

Pentecost 17
Hosea 3:1-5 (whole chapter)
September 19, 2010

The very fact that the LORD God commanded the prophet Hosea to do this shows that the LORD knew Hosea had a powerful trust, faith, reliance, certainty in his Lord and Savior. It is safe to say that the faith of many would have collapsed under this commandment. Hosea was a rare man in Israel in those days, a man of unflinching trust in the Lord God, his Savior. "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress."

As is clearly spelled out here, this extraordinary action by the jilted prophet toward his unfaithful wife is an illustration of the even more extraordinary action taken by our jilted Lord God toward His unfaithful people.

God' Love for Us (and All Sinners) Is Unreasonable.

What do I mean to say when I say that God's love is unreasonable? I mean it goes beyond all human understanding. God's love is too great, too wonderful for us to grasp.

God's love has always been that way. These verses first have to do with the northern of the two kingdoms of the Jews. The northernmost of the two kingdoms was called, in those days, Israel or Ephraim, or Samaria.

As part of the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob they had been among the people whom God had rescued out of Egypt 700 years earlier.

Even back then, God came to their rescue because of the promises He had earlier made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because of His love for them, because His merciful heart reached out to these suffering, abused, helpless people. It was not because they were such fine examples of faith and obedience. Sure they loved it when Moses and Aaron first told them what the LORD was going to do for them. But when the fulfillment didn't happen immediately, they were quick to grumble, rebel and disobey.

But God kept His promises! He even used what can only be described as pure miracle to do so.

And for the next 40 years, two things were in sharp contrast, the people's seemingly constant rebellions against the Lord and His Word, on the one hand, and God's loving faithfulness to them on the other hand. The Lord lovingly applied appropriate discipline to them, always to turn them away from sin to His free and full forgiveness.

Now they were coming to another round of this. God's discipline was going to be very severe. It has to be, because for well over 200 years, the citizens of the northern kingdom, in vast majority, together with every single one of their kings, stubbornly

rejected the LORD and His Word. They enthusiastically worshipped the Baals and many other gods, especially the golden calves first set up by King Jeroboam I. God had tried repeatedly to use lesser discipline and warning to no avail.

Israel had made herself a spirited adulteress chasing after many lovers. It would soon lead to loss and desolation, to slavery and death.

Poor Hosea was to illustrate all of this by God's command. First, God told Hosea to marry an unfaithful woman. Hosea did. Despite His love and faithfulness to her, she was unfaithful. This is chapter one. Only the first of three children was apparently Hosea's. God named all three of the children and preached a little sermon with all three names – Jezreel – the valley where an enemy would defeat Israel; Lo-Ruhamah – not loved, this baby did not come from Hosea's love; and Lo-Ammi – not My people (Not Mine), because their unbelief cut them off from the Lord.

Spiritual adultery is idolatry. Israel would soon be gone and be enslaved, enslaved again.

Idolatry, the following of any false god, always leads to spiritual slavery, even to death.

Let this be a warning to us. First by nature, conceived and born sinners, this is all of us. Rescued by the LORD, our Savior, Jesus, let us always be on guard against the sin in us, lest, in a moment, we substitute our wants for what God wants, or substitute the temporary lusts and passions of a lying world for the truth of God, or substitute money as what we rely on instead of God, or when we fear the reaction of people more than God's reaction, when we love the praise and acceptance of people more than our Lord's praise. All of this is really spiritual adultery, idolatry.

But God still loved those sinners. After Hosea's wife had been unfaithful to him over and over again, she left him, went running off first to this lover, then to that one. Things did not go well for her, though. She lost everything. Finally, she sold herself as a slave; yes, I suppose that kind of slave!

It was then that God told Hosea to do everything possible to show love for his wife to get her to come back. Oh, my! Hosea even had to buy her from her slave master. Do you remember the fancy, religious word for 'buy or buy back?' It is redeem!! Hosea redeemed her and he loved her. She came back. He promised her the rest of his life as her husband and expected only that she'd stay faithful to him.

So with Israel! When all was said and done, God still loved Israel. He offered them King David, no, not the original King David. He was dead for 200 years already, the great David's greater Son, the promised Savior, the LORD Himself in the flesh, Jesus, the Redeemer, who redeemed the world with His given life on the cross and who rose from the dead to prove our forgiveness and new life forever.

We are the new Israel, and really no better than old Israel. We are not the perfect Bride

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of Jesus, not in ourselves. But Jesus loves us, blesses us especially with forgiveness, given to us freely, mercifully, lovingly in His Word and Sacraments. Only in Jesus are we perfect to God. God's love for us is unreasonable; it goes beyond all reason and understanding. Thank Him for that.

Let us humbly, tremblingly come to Jesus for all of His love and blessing. We who were once called 'not My people' God Himself now calls 'My people,' all because of Jesus and because of Jesus we say, "You are my God." Amen!