

**"FOR THE UNFAITHFUL"****Date: May 8, 2022****Speaker: Brenna Blain**

My mom isn't here cuz she's mad at me...jk. I love you mom...something about my mom that I think my siblings could agree with is that if there is something that my mom LOVES...she will try to get us to love it too.. I think maybe that's how we all ended up in musical theater at one point or another... but my mom would sometimes try to convince us that we liked the same things in very subtle ways that weren't really subtle...

I remember my mom had this functional author that she just loved...I would walk into my moms room and she'd be laying in bed with tears streaming down her face and I'd say "mom...what's wrong"/..."this....book" \*womp face" and one of the books my mom read... you know I think several times... and when I got a little older she started to say "Hey Brenna I think you would like this book..." and I say no thanks...and I'd go to bed...and I'd be sleeping and I'd wake up and find the book in my bed... and she just really loved this book.

I didn't know much about it...you know it was some christian romance type book and I remember my mom would say "it's based off of Hosea" and I thought...yeah never read it. And somehow I escaped 4 years of not only not reading that book but also not really reading the Bible... certainly not prophets... I had this perception that 1. They were boring and 2. They had nothing to offer me.

And then the book of Hosea...completely changed my life.

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Context: the book of Hosea is an interesting one because there is so much meaning packed into the 6.5 pages that make up the book in our modern Bibles... just 6.5 pages...but with all things in Word it's important that we look at it with the understanding that all of it matters... that every paragraph...down to the individual words were God breathed and not just written TO the people living in that specific time period but were also given FOR us.

Another thing that makes Hosea interesting is that there is not just an abundance of Poetic forms...like many prophets we see in the Bible... but it holds a narrative about Hosea himself that is intertwined within the pages of his prophecy to Israel. You see God did not just say to Hosea "Here's your calling... I am going to use your words" but he said "Here's your calling... i'm also going to use your life".

Right now here at Kessid you're in the middle of a series called "The Theory of More"... And if you're like me you read Hosea and there's an ache in your heart...because you don't identify with Hosea...you don't identify with God....instead you see the unfaithfulness and the brokenness and the humanity of Israel and Gomer and you say THAT'S me. Too far gone...too disobedient...too uninterested in Jesus to even have a place at the table...even just being here today is uncomfortable for you...you're just trying to honor your mom or whoever invited you today.

I had grown up in the Christian church but after being molested at a young age I really started to wrestle with things that felt unsafe for Christians to wrestle with. I was depressed and suicidal by the time I was a freshmen in high school and I lived life often looking over my shoulder as if to say "God... are you even there? ...Do you even see me? Or is this all fake..."

And I was nervous to tell my parents that I had doubts... so I never wanted to say "I don't want to go to church" but I think my parents knew I was wrestling with a lot so at the end of 8th grade they said "Hey...we'd like for you to go to church but you don't have to go to the same church as us... we just want you to find a place that you want to be..." and somehow I found a youth group that was like...the DREAM for an enneagram 4. No one talked about sports...almost everyone listened to 94.7 alt Portland... And someone there knew I could play a few instruments and so not even after one week of going I got asked to be on the worship team...and even though singing songs to a God I wasn't sure was even was there felt odd...it was so much better to me that I had something to do during worship...that I got to focus on playing an instrument... then have to sit through and actually think about worship.

Because worship had an overwhelming effect on me... when I would have to sit there...I would see all these people around me singing words of adoration, and affection, and praise to a God who had let me be abused. Who had let me get to a place where I no longer wanted to live... and it was like everyone around me was in on something... was experiencing a God I never knew...without me. And I would just want to scream.

And that continued for all 4 years of my time in high school. And I had moments... if you know my story... you know...I had moments with God where I'd say okay... I think you know maybe you do care...so I am going to give you "this"... this little square inch of my life... you're welcome...but you can't have any of this. And I'd gather it up in my arms... my depression, my anger...my self image...my doubt... and i'd run around to every other thing in this world and say "do you think you could heal me... do you think you could make me better?"

And I look back on this and see God like \*ushing to give Him a chance\* and I'm like \*putting him on hold\* you had your chance...

So by the time I was 18 I had a lot of practice at avoiding God...and I was at the age where I needed to decide what I was going to do next after graduation so I did what any person running from God would do...and I decided to become a missionary.

And I thought I was being clever... like "God I'm going to hide from you right under your nose and you'll never find me". I hated school. I did not want to go to college, but I loved Hawaii so I signed up to do youth with a mission "YWAM" with the expectation that everyone else there would be just like me...not really bought into God... wanting to do some traveling and just get away. And a lot of people there were just like me. I don't know if we all collectively thought we were tricking our parents or youth pastors or what...but at least a handful of us thought we ran so fast and far away from God that He could not catch up.

