

The Greatest Story (Part 33):

The Overwhelming, Never-ending, Reckless Love of God

Hosea

Memory Verses: Hosea 6:1, 1 John 4:9-10

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

We are in a series called the Greatest Story. There is no greater story that has ever been told. It is a love story. The story of the Love of an all knowing, all powerful God for a rebellious, obstinate people.

We've seen this in how God so loved Adam and Eve that he created them and gave them all the riches of the world, all the joy of paradise, and all the bliss of an everlasting utopia, and yet they threw it all away to eat from a tree. We've seen this in how God so loved Abraham, that even though his wife Sarah was barren, he promised to give them a son. Yet Abraham and Sarah became impatient and rebelled, taking matters into their own hands and had a different son through a surrogate. We've seen this in how God so loved Israel that he delivered them from the bondage of Egypt only to see them create and worship a golden calf, refuse to enter the promised land, and then spend the next 40 years in the desert grumbling and complaining and saying that they preferred slavery. We've seen this in how God so loved Israel that as their king he gave them a land flowing with milk and honey, and peace and prosperity throughout the time of the judges, yet they rejected him as their king and demanded another. We've seen this in how God so loved David that he gave him the kingdom even though he was a lowly shepherd boy, yet David rebelled in murder and adultery. We've seen this in how God so loved Solomon that he gave him more wisdom than any man ever, yet Solomon became an idolatrous king who's sin divided the kingdom.

And we've seen it in how you and I have time and time again yielded to sin instead of the Spirit, how we've turned from our first love and wandered after other idols, how we've spent countless hours chasing the things of this world yet God so loved us that he gave his one and only Son to save us. We continue to sin and God continues to love us.

I don't know about you but I wouldn't. How could anyone keep on loving someone who time and time again has proven that they are unfaithful. Who, every time you forgive them, ends up betraying you again. Time after time after time. Eventually, anyone with half a brain says... No more. You will not hurt me anymore... you are not welcome back anymore. And yet... that's not our God. No matter how many times we fail, fall, turn our backs on him, and wander from his side... he allows

us to come back. Some would say that's foolish. Others might say that that's reckless.

Today we are going to turn our attention to one of the most absurd books of the Bible; Hosea. And one of the reasons that this book is absurd is because it is the story of God telling a man to marry an adulteress harlot, knowing full well that she would not be faithful to him. He was to marry her and continue to forgive her and take her back every time she cheated on him. That's an absurd kind of love. That's a reckless love.

Why? Why would God ask this of Hosea? Because as the prophet he was to illustrate God's love for an adulterous people. All of this was to show the nation of Israel that they, like a harlot, were unfaithful spiritual adulterers who could not keep from betraying their God and spiritual husband... and to show that God is a God who consistently takes them back and restores them to the marriage.

But even more so, today it also shows us as believers just how faithful our God is to us and how far his love extends to us. If you are a follower of Christ, there is no where you can go that our God will not find you. There is no sin so big that our God will not forgive you. **You may be prone to wander but our God is prone to follow.** The renown theologian Brennan Manning says it like this; **"He (God) has a single relentless stance toward us: He loves us. He is the only God man has ever heard of who loves sinners."** The love of God is too big to comprehend... it is an overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love. And... **Only The Reckless Love of God Could Save Our Wrecked Lives.** So let's turn to the book of Hosea and let's read **Hosea 1:1-8**. Today I want us to recognize three things concerning the love of God for us through this book.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first is that... **The Reckless Love of God Wrecks Wrecked People.** What in the world do I mean by that? Well, when we look at chapter 1 we notice that there is a lot being illustrated to us through the names of the people that God uses here. For example; Hosea means salvation while Gomer means complete. The nation of Israel in a way completed God's plan for a chosen nation. They were saved as his bride and he was their husband and together they were a complete marriage. Now I know I'm not the only one who can't help but hear this and not think of the movie Jerry McGuire where Tom Cruises character looks into the eyes of the woman he loves and says the now infamous line; "you complete me."

Through the marriage of Hosea and Gomer God is saying to us that when humanity comes into a covenant relationship with God that he feels complete... It's as if God is looking into our eyes and saying... "you complete me." Follow me if you will. You see, God created mankind to willfully and freely worship him and proclaim his glory and when we effectively do this

through our covenant relationship with him we have completed our purpose and in a way so has God. Our salvation (in a way) makes God complete. Now before you try to critique my theology on this... I'm not saying that God needs to be made complete by us. God is too big and we are way too finite to completely know all his ways or all of his purposes. I'm sure a covenant relationship with humanity is not his only purpose or perhaps not even his main purpose and thus doesn't completely complete him. Nor am I suggesting that God is depending upon us for his completion. We know that he is fully complete as He is or he wouldn't be God. All I'm saying is that through the language of Hosea the idea of completeness is an expression of how God longs for a faithful relationship with us; with you! In nothing else he most certainly is longing for you to look into his eyes and proclaim that he completes us.

