

THE REVELATION OF GOD'S MERCY

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If you have your Bibles with you, today we are going to be in Hosea 11, but put your finger there and turn over to Romans 5.

Now we are all in a Christian church, and as Christians, we find that Christ is not only the center of our name, but at the center of our Bible. So in our sermons, regardless of where we are preaching from, we want to bring the person and work of Christ to bear on our text. Jesus himself said that the whole Old Testament points to him, so we want to read the Old Testament like Jesus did.

As we have been going through the book of Hosea, it has been pretty common for John or I to look at Hosea, and build towards Christ, but what I want to do today is start with Christ, and build back to Hosea.

So I want us to start by looking at Romans 5:8.

You know, there are just some things in this world which I will never understand. The internet. Quantum Physics, the inner space of matter, infinity. We humans cannot understand the concept of infinity because we don't have the framework to do it. We can speak outside of our time, but we can't truly understand it.

I cannot wrap my mind around these things. My brain hurts when I think about them, yet that verse we just read makes these two issues look like elementary arithmetic. A perfect and divine being, being so motivated by love, to send his son to die, while those who he would die for were still sinners, is unimaginable.

Even when we get to heaven, and we see God as he is and we have a perfect mind I don't think we will ever be able to comprehend the vastness of Romans 5:8. Without being God, I don't think it is possible to understand the depths of God's grace revealed to sinners.

Now the contrast between infinity and inner space and God is that with the first two we are left asking "how?" but with the God we are left asking "Why?" Why would a perfect and divine being come and send his perfect son to die for a hostile humanity? Well, I think the text of Hosea 11 helps us answer this question, and I hope that the answer leads us to a great encouragement and a pure worship. Let's **pray**.

This text is a very refreshing text in the flow of the book of Hosea. We have seen a lot of sin, a lot of judgment, and a lot of hard word so far in this book, but today we get to see a lot of grace.

But I also want to put some parameters on what it is we are going to read today. The book of Hosea is written to Israel, God's people. That means that the grace and mercy we are going to see in this text are given in the context of a relationship with God. God's people are recipients of his grace.

Your relational status with God dictates the way in which you experience God. God's people have a unique relationship with God which is not present for those who are not God's people.

Keep that in mind as we look at God's monologue in Hosea chapter 11. The first thing we are going to look at is **God's Reflection on Israel**.

We see this in **Hosea 11:1-4**

We see right off the bat, God is taking a different tone here with his people. The predominant allegory of the book is Israel as God's wife, but here it is portrayed as God's child.

And God has chosen to identify himself as someone who loves his child, and someone who called his child out of Egypt.

This is God referencing back to the birth of the nation of Israel. You see Israel wasn't born by a conquering prince who settled in his new found kingdom. The nation of Israel was born as 12 brothers who left home and created offspring who were raised under the oppression of Egyptian rule. Joseph and his family enjoyed the fruits of Egypt, but soon, Egypt became an oppressive ruler. Israel was born in slavery. Born under foreign rule, born under oppression and opposition, born as a people without a King.

But God had made a covenant with these people. Back in Genesis chapter 12, God said to this hippy wanderer named Abram, I am going to be your God, you are going to be my people. You are going to have kids like the sand on the seashore, you are going to become a great nation, kings will come from you, I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.

And Abram says, ok.

You see some of you single ladies in here have lists eight miles long of qualifications for a guy you could potentially date. God is looking for a covenant people with whom to enter a personal relationship and he says, "Hey you! You look lost, your home is in the desert...you got a pulse? Good, because I'm choosing to bless you and your offspring forever."

So fast forward now to Abraham's offspring living in captivity in Egypt, and God calls Moses and he says, "I have heard the cries of my people. Go get them, because I am bringing them back to me." You see Israel knew nothing but slavery, it was the only think they knew, and God called them out of it.

Yet look at what happened immediately after that: **Hosea 11:2**

As we saw way back in Hosea 6, the more the prophets called out, as God's continuing voice to his people, the more the people of Israel rejected God and chose to worship idols. Some thank you.

Yet look at the tenderness with which God speaks of his people in **3-4**. I love verse 4 because while Israel was in Egypt, they were forced to haul bricks and supplies with cords on their backs, worked like oxen with yokes in their mouths, and branded as slaves by the bands on their wrists. Yet God redeems all of those images with a language of love. **4**.

