

Hosea 11:1-11
April 18, 2021

Decades ago when the American culture was in upheaval, Francis Schaeffer winsomely and warmly spoke up. He showed how a the Bible, a Christian worldview, and Jesus Christ was the answer to society's ills. He injected courage into a generation of Christians to believe that the God of the Bible is worth getting to know.

This week, I was reading Schaffer's classic, *The God Who is There*. A couple of sentences arrested my attention. He said,

"When we understand our calling, it is not only true, but beautiful—and it should be exciting. It is hard to understand how an orthodox, evangelical, Bible-believing Christian can fail to be excited. The answers in the realm of the intellect should make us overwhelmingly excited. But more than this, we are returned to a personal relationship with a God who is there. If we are unexcited Christians, we should go back and see what is wrong." Francis Schaeffer

We should go back and see what is wrong.

There are times I am excited, but I found myself thinking, "What is wrong?" Why am I not more excited about the fact that I know God? What am I missing?

I don't expect excitement. But I think I should. I expect, I don't know what.

Hosea 11 gives us reason to be excited Christians.

God's love.

Today we are going to see how his love is different than anything that we have every experienced. It is enough to make you excited again.

PROP: God loves the undeserving.

His love is different. It is not a passing, what have you done for me lately kind of love, but a lasting love. His is not the kind of love we are used to, it is different enough to make us excited. Or it should be.

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.

² The more they were called,
the more they went away;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals
and burning offerings to idols.

³ Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk;
I took them up by their arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.

⁴ I led them with cords of kindness,
with the bands of love,

and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws,
and I bent down to them and fed them.

⁵ They shall not return to the land of Egypt,
but Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to me.

⁶ The sword shall rage against their cities,
consume the bars of their gates,
and devour them because of their own counsels.

⁷ My people are bent on turning away from me,
and though they call out to the Most High,
he shall not raise them up at all.

⁸ How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.

⁹ I will not execute my burning anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and not a man,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath.

¹⁰ They shall go after the LORD;
he will roar like a lion;
when he roars,
his children shall come trembling from the west;

¹¹ they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt,

and like doves from the land of Assyria,
and I will return them to their homes, declares the LORD.

PRAY

1. His Love: Like A Father (11:1-7)

If you have been with us through this series in Hosea, we have heard again and again that Israel ran from the true God to find refuge in false gods. Hosea sallies forth again here in our section today announcing God's displeasure because of Israel's unrepentance. The Lord had used Hosea as a mouthpiece, from marrying a prostitute to naming his children horrible names, the Lord has tried to get his people's attention, but it did not work. They would not repent.

We can be tempted to think that the Lord is just fed up and he is going to deliver punishment on the people. But that is not his attitude, instead the Lord looks at the photo album and recalls days gone by—

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.

God loved Israel. His heart went out like a father to Israel. The Lord saw Israel trapped and imprisoned in Egypt and he loved him. He saw Israel with no one to protect him and he moved to help.

He did this not because it was the right thing to do, but because he loved Israel. He made this orphan country his son. And he reached out and saved them from the clutches of Egypt. And yet, the more that the Father showed love to his son, the more that the nation ran away.

Vs. 2,

² The more they were called,
the more they went away;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals
and burning offerings to idols.

Israel ran off to revere, worship, and serve other gods.

Even though the father was the one who stood there on his knees saying to the nation—C'mon, you can do it. Come here. It was the Lord who was a father to the people of Israel.

Vs. 3,

³ Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk;
I took them up by their arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.

You can hear the heart of the Lord for the nation. He loves them. He would take them up in his arms and they could not wait to run off to the Baals. The more the Lord called to his son, the more they ran away.

If you listen, you can hear the heart of the Lord breaking here.

Vs. 5,

They shall not return to the land of Egypt,
but Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to me.

⁶ The sword shall rage against their cities,
consume the bars of their gates,
and devour them because of their own counsels.

⁷ My people are bent on turning away from me,
and though they call out to the Most High,
he shall not raise them up at all.

Because they refused to return and continually sought refuge in the Baals, the Lord had to respond to their waywardness. And yet even in his response we find should find reason to be excited at the love of God.

His love was like a father to a wayward child. The Lord calls and calls and calls and the people run farther and farther away.

2. *His Love: Like No Other (11:8-11)*

And as the Lord contemplates their apostasy, we get a unique glimpse into the heart of God. This passage is unique in all of scripture.

Vs. 8,

How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.

As he considers giving them over to their own desires, his heart is conflicted. It is what they deserve, but he does not want to give them what they deserve. He cries out:

How can I give you up?

How can I hand you over?

His heart is broken.

In the pages of scripture, we are not often invited into the heart of God. I wish I had the words to explain how remarkable this is. God

is high above all things, this God who stands outside of time, is heartbroken.

Theologians tell us that for God to be God he must be from himself. The word is Aseity. God is from himself. That means that God is utterly unique. Everything in all creation comes from somewhere. Every particle of dust, every star, every, drop of water, every flower petal, every person comes from somewhere. But not God. He just is.

