**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes 5-7-2023
Majoring in the Minors - Hosea**

Today I am excited and a little nervous to begin this new sermon series with you today. We are calling this sermon series *Majoring in the Minors*. Now, typically, that’s not a good thing to do. In life we want to focus most of our attention on the major things and sometimes agree to disagree on minor detail or non-essentials. I think that can be good and healthy things.

But this type of majoring in the minors is actually a good thing. And that’s because the minors are the minor prophets. The name minor prophets does not mean that they are of little or minor importance, but rather that the books that we have of these prophets are smaller in size than what we call the major prophets. The major prophets are considered Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

These minor prophets are the 12 smaller books, prophetic books in the Old Testament. These 12 were sometimes included in one scroll and together they have been called The Book of the Twelve.

But before we dive into the first of these 12 today, I wanted to share with you a Facebook post from a student that I went to and graduated seminary with. His name is Matt Sichel. He is a great man of God and a really good scholar as well.

With his permission, I am sharing this with you today. I just found it so profound. This post is really about the importance of the Old Testament for Christians today.

Matt wrote this:

It is my argument that one of the biggest issues in the church today is that Christians continue to have little to no understanding of what to do with the Old Testament, especially the Law. Though they seem to know that it cannot simply be jettisoned, they struggle to understand why it matters, how to handle it, and how it can be relevant. Because of this, it is functionally ignored, except for some beloved stories. As a result, understanding of what God is doing from Genesis to Malachi is nonexistent. This should not be.

The heartbeat of God runs through the entire Bible, and Christians need to be taught how the story of Christ's redemption of the world is part and parcel of God's work with Israel. The God who created the world, called Abraham and Sarah, freed Israel from Egypt, gave the Law on Sinai, guided the Kings, and spoke through the Prophets, is the same God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no change nor shifting shadow. There is no "God of the Old Testament." The character of God is consistent throughout all of Scripture.

It is imperative that gentile Christians be taught how to handle the Old Testament, and the gentile church continues to struggle with this. It should be emphasized that the early church had no New Testament, no 4 Gospels, no Epistles. They understood the story of God's redemption from what was written in the Old Testament scriptures ALONE. When Jesus spoke with the disciples on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection, he "explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself," and it was ALL Old Testament. Christians who do not understand what to do with the Old Testament are missing not only 3/4 of their Bible, but an enormous piece of their own theology.

This post reinforced my belief that investing 12 weeks of highlighting these minor prophets is well worth of the time. In some ways, I feel that these minor prophets may be the least known of all the books of Scripture. In fact, my daughter Anna was asking me recently why we don’t seem to talk about the later books in the Old Testament very much at worship on Sundays. I took that as confirmation that we are doing what the Lord has called us to do at this time.

BUT AGAIN, IT IS THE SAME GOD IN THE MINOR PROPHETS THAT WE HAVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. OUR TRIUNE GOD HAS THE SAME CHARACTER IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS. HE DOESN’T CHANGE. HE IS FULLY GOOD AND FULLY PURE AND HOLY. HE HATES SIN BUT LOVES SINFUL PEOPLE AND HE WANTS WHAT IS BEST FOR EVERYONE!

And what’s best is finding life through Him, our Creator and Savior.

For simplicity’s sake, I decided that it would be best to proceed through the minor prophets in the order found in our Bibles. This is largely chronological as well. This means that today we are highlighting the book of Hosea.

Hosea is one of the more well-known of the minor prophets. And it is largely because of the unusual call that the Lord gave him. Today’s Scripture will help explain this. It’s the first chapter of Hosea, which is verse 1-11.

**1 The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hosea+1&version=NIV#fen-NIV-22096a)**] king of Israel:**

**2When the Lord began to speak through 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.” 3So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.**

**4Then the Lord said to Hosea, “Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. 5In that day I will break Israel’s bow in the Valley of Jezreel.”**

**6Gomer 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. 7Yet 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.”**

**8After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. 9Then the Lord said, “Call him Lo-Ammi (which means “not my people”), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hosea+1&version=NIV#fen-NIV-22104b)**]**

**10“Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘children of the living God.’ 11The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hosea+1&version=NIV#fen-NIV-22106c)**]**

Now, there are different views held by scholars on what exactly God was asking Hosea to do. But it appears very likely that Hosea was being asked by God to marry someone that was bound to adulterously and promiscuous. That’s a difficult calling indeed. Put yourself in his shoes for a moment.

But Hosea loved God and he truly desired to live for God. And so Hosea does marry Gomer. Eventually, Gomer does commit adultery and chapter 3 describes how even then, the Lord directs Hosea to pursue Gomer and take her back and call her to faithfulness.

But before we dive more into the heart of this book, let’s take a few minutes to highlight the setting. We are told in verse 1 that the word of the Lord came to Hosea during the reigns for Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judea, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jeoash king of Israel.

This was the time when the nation of Israel was divided. Shortly after King Solomon’s reign as King, ten of the twelve tribes of Israel succeeded and set up their own government. This Kingdom was called Israel or Ephraim and the southern kingdom, which continued King David’s line, became known as Judah. That is where we get the word Jew from.

