

Calvary United Methodist Church
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HOSEA AND GOMER, A LOVE STORY
Rev. Doug Compton

Children's Message:

Can we have the children come forward? I have treats. That's always a pleasant thing. Come on up, sit right here. Have some Cub Scouts, you look cool in those uniforms, guys. Alright! How's everybody doing today? Had to get up early, didn't you? It's not a school day and you had to get up early anyway. What's mom and dad doing to you?

One of my favorite books happens to be *Horton Sits on an Egg*. Anybody ever read this book? Okay, good. I'm preaching to the choir today. It's a story about Horton who is an elephant and the person who laid the egg happens to be...the bird that laid the egg...happened to be Mayzie, and Mayzie is lazy, isn't she? She lays the egg and she asks Horton to sit on it. And elephant sitting on an egg. Are you guys following this? Pretty weird, isn't it? Yeah. Well, Horton decides he is going to do that, so that's what he does. He sits on this egg. Does he have an easy time? No, it's a tough time. Way tough. The weather gets bad and there he is sitting on the egg. His friends come and they make fun of him. It gets worse. Hunters show up and the hunters, they are fascinated by this elephant sitting on an egg.

Now, all throughout this Horton always said this: I meant what I said; I said what I meant. An elephant is faithful, 100 percent. Well, the hunters decided to put him on a boat and take him across the ocean. So he comes across the ocean, he gets seasick on the way, haven't read it for a while, gets a little seasick on the way, but then he gets sold into a circus at none other than Palm Beach. And that's where Mayzie happens to be, she wasn't coming back. She was gone. Mayzie flies through and she reads the sign...I don't know how she read the sign, but she reads the sign in the children's book. She reads the sign and she comes to the circus. When she is at the circus she argues with Horton and says: I want that egg back. While they are arguing, what happens? (The egg hatches and it's a flying elephant.) The egg hatches and it's a flying elephant. That is very good. I couldn't have said that better myself. That's right. It's a flying elephant. Does Mayzie get to keep the bird or flying elephant? No. Mayzie has to go and Horton wins out because he always said this: I meant what I said and I said what I meant. An elephant is faithful 100 percent.

Let's talk about these characters a little bit. Would we ever want to be like Mayzie the bird? No. What were some things that Mayzie's like? Mayzie is lazy. Does she care about her egg? She only cares about herself, doesn't she? That's not good, is it? It really isn't any good at all. And what about Horton? Is Horton smart? You think he is? I'm getting yes. They are going up and down. Okay, he's smart enough to be loyal, isn't he? Smart enough to be faithful, isn't he? And he loves that little egg, no matter what.

Should we be more like Horton? Yeah. That's really some things that a Christian is like. A Christian is loving, is faithful, is loyal. You know we are more like Horton than you think. And never forget that line: I meant what I said, I said what I meant. An elephant is faithful 100 percent.

Let's pray:

Lord, thank you for all things. Help us to be faithful like Horton. Help us, Lord, to know that when circumstances come and we are tempted not to follow through, we are tempted to give up, help us to be faithful to you at all times and to each other. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Guys, I have some treats for you. Help yourself as you return to your seats. I know Boy Scouts are faithful.

Message:

Hosea 1:2-9

Gary Smalley, in his book *Love is a Decision* tells the story about a woman who notices a young couple across the street, just moved in. And every night when he comes home from work he gets out of the car and she greets him right there at the car and he has a gift for her or a flower or something. They hug and they kiss and they go into the house arm in arm. This happens day after day; every evening this happens, some kind of gift or some kind of flower or something. Well, the lady who is watching all of this has had it. So, when her husband comes home she sits him down and she says: George, have you noticed the young couple across the street? He says: I know they moved in and everything. Have you noticed what they do? Well, not really. She says: Every night she greets him with a kiss and a hug and he has a little gift for her. And she looks at him, you know that look guys, she looks at him and she says: Why don't you do that? He's really puzzled and he goes: Honey, honey, I hardly know that woman!

