

"Hosea: This is God's Love"

We have seen prophet Amos last Sunday, and today we focus the prophet Hosea. He lived the same time with Amos. I will explain little bit about the background. Israel was reigned by King Saul, David and Solomon, but after King Solomon, Israel was divided into two nations, Judah and Northern Kingdom of Israel, and Hosea and Amos was facing Northern Israel as a prophet.

In the early years of his prophecy at the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Israel was prosperous, but behind the scenes, their political, religious and ethical situations were midst of corruption. In addition, they are surrounded by two powerful countries, Assyria and Egypt, and the day the kingdom would be destroyed by Assyria is coming. In the midst of all these, Hosea received the words from God and warned to the people of Israel.

When Hosea started his works as a prophet, God talked to him amazing words **"Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord."** **3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son (Hosea 1:2-3)."**

The words from God made him doubt his ears. He has been faithfully serving God, and he also must have the idea of ideal marriage, but God told him to get marry with a promiscuous woman, Gomer and have children she bore through her sexual misconduct.

We don't know how much Hosea struggle to make his decision, but he accepted God's words and they started their marriage life and Gomer bares three children. Regarding the first child, Hosea 1:3 says, "She conceived and bore him a son." However, regarding the second and third children, it just says "conceived" (1:6,8). Probably, those two children might not Hosea's children.

Marriage does not exist without love and trust towards each other. But of all things, why did God tell Hosea to choose a woman such like Gomer. God told him: **"Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord (Hosea 1:2)."** As Hosea is becoming the prophet, God want him to realized God's thought toward Israel by Hosea will get marry with Gomer.

Their marriage life is not written in detail but Hosea loved Gomer because she is his wife, and we assume they had lived a happy life for a while. However, Gomer soon left Hosea and her family, and returned her sinful life.

Nevertheless, say this was deeply hurt Hosea's heart. His relatives must say, "Look at you. We know this is going to happen". But God spoke to Hosea, **"Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes (Hosea 3:1)."**

Gomer betrayed Hosea and her family, and she left, but God told him to go to Gomer and bring his wife home. What does the Bible write about? What did Hosea do after hearing these words from God? Verse 2 says: **So, I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley (Hosea 3:2).**

Hearing by God's words, Hosea went to go buy Gomer. Gomer was at the cathouse, had become someone's property. Probably, she was like a prostitute at the temple of Baal which is the gods of the idol. She has forced to owe some debt for not escape from the temple. Hosea paid the price and took his wife back to home. Hosea said to his wife, Gomer: **"You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you (Hosea 3:3)."**

What is the book of Hosea will speak to us? The book is not trying to tell us about the impressive marriage life of ancient couple but the message of the couple tells us the relationship of God and Israel.

When we read the Bible, we are getting understand that God had chosen the nation of Israel. This is not because Israel is great to compare to the other countries, but they are small and weak nation. This is clearly written in Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

6 For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. 7 The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Deuteronomy 7:6-8).

The relationship of God and Israel is like husband and wife and the relationship supposed to be kept with their faithful pledge, but Israel broke the pledge and they went to the gods of Idol so many times. The relationship of Hosea and Gomer imply the spiritual adultery of Israel to the God.

The idolatry is not only worship the idol gods but when our heart is not direct toward God but direct to the other thing more than God. If we live like that, we are all committing some kind of idolatry to God. Therefore, the story of Hosea is not for somebody else's, but it was talking about each one of us.

Like Hosea who tried to take Gomer back home from the other men, God also tried to take Israel back to him with His Love and mercy, but they won't come back to where they should stay Yet they continue to leave God. Hosea wrote about God's love and mercy on Israel like this.

1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. 2 But the more they were called, the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images. 3 It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. 4 I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I

was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them (Hosea 11:1-4).

Prophet Isaiah, who lived after Hosea, also talks about God's love. **"I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' 2 All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations."** (Isaiah 65:1-2)

Due to their sins, Israel loses their freedom and become like slaves, but God lifts the yoke from their cheek and stoops to feed them for they were too weak to eat. God extends his hands out to unfaithful Israel saying, "I'm here, I'm here." But they have brushed off these words and abused God's love with every wrong doing they've done. This was, without a doubt, how Gomer treated Hosea.

Dear everyone, our sins are not only we do criminal things nor had done something terrible. It is not only we rejected the hand God stretch to us but If we ignore His extended hand and the one who feeding us, and live whatever we like without God , the Bible say it is sins.

Yet God never abandoned them. Hence told Hosea: "As I have done the same and loved Israel, love Gomer." As the same human beings, we realize how difficult and unthinkable the task was to love Gomer. It is the nonstandard love.

When we honestly ponder about our relationship with God, we realize that what we've been doing is like that of Gomer. If we allow our hearts to be taken by other things, other than God, as if He was not in our mind, it would be the same as Gomer meeting other men though she had a husband to love, because God is the only one who is originally supposed to fill our hearts.

As God was with Israel, God extends his hands out to us again and again and says, "I am here." Yet, our eyes are closed and we do not see. No, what the Bible tells us is that, even if we saw, we live as if we heard nothing, because that's how we, humans are.

Hosea paid a price for Gomer. He didn't have to pay for her in the first place. She deserved to end her life as a prostitute. Yet, Hosea loved her and took her in as a wife and a mother. Yes, He paid for her to be with him.

We are surprised and amazed Hosea's love. But, as a matter of fact, Jesus Christ did the same thing for us through the cross. No matter how we may think or object, the Bible tells us that we are all sinners before God. And there is not a way in which we may make up or pay for our sins. In that sense, we have already failed. However, Jesus Christ gave his life in exchange for our sins.

We are amazed what Hosea had done to Gomer, but what Jesus had done for us is incomparable. Hosea bought back Gomer with silver and barley, but Jesus paid his own blood for us. It is not the time to saying "Oh, Gomer, you are lucky because your husband is such a merciful man. It will not happen like that". We should not look at this story as bystanders. What Jesus had done for us is much, much bigger than that.

Our sins will not have solved by our teaching and creed. God took His own way which is the son of God was born in the manger. He abandons his status and heavenly glory, and he dedicated himself on the cross for us. He proved his love for us through offer his life for us.

Hosea wrote many times about God hands extended to Israel, but they did not grab His hand. Hosea loved Gomer who bore the children by other man, bus still she did not acknowledge Hosea's love. The book of Hosea said; "Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the LORD (HOSEA 5:4).

Gomer did not know the love of Hosea. Therefore, she left her family and stayed in darkness. Why did she do such silly things? As the Bible said a spirit of prostitution must drive her to wrong way and therefore she could not know the love of Hosea to her.

But Hosea came to her to pay her owe, and finally she knows his love. **"You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you."** (Hosea 3:3) Finally his words

reached her heart. Yes, she knows his love. Therefore, Hosea wrote how important to know about God's thoughts to us, and Hosea knows the strength and blessing to know God. **Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge him.**

As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth." (Hosea 6:3)

One of Christ's disciple, John wrote ¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters (1 John 3:16). Only the youngest John watched the cross of Jesus among other eleven disciples, and he knew what is the true love through Jesus Christ on the cross.

Dear everyone, let us also **know** what our Lord, Jesus Christ had done for us. We had been lived like there is no God in this world, but God loves our world as He gave his only son for us. This is not a normal love. The love is now pour on us. Everything will start from here. Yes, let us know His love. John also wrote: ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (John 17:3).

After all, what our life need is God's nonstandard love for us. We have to know it. When we know the love, our life will be changed. The life will be different before and after we know His love. Our life is depending on to know we are loved or not. When we know we are loved, many of our problem will be solved. Let's pray.