**December 1st 2024 First Sunday in Advent**

**Text: Hosea 1:2, 3:1-5** 0750

**Theme: The Redemption of Israel.**

May the grace of God through the gift of His Son grant unto joy this Advent season and hope in the forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Amen. Dear redeemed Christians: Today we begin a new church year. The church year has been designed by the early Christians to give a chance for the church to study each of the chief doctrines of Scripture throughout the church year. Eleven of the twelve years since I received the call from this congregation, a preselected pericope has been used for the sermon texts, and I pray these have been edifying to the hearers for those years. This year, however, I have decided to do something a little different than previous years. I prepared my own pericope for this year. I did this because I realized that all of the pericopes rarely touch on the minor prophets of the Old Testament. Very few texts are given from those twelve books, and I thought it would be good to preach from those twelve books, one each month for the church year. Today we embark on that new series of texts, beginning today with the first of the twelve, the book of the prophet Hosea. So as we begin each of the twelve books we will begin with a little background on the men themselves as well as when they prophesied, and the circumstances surrounding it. The prophet Hosea may well be one of the most interesting figures in all the Bible, and his infamy comes from the things that God commanded him to do. We will get into that in a little bit. The first verse of the book of Hosea tells us this about the timeframe of his prophetic office: *“The Word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.” (Hos. 1:1)* Hosea then prophesied during the days of the divided kingdom of Israel, but his preaching was not meant for only the two tribes of Judah, but also for the ten tribes of Israel. Now during this time the people of Israel were enjoying an outward time of prosperity, but inwardly they were plagued with moral corruption and spiritual adultery, which is the primary focus of Hosea’s preaching.

As had been the case for many centuries, the people of Israel had a cycle that had continued on and on. God had chosen them as His Old Testament Church, had given them His Word, and made many promises to them concerning the Messiah and salvation. The people of Israel would enjoy blessing and prosperity for a time, and that ease of life led them into idolatry. God would then send them a prophet to warn them and urge them to repentance, but often they would refuse to repent. God would then send a judgment to correct them, they would repent, and the cycle would start again. Hosea then is the one sent to warn them, and call them to repentance. This, of course, is not a pleasant task for any minister of God, for one who does this is not going to be popular, he will not be liked, and will probably be persecuted in some way or another. However, it is a necessary work, for it is the work of the Law which leads to sorrow over sin, that is to contrition, which then allows for the giving of the Gospel. The term prophet actually means ‘preacher,’ and therefore Hosea office is to give the Word of God unto the people God sends him to. The people of Israel needed the Word of God, they needed a man like Hosea, self sacrificing, willing to do whatever it took for the souls of God’s people. The people of Israel, like all people, needed redemption; redemption from sin, death, and the devil, but also from their lives of sin and shame, from their spiritual adultery. It is here that we see the events of our text for today, the signs given through the prophet by God, and the precious promise given to those same adulterous people. Let us then see the redemption of Israel according to our text for today which is found in the first and third chapters of the book of the prophet Hosea beginning at verse one.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O Lord God almighty, like the people of Israel, all too often we committed spiritual adultery against Thee, and have loved, trusted or feared someone or something more than Thee. O Lord, do not consume us in Thy wrath, but as a loving bridegroom, redeem us from the sin we have committed against Thee. O Lord, we cannot put into words the thankfulness we have over the fact that Thou didst not cast aside over our unfaithful conduct. Like an adulterous husband or wife, we have betrayed Thee, we have thrown away from ourselves Thy love, and have incomprehensively hurt Thee. Yet Thou, O Lord, hast continued loving us, and hast even paid the price necessary to take us out of the spiritual adultery we have been embroiled in. O Lord, we confess these sins unto Thee, and we are sincerely sorry for them, and we pray that Thou wouldst forgive us for each of them, and cleanse us, presenting us to Thyself as a chaste virgin, clean and purified by Thy purity alone. Grant, O Lord, Thy continued love for time and for eternity. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us learn of the redemption of Israel, seeing first that it was:

