

**Text: Hosea 3:1-5 (Pew Bible pg.889)**

**Title: “Amazing Love”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**ILLUSTRATION** – Now we’re hovering over a period in Bible history after the great kings David and Solomon when Israel was sinking spiritually. (Someone decided that we didn’t need a special plane for this; just a special helicopter.) Israel had been in the Promised Land for more than 200 years and yet they had not completely driven out the pagan nations, as God had commanded them. Instead they began to blend in with them and to mix the worship of the Lord God with the worship of pagan gods. Detestable practices began to emerge. There was unspeakable immorality as many of the Israelites engaged in sexual immorality with temple prostitutes. There was unspeakable wickedness as many offered their children as human sacrifices to pagan gods. There was no end to the evil. What amounts to a civil war developed in Israel, and they split into the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom.

Now God is not ignorant or tolerant of all this. He is a speaking God. He sends His Word to His people because He loves them, and because He is zealous for His own glory to be manifested. So during these days God sent messengers called prophets.

Open your Bibles to the book of Hosea (Pew Bible pg.889). I’m in a series entitled “Profiting from the Prophets.” There are Major Prophets and Minor Prophets. The first of the Minor Prophets to appear in the OT is the book of Hosea. Hosea’s name means “salvation,” and his message was that God wanted to save His people.

To get started let’s just read the first three verses. The first verse tells us when and where Hosea appears on the scene. Read vv.1-3.

The prophets not only preached the message God gave to them. They lived it. Sometimes God would use the prophets’ personal lives and families as a living picture of the message He had given them to proclaim. Such is the case with Hosea. God’s message to Israel is to be communicated partly through the spoken word, and partly through Hosea’s marriage to this woman named Gomer, who did not remain true to Hosea after they married. There’s some indication that Gomer was a temple prostitute, like the ones I mentioned earlier.

So Hosea marries Gomer, and the unique circumstances of Hosea’s marriage to Gomer will communicate something important about the relationship that God has with His people Israel. In this case, Hosea represents God, and Gomer represents Israel. Just as Gomer was adulterous and unfaithful to Hosea, so Israel was guilty of spiritual adultery and was unfaithful to her God.

**SPEAK TO SINGLES:** Now much of what I have to say today centers around marriage. And I realize that not everyone here today is married ... previously married singles, never-married singles, widows and widowers. It may be that the talk of Gomer’s sexual sin brings up painful memories in your own life. Today I want all of us to see beyond marriage to the God who has given marriage, and to His gracious purposes for us all, married or unmarried.

So after they were married Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea. Now Hosea could have rightfully put Gomer away since she had violated the marriage covenant, but he didn't. In fact, what Hosea does is totally unimaginable. Look at Hosea 3:1.

**Hosea 3:1 - The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."**

God said, "Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites..." This is the call of God to those of us who are husbands and wives, or one day hope to be. Notice that God does not say, "Love her the best you can." That won't cut it. There's nothing extraordinary about that. Rather the Lord says, "Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites." In other words, "Hosea, go and love your wife with a love that is far beyond any human love that you could muster. Go and love her with a love that you don't have the power to give, but that God has shown to you.

So in loving Gomer in this way, Hosea was becoming a live video of God's loving activity toward His own people who have forsaken His love.

We see this, as well, in the NT teaching on marriage. Ephesians 5 contains some of the most detailed instruction as to how a husband is to love his wife, and how the wife is to love her husband. And the point of it all is not just so that the marriage will be great, and the mates will feel loved. That's important, but it's not the main point. Let's just look at it.

**Ephesians 5:22 - Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.**

**Ephesians 5:25 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...**

**Ephesians 5:32 - This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.**

Now, let's go back to Hosea 3:1 and look at this amazing love in more detail. It's God's amazing love that saved Hosea's marriage. Amazing love is...

## **1. EVIDENT LOVE (v.1)**

**Hosea 3:1 - The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife ...**

There's action attached to this love ... "Go, show your love..." Notice that God doesn't say, "Hosea, go fall in love with your wife." No, He said, "Go show your love." There's a huge difference. Feelings really have nothing to do with it. Go and show your love with your words by speaking kindly to her. Go and show your love by treating her with respect. Go and show your love by reaching out to her to help her and meeting her needs.

**ILLUSTRATION** – It's like a train. Many married people think that romantic feelings are the locomotive of the train, pulling everything else. And so if the feelings die, the marriage dies. No,

the feelings are not the locomotive; they are the caboose (though they don't even use them anymore on trains). The locomotive is the evident love that a husband shows to his wife and the wife shows to her husband. And when that is the case the romantic feelings will follow.

Remember, Hosea was to go and love Gomer the way God loves the Israelites. The energy in any marriage relationship has to be the God's love ... love that Christ demonstrated on the cross.

**Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

God *demonstrated* his own love ... Christ died for us. That's evident love. But this amazing love that saved Hosea's marriage is ...

## 2. EXHAUSTIVE LOVE (v.1)

**Hosea 3:1a - The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress.**

The key word there is "again." The Hebrew word used in the OT text means "longer." It's about persistence. Amazing love is exhaustive ... complete and absolutely unconditional.

Notice that though Gomer had been unfaithful, God said to Hosea, "go show your love to *your wife*." She's still his wife even though she was unfaithful, perhaps a temple prostitute (the ancient equivalent of a sex slave).

**Hosea 3:1b - Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."**

Remember I said that the Israelites engaged in all sorts of pagan worship practices, one of which was the eating these "sacred raisin cakes." They were "refreshments" that were used in pagan worship feasts associated with Baal worship.

The Lord loved Israel *even though* they worshipped pagan gods. God still loves and cares for His people, even though they were unfaithful to Him.

