

LIFE GROUP LESSON

Redemption Crisis • Week of September 24

Introduction

Webster defines *redeem* as, “to buy back: REPURCHASE... to get or win back... to free from distresses or harms... to free from captivity by payment of ransom... to make good: FULFILL... to atone for” (Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, Copyright 1984 by Meriam-Webster, Inc. p.986). The entirety of Scripture is about God redeeming and restoring a fallen, broken world. Only through redemption can there be restoration; and only through restoration, can there be reconciliation. From the beginning, God has demonstrated his great love and mercy, his desire to redeem and restore. Though we are created in the very image of God, we all have rebelled against God. All of us, prone to choose our way over God’s way, experience low points when we demand ‘my will be done’ instead of ‘Thy will be done’. Yes, the Bible says, “All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own...” (Isaiah 53:6a).

Background

The story of Hosea is about a woman who chooses her way over her husband’s way. Her name is Gomer and she persists in being unfaithful to her husband, Hosea. It is a picture of God’s covenant with the people he loves like a wife, Israel. This story reminds us that few illustrations can even come close to adequately depicting God’s covenant love toward his people. Indeed, God’s unfailing, absolute love toward his people is beyond description, for his love is like an eternal seal stronger than death and the grave (Song of Songs 8:6). Thus, perhaps the closest image we can draw to God’s covenant love is the love seen in holy marriage between a man and woman. Yet, what happens when sin corrupts the holiness? How can love be nearby? God calls his servant, Hosea, to *live* the message God must deliver to his unfaithful wife, Israel:

“When the LORD first began speaking to Israel through Hosea, he said to him, “Go and marry a prostitute, so that some of her children will be conceived in prostitution. This will illustrate how Israel has acted like a prostitute by turning against the LORD and worshipping other gods.

So Hosea married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she became pregnant and gave Hosea a son” (Hosea 1:2-3).

Even though Gomer gave Hosea children (see Hosea 1:6-10) she was not faithful to Hosea. Gomer persisted in running after other lovers, just like Israel was determined to run after other gods. Hosea had been a good and faithful husband to Gomer, like God had been faithful to Israel. God had given Israel everything she

could ever want. But Israel always wanted more. Like promiscuous Gomer, Israel lived in lewdness and seduction, desiring the many nations to whom she was attracted. She dressed like a prostitute, acted like a prostitute – all the way to a place of nakedness, shame and scorn. Yet, the Lord never stopped loving his *wife*, Israel. Why?

Read: Hosea 3:1-5

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?
2. What are you going to do about it?
3. How can we help you?

What causes someone to hang on in a relationship (unfaithful spouse, wayward child, close friend or family member who resists correction) when there is no real apparent reason to hang on? Well, one reason is because the Lord hangs on, the Lord never gives up and never loses hope when it comes to each of us. Our Lord is a God of redemption and restoration—

“Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah or demolish you like Zeboiim? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows...

For someday the people will follow me. I, the LORD, will roar like a lion... And I will bring them home again” (Hosea 11:8, 10a, 11b).

There is a plethora of examples across the pages of Scripture of God not giving up on his sons and daughters. Think about Jacob. One of the first times we think about the word *redemption* in the Bible is when Jacob as an old man is blessing Joseph and his sons: “May the God before whom my grandfather Abraham and my father, Isaac, walked—the God who has been my shepherd all my life, to this very day the Angel who has redeemed me from all harm—may he bless these boys. May they preserve my name and the names of Abraham and Isaac. And may their descendants multiply greatly throughout the earth” (Genesis 48:15-16). Jacob, whose name God had changed to *Israel*, was about to die; yet Jacob knew the LORD’s promise to him would live on. Jacob had not lived a perfect life, but he kept faith in God. He had personally seen God come through for him and his family, time after time.

For example, there is the time when Jacob and God have it out in Genesis, chapter thirty-two. On the eve of meeting his brother Esau, who twenty years prior had

Redemption

Text: Ruth 3:9-13, Genesis 48:15-16

PLAIN TRUTH

Redemption is to _____ and _____.

1. Redemption is a _____.

2. Redemption is to _____.

vowed to kill him for stealing his birthright – Jacob fears for his life. He sends his entire household ahead – every possession, servant, his flocks, herds, every family member – until he (Jacob which means *heel-puller*) is utterly alone. There by the Jabbok River, God shows up and wrestles Jacob all night until his hip is wrenched out of socket. What comes of this ‘fight’ is that God redeems Jacob by blessing him and giving him a new name and new identity (see Genesis 32:22-32). Perhaps there has been a time when you had it out with God. What did you learn from that experience?

(briefly share)

You are not beyond God’s ability to redeem and restore his purpose and plan for you. Praise God that in his great mercy, he won’t let you go. Like Jacob, you may walk away with a limp, but how wonderful that God loves you enough to fight you if that’s what it takes. Praise God that he loves you enough to go after you and buy you back – like Hosea bought back Gomer. God does not want to win in order to ‘lord’ it over you, God wants to *win you back* because he loves you. God wants to deliver you from anything that keeps you from his love. God loves all of us *Jacob’s* and *Gomer’s* despite our failures. We all need to be redeemed – bought back for God.

Biblical scholar and theologian, Thomas C. Oden says –
“God loves sinners, because he sees in them something they may not see in themselves, namely, lovability, or at least potential lovability, and the possibility of restoration to the fullness of the divine fellowship... Perfect love lives out of a deep affinity with faith. For perfect love is none other than to have confidence in God’s redemptive work. This perfect love we can have. For it is within our reach, enabled by grace, to trust in God’s love.” Yet, Oden goes on: “God’s holiness detests sin; the motive of reconciliation is God’s love for the sinner, which is so great that it is willing to pay the costliest price to set it aright. The most profound New Testament moral injunctions hold together God’s holiness and love precisely as they had become manifested in Christ” (Classic Christianity – A Systematic Theology by Thomas C. Oden, p.72-73).

Close by Reading Hosea 14:1-9

One Year Bible Reading

Sept. 24: Isaiah 43:14-45:10, Ephesians 3:1-21, Psalm 68:1-18, Proverbs 24:1-2
Sept. 25: Isaiah 45:11-48:11, Ephesians 4:1-16, Psalm 68:19-35, Proverbs 24:3-4
Sept. 26: Isaiah 48:12-50:11, Ephesians 4:17-32, Psalm 69:1-18, Proverbs 24:5-6
Sept. 27: Isaiah 51:1-53:12, Ephesians 5:1-33, Psalm 69:19-36, Proverbs 24:7
Sept. 28: Isaiah 54:1-57:14, Ephesians 6:1-24, Psalm 70:1-5, Proverbs 24:8
Sept. 29: Isaiah 57:15-59:21, Philippians 1:1-26, Psalm 71:1-24, Proverbs 24:9-10
Sept. 30: Isaiah 60:1-62:5, Philippians 1:27-2:18, Ps. 72:1-20, Proverbs 24:11-12

September 24, 2023