So the third morning I am there we are still in this preliminary free time zone where we could kinda do whatever we wanted the first few days and I just wanted to be at the beach. But I had no car and hitchhiking into town was hard... and so when they announced that they were taking some vans into town for morning worship I thought...that's it. I got a ride...i'll just BS my way through this worship time so I at least seem respectful and then I'll hit the beach.

So we get to this place where we are going to have worship and I book it to the back of the room and I'm like...this is going to be so awkward I'll just...close my eyes and be back here and get through it and leave. And I had grown up....um... not really knowing the Holy Spirit. And I thought YWAM was like...Baptist...but it's not. So my eyes are closed and were singing some song that everyone knows because it was written in like 2007...and I know music well because I'd been on worship team at this point for 7 years...and I know there's an instrumental break coming up...and so they go to play the instrumental but then all of sudden people are still singing....and i'm like what the heck whose taking a solo here...and then more voices start to sing and then some people start talking...and i'm thinking....this...what...what's happening... And my eyes are still closed but by now I'm bothered by what's happening and so I open my eyes...

And you know how I shared about hating sitting in worship... but I open my eyes and I see something I had never seen before in my life....I see a girl standing like this...singing...her own song... her own words...worshipping...and then I look around and I see people praying OUT LOUD (!!!!) over other people in the room.....??????? And i'm thinking WHAT IN THE... and then the girl...whose standing over here singing.... YELLS.....

And I don't know...how or what it was but I remember how every time I've had to sit through worship i've just wanted to scream....and now here's this girl...embodying all these negative things that have been pent up inside me...in a positive way...in her worship.... And I lost it. I had NEVER seen someone worship with their entire being before...and in that moment I prayed and prayed a prayer I shouldn't have prayed...

I said "God...if you're real...if you care for me...if you see me...I want you to let me know... whatever it takes....because this is the most real thing i've seen in my life and if there's a chance...I could have that... because that girl looked like she was in LOVE....if there was a chance that my angst and anxiety and anguish could be set aside and I could know you like that... I want you to do whatever it takes to get me to that place".

Shouldn't have done that.

For the next entire month of being in this environment.... It's like i'm watching a movie unfold before my eyes...you see there were 32 students in my school...so 31 not including me and it's like every SINGLE day....someone else...who was living a life much like mine... suspicious of God at best...just completely melts... I didn't know what it was or why it was happening but these people who looked like different versions of me were starting to confess "i'm in love with God now..." and I was LIVING with them...so it wasn't just that their words were changing... their lives...their personalities...the way they interacted with people... they were REALLY changing.

And during that entire month I went through almost every prayer and worship session like this \*one eye open, arms out\*... like is this even real??? And the more this happened for other people the more conversations I had with myself that said...no. This isn't going to happen for me. I don't know what they are on...but I don't buy it.

But I had a problem because we were supposed to do christian things you know... because we were missionaries and one of the things we had to do was prepare and preach a 10 minute chapel talk. And I signed up for the very last date possible on that calendar because I didn't want to do it. And by the end of the month I just had a few days left until I was supposed to teach...and I couldn't think of anything! I tried doing that thing where you open a random page and I was like...okay God whatever you want me to speak on show me.... NOW and every time I opened it... it was like Leviticus...and that was not an option.

And then one day...something reminded me of that book my mom was always trying to get me to read...and I thought... If some lady can get an entire book out of it...maybe I can get 10 minutes... And so I flip to Hosea and I start reading.

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And I close my Bible and walk away and all I hear for the next 24 hours is "that's you...that's you that's you that's you...." there are all these people who have been faithful and never struggled with doubt and never wanted to die and never questioned God's plan and then there's you.... Like an adulterous woman towards God.

And I can't stop thinking about that.... And I don't know if people could tell...I was just down. Or if something was wrong...but I like to think it was the Holy Spirit but I was sitting on the bathroom floor just having a little bit of a melt down...because not only were all the people around me experiencing a God I felt like I had never even really known...but now I was aware of how unfaithful I had been towards God in the first place. Like why would God ever even WANT to change me if I never even acted like I've ever really wanted him...

And as I'm sitting on that floor I hear footsteps...angry and fast footsteps coming in my direction and I panic because...I wasn't supposed to be in this bathroom, it was a staff bathroom and I just wanted some alone time... But the door flies open before I am able to do anything and here's this student... a girl I had met on the plane on the way to YWAM who was the complete opposite of me. Joyful and loud and loved everyone and wanted to hug everyone and she WOKE UP HAPPY....??? And she's standing at the door and I'm thinking what in the....what do you want? And she looks me dead in the eye...with some frustration on her face. And she yells.

YOU. ARE WORTH. IT.

I said...what?

YOU ARE WORTH IT. GO FINISH READING WHATEVER GOD ASKED YOU TO READ. and she leaves.

And I wander back into my room so confused cuz im not charismatic...and I open up my Bible back to Hosea and I start reading again where I left off.

