

"Love Stays."
Hosea 1:1-3:5

Introduction: Pg. ____

Pic of the Pats... (prophesy - 41-27)

Power of WE... Live the vision of Jesus through **the Power of WE**. More than the notion that we are better together, but a focus on how we can be at our Best as a community of Jesus Christ.

John 17 - that they may be one, just as... even as we are... perfectly one.

Pursue community with intentionality, display unity in diversity, build community through community. (If you missed, please go back and listen.)

Over the next four weeks, we want to explore how we can experience THE POWER OF WE: in our relationships!

We are going to center our thoughts around what is communicated in the statement: "**I AM YOURS.**" Each week in this series we're going to draw out an implication of how we love one another when we say: "I am yours."

First, to say "I AM YOURS" is a statement of belonging and commitment! This is especially true in marriage, but I want everyone to listen carefully throughout this series, as the truths we look at together will have both direct and indirect implications whether you are seeking marriage, strengthening marriage, or trying to save your marriage.

Not only that, we need to remember, as we saw last week, that those who belong to Christ really do belong to one another. What we cover in this relationship series will address friendships in general, but especially friendships in the church because, as Paul says in Romans 12 and other places:

"So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." (Romans 12:5)

The Point: Love stays.

The story captured of the prophet Hosea gives us a clear picture of this truth.

Hosea lived in a time of great material wealth but great spiritual poverty. People continually turned their backs on God and his plan for them, to chase after their own selfish pleasures.

Oftentimes, God asked his prophets, not only to speak his message to his people, but to provide a visible illustration through some astounding acts.

Read HOSEA 1:1-3...

God calls Hosea to marry a "wife of whoredom." It seems Gomer is already living a sexually promiscuous lifestyle, and as we will see, her unfaithfulness in the present is a picture of her future unfaithfulness, but the message is clear:

God wanted the story of Hosea's marriage to illustrate his faithful love to his unfaithful people, Israel. Hosea is the ultimate picture of one person saying to another: "I am Yours." "You belong to me and I belong to you." (3:3)

The staying power of love depends on...

I. Staying love is built on a covenant not a contract. (Hosea 1:1-3)

What do we mean by covenant?

- **Covenant refers to a relationship bonded together by God through mutual promises.**
- The entire OT is the background for what is happening in the Book of Hosea.
- God entered into a covenant with Noah and then with the people of Israel, through Abraham, Moses, and David, with the refrain: "I will be your God and you will be my people." It is the language of relationship and mutuality and promise, BUT
- ... the people consistently failed to be faithful to God. (*Hosea 8:1*)
- Why was this so tragic?
 - Because they disregarded God's love, mercy, and faithfulness to them...
 - Like a good Father, he warned them soooo many times....
 - And every time they wavered, God never wavered in his love for them.
- God's covenant love is unconditional love.

So many times people approach relationships with a contractual rather a covenant mindset.

A contract says:

- Do this? Get rewarded. (Bonus \$, Massage)
- Do this? Get punished. (Fined \$, Silent Treatment)
- If you live up to expectation, everything will be good between us.
- If there is a breach of the agreement, we can GET OUT of the contract, because it's based on certain conditions.

But aren't you glad that God does not love us based on our credentials or how well we meet certain conditions. God would have grounds of getting out of the relationship every single day! He loves us simply because he loves us!

In Christ, what's a prenuptial agreement? There is no plan for this to fail. I am with you without condition... even if you become a billionaire like Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon, and could stand to lose \$137 Billion dollars.

One of the reasons relationships suffer are what my ethics professor in seminary called phantoms. Phantoms are false and unrealistic expectations we bring into a relationship.

- In marriage, we have an ideas or dreams about how our spouses will meet our needs, how they will look, how much money they will make, how spiritual they will be, the quality of their parenting skills... in 10, 20, or 40 years. We could go on...
- Phantoms are a phantom... Why?
 - 1) Because no one will meet all of our expectations (we don't even meet our the expectations we set of ourselves.)
 - 2) People are always changing, hopefully for the better, but that is not always the case, as you know.
- **Stanley Hauerwas**, professor at Duke University, says this: "**We never know whom we marry; we just think we do. Or even if we first marry the right person, just give it a while and he or she will change. For marriage, being [the enormous thing it is] means we are not the same person after we have entered it. The primary problem is . . . learning how to love and care for the stranger to whom you find yourself married.**"

T: Our covenant commitment to one another provides the foundation. Then, #2...

II. Staying love continues because of promises not performance. (3:1)

Look at chapter 3:1. Once again, Gomer, has been unfaithful, except this time it occurs after Hosea takes her as his wife.

People are sinful. We are bound to fail one another. We will disappoint one another. We will sin against one another. Relationships sting. Some last for moments, others last a lifetime.

- Put two people in the same space for a week or a month, it will not be perfectly harmonious.
- Put two people in the same space for life, the chances skyrocket to 100%. It's going to RAIN. The Nor'easter is coming.
- Marriage, like no other relationship, has the ability to expose the best in us AND the worst in us. Spouses see who you are, behind the curtain . . .
- What happens when your spouse doesn't measure up?
 - While we should never sweep sin under the rug, even that of our spouses, the first step in conflict resolution is to realize that none of us measure up!
 - That's the whole point of Hosea. That's why their actions are described as adultery and prostitution. That's the whole point of the Bible. We are all idolaters. We willfully give our highest affections to things other than God.
 - We all NEED GRACE. Loads and loads and loads of grace.
 - That puts us in a better position to then seek forgiveness and biblical reconciliation.
 - Receive counsel and support in community. NO SHAME.

APP: Who among us, whether personally or a close friend or family member has not seen the devastating effects of a broken relationship or broken marriage that has ended in divorce (one reason some are fearful to commit). I want to say a couple of things... No matter where you are in the journey, we are here for you, without judgment or condemnation and with immense HOPE in God.

