

Hosea 11:1-9
Getting What We Don't Deserve
WRCoB 11.12.23

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

And we can't talk about Hosea
Without at least mentioning
That God instructed Hosea to marry a prostitute.

God wanted him to marry Gomer, the prostitute

So that God could use Hosea and his wife, Gomer
As a metaphor
For the way God feels he's been treated
By the people of Israel.

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But first, a question!
A rhetorical question to engage us in conversation.

How can the OT God be the same God as the NT God?

When you read the OT
You discover a wrathful, quick to punish, God.

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."

And then, we have the God of the NT.

The God of peace who says
Turn the other cheek, go the extra mile
Love your enemy
Pray for those who persecute you!

The God of the NT is the God who sent his only son
As a love offering.
Forgiving the sins of humanity.

Seemingly, quite the contrast.

But I want to assure you that indeed
The God of the OT and God of the NT
Are both one and the same.

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Now, historically, we, Brethren, call ourselves a NT church.

Perhaps this is to distance ourselves
From the warmongering God of the OT.

But I think more to embody the faith and practices
The ethics and behavior of Jesus Christ.

Brethren recognize the whole of the Bible is God's Word.

And everything in it is inspired and useful
For our understanding of how God
Moves in history.

So how do we resolve what seems to be
Extreme differences in the character of God
If we understand God to be without change.

Despite the seeming differences
There are golden threads of God's character
That run from the OT through to the NT.

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

1. God is Just
2. God is Merciful
3. God is Gracious!

In simple language, a just God is a God who says.

You get what you deserve!

The God of mercy, on the other hand
Is a God who says

You don't get what you deserve

And above all, the God of grace is a God who says

You get what you don't deserve!

Frankly speaking

There is no other god out there
That offers underserved grace
Like the one and only true God.

Buechner writes this about God's grace.

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

Grace is the golden thread weaving through the Bible!

And our Scripture Lesson is a fine example
Of God's grace found in the OT.

Hosea was a prophet living in the northern kingdom
From about 750 to 722 BC.

God told Hosea to marry Gomer, not Pyle

And so, he did and Hosea loved Gomer.

But she didn't love him back.

She was unfaithful to Hosea
And mothered many children.

Some were his and some were not.

Despite this, Hosea continued to love and care for Gomer

The metaphor played out in the relationship
Between God and Israel.

God loved Israel
But Israel didn't love God back.

Israel remained unfaithful to God
And played around with the other gods in the region.

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Hosea warns the people of approaching doom!

There will be consequences for their unfaithfulness.

Until we come to chapter 11
Where the heart of God is revealed.

God cannot help but share his love for Israel.

God's words are tender.
God's words are gentle

God speaks in the way a parent speaks to a wayward child.

I taught you to walk.

 I took you up in my arms

 I lifted you to my cheek

 I bent down and fed you.

Excuse me?

Are these the words of our OT God?

 Words expressed is such tenderness and love?

And yet, God is upset.

God knows Israel's behavior will lead to destruction.

And it breaks God's heart.

Does Israel deserve to be disciplined for their behavior?

Yes.

Time and again

 They disobeyed God

 They worshiped idols and other gods.

They neglected the marginalized, the widow and orphan.

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

Even as God is ready to deliver the verdict

 To mete out the proper punishment

 For Israel's disobedient behavior

God does something seemingly uncharacteristic.

God relents.

 God's anger melts

 And God's unconditional love and grace prevails.

How can I give you up?
How can I hand you over?

My heart recoils within me.

I will not execute my fierce anger
I will not destroy
I will not come in wrath.

God is just, God is merciful
But oh my, God is gracious indeed.

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So is the OT God the same God as the NT God?

Yes, yes, YES!

How do I, personally, come to terms
With the seeming contradictions?

Well, yes, there are some incongruities
That are hard to reconcile.

But, perhaps, it is our own inability
To understand the ways of God.

But here we are in the Book of Hosea
Seeing some of the doting, tender, lovingkindness
The God of the OT has for Israel.

Some suggest it is progressive revelation.

And I can agree to some of its arguments.

Progressive revelation is likened to the words from Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:1-3a NRSV

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son . . .

³ He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.

Progressive revelation is the theory
That God reveals his Word to us in increments.

But God has done so in much the same way
As a teacher would who teaches 3rd grade
And a teacher in 9th grade teaching math.

One cannot understand algebra or calculus
Without first learning the basic math principles.

As we read through the Bible
God's will and way is progressively revealed.

We need to understand God in the OT
Before we can understand God in the NT.

It's vital to know how we get to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

St Augustine saw the importance of both testaments
When he said

The new is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed."

They work in tandem.

They need to be read as one continuous story
Gradually revealing God's redemptive plan.

We must remember the OT was Scripture for Jesus.

Another clue of progressive revelation in the Bible
Comes from Jesus himself
From his Sermon on the Mount.

He goes through a series of teaching proclamations
Beginning with

You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times

Jesus would then recite an OT law.

And then he'd counter it with

But I say unto

Jesus deepens and broadens the earlier law
Further revealing God's will and way.

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The person of Jesus
Is the fullest expression of God's character.

And the gospel message centers on God's love
Exemplified by grace
In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Here in our passage in Hosea
We see God's golden thread of grace
Getting what we don't deserve.

God's grace is revealed throughout the Scriptures
From cover to cover.

We first see it when Adam and Eve
Leave the Garden of Eden
After disobeying God.

God clothes them in animal skins
That they'd be protected against the cold realities of life.

1. Getting what we deserve
2. Not getting what we deserve
3. Getting what we don't deserve

In Jesus Christ, we get what we don't deserve.
And that's grace.

God is just and merciful.

But it is God's grace that supersedes all other attributes.

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.*

Grace is a gift, freely given.

And through the grace of Jesus Christ we are redeemed

And according to Buechner grace looks something like this.

*Here is your life. 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.*

Buechner says, 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.*

And that, my sisters and brothers

Is the lovely good news of Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 9:15 NIV Thanks be to God for his
incredible gift!**