

HOSEA – CALL ME ISHI

Harvey Penick's Little Red Book On Golf, has sold more than a million copies it is one of the biggest things in the history of sports books. In the 1920s Penick bought a red spiral notebook and began jotting down observations about golf. He never showed the book to anyone except his son until 1991, when he shared it with a local writer and asked if he thought it was worth publishing. The man read it and told him yes. He left word with Penick's wife the next evening that Simon & Schuster had agreed to an advance of \$90,000. "When the writer saw Penick later, the old man seemed troubled. Finally, Penick came clean. With all his medical bills, he said, there was no way he could advance Simon & Schuster that much money. The writer had to explain that Penick would be the one to receive the \$90,000." People often have Penick's reaction to the fabulous gift of salvation offered in Jesus Christ. We ask, "What must I do to be saved?" God answers, "Just receive."

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

The bible says that God loved the world so much that Jesus came to die for our sins on the cross. What an amazing act demonstrating for us the love of God.

Sometimes God demonstrates his heart for us by practically calling us to participate in an event which shows us in a very practical way so that we can understand. A great example of this is found in the book of Hosea:

Hosea 1:2 When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD." 3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 4 Then 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. 5 In that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel." 6 Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer show love to the house of Israel, that I should at all forgive them. 7 Yet I will show love to the house of Judah; and I will save them--not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but by the LORD their God." 8 After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. 9 Then the LORD said, "Call him Lo-Ammi, for you are not my people, and I am not your God

Put yourself in the place of Hosea. He was a young prophet who was a contemporary of Isaiah. The Lord came to him and told him that he had a wife in mind. Imagine the excitement! Maybe Hosea started naming off all the godly Jewish woman he could think of. God ends up saying something that Hosea did not expect;

1. Marry Her -

God calls Hosea to go and to marry a prostitute. Certainly, this is an unusual request. If God had asked me to do this, I know how I would have answered, 'No Way'. What about being unequally yoked and all that? What about my reputation? But God was wanting to communicate His heart – showing what He has done for us. He came to us while we were far from Him and showed His love for us.

Romans 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God redeemed the human race when we were still spitting in his face. -- Oswald Chambers

You would think that an act of love like Hosea's might have changed Gomer's heart, but it did not. Not only did Hosea have to deal with an unfaithful wife but also with 'children of unfaithfulness'. The fact that the word 'children' is plural means that at least 2 of the children born to Hosea and Gomer were out of adultery. He had to deal with children that were not even his. Look at the names:

Jezreel means PUNISHMENT (it refers to the town where Jehu killed King Joram and Jezebel) - 2 Kings 9 and 10

Lo-Ruhamah means NOT LOVED (no mercy or compassion)

Lo-Ammi means NOT MINE (no nation or not my people)

Can you imagine eating breakfast with that family? Gomer is in bed after once again being out all night. Hosea shouting at the breakfast table "Not Loved, stop bothering Not Mine. Punishment, hurry up and finish your cereal!"

These are what Hosea called his children of unfaithfulness, so what do you call yours? You might say "Me, I've never committed adultery!" Every time we reject God and follow other things, we forsake our first love. What is an idol? An idol is anything that takes the place of God in your life. We reject God and chase after other lovers and as a result we become enslaved often to behavior and habits which, like children, God then has to deal with and take care of. What do you call your children of unfaithfulness? How about Pornography, Arrogance, Racism?

In spite of all of our wanderings and failings God still loves you and wants a relationship with you.

The entire bible is really just the simple story of God's love for us. In the first chapters God created us and gave us a choice. We could choose between the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life brought healing and wholeness. It was a tree representing dependence – as long as we trust in God and looked to that tree we would live. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is really the tree of I'll decide for myself what is right and wrong. It is the tree of self-dependence. It is rejecting God and making yourself lord of your life.

A London businessman was trying to sell a warehouse that had been empty for months and needed repairs. Vandals had damaged the doors, smashed the windows, and strewn trash all over the place. As he showed a prospective buyer the property, he took pains to say that he would replace the broken windows, bring in a crew to correct any structural damage, and clean out the garbage. The buyer said, "Forget about the repairs. When I buy this place, I'm going to build something completely different. I don't want the building; I want the site." That's God's message to us! He isn't interested in your renovation but your re-birth. When we become God's, the old life is over. He makes all things new. All He wants is the site and the permission to build. God says to Hosea marry her

2. Redeem Her -

We are not told the specifics of what happens but somehow, as a result of her prostitution, Gomer is sold into slavery. The lesson here is that sin always has consequences. Whenever we replace God with something else in our lives it always leads to bondage. Even though Gomer was his wife, Hosea had to pay for her sin. He had to buy her back.

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." 2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. 3 Then I told her, "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."

Would you have done that? I would have said, "No God, Not again! I married her but she has betrayed me. She is getting what she deserves. It's not my problem now!" But Hosea loved her as the Lord loved the Israelites (as we can see from chapter 2).

Hosea redeemed Gomer. Though she was his wife her actions made her a slave to another. Hosea had to buy her back. That is what redemption means – to buy back. This is a graphic picture of God's redemption of us through Jesus. God had to pay for someone that was already his.