What a wonderful and merciful God. A God whom Israel had forsaken.

Now I want to look at the second portion of this passage. **God's Merciful Discipline**

Hosea 11:5-7

Now verses 6 and 7 of this chapter give translators nightmares. Because there are so many pronouns it is hard to keep track of who is doing what. And how it reads in your ESV is kind of confusing. It almost makes it sound like the people of Israel will cry out to God, and God will not answer them.

But the issue in this passage isn't that the people of Israel are crying out to God and God is not answering, it is that the people will not cry out to God. They may cry out to a false god, they may cry out in general, but God's people are so bent on turning away from God, that they will not cry out.

And even though God is loving towards his people, he will not break his own laws. If the people will not repent, they will be punished. Yet we see a glimmer of mercy in God's discipline. Look back at **verse 5**. God is not going to send his people back to Egypt, but he is going to send the nation of Assyria.

How is this encouraging? God is not going to send his people back to their time of total and abject slavery. God will not forsake his people, but he will discipline them in order to bring them back to himself.

So let's recap quickly. God had chosen to relate to his people in total love and salvation, but his people refused to love him in return, therefore God has the right to punish his people. But, God will choose to do something else.

Hosea 11:8-12

I love God's inner dialogue with himself. Now understand the poetic nature of this dialogue. God doesn't debate with himself. He doesn't need to convince himself of the best course of action, but God has decided to communicate in this way so that we can see the driving force behind God's relationship with his people.

How can God give them up, how can he and them over, how can he make them void as he has done other nations, how can he do that when his compassion is growing inside of him.

You see God will discipline his people, but he will not bring his full wrath upon them because God has chosen to relate to his people in a merciful manner.

The sovereign God of the universe has chosen to be merciful to his people.

Why?

Would you be merciful to someone who stole five dollars from you? Maybe. What about a thousand? What about someone who murder your wife? What about someone who abused or assaulted your child?

You see as the nature of the crime increases the natural ability to have mercy decreases and the greatest sin we can imagine between humans is nothing compared to the nature of sin we committed when we rejected God, so why would God be merciful to his people?

We know God is jealous God. We know God is a just God. We know God is wrathful God. We know God exhibits anger. So why if we are due all of those things, why would God show us mercy?

In Exodus 33, Moses asked to see God because he wanted to know him and God says I will show you my back so you won't die, but look at what God says **Ex 33:19**.

God's revealed his personal name as Yahweh, and Yahweh is merciful to those whom he seeks to be merciful.

Paul reflects on this same verse in **Romans 9:15-16**

Why did God choose to enter into a covenant with Abraham, why did he choose to bring his people out of slavery, why will he not destroy Israel for their sin, why does he stir up his compassion? Because for those who are God's he has chosen to relate to us as a merciful savior.

This is my last point: **God's Merciful Revelation**. Towards his people God has chosen to be merciful, because he is merciful.

You see, the past few chapters we have seen God call on the people of Israel to do things. Things which Israel needs to do, yet in this chapter there is not one command given to Israel. Instead God chooses to give statements about himself.

Israel's greatest hope is God himself.

Now what does this have to do with us. Well, this chapter begins with the phrase, "Out of Egypt I called my son," and it ends with the idea of God gathering his people back to himself like a lion.

Those phrases should not be lost on us as New Testament Christians. I want these phrases to give us grounds for confidence and hope before God.

You see in Matthew 2, Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus flee to Egypt because Herod is going to kill all the Jewish babies because he fears that Jesus will overthrow him as King. But look at what Matthew says about Joseph's flight to Egypt: **Matt 2:14-15**

Now wait, this gets better. In Revelation, we get a glimpse into the throne room of God and we see all the angels and elders weeping because there is no one able to open the scroll which will fulfill God's plan. But look at what happens in **Rev 5:5**.

You see Jesus is the lion through which God has called his people to himself. The church is the new Israel if we believe in Christ Jesus as our savior we have become God's children.

What is our confidence before a Holy God? Where is our joy in life as believers? Our joy is that through Christ we are able to relate to God as a merciful savior and live before him all the days of our lives.

We rejoice because as God's people we are recipients of a magnificently faithful God who has chosen to save us because he is God himself. Our view of God shapes the joy of our salvation.

So rejoice church, because we have a God who for the sake of himself, has chosen to make us his children through his son so that we might receive mercy.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.