

## Getting What We Don't Deserve

Somebody once said

There are only two kinds of people in the world.

Those who wake up in the morning and say,

“Good morning, Lord”,

And those who wake up in the morning and say,

“Good Lord, it's morning!”

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Today, we're going to talk about the prophet Hosea.

God instructed Hosea to marry a prostitute.

I just wonder if the same mistake

Was made on their wedding cake.

A Christian couple asked a baker to inscribe

The words from 1 John 4:18 on their wedding cake.

But instead of decorating is with 1 John 4:18,

He mistakenly iced in John 4:18.

And so instead of the cake reading 1st John 4:18 (ESV)

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”

The cake had the words from John 4:18 (ESV)

“For you have had five husbands,

And the one you now have is not your husband.”

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If you have ever read through the Bible

You might draw the conclusion

And I've said this before . . .

There seems to be this huge contrast

Between the God of the OT and God of the NT.

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I mean, at times it's like  
 Can we be talking about the same God here?

You read the OT  
 And you discover a God  
 Who seems quick to punish.

The God of the OT is a God you should fear!

The well-known British atheist Richard Dawkins,  
 In his book, *The God Delusion* writes;

*“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”*

Don't ask me to read that twice.

And then, we have the God of the NT.

The God of the NT is the God of peace who says  
 “Turn the other cheek, go the extra mile  
 Love your enemy and pray for them!”

The God of the NT is the God who sent his son  
 Because he so loved the world!

The NT God blesses those who mourn  
 Blesses the meek and merciful  
 Forgives the sins of humanity.

The God of the NT is a God willing to suffer and die  
 For humanity's sake.

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This God is a God not to be feared.

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The Brethren call themselves a NT church  
Perhaps to distance themselves  
From the God of the OT.

I confess I struggle with trying to reconcile the differences.

But as I understand it  
The OT and NT God are the same!

So how do we resolve  
The extreme differences in the God of the old and new?

That's a difficult question for another conversation.

And yet . . .

Despite the seeming gap between the two  
There are golden threads that run from the OT to the NT.

I see three, consistent, personality traits of God,  
That weave their way through the Bible.

God is just,  
God is merciful,  
God is gracious!

The God of justice. in simple language, simply means:  
"You get what you deserve!"

The God of mercy, on the other hand, essentially means:  
"You don't get what you deserve."

And the God of grace means:  
"You get what you don't deserve!"

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There is a strong thread of God's redemptive grace  
Weaving through the entire Bible!

Find an example of this in our OT scripture lesson today.

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Hosea lived and ministered in the northern kingdom,  
From about 750 to 722 BC.

As I said earlier, Hosea married a prostitute

I bet you don't know her name? Her name was Gomer.

I wondered if the character Gomer Pyle  
On the Andy Griffith show  
Was named after Hosea's wife.

Curiosity got the best of me. I had to look it up.

Gomer Pyle did not get his name from the Bible.

Everett Greenbaum, one of the writers on the show  
Came up with the name as a tribute to another writer  
Whose honest-to-goodness name was Gomer Cool.

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God uses Hosea's marriage with Gomer the prostitute  
As an analogy for the relationship between God and Israel.

Hosea loves Gomer.  
But she doesn't love him in return  
And remains unfaithful.

She mothers many children.

Some his, others from her other lovers.  
Despite this, Hosea continues loving and caring for his wife.

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Like God who continues to love Israel,  
 Even though they too were unfaithful to him.

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God through Hosea warns the people of approaching doom!

There are going to be consequences for their unfaithfulness.

Most of the Book of Hosea prophesize God's coming wrath.

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That is, until we come to chapter 11.

There the heart of God is exposed.

God cannot help but tell of his love to the people.

He does so in the way a parent might speak  
 Of the love they have for a child who's gone bad.

Like the way a parent might reflect back,  
 To the innocent childhood  
 Of their now rebellious teenager.

### **Hosea 11:1-4 (Message)**

**When Israel was only a child, I loved him.**

**I called out, 'My son!'—called him out of Egypt.**

**But when others called him,**

**he ran off and left me.**

**He worshiped the popular sex gods,**

**he played at religion with toy gods.**

**Still, I stuck with him. I led Ephraim.**

**I rescued him from human bondage,**

**But he never acknowledged my help,**

**never admitted that I was the one pulling his wagon,**

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**That I lifted him, like a baby, to my cheek,  
that I bent down to feed him.**

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These are the words of our OT God?

Words filled with such tenderness and love.

And yet, God is angry.

And can see their behavior leads to destruction.