1. **Paid for by sacrifice.** We read chapter one, verse two, and chapter three verses one and two of our text: **read verses here.** Probably one of the strangest commands ever given by God to a man, God gives to Hosea the prophet. God commands Hosea to take a wife of whoredoms, meaning to take a prostitute as his wife. So Hosea, in obedience to God’s command, goes out and takes Gomer, a known prostitute, to be his wife. It is noteworthy that she agreed to this marriage, and promised to be faithful to him until death should part them, and as chapter three states she was expected to be faithful to him and to never commit fornication with any man from that day forward. Yet in the opening verse of chapter three it is made known that Gomer was not faithful to Hosea, and that children were born from her within the marriage that were not Hosea’s children. Yet God tells Hosea to love her anyway, to take her to him, to forgive her, and to continue to love her and show her mercy. Obediently Hosea does as God commands, despite the pain that she caused him, despite the anger he likely had toward her, yet he continued to love her, to show her mercy, and to forgive her sin. One can imagine how Hosea felt here, for he endured a great deal as a husband, but for the sake of that woman’s soul, he sacrificed of himself, so that she might be saved. Hosea paid the ransom necessary to redeem her from the death of those who commit adultery, that is from stoning, according to the estimation of the value given by the High Priest, which in Gomer’s case was fifteen pieces of silver, and one and a half omers of barley, which Hosea paid. It is to be noted that the normal price to redeem a female was twenty pieces of silver but could adjusted if a person was destitute. Hosea then must have been poor, but he followed closely the law of redemption given in Leviticus, chapter 27. Thus not only did Hosea not divorce her, he continued to love her, to have mercy upon her, and forgive her, but he also paid the redemption price for her. Hosea gives an example of self-sacrifice to all of us. Sometimes God so wills that we give of ourselves for the good of another, and there is no Christian that would say no, at least if led by their faith, for salvation must be the highest concern for the souls of our neighbor. Jesus had an exchange with Peter concerning forgiveness: *“Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto Thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven.” (Matt. 18:21-22)* Now Jesus didn’t mean for us to multiply seventy times seven to come to the conclusion that we can stop forgiving our brother after we have forgiven him 490 times. Rather, what Jesus is saying is that there is no limit to it. Forgiveness is without end because forgiveness has no limit with God. And here we find a direct correlation between what God commanded to Hosea and the work of God toward spiritual Israel.

Like unto Gomer we are prostitutes, but spiritually. We are God’s, that is, we are His by our creation in the same way that a wife belongs to her husband. And yet by the very act of sin, we commit spiritual adultery against God. After all what exactly is the act of sin?: in each and every case it is making a god of ourselves. It is essentially saying, I don’t care that I am betrothed to God, I want to do this right now, so I don’t care what this act will do to Him, I don’t care that I am breaking the vow of faithfulness I made, in short I just don’t care. Yet God continues to love us, continues to have mercy on us, continues to forgive us day by day, even when we are far from Him. He also did what was necessary to redeem us from the sin that required our death, the same way that Hosea redeemed Gomer. He paid to buy us back from our sin, from our pending death, and our eternal damnation. God is not talking about Israel as a nation here, though that is who the words are initially addressed to, but He is talking to spiritual Israel which is the visible church on earth. These people are like unto Gomer. Yes I am saying you are a spiritual whore, an adulterous person who deserves to have your beloved turn away from you in anger and allow you to go and be punished as your crime deserves. However God does just the opposite, as represented by the commands God gave to Hosea. So have we seen the redemption of Israel paid for by sacrifice, and despite the adultery God continues to love her and even put into action what was necessary to redeem her:

1. **In the promise of Messiah.** We read verses three through five of our text: **read verses here.** The things we have heard concerning the prophet Hosea should tug at the heart strings, both for what Hosea went through in his life, but also, and primarily, because of what we have done to God by our sin. Yet God went above and beyond what any man could ever do for his wife. This is reflected also in Hosea’s name. The names Hosea and Jesus both derive from the same Hebrew root word; Hosea means salvation, but the name Jesus adds a new layer to that, and means God is salvation. So what Hosea could only signify by His sacrifice, Jesus actually performed eternally, and not just for one person, but for every person who has ever lived. This is an important distinction, for while the self-sacrifice of Hosea may have slightly contributed to the salvation of his wife, at the end of the day her salvation is due to God alone, as is the salvation of every person who will be saved. He is salvation itself. He makes us what we cannot be on our own. In fact we hear: *“For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Cor. 11:2)* What Gomer could not do for herself, Hosea provided to her by his sacrifice; likewise what we cannot provide for ourselves, that is chastity and virginity, Jesus provides for us. In a manner of speaking He has undone our adultery against Himself, and has purified us by the payment of the redemption due. But rather than simply making a payment of silver or barley, the price for our redemption was greater as determined by God the Father Himself: blood. Either the blood of the adulterer is due, or as it so happens the blood of the bridegroom Himself paid in exchange for His bride.

These things are the promise made at the end of our text. There will come a time when that wife shall seek out her husband, they will look for their King David, the promised Messiah, and they shall fear the Lord in the latter days. Individually this is speaking to people who have despaired of their own ,merit, and look to God for the forgiveness of their sins. But collectively this is speaking about the Church. Through the advent of Christ into this earth, and the work performed by Him on earth for His bride, we are cleansed, we are renewed and have become His. This work will be entirely complete when He returns to take His bride to Himself, that is the Church universal, the collective of all the saints of God.

Here then we have seen a very edifying message from God Himself, and one which should leave us in awe of the work God did to us. For here in the book of Hosea we have seen a clear picture of God’s work in our behalf, given in a way that we can readily understand. May God grant that we be faithful believers in the Lord God, and thankful for the redemption of our bodies and souls, that we may be His eternal bride, loved more than we can possibly fathom. Return, O Lord, a take us home soon, that we may forever be pure from sin and shame. Amen.