Perhaps, restoration is still possible. Let us walk with you.

Perhaps, restoration is not possible. Then let us walk the path of healing with you

The ultimate hope is that our relationships (and we have to encourage one another in this) is a day by day fulfillment of the love we promised in the very beginning.

- Wedding vows are a promise to be loving and faithful - for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, til death do us part.
- Some days I won't feel like being as loving: patient, kind, preserving, selfless, etc.
- But my commitment is not based on how I feel, what's going on around us, or how you perform. My commitment is based on my promise
- Not July 22, 2006, but February 3, 2019. Ok?
- Here are two crucial encouragements:
 - 1) Focus on who you need to be.
 - 2) Focus on who your spouse is becoming.
 - And your role in each of those processes!! As I'm becoming more like Christ, I will encourage them to become more like Christ. The Christ in you stirs up the Christ in them.
- OT scholar, Peter Craigie, puts this in perspective when he says: "**The tragedy of Gomer is . . . the shriveling of her capacity to love. . . . As the muscles of the legs will shrivel if we do not walk, so too will the muscles of love shrink if they are not exercised in the true and profound forms of loving.**" - **Peter Craigie**
- Love Shrivils when we believe those sneaky lies:
 - "But my husband, knows I love him, I don't have to show him. I don't need to respect him."

- "My wife, she gets it. I don't need to open doors, write sweet love notes, sweep her up off her feet!" Can someone do that this week? Not simply to celebrate a Pats Super Bowl?
- Love is strengthened...
 - when we stare the love of God in the face and go and do likewise.
 - when we move toward our spouse in love day after day after day!

T: As we fulfill our promises to one another day by day, that love carries immense power. Finally.

III. Staying love perseveres by dwelling as one not dividing as two. (3:2-3)

Read 3:1-5

Hosea is the ultimate picture of one person saying to another: "I am Yours." "You belong to me and I belong to you." (3:3)

Why did he have to do this? (v2)

- Perhaps Gomer had accrued some kind of debt after running away from Hosea, but it is also possible, painfully possible, that she engaged in temple prostitution and had lost her freedom. Thus, Hosea may very well be paying the price to buy her back out of slavery.
- Whatever the case: Hosea scrounges together all he can to redeem her. [Fifteen shekels of silver, and about 9 bushels of barley. Hosea can't even pay with cash in full.]
- In a radical and shocking act, Hosea buys her back.
- What would you have done? Most people - run as far the other way, but Hosea doesn't move! Amazing!!! Confounding faithfulness. He does not run away, he runs toward!
- LOVE PAYS THE PRICE
- REDEMPTION: deliverance from evil by the payment of a price, transferring from one reality to another.
- This radical acts moves her from a place of...
 - separation to reconciliation,
 - filth to purity
 - dishonor to honor
 - being used to being loved AGAIN.

T: But there is a larger question looming here: Why would he want to do this? (v3)

- Look at what it says in verse 3: "And I said to her . . ."
- Can we just stop right there? Picture this moment. She has been sleeping with another man, probably many men! And he looks at her in the eyes, doubtless with tears in his own eyes, and he looks at her in all of her shame, in all of her disgrace, and says, "You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you."
- This is God's design for marriage, pointing us to the unity we enjoy with him as his bride, the church! It is about dwelling together.

Totally sharing of LIFE. ONENESS. T: SO what does it mean for two people to become ONE?

Ray Ortland says "**One flesh' is essential to the biblical view of marriage. It means, one mortal life fully shared. Two selfish me's start learning to think like one unified us, sharing one everything: one life, one reputation, one bed, one suffering, one budget, one family, one mission, and so forth. No barriers. No**

hiding. No aloofness. Now total openness with total sharing and total solidarity, until death parts them." - Ray Ortlund

It's not: You do your thing. I'll do mine. You do you. I'll do me. NO... We'll DO US. Not two. ONE!

Physically & Sexually (we'll take a deeper dive at the end of the series). Emotionally. Relationally. And Spiritually.

ONENESS in SICKNESS

Let me explain how Satan will attack your marriage? (Excursus: Expect warfare!)

Satan will try to drive a wedge in your marriage by attacking the fundamental nature of your oneness with your spouse. Concerning your...

- Physical oneness, he will lie to you and say: "Let them do all the work. They are there to serve you." **ONENESS IN SICKNESS.**
- Regarding your emotions he will lie by saying: "They can get support from their friends. You don't need to really enter into their pain."
- Relationally he will say: "Turn on the TV. Spend an hour on Facebook. Don't have quality conversation about things that really matter. Superficiality is the norm today."
- Sexually, he will say: "You don't have to reserve all of your sexual desire for your spouse. Take another look. A few minutes on a porn site won't destroy your soul or your marriage."
- Spiritually he will say: "You prayed at church and you were sitting beside your wife, wasn't that enough?!"

T: Do you hear those lies? Yes, I know you do. You have heard those lies, believed those lies and lived those lies, and so have I.

The privilege we have in marriage and every covenant relationship is to grow into the reality of our oneness.

Marriage at its best is two people saying: "**Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.**" (**Psalm 34:3**)

Churches at their best are a group of people saying to one another: "**Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.**" (**Psalm 34:3**)

Conclusion:

All of this is possible because of the true and greater, staying love of God...

... the love that sent Jesus to the cross to redeem us.

"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**)

Have you received God's love? Are you resting in the persevering love of God for you? Look at what he's done in Christ: once separated, now reconciled; once enslaved to sin, now adopted sons and daughters; once spiritually dead, now spiritually ALIVE with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

It's the staying love of God in Christ that motivates us to love one another day by day by day.