Women really enjoy love stories. They just really enjoy love stories. There are movies out. There is one called *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. I've been to hundreds of weddings, I didn't see that one. It must have been a success because there's a bigger, fatter, Greeker...no that's *Big Fat Greek Wedding Part 2* or something like that. Women just enjoy love stories, they really do. There is a show on called *The Bachelor* and if you think I watch *The Bachelor* you don't know me at all. But I overheard some women a few years back and they were talking about *The Bachelor* and they said: I don't like that girl at all, she lies and she connives and he shouldn't marry her at all. And they said about this other one, her parents died in a car accident or plane crash or something and she ended up raising her younger sister. She's real sweet and everything and I think she should marry him. And I'm standing there going: I don't care. Do what you want to do. Women just enjoy love stories.

Well, I have a love story here for you today. It's from Hosea. Hosea is a minor prophet. There are twelve minor prophets in the Old Testament and they are only minor because their

books are smaller. That's all it is really, because their books are smaller. When you read a prophet you have to know what's going on in the historical setting or when you read it you won't understand anything. So what is going on during the time of Hosea? The year is 750 b.c. Israel is at the top of their prosperity and their power. They are doing really well. However, they've taken on the gods of the Canaanites, they are worshiping idols. God is very angry with them and God decides He is going to pronounce judgement. The Assyrians from the north are coming down and they are going to pronounce judgement upon them.

From Hosea we find these words, Chapter 1. Bet you thought I forgot the scripture, didn't you? When the Lord began to speak to Hosea, the Lord said to 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." So, he married Gomer, daughter of Diblaim and she conceived and bore him a son. And the Lord said to Hosea, "Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu with a massacre at Jezeel and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel and that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel."

Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means "not loved"), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them. Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the LORD their God, will save them." After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. Then the LORD said, "Call him Lo-Ammi (which means "not my people"), for you are not my people, and I am not your God."

God's Word for God's people.

Let's think about Hosea for a minute. Hosea was an itinerant preacher, a prophet, a young man. His family probably didn't have a lot of money, his chances for finding a wife probably weren't that great. E-Harmony.com had not been invented yet, so he couldn't go on the internet and find a wife. He was kind of struggling. And all of a sudden God came to him and said, "Look, have I got a girl for you!" Thank God for Hosea's attention. Have I got a girl for you! She's the most beautiful in all of Israel. Now he's really excited. Two drawbacks though for you, Hosea. The first drawback is her name is Gomer. If you grew up in the 60s, you're already ahead of me, aren't you? If you grew up in the 60s, do you remember Jim Nabors? Gomer Pyle, USMC...Golly, Sargent Carter. Shazamm. I can't read Gomer without thinking of Jim Nabors. It's a thing with me right now. That's the first drawback. The second drawback, much more serious, the second drawback is: she is going to be unfaithful to you, Hosea.

Now, Hosea loved her with all his heart. He really loved her, but she is going to be unfaithful and she is going to have three children with three different men, three different men. The first child, names are very important in the Bible and Hosea's wife is going to be laid out for

the nation to see the unfaithful of Israel to God. And so the names are important.

The first name is Jezreel. Jezreel means castaway. It's an insult to the nation because it reminds them of a terrible time in their history, but his boy, the first name is Jezreel.

The second name is a girl. Her name is Lo-Ruhamah which means not loved, just as Israel will not love God, God has withheld. He backed off and will not love Israel.

And the third one was another boy, Lo-Ammi, which means not my people. All God ever wanted was for them to be His people, and for Him to be their God, and they were turning their back on Him, all in all.

Let me tell you how terrible this whole thing was. They worshipped Baal. The god Baal was linked to fertility and growing crops. In other words, if you wanted your crops to grow, you had to worship Baal.