In other words, he is independent and needs nothing from anyone. AND YET how does he respond to his wayward people? Like a brokenhearted father. We don't see one ounce of frustration, annoyance, irritation, exasperation, but just unmixed love.

This is one of the major differences between God the Father and us.

When someone wrongs us again and again and again and again we are not moved to compassion but to anger or irritation. When someone returns our love with hatred, we are NOT apt to respond with love.

Yet, Israel's stubbornness engendered compassion in God.

Make no mistake, God's had to respond to their sin, but as the contemplated giving them what they so richly deserved, he balks. The heart of God is conflicted.

Listen: Vs. 9,

I will not execute my burning anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and not a man,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath.

What is the reason that God would not crush them?

“For I am God and not a man.”

Instead of utter destruction and annihilation he will not totally destroy his people. He will not give them what they deserve, instead he will give them what they don't deserve.

Look at verse 10,

They shall go after the LORD;
he will roar like a lion;
when he roars,
his children shall come trembling from the west;
“ they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt,
and like doves from the land of Assyria,
and I will return them to their homes, declares the LORD.

There is no record that the people of the Northern kingdom ever made it back from Assyria. They were absolutely destroyed. They never made it back to their homes.

What is going on?
So is God wrong?

No. He is pointing to a greater fulfillment than just returning from Assyria. The clue that we get that more is going on is in Matthew 2. Matthew quotes Hosea. When Jesus born Herod got wind of this new king and moved to kill all the baby boys in Bethlehem. Joseph was warned and fled to Egypt. Matthew says,

[13] Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." [14] And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt [15] and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." Matthew 2:13–15

What gives?

In Hosea, the Lord is clearly talking about his son Israel. And yet Matthew shows us that he is ultimately speaking of his son Jesus. Matthew is asking us to think about this whole passage in light of another son.

This is in an invitation to compare the two sons. Israel and Jesus.

Did Israel follow their father?

No.

Vs. 2,

The more they were called,
the more they went away;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals
and burning offerings to idols.

God lavished love upon them and they ran and ran and ran.

Did Jesus follow his father?

Yes. Every time. All the time.

God showed Israel tender love and mercy and they ran away. They broke his heart. He plucked them up and out of slavery and they returned his love with rancid indifference. And yet the Father still cries—

How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?

Jesus was different.

But not Jesus. He was the son Israel should have been.

We all know the story of Jesus and that he came to die. We know the story so well that we neglect to see how incredible it is. Jesus was our substitute.

Yet, we have no record in the annals of scripture of the heart of the Father recoiling at the prospect of destroying Jesus. We never read,

How can I give you up, O Jesus?
How can I hand you over, O Son?

And we should have.

Sure the father was pleased with his son, he announced at his baptism---This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

Instead of the Father's heart breaking we read passages like this,

[10] Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Isaiah 53:10

We are left to shake our heads and wonder at the Father's love. He gives love to the undeserving. The Father loves the undeserving.

We are just like Israel.
We wander.

We have run from God.

We worship blessings from him instead of him.

We have served the Baals of money, ease, leisure, and relationship.

And yet, we go unpunished.

And the son?

The Father crushed him. Crushed him!

The Father loved the son and called him out of Egypt to lead his people into a new Exodus. Every time the Father called, the son came. Every time. Not one time did the son sacrifice to the Baals of money, ease, leisure, or relationship. Not once.

The father taught him and the Son knew he loved him. The Son knew that that the Father provide for everything he needed. The Son NEVER wandered having to be called back. Yet we read,

[21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21

Jesus was the Son Israel never was. He loved his father. He worshiped his father.

Upon the cross he cried out,

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Why?

Do you see the surprising and exciting love of God? His heart should have recoiled at the thought of destroying the Son. He should have been heartbroken at the thought of treating the son like Sodom and Gomorrah.

He should have said,

I will not execute my burning anger;

But he did.

The Father treated the Son as if he were responsible for our every sin. And the Father burned in anger toward the Son and destroyed Jesus.

Why?

Why indeed.

Love.

Love for us.

Who deserved kindness and mercy from the Father?

Israel? No.

Me? No.

You? No.

Jesus? Yes.

Who received kindness?

Israel? Yes.

Me? Yes.

You? Yes.

Jesus? No.

Why? Why?

Properly understood the Love of God for you and me does not make sense. And that should make us excited. One of the many things wrong with me is that I am not excited enough by this love that I cannot explain. This love does not excite me enough.

It seems that the Lord has treated me better than Jesus.

His love is other-worldly. Life-Changing.

It is his love that calls us to himself.

They shall go after the LORD;

he will roar like a lion;

when he roars,

his children shall come trembling from the west;

¹¹ they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt,

and like doves from the land of Assyria,
and I will return them to their homes, declares the LORD.

We are in that picture.

He has roared—I have a love that will never let you down. He has roared.

Are you excited enough by this love?

What is wrong with us?

It may be that we consider ourselves loveable. Pretty good.

But compared to Jesus? We fall short.

PRAY

May the Grace of our Lord be upon you.