So if we and God are longing for completeness... then the enemy of that would be brokenness. Completeness is broken in spiritual adultery. Look with me at **1:2a**. Gomer is not a faithful wife and this unfaithfulness represents the wayward unfaithfulness of the nation of Israel as well as us believers who are prone to wander. We have broken the bond of completeness that God has designed by rebelling from his plans and running towards unrighteous and sinful lifestyles. We are like runaway brides unwilling to follow through with our vows. As long as we continue to stray from God will experience wrecked lives.

So what's the solution? How does God complete broken people? Well, he breaks us even more. He must fully break us to put us back together. It may not make sense to us but in God's infinite wisdom he knows that there must be a measure of discipline in order to draw us back to a relationship with him. Things must be taken away so that they will long for the giver and not the gift. We see this in **1:2b-8**. The Name Jezreel, the firstborn of Hosea and Gomer, means God will Sow. It's not hard to understand this prophecy. God is sowing destruction for Israel and their evil kings. Lo-Ruchamah, Hosea and Gomer's second child's name means No Mercy. God can no longer have mercy and hold back his wrath; he must discipline them by sending them into exile. Finally, their third child is named Lo-Ammi which means Not My People. God must set aside Israel as his chosen people for a time so that they can be restored and long for him once more. When we stray so far from God and break his completeness he must do something drastic to get our attention and draw us back to his side. We see this all the time in life. **Increased distress either increases dependency which leads to restoration or completely devastates which leads to destruction.**

Our God is good with either one but prefers restoration. Let us not forget, his holiness is revealed in his just wrath and his unrelenting love. So God must wreck us.

And here you must understand that so many of us seem to

miss.... God doesn't want to wreck your life because he is upset with you, he wants to wreck your life because he loves you. Look at **Hosea 6:1**; he tears us to heal us. You see God understands something that we are keen to ignore; our lives will end some day and then we will be judged and sent to either an eternal hell or and eternal heaven. Our lives will end in destruction if we are not complete in the salvation of God. And here's the problem, we already think we are complete because of the things we cling to in this world; Jobs, bank accounts, hobbies, family, friends, sports, houses, cars, prestige, power, etc... But these are just idols and the more we depend upon them instead of God we commit spiritual idolatry. So... God must help you be complete in him instead of this world so that you don't end up destroying your eternity. God loves you enough to take those things away from you so that you can find true completion in him. You have to understand... you were driving your life in one direction and God had to wreck that so that you would go in his direction. Let me tell you about Jaelene Hinkle. You may have heard of her. She is a devout Christian who refused to wear a jersey promoting LGBT pride and was rejected from the Women's national Soccer Team, which just won another World Cup Title. Some girls would think winning a World Cup would be their dream come true... but God wrecked that for Jaelene so she could promote the glory of Christ. Or what about Kathy Zhu. Kathy is another believer who recently won the Miss Michigan pageant. But she... was stripped of the Miss Michigan crown because of her conservative Christian views. Again, some girls would see winning a pageant of that caliber as the pinnacle of their careers... but God wrecked that for Kathy Zhu so she could be light in a dark world. Or what about Natalie Wynalda. Natalie was a girl in my youth group who was a very talented softball player. When I first met Natalie softball was her life and everything revolved around it. I knew she wanted to be a strong believer but softball was an idol that would keep her from being complete in Christ. Then she broke her ankle twice over the course of a two year period. And you know what happened. Natalie gave up softball because over that time she fell in love with Jesus and devoted herself to ministry. Her life was headed one way but God had to wreck it... and Natalie is all the more thankful that he did. You see... some people see these things as tragedies while others, years later, after having had the chance to see God's plan, see them as blessings. Some people see these as wrecked dreams... but if your dream is being complete in Christ... well that never gets wrecked. **Sometimes your life may seem wrecked... unless your life is Jesus! Only The Reckless Love of God Could Save Our Wrecked Lives.**

Secondly, **The Reckless Love of God Betroths Betrayers**. We may run from God's love but he will never stop running to love us. Look at **2:2**. It may seem weird, but here we see God like a lovesick husband who pleads for the restoration of his unfaithful bride. He says that she isn't acting

like my wife or even acknowledges that I'm her husband for she keeps being unfaithful. You can hear the brokenness in his voice. So what does he do? Look down at **2:14**. He pursues his unfaithful wife. God is like a relentless husband who pursues his wayward wife in the hopes of winning her back. He says; I will allure her and speak tenderly to her. Why does he keep on pursuing the unfaithful? Reckless love. He doesn't care how many times we betray him... he loves us and nothing we do will change that. Which brings us to **2:16-20**. God has no plans of divorce. Instead he would remarry us again and again. God is like a forgiving husband who marries his unfaithful bride and transform her through his love. Like the father of the prodigal son, it doesn't matter what she has done, that's in the past.... all that matters now is that she has come back. Get this love! God will make a covenant with his wife; an unconditional covenant which he alone will secure through the blood of Christ. He will betroth (covenant to marry) us and remove our idolatry (**vs.16-17**), the war between us (**vs.18**), and our unrighteousness and injustice (**vs.19**). And he will continue to allure us with his steadfast love and mercy.