By the time Hosea had come along, Israel and Judah had both turned away from following the Lord. But things were worse in Israel. Worship of idols were more prevalent and God’s judgment was becoming more imminent. Hosea’s messages were directed mostly to Israel, rather than Judah.

God loved both Israel and Judah and one of the clear messages of this book of Hosea is how betrayed God felt by the unfaithfulness of His covenant people. God has raised up this nation to be a light to the nations. They were called to be that light on a hill sharing the love of the Lord, so to speak.

But instead, Israel had betrayed God. They had run after other lovers, by worshipping the gods of the nations, rather than their Creator and the God who had set them apart to be His people.

And so Hosea becomes this living parable. God even has Hosea name his children names like Lo-Ruhamah (which means “not loved”) and Lo-Ammi – which mean ‘not my people’). This, of course, does not mean that God didn’t love these particular children, but that even their names testified to God’s coming judgment against Israel.

Eventually, as much as God loved Israel, His patience would run out and the Lord would allow her to be taken over by the Assyrians.

While Judah would be temporarily spared through their repentance, Israel was on a highway to hell, so to speak. Things were so desperate and a wake-up call was so needed that God used Hosea as a living parable to show how covenant faithfulness was being violated by Israel.

The Book of Hosea describes Israel as an unfaithful wife at the beginning of the book and as a wayward son towards the end of the book. Yahweh had been the perfect husband to them and the perfect Father to them – so to speak. He had loved them deeply and wanted only what’s best for them, as a good husband and a good father seeks to do. The Book of Hosea helps us to see God’s deep love for His people and His zealous desire and passion that they would be faithful to Him.

Hosea also writes in chapter 4 of his book that “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.” The way of God, the character of God, the actions of God --- were not being taught. People were biblically illiterate and as a result they were falling away from God.

But despite the coming judgment for its sins that Hosea describes, like many of the prophetic books, Hosea also includes messages of hope.

In chapter 1 verse 7, God says “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.”

This may refer to when the Assyrians were attacking Judeah, an angel of the LORD came during the night and basically wiped out the Assyrian army and they fled.

But even more so, eventually the LORD Himself would come to save the Jews and all who would call on His Name. And it wouldn’t be through bow and sword and battle, but by His own death and resurrection that He would save.

Salvation is God’s doing! It can’t be achieved, it can only be received.

Likewise, in verses 10-11 of chapter 1, God says through Hosea “Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘children of the living God.’ The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.”

**Friends, God is speaking about Jesus**. Jesus would be the One leader who would bring Israel and Judah back together. He is speaking about the One who would bring Jew and Gentile together. Jesus Christ.

What is the main takeaway from our overview of Hosea today? And I believe that it is to remember this. **Our God passionate loves His people – He loves us – with a love that is strong, deep, and emotional.**

His love for us is stronger than the deepest relationships that we have in life. Stronger than a love for a spouse or a child is God’s love towards us. That’s amazing!

I am so thankful that we do not have a God that isn’t concerned about us or is indifferent towards us. He is passionate. He is intense. He is zealous for us. His love is real. Paul the Apostle prayed that Christians would know how long and wide and high and deep is the love of Christ.

I suggest 3 responses from us to this passionate God.

**First, because we are to tend to our love relationship with God**. Quality time together is critical for the strengthening of any relationship. This is especially true when it comes to our relationship with God. And prayer is the key. Talking with Him, being still before Him, worshiping Him. These are essential for our daily lives.

Think about how much spouses get to know one another or a parent gets to know a child. These are pictures of how deeply God desires us to be in close relationship with Him. To talk with Him all the time. To put Him above everything. To make Him our greatest treasure.

**Second, we are to pursue getting to know God better through His** **Word**. Sadly, so much of the church in America today is biblically illiterate. I think that is why much of the western church has become shallow in their faith and is even falling away from the faith entirely, in many cases.

Friends, may the passionate love of our Triune God towards us spur us toward growing in the knowledge of love of God each and every day. In order to become more Christlike, we must get to know Christ better through His Word. The Bible is one of God’s greatest gifts to help us in this way and we must passionately dive into it. We have our Thursday Bible study here at the Church. We have our Bible Book of the month each month. But whatever we do, we must actively seek to grow in our knowledge of God.

**And third and finally, may the intense of the Lord towards us help spur us onward towards holy living.** Hosea is sadly filled with many examples of unhealthy self-destructive behaviors that become common when people turn from God.

We are not only to grow in our knowledge of God – God’s ways, God’s character – through His Word, we are to put His Word into practice. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commands.” God will lead us by His Holy Spirit to holy living. This applies not only to not actively sinning, but also actively seeking to make a difference in the lives of others.

Every person is loved by God with that same love Hosea describes in his book. He wants to be the perfect husband to all of us and the perfect Father to all of us. And the LORD wants to make His passionate love known to others through us.

Resources: [**Matthew Sichel**](https://www.facebook.com/popsichel?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZUoXa-C6aZ1glxRv6Mis7YiM2MnFtSSxua2cr2tRN4cPdhQZmMo2DbPLA_a5DAONKUyuueZ6PiQfV9ko7neAQddvgaEzkOTUPsReyEUxUapb62-U-mB0Y6ywxa8Y4jEo6g&__tn__=-UC%2CP-R) **– facebook post 4-18-2023**

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