Well, they had prostitutes, they had debauchery, they had drunkenness. The Israelites were trying to worship God in the temples of Baal and they were bringing those idols into God's temple. God was horrified. He was angry and He was ready to just do away with them knowing judgement was going to come.

I want you, since Hosea represents God and Gomer represents Israel, I want you to look at God in a different light today. I want you to see God as a jilted lover, His heart was breaking. He wanted Israel so much to love him back as much as he loved them. And He really, really loved Israel. And all they did was hurt Him over and over and over again. Scripture says that God is a jealous God and He was very very angry with them for they were literally committing adultery against God.

Now, this is where we come in. This is where we come in. Where is it the times when we... what do you do when you commit adultery? You make a pledge to one person and then your heart and your mind and your spirit goes to somebody else. How do we every commit adultery against God? Well, in 1 John 2, we find three ways in which we commit adultery against God. The first one is the lust of the flesh. Our society is just saturated with sexuality these days in movies, in our video games, in our TV programs, lust of the flesh. But it means more than that. It means the overindulgence of our appetites for luxury or power or control. The overindulgence of our appetites are things that take us away from God because we want those things instead of God.

The second way in 1 John talks about the lust of the eye. The lust of the eye is when we want more, overindulgence of more. Our whole economy is built on three words: new and improved, right? What was it before? Old and antiquated? Now it is new and improved. We always want more. There is a desire for more. My other job is that I work at L.B. Smith Ford, believe it or not, in Lemoyne. Anybody know where that is? I'm not a salesman. I'm

just one of the drivers, but I get to drive all the vehicles, all the Fords and all the Lincolns and everything. Now, I have a Buick that's nine years old. I own a Chevy that's eight years old. I get to drive all these brand new vehicles. And I fall in love with this vehicle or that vehicle, because you want more. You want the latest and greatest. The problem is they come with something I don't have right now...car payments. I'm not going to make a car payment. So whatever you fall in love with you kind of fall out of love with. We want more. If we have one we want two, if we have two we want four. It's an overindulgence of our desire for more. This literally takes us away from God. Are you following me? Say amen. (Amen.) Alright.

The third thing is the boastful pride of life. We boast about how special we are. Did you every that: She's all that and a bag of chips? That's kind of what we are talking about. Someone in boastful pride of life, they are just so full of themselves that they get so wrapped up in themselves they forget about God altogether. Boastful pride of life.

Essentially when we commit adultery against God we have overindulgence of our appetites, overindulgence of our appetites for more and the fact that we are stuck on ourselves, we think more highly than we ought to think.

Now, the opposite of adultery and infidelity is faithfulness. Remember when I said to the kids: I meant what I said, I said what I meant. That a Christian is faithful, 100 percent.

In the book of Corinthians, the Apostle Paul uses an ancient creed: Jesus is Lord, which means that he is number 1 priority in our lives. Christians who are faithful understand this ancient creed, Jesus is Lord and they live out their lives with that creed. What does it mean? It means that we believe Jesus is Lord in our finances, he's the first one that we consult when it comes to our checkbook, our finances.

Relationships, he's number 1 in our relationships, Christian principles in our relationships. We do our best to forgive, we do our best to show compassion, we do our best to show others that we love the Lord in our relationships.

The next one is our attitude. I once said to a Christian: Are you happy? And she said: Yes. I said: Then tell your face because your face doesn't know. It has to do with attitude. A Christian will have the right attitude. It's all about being faithful: I meant what I said. I said what I meant. A Christian is faithful, 100 percent. We are all motivated by love.

Back to our story about Hosea and Gomer. Scholars believe that Hosea loved Gomer so much that he would gather some clothes, some money and some food and take it to the house that she happened to be living in and the creep would answer the door, he would give those... now this guy might have beat her up the night before...he would take them and off Hosea would go.