And the only way this can happen is there must be forgiveness. Gomer had failed repeatedly. Hosea was to forgive her and keep showing his love for her. Sooner or later we will fail our mates in some way. And for spouses to love in this way requires that we understand and experience the love and forgiveness that God has shown us in Christ. Remember...

**Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

God does not love you because of what you do. God always loves you in spite of what you do. And it's the experience of that kind of transforming love in our own lives that helps us love our mates the way we should. But this amazing love is also...

### 3. **EXPENSIVE LOVE** (v.2)

Apparently Gomer had gone so far down the road of unfaithfulness that she had sold herself into slavery. If Hosea is to take her home as his wife a price must be paid.

**Hosea 3:2 - So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.**

You can imagine the scene. Gomer stands up on the slave block. She's covered in shame. As the bidding begins maybe someone hollers, "I'll give you ten pieces of silver for her." Somebody else shouts, "I'll give you twelve." Hosea says, "I'll give you fifteen." And somebody else said, "Well, I'll give you fifteen pieces of silver and a homer of barley." (A homer of barley was about 8 bushel baskets.) Hosea said, "I'll give you fifteen pieces and a homer-and-a-half of barley." The gavel sounds, and Hosea pushes forward to pay the price to redeem his wife ... expensive love.

Now there may be a husband here today thinking, "Yep, it's expensive keeping my wife."

**ILLUSTRATION** – I heard about a guy whose wife's credit card was stolen. His friend asked him if he had reported it to the credit card company. The husband said, "No I haven't. Whoever stole it is using it less that she did. I think I'll just let him keep it." That's not what we're talking about.

And for husbands in particular, that's the picture painted for us in the Bible as to how we are to love our wives.

**Ephesians 5:25 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.**

The love that energizes marriages is divine love that was shown on the cross when Christ redeemed us out of the slave market of sin paying the price on the Cross.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Last week I spent some time with one of our retired seminary professors and his wife of over 60 years. I had gone to visit this couple because the wife had fallen several months ago and she had been in rehab and had just returned home. The professor shared with me how his wife returning home put a heavy load on him to care for her. At the time he was teaching a Bible study and saw that as a great ministry, but he had to give it up because he couldn't leave his wife at home alone. He shared how he was discouraged that he was not able to continue his "ministry." Then the Lord reminded him of that passage in the Gospels where Jesus said, "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was sick and you visited to me." And the disciples said, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you? When did we see you sick and visit you?" Jesus replied, "Whenever you did it to one of the least of these children of mine, you did it to me." And the Lord said to the prof, "Your new ministry to care for your wife and cook and clean the house. You do it for her and you're doing it for Me."

That's sacrificial, expensive love. But this amazing love is also...

#### 4. EXCLUSIVE LOVE (v.3)

So Hosea takes Gomer home. Can you imagine them walking through the streets of Samaria? Gomer has her head down in shame. Hosea has the look of determined love on his face. As Hosea takes her back into their home he explains to her ...

**Hosea 3:3 - “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you.”**

What Hosea is saying is something like this: “I have bought you, and now I want you to live with me. I want you to be faithful to me, and I promise you that whether you're faithful to me or not I will be faithful to you.”

That is God’s design for every marriage.

**Hebrews 13:4 - Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.**

Marriage is an exclusive relationship. There can be no other loyalty in your life like the loyalty you have to your mate. The wedding ring is a reminder to you, to your mate and to everyone else ... “I’m off the market.” This amazing love is exclusive love, but it is also...

#### 5. ENDURING LOVE (vv.3-5)

Do you see that Hosea’s love was greater than Gomer’s sin? Hosea’s love will have to be strong enough for them both for a time while the marriage is being rebuilt. When the love is strong enough (again, not feeling strong, but acting strong) anything can be overcome.

God says, “Hosea, go love your wife the way that I love Israel. They have gone after other gods, but my love for them is stronger than their sin ... it endures and I will draw them back to me.”

**Hosea 3:5 - Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.**

Later in Hosea the Lord says...

**Hosea 14:4 - “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.**

#### CONCLUSION

**ILLUSTRATION** – One of the hottest movies out today is called “The Vow.” It is based on the real-life marriage of Kim and Krickitt Carpenter, whose names are Leo and Paige in the movie. A book by the same name tells the full and true story. In fact, I suggest you skip the movie and read the book. The story is that Kim and Krickitt had only been married two months in 1993 when they

were in a terrible car accident leaving Krickitt in a coma from severe head injuries. When she awoke Krickitt had amnesia ... she couldn't remember anything from the past 18 months, which means that she had absolutely no memories of her husband Kim. She was essentially married to a stranger.

And yet, against all odds, Kim and Krickitt rebuilt their marriage. They happen to be strong believers and their faith in Christ sustained them through the terrible ordeal. Kim stuck by Krickitt and was patient with her while she struggled with rebuilding her life after the accident. The movie version had Kim divorcing Krickitt because their relationship was over. But that's not what happened. Kim stayed by her side. He set about to show her love and woo her; and soon it happened Krickitt rediscovered the love she had forgotten. When Kim was asked about it later he said, "I'm no hero. I made a vow."

Now as we close the service today, we are going to give the married couples present an opportunity to renew their marriage vows. I'm going to ask that if you're not seated with your spouse that you move to their side now.

If you are a widow or widower you might use this time to thank God for your mate who passed away. If you're a single adult you are part of the body here just like married adults are. You can use this time to pray for your brothers and sisters who are standing around you.

Just hold the hand of your mate and, if they're wearing the wedding ring, just let your fingers touch the ring. Husbands then wives, repeat after me:

**"Today I recommit myself to you ... With the help of God ... I renew my pledge ... to love you with an everlasting love ... to stay with you in the good times and bad ... to be faithful and true to you ... and to fulfill my responsibilities ... as your husband/wife ... until death alone shall part us."**