(V) Hosea 3:1-5 ESV "And the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins." So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. And I said to her, "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." For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days."

And as I read these words I begin to WEEP. And God says to me "If that's YOU then who AM I".... in this story....if YOU are the woman..if you are like ISREAL....than WHO AM I?" and as I said earlier....there is so much depth packed into this book...that not just every sentence but every WORD means something...and the literal meaning of the name "Hosea" the ROOT of that name means "to SAVE...to deliver...."

Here is a woman who has said to Hosea "I'm yours...i'm here..." and Hosea KNOWING her promise would be faulty...still enters into a covenant relationship with her...much like God has willingly entered a covenant relationship with us. An unfaithful people. And much like us...so much like me...after time...not feeling like I was getting what I thought I ought to get from God...this woman leaves her husband and goes into town with the mission of unfaithfulness...probably hoping something else would meet her needs. Would make her happy...would give her what she felt she needed. All the while she must also wonder....does he even see me? Does he even care that i've gone... such a mix of unhealthy but REAL feelings so many of us have felt about the God of the universe..."I don't care...but does He?...I don't want to be faithful...but will He?"

And the reality is this is far after Deuteronomy so Hosea could have rightfully divorced his wife...this must have been something on BOTH of their minds... but God speaks to Hosea....Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods....."

You see some of you here know the pain...the real pain that unfaithfulness causes in the midst of a covenant relationship...and so hearing this feels unfathomable. and Even more so is that a GOD who has NEVER sinned against us has the SOUL right to walk away and yet...watch what he does...

Hosea tells us "So I bought her" ....this give us an insight into the view of women at this time... by many cultures they were seen as property...not by God....(do a word study through Leviticus) but the interesting thing was because Hosea was already married to her.... She would have been his.... He literally could have gone into town and said THIS IS MINE and taken her home. But not only does Hosea want to bring his wife home... he wants to make something abundantly clear to her in the language and action of this time... he wants her to know YOU ARE WORTH IT. So. He. Sacrifices.

As we read this... are you able to see the story within the story?

The narrative of Hosea is not just a beautiful story of faithfulness...it is a foreshadowing of Christ and the cross. We ... being God's creation... We are HIS to begin with. And yet he has given us agency to make the choices we make...if we want to be unfaithful..he doesn't keep us locked up as his property but allows us to leave.

And yet...even after we have left....He pursues us. Not in anger...not as a tyrant....not as an owner of our souls... even though He could with the snap of his fingers demand we come home... he chose to come after us in an act of sacrifice...to buy what is already HIS... God sends his son to die in our place and through that we become...worth it.

"If we are Gomer and Israel... God is our FAITHFUL Savior"

And it was in that moment when I looked back over every single thing that happened in my life...every time I ran from God, every time I felt He left me alone...every time I wondered if He saw me and I realized I....have been....relentlessly pursued.

YOU have been relentlessly pursued. It doesn't matter what you've done...it doesn't matter how far away you have gone...it doesn't matter the things you have said....because the one who is FAITHFUL is the one who has bought you for a price and NAMED you...CALLED you....and brought you HERE.

I know the reality is that some of you are hearing this and thinking "NOT ME....maybe thats for someone else but not me...." and I have to stop and say if you're feeling or thinking that I think that's a sign...

I think God wants to meet with you.. I think...I hope he's using this right now as the girl BURSTING through that door saying YOU ARE WORTH IT because think about it...what are the chances that you're hearing this now and this is the message God said "I want you to share"

"But I am unfaithful" yes....

"I have been and I have hurt others" yes....

"I am constantly running away" Yes.....

But what's the picture God has painted for us? It's this: whether it is the idolatry of the israelites...or the adultery of Gomer....our heart's sinful condition is to wander from God. BUT

God's promise to us we find in...

(V) Hosea 2:19-20 "19 And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. 20 I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord."

His promise to us is His Love. His compassion...and the most significant...His faithfulness.

And with that, by no feat of our own strength...but only through His sacrifice.... He declares us worthy of being brought home.

"How should we respond?"

If you have not made the choice to willingly go with God....why not now?

If you have made that choice... would let today be a reminder to look back and celebrate God's faithfulness to you?

"Jesus sought me when a stranger  
Wandering from the fold of God"

## MESSAGE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

### PONDER

1. What about the message did I feel...
  - Inspired about?
  - Convicted by?
  - Sadness, grief, or loss about?
  - Curious about?
  - Hopeful for?

### EXPERIENCE

2. Did anyone have a "Wow!" moment during the message that resonated in you? If so, what was it? (Could be a new scripture/Bible story you've never heard, a profound concept, etc.)

### LEARN

3. What new/fresh thing did I learn about God? What new/fresh thing did I learn about myself?

### APPLY

4. How can I challenge myself this week with what I've learned? What might responding well look like?