The Simplicity That Is In Christ

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11:2-3

God sometimes calls his messengers to take extreme measures to make sure their message is received.

- The way that God uses his prophets in the Old Testament to convey his message gives us great insight into the extremity that God will go to make his point.
- We often think of those Old Prophets as these well respected wise old men that were equally feared and revered.
- When they spoke, at the sound of their voice, Kings would tremble.
- And, that may well have been the case for some of God’s prophets of old but others were enlisted by God to live out their prophetic utterances.
  - Think for a moment of Isaiah who, for several years, embarrassed his countrymen by walking around dressed as a prisoner of war.
  - Or Jeremiah, who, for a while, carried a yoke on his shoulders everywhere he went.
  - Jeremiah was once commanded of God to buy a farm from a relative even though the farm was in land that was occupied by an enemy and would remain so until after the prophet’s death.
  - I could name other examples, but, when you start talking about living sermons, Hosea takes the cake.
- God called this simple unassuming prophet to confront the unfaithfulness of Israel.
  - Isreal was caught in a relentless cycle of unfaithfulness to God.
  - And God was jealous of his people.
  - He had extended them his love and affection to them, even when it was spurned.
  - He had provided for them, even when they didn’t deserve it.
  - And He had kept every promise that he had made to them.
    - However, like an unfaithful bride they continually turned to the pursuit of idol Gods, pagan traditions, and unholy unions.
    - They seemed to be oblivious to God’s goodness and his mercy.
    - They spurned his love and gave themselves fully to other pursuits.
    - When they needed God they wanted Him to be there.
    - But, as long as things were good, they spent themselves in the pursuit of other things – forgetting the provision and blessings of God.
  - In an effort to bring this unfaithfulness into focus God instructed Hosea to take for himself a wife of harlotry.
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- The story that unfolds in the living out of the relationship between Hosea and Gomer is a powerful illustration of God’s love for humanity and humanity’s abuse and rejection of that love.

- No doubt it was a great surprise to his friends and family when Hosea took for his bride a woman that everyone knew was a harlot.
  - I’m sure many people asked him – how can you love her?
    - I mean, come on, we all know what manner of woman she is.
    - Guys like you come a dime a dozen to a woman like that.
    - There’s no way she’s ever going to return your love.
  - And then, as the relationship began to unfold they must have witnessed here unfaithfulness and wondered all the more at Hosea’s patience and longsuffering.
    - All along, Hosea was living out before their very eyes, a replica of their relationship with God.
    - When it came to Gomer they were pompous and pious, boasting how that they would never put up with that.
    - But, in reality, they were playing the part of the harlot in their relationship with God!

- The beauty of Hosea’s story is that it perfectly demonstrates the love of God in that while we were yet sinners – He first loved us.
  - Before we ever even knew Him, He loved us.
  - While we were yet unfaithful to Him, He loved us.
  - When we gave no love back in return, still He loved us.
    - The testimony of Hosea’s relationship with Gomer is a tremendous illustration of just how much God loves us.
      - Tonight, it doesn’t matter where you’ve been or what you’ve done – God loves you!
      - You may have been unfaithful, you may have let up on some things, You might not have done what you know you should do – But I want you to know that God still loves you!

Without boring you tonight with the familiar details of the relationship between Hosea and Gomer, let me fill in some of the basics.

- In the course of their tumultuous marriage Hosea and Gomer had 3 children.
  - God used the occasion of their births to pronounce his judgments for unfaithfulness.
    - When the first child was born the prophet of God named the child Jezreel which means “God Sows” or “God Scatters.”
      - When Hosea gave the name he spoke a word of prophecy, declaring that God would scatter Israel because of her unfaithfulness.
    - Hosea’s second born was named Lo-Ruhamah which means “Unpitied” or “No Mercy.”
    - The third child was named Lo-Ammi which means “not my people.”
However, the dramatic prophecies that accompanied the births of Hosea’s children did not bring Israel to repentance.

- Nor did the responsibility of children cause Gomer to turn away from her unfaithful ways.
- As a matter of fact Gomer finally left her husband altogether and returned to her harlotry.

Hosea tells us that when Gomer left him, it was not so much in pursuit of her lovers as it was a pursuit of material things.