A father and son worked for months to build a toy sailboat. When it was finished, they traveled to a nearby lake for the boat's trial run. Before launching it the father tied a string to its stern to keep it from sailing too far. The boat performed beautifully, but a motorboat crossing the lake cut the string, and the sailboat drifted out of sight. Attempts to find it were fruitless, and both father and son wept over its loss. A few weeks later as the boy was walking home from school, he passed his favorite toy store and was amazed to see a toy sailboat in the window -- his sailboat! He ran inside to claim the boat, telling the proprietor about his experience on the lake. The store owner explained that he had found the boat while on a fishing trip. "You may be its maker," he said, "but as a finder I am its legal owner. You may have it back -- for fifty dollars." The boy was stunned at how much it would cost him to regain his boat, but since it was so precious to him, he quickly set about earning the money to buy it back. Months later he joyfully walked into the toy store and handed the owner fifty dollars in exchange for his sailboat. As he left the store, he held the boat up to the sunlight. "I made you, but I lost you," he said. "Now I've bought you back. That makes you twice mine, and twice mine is mine forever."

Like Gomer our sin has imprisoned each of us. We were slaves until Christ paid the ransom price for us and set us free. He has paid the price for our sins. We owe Him everything. God says to Hosea marry her and then redeem her.

3. Love Her – call me Ishi

The central theme of Hosea is that God loves you us even though we have blown it. He wants to have a personal relationship with each one of us. God longs to draw you near to Him because He loves you. At the centre of the book there is a sentence that sums this up:

Hosea 2:14-16 Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. 15 There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. 16 In that day, declares the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.' "

Put yourself in this situation. Hosea had bought back his wife as a slave. He now owned her. She was his slave. He could have treated her as a slave. Look at verse 16 again. You will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.' In the King James this reads:

Hosea 2:16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.

Instead of insisting that she call him master (or Baal), he asks that she call him husband (or Ishi). God says to each of us this morning – call me Ishi. God has redeemed us through Jesus. He DESERVES to be called master, but that is not what he DESIRES.

People call be by a variety of different names. The telemarketer who calls on the phone calls me Mr. Sheane. People who know me more call me Pastor Steve. People who know me more call me Steve. Two people on this earth call me brother and there is one person here this morning who calls me son. My daughters call me dad. E.g. when Petra was in daycare in Kuwait – she called me Pastor Daddy.

There is one person here this morning who calls me husband. A husband/wife is the deepest and most intimate of all relationships. Only Naomi gets to call me 'dear'. It would be inappropriate for anyone else to call me that. E.g. When we were just married she did not like to call me dear, so she called me moose – it's an inside joke.

God DESERVES to be called master, but that is not what he DESIRES. He wants us to call him by the most intimate of relationships. He wants to be known as husband.

John 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

How do you respond to this kind of grace – you receive it.

All of us like Gomer have gone astray. We had everything but threw it away to chase other loves. God has brought us back. Certainly, he deserves the title master, but he asks us to call him 'husband' or my love.

W. Paul Jones tells the story of women who shared this story from her childhood as a polio victim: "When my mother left me in Sunday School, I always asked to wear her locket. She thought I liked the locket but that wasn't it at all. I knew I wasn't worth coming back for, but I knew she would come back for her locket." That little girl didn't understand her value. It does not come from what we do or the ways we have been broken, but the fact that God created us to be His.

God knows completely the depth of our sin and adultery and yet loves us still.
God deals with our "children of unfaithfulness" and bondages and loves us still.
God comes to us even when we again and again hurt Him and loves us still.
He deserves to be called Master, yet longs for us to call him My Love.

During the reign of King Cyrus the Great in Persia there lived in a nearby kingdom a great ruler named Cagular who defeated the armies that Cyrus sent against him. Finally the king amassed his whole army and defeated Cagular. He was captured and brought him to the capital for execution. On the day of the trial, he and his family were brought to the judgment chamber.

Cagular was a tall and impressive man and Cyrus was so impressed with his appearance, that he asked "What would you do should I spare your life?" "Your Majesty, if you spared my life, I would return to my home and remain your obedient servant as long as I lived." "What would you do if I spared the life of your wife?" Your Majesty, if you spared the life of my wife, I would die for you."

So moved was the emperor that he freed them both and they returned home. Upon arriving at home, Cagular reminisced about the trip with his wife. "Did you notice," he said to his wife, "the marble at the entrance of the palace? Did you notice the tapestry on the wall as we went down the corridor into the throne room? And did you see the chair on which the emperor sat? It must have been carved from one lump of pure gold."

His wife could appreciate his excitement and how impressed he was with it all, but she only replied: "I really didn't notice any of that." "Well," said Cagular in amazement, "What did you see?" His wife looked seriously into his eyes and said, "I beheld only the face of my husband. The one who said he would die for me."

Even though we have all blown it, we have all gone astray. Even though we were once enemies of God, he died for us. God was not only willing to die for us – but He did so. We take a moment to ignore the marble floors and the tapestry, the hectic week or the problems and look into the eyes of the man who was willing to sacrifice his own life to save us from our sin.