### 5-7 (Message)

**Now he wants to go back to Egypt or go over to Assyria—  
anything but return to me!**

**That's why his cities are unsafe—the murder rate  
skyrockets**

**and every plan to improve things falls to pieces.**

**My people are hell-bent on leaving me.**

**They pray to god Baal for help.**

**He doesn't lift a finger to help them.**

~~

Much can be said and has been said

Concerning the current situation here in the USA.

Many of the fundamental preachers of our day

Have preached gloom and doom for America

And its waywardness to God.

I just read on Wednesday a GOP leader from Ohio

Called California's killer wildfires

"God's punishment" on the "liberal" state.

And yet . . . before we go too far down that path

Even as God is ready to deliver the verdict

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The ax held high ready to mete out his justice

Here in the Book of Hosea

God does something very uncharacteristically OT.

God relents.

God changes his mind.

God's anger melts

And his unconditional love prevails.

**8-9 How can I leave you to be ruined like Admah,  
devastated like luckless Zeboim?**

**I can't bear to even think such thoughts.**

**My insides churn in protest.**

**And so I'm not going to act on my anger.**

**I'm not going to destroy Ephraim.**

**And why? Because I am God and not a human.**

**I'm The Holy One and I'm here—in your very midst.**

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God is just, God is merciful and God is gracious.

What we see in Hosea is God's predominant personality trait

Grace . . . wonderful . . . marvelous grace.

Philip Yancey, in "*What's So Amazing About Grace*,"

*During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating possibilities.*

*Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods appearing in human form.*

*Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of returning from death.*

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*The debate went on for some time until C. S. Lewis wandered into the room.*

*“What’s the rumpus about?” he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity’s unique contribution among world religions.*

*Lewis responded, “Oh. That’s easy. It’s grace.”*

~~~  
Among the religions of today,  
Grace is not a usual characteristic of God.

According to Yancey,  
*Only Christianity dares to make God’s love unconditional.*

~~~  
I ran across a story by Norman Vincent Peale  
And didn’t know much about the man  
So I looked him up online.

Norman Vincent Peale  
Was born in Bowersville, Ohio  
On May 31, 1898 and died December 24, 1993.

He became the pastor of the Marble Collegiate Church,  
In Manhattan.

Under his leadership of 52 years  
The church grew from 600 members to over 5,000.

He wrote the best-seller “The Power of Positive Thinking.”

~~~  
Anyway, he tells the story  
About walking by a tattoo parlor  
In Hong Kong one day.

Displayed on the window were various tattoo designs.

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One in particular caught his eye.

It was a tattoo of a skeleton  
With the words, "Born to Lose"  
Written underneath.

Curious about the design Peale asked the shop owner  
If anyone ever ask for that particular design  
Tattooed on their body.

The owner answered that surprisingly enough  
He'd just tattooed that very one on someone's chest.

In amazement Peale asked  
"Why would anyone want such a gloomy tattoo  
Branded for life on their chest?"

The old Chinese man shrugged his shoulders  
And responded

"Before the design is on the chest,  
The tattoo is etched on the soul."

In some ways, if you think about it  
Each of us, in some way or another  
Has had the words, "Born to Lose"  
Etched upon our hearts.

It's any wonder any of us has made it this far.

But here we are.

God, in his infinite grace, through Christ Jesus  
Has erased the words "Born to Lose"  
And replaces them with, "You are my beloved."

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And no matter how far we have traveled away from Him  
 God will never give up on you  
 Will never, ever turn you loose.

Why?

Because God is a God of Grace  
 We get what we don't deserve.

We see it in the Book of Hosea.

And we see it in Jesus Christ,  
 The pivotal act in God's history of redemption.

For everything about Jesus is about grace!

God is just and merciful and gracious,  
 It is evident in flesh and blood  
 In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

From Frederick Buechner:

*Grace is something you can never get but only be given.*

*There's no way to earn it or deserve it or bring it about . . . .*

*A crucial [understanding] of the Christian faith,  
 is the assertion that people are saved by grace.*

*There's nothing you **have** to do.  
 There's nothing **you** have to do.  
 There's nothing you have to **do**.*

*The grace of God means something like:*

*Here is your life.*

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*You might never have been but you are  
Because the party wouldn't have been complete  
Without you.*

*Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen.*

*Don't be afraid. I am with you.  
Nothing can ever separate us.*

*It's for you I created the universe.*

*I love you.*

*There's only one catch.*

*Like any other gift, the gift of grace can be yours  
Only if you'll reach out and take it.*