Whenever I watch a movie, I am always, when the ending gets there I always am a sucker for happy endings. Who is a sucker for happy endings? Come on, alright. I'm a sucker for happy endings. Let me tell you the happy ending. Things go so bad for Gomer, every time that she had these encounters, her beauty began to fade more and more. As time wore on, her beauty began to fade until she wasn't worth anything, even to the men who used her, misused her and abused her. So the men decided they were going to put her on the slave market. They would take her down and put her up for auction on the slave market. Hosea gets word of this, Hosea comes down, he buys her, she didn't take a lot of money because by this time she wasn't worth a whole lot to anybody, but he buys her back. He takes her home. Hosea reiterates his love for her, tells her he forgives her it melts her heart and she finally receives his forgiveness and his love and they live out their days together. Everyone want to go: Ahhh? (Ahhh.) That's a happy ending. Thank you, God, for the happy ending.

What does this mean to us? It means that when we come to a point in our lives, when we say I can't forgive myself, God says, wait a minute, I took care of that. I sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross. On the third day he rose again and his victory is your victory, just claim that victory. What do I have to do? Well, in 1 John 1: 9 he says if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness as if it never happened. That's the kind of forgiveness we have in Jesus Christ. Amen? (Amen.) Alright.

One last story. It's about Hersheypark. How many love Hersheypark? Hersheypark happy. I love Hersheypark, I really do. I just love Hersheypark. Well, I had season tickets for a while, I don't have them anymore. They built this ride called the Triple Tower. Has anyone ridden on the Triple Tower? I see a few hands. Let me tell you about the Triple Towers. The Hershey Kiss size is 80 feet. It's a tower with seats around it, 80 feet. The Reese's size is 131 feet. But the chocolate bar, that's the one you want. Chocolate bar is 189 feet of pure joy. So, you sit down on that, there is an iron bar that comes across and it snaps in and there is no way you are going to fall out. You couldn't fall out if you wanted to. People take off their glasses and their hats and their shoes and stuff like that. I got on that and there is this big guy next to me. Now, I don't know if he was in his late teens or early 20s, but he was big. He got in and hooked in alright and just as we were ready to take off he says: We are going to die. If you didn't get that, I said we're going to die. That's what he said. Well, this thing has turbo thrust. I mean it takes you up in a hurry. You get up there almost to the top, it stops. I heard this guy say: We're going to die. Then it's a drop part way down, it stops and I hear him say it again: We're going to die. This time, you know, I'm starting to get really tickled. I'm starting to laugh. So the next time it goes all the way up to the top and it starts to turn. Sure enough, this guy yelled out: We are going to die. I thought I was going to die laughing, I really did. Funniest thing. A big guy too, you wouldn't think a big guy would be that afraid. Well, we get down to the bottom and none of these last more than three minutes. We get down to the bottom and you know me, I gotta say something, it would kill me if I didn't. I gotta say something so as we're getting off the ride, I say to him: Hey, Buddy! We didn't die! He says: Yeah, good thing, huh? And he stomps off. Good thing, huh?

Well, I told you that to tell you this: there will be a day when we die and when we stand before the Lord, I want to hear a certain phrase from Him, a certain sentence from Him that I long to hear with my whole heart: Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord. That's what I want to be. I want to be God's faithful servant.

Imagine a Christian who is following this with her whole heart. I meant what I said, I meant what I said. A Christian if faithful, 100 percent. And here she lives her life out like that. Imagine a couple who Jesus is number 1 in their lives, is high priority, they are living out their lives in service to him, in church, mission work, helping in the neighborhood and they are living their life for the Lord, they are actually growing old together. Imagine a church, imagine a church, that would have that as their value: I meant what I said, I said what I meant that a church is faithful 100 percent.

Gracious God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you and we praise you. You are Lord of all things and we thank you for this example of Hosea and Gomer and we thank you, Lord, for all that you do is watch over us and all that you want us to do is love you. Help us to stay away from those thing that take us away and take us apart. Help us, Lord, to begin again our love for you. In Jesus' name. Amen.