- Hosea 2:5 tells us that “she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.”
  - When Gomer left Hosea she did so because of the material things that would be gained by her involvement in prostitution.
    - As a result of her illicit employment she would get: bread and water; wool and flax; & oil and drink.
  - But Hosea shares with us an interesting truth.
  - He says that, in her fascination with things outside of the home she failed to recognize that in her pursuit of bread and water she left behind corn and wine.
    - When she went in pursuit of wool and flax she left behind silver and gold.
    - Hosea says that she was so enamored with her pursuit of those petty things that she did not even know that he was offering her much better things!
      - Gomer was so blinded by the things she was pursuing that she couldn’t see that she was leaving better things behind!
  - For over a week now the same message has been reverberating through my soul.
    - How tragic it must be to God when we forsake our relationship with him to pursue the material things of this world.
      - Last week and this morning it was the bread of this world as compared to the bread of life.
      - This evening it is bread and water compared to corn and wine, wool and flax compared to silver and gold.
    - I keep coming back to this simple truth: Sometimes we leave behind the goodness of God and the richness of His blessings in order to pursue some lesser thing.
      - There are times when we become enamored with some treasure in this world that we convince ourselves that we simply must have and, in our haste, we forsake the provisions of God to pursue that thing that lies outside of his perfect will for our lives.
        - When all along, if we would just stop and recognize it, the things we are leaving behind are so much better than the things we are pursuing.
    - I’m afraid that we pursue material things, empty affections and carnal pleasures when God wants to bless us with abundance beyond our wildest imaginations.
I’m afraid that, when you neglect your relationship with God in order to feast on the things of this world you are leaving behind the better thing to pursue the lesser!

- All along he has given us everything we could ever need.
- There is a tremendous temptation to allow our lives to be controlled by the pursuit of bread, to allow our lives to be controlled by the pursuit of worldly riches and material blessings.
- While our relationship with God suffers for lack of time and energy to pursue it.
  - When will we realize that we are leaving behind the silver and gold to gather the wool and flax?
  - Leaving behind Corn and Wine to chase after bread and water!
    - When will we ever realize that the temporary carnal pleasures of this world can’t even begin to hold a candle to the richness and satisfaction that flows from the presence of God in our lives!

- I wonder how Hosea must have felt as he watched Gomer head out into the night in pursuit of such miniscule things when the blessings that he had for her were so rich in comparison.
  - He must have shook his head in pity and wondered, will she ever see the value of what she is leaving behind in her pursuit of such temporary, trivial things!
    - I come to this pulpit again, tonight to tell you that the temporary satisfactions of this world are fleeting pleasures that will never satisfy the deeper longing of your soul!
    - There is a desire within you that will never be satisfied by anything less than the presence of God.
    - There is a hunger within you that nothing in this world will ever fill!
      - Isaiah 55:2 asks this question: Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
      - That same question is resounding through this house tonight!
      - Why do we spend so much effort in the pursuit of things that will never satisfy our souls?
      - Why spend your money on that which is not bread?
      - Why work so hard for that which does not satisfy?

- We need a renewed understanding of the absolute treasure of God’s presence that we are neglecting on a day-to-day basis!
  - This is the thing that Gomer could never see and it is the thing that Paul was addressing in our text:

Paul writes to the church in Corinth, saying:
• “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

• Paul is preaching the same message to the New Testament church that Hosea preached to the nation of Israel.
  o I am jealous of you, he says, with a godly jealousy!
  o I have espoused you to Christ he says, but I am afraid that as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds have become corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.
    ▪ You see, in the garden, Eve, fell prey to the same attraction that ensnared Gomer.
      • The serpent convinced her that God was withholding some good thing from her.
      • She was deceived into believing that there was some good, fulfilling, thing outside of God that God was keeping from her.
    ▪ Just as Gomer believed that she was somehow going to find better things with her lovers than she found with her family,
      • Eve believed that she was going to find some good thing outside of God.

• Paul looks at the church in Corinth and says, “I’m concerned that you would fall prey to this same trick.”
  o That somehow your mind would be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.
    ▪ Paul is pleading to the church as Hosea must have pleaded with Gomer,
      • this thing is real simple – seek your first love, your true love and you will always have everything you will ever need!
  o This is the simplicity that is in Christ!
    ▪ It is not incumbent upon us to provide for ourselves,
    ▪ It is not incumbent upon us to seek our own provisions,
      • It is only incumbent upon us to seek him!
      • To renew our relationship with him.
      • To stay close to him…
    ▪ As we stay close to Him and seek Him, He will provide for us!