Now, our human counsel to any person who had been betrayed by an unfaithful spouse this many times may very well be – MOVE ON, THEIR NOT WORTH IT... but here we see that **God will not stop pursuing us as long as we are alive and there is still a chance of betrothing us**. Just look at **vs.23**. He tells the people who he once called “not my people” his people once again. And they in return will call him their God. God will make this marriage work because... **Only The Reckless Love of God Could Save Our Wrecked Lives**.

Thirdly, **The Reckless Love of God Redeems The Unrighteous**. Turn over with to **3:1-3**. Here we see Gomer redeemed from slavery. We will touch on that in one second but first let me remind you that your sin leads to slavery. Without God you are a slave to sin, and you are a slave to the fear of death. This is where Gomer is now. She has left Hosea, pursued a life of adultery and prostitution and has now become a broken and destitute sex slave with no hope, and on the market for anyone who can purchase her. But guess who shows up to purchase her. Hosea. Can you just imagine the look on her face when she sees the man who loves her unconditionally show up to redeem her from the lowest place in perhaps the whole world. At that point I think she breaks down weeping. I can just see Hosea go over to her, grab her by the hand, pull her to her feet, and embrace her and kiss her and make a big scene. But they don't care... cause this is real love! Even though Gomer was an unfaithful wife who's adultery led her to down a path that eventually led to slavery... Still Hosea paid her ransom and bought her back and made her his wife again. Not because she deserved it – she

was so far from deserving it that it's not even funny, but because of his unrelenting love. To the common man this is down right reckless... this crazy nuts! I can just see Hosea's best friend slapping his head saying... dude... are you an idiot. Fool me once, shame on your... fool me a thousand times... dude you are dumb. But Hosea didn't care about any of that. And guess what... God doesn't either. **Only the reckless love of God could pay the ransom to redeem us from our enslaved state and restore us to a relationship with him**.

And the price for our ransom? It was his Son! Now this is where we descend into madness. This just is ridiculous. Not only did we cheat on him, betray him, run from him, and leave him for idol after idol after idol... and not only did it lead us to the pit where we became slaves to our sinfulness... and not only did he come and pay the price to redeem us from that pit... but get this... the price he had to pay was to see his own Son slaughtered on a cross and die one of the most agonizing deaths of all time. Who trades their perfect son for an adulterous cheating wife? God does! Look with me at **1 John 4:9-10** – the love of God for us cost him his Son. We have to come to grips with this... this is reckless at best but **Only The Reckless Love of God Could Save Our Wrecked Lives**.

Application (Resolution, You)

Perhaps you are here today and you feel as though no one could love you. You're a sinner who has sinned way too much. You've been unfaithful and there is no way God could ever take you back. You know you deserve your enslaved state in sin and your eternal state in hell and there's no hope of changing either. But you'd be wrong.

You see... if Hosea can unconditionally love Gomer and forgive her unfaithfulness... and if God could unconditionally love Israel and forgive her unfaithfulness over the course of 2000 years... then guess what; God can forgive you! And not only can he... he wants to. He wants to forgive you and to complete you! He wants to wreck you and make you whole. He wants to betroth you and be with you forever more. And he wants to redeem you and give you eternal freedom. You may feel that there is no more hope that you may find this kind of love... but you can... **Only The Reckless Love of God Could Save Our Wrecked Lives**. So the question today is simple... would you accept his love today? He's already paid the price to redeem you.. he's already made his proposal... he's merely waiting for you to accept his love.

Conclusion

Let me tell you about my good friend Stuart. We worked together when I sold cell phones and he confided in me to pray for his marriage. His wife was cheating on him and had left him for another man. He wanted to

know what he should do. I counseled him to forgive her and take her back if she was willing to come back. My basis for this advice was the example of Hosea. This pattern continued. She cheated again, and left him again, and Stuart forgave her and took her back again. At this point everyone was thinking that Stuart was an idiot. Dude... why do you keep setting yourself up for disappointment; She isn't going to be faithful... just move on. But Stuart was resigned to loving his wife unconditionally. Well, I wish I could tell you that she came home and they lived happily ever after but the last time she left she never came back and there was nothing else that Stuart could do.

Years later Stuart remarried a godly woman who was a perfect fit for him. But when we talk about those hard times Stuart always reminds me... you know Shevi... people will leave you and abandon you and be unfaithful to you... but God never will! You see... God's not human like us. He doesn't love like us. In fact his love is so much greater than we can even comprehend that it may seem reckless.

It seems reckless... but it's not. God knows exactly what he's doing and he will never quit. He will chase you down. He'll fight til your found. He'll leave the 99 for you. There's no shadow he won't light up, no mountain he won't climb up, no wall he won't kick down, and no lie he won't tear down coming after you. Oh the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God