• Jesus tried to convey this simple principle to his disciples in the twelfth chapter of Luke.
  o He said:
    o Do not be anxious and troubled [with cares] about your life, as to what you will [have to] eat; or about your body, as to what you will [have to] wear.
    o For life is more than food, and the body [more] than clothes.
Observe and consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn; and [yet] God feeds them. **Of how much more worth are you than the birds!**

And which of you by being overly anxious and troubled with cares can add a cubit to his stature or a moment of time to [the length of his life]? If then you are not able to do such a little thing as that, why are you anxious and troubled with cares about the rest?

Consider the lilies, how they grow. They neither [wearily] toil nor spin nor weave; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory (splendor and magnificence) was not arrayed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today, and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you, O you [people] of little faith?

And you, do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink; nor be anxious. For all the pagan world is [greedily] seeking these things, and your Father knows that you need them.

But rather seek the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

- This is the Simplicity that is in Christ, if we will seek Him first, if we will focus our attention on our relationship with Him
  - He will take care of all the other things!
    - You don’t have to focus on bread, he’s taking care of that.
    - You don’t have to focus on all the trivial things of this world.
    - If we will focus on him, he will focus on us and He will take care of all of our needs!
      - Someone once said that “If you will make God’s business your business, He will make your business His business!”
      - If we will seek him, if we will focus on him, He will take care of the rest!
      - That’s the simplicity that is in Christ!

All too often we do just what Gomer did, we leave behind God’s goodness and go in pursuit of what we perceive as the good things the world has to offer.

- The serpent in the Garden beguiled Eve, and corrupted her from the simplicity of the issue.
  - All she had to do was live in the garden.
  - All she had to do was maintain her fellowship with God.
  - All she had to do was live in obedience to him and everything else in her life was taken care of!
    - Like the lily in the field, God had made it his business to meet their every need!
    - They didn’t have to worry about it.
    - They didn’t even have to ask for it!
• However, even in the relative isolation of the garden, Eve was tempted to seek wisdom and understanding somewhere other than her fellowship with God!
  o It started in her mind when she began to entertain the pursuit of something other than the riches and blessings of God!
• And Paul said to the church, there is a Simplicity to serving God.
  o Seek Him, walk with Him, live in fellowship with Him and He will provide for you.
    § But there is also a great danger that your MINDS will be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ!
    • That, in your mind, you will begin to turn somewhere else for your pleasure.
    • That, in your mind, you will begin to entertain some other source of satisfaction.
      o When you lose the battle in your mind, it’s only a matter of time before it shows up in your life!
    § Unfortunately that’s exactly what happens to too many of God’s people.
    • We allow our minds to become corrupted away from the simplicity that is in Christ and we begin to pursue other things that gradually replace our relationship with God!
      o We begin to drink from other wells and draw from other springs.
      o With the same mouth we propose to drink from the cisterns of this world and the fountains of everlasting life!
      o What a tragedy – What a travesty.

Here’s the problem with being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.
• When we are turned from the simplicity of our first love we find ourselves chasing something we will never catch.
  o Listen to what God says through Hosea (2:7):
    § And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them
  o The problem is that – just like Gomer – when we leave behind our relationship with God to pursue the things that we have been perceived as good we soon discover that those things are perpetually out of our reach.
    § Like the fabled carrot before the donkey we find ourselves mired deeper and deeper in carnality and bondage while the perceived pleasure is always just one step ahead of us.
• There is a reason why Mick Jagger’s hit of 1965 struck a resonate tone with people all over the globe.
• As the Rolling Stones cried, “I can’t get no satisfaction…” a world of people bound by sin empathized with the frustrated desires represented by the song.

• Let me tell you tonight, when you forsake the goodness of God in pursuit of the things of this world you will always find yourself in this same state of mind.
  o There is no satisfaction outside of God.
    ▪ Remember, Paul said things are simple when you seek God – but they become so complicated once you turn from that pursuit and chase after other things.

Gomer’s pursuit led her deeper and deeper into sin and further and further from the good life she had once known with Hosea.

• Just like the prodigal son who left his father’s house in pursuit of “better” things but soon found himself eating with the pigs, over time Gomer found herself bound in slavery.

• Now if there was any justice in the world – this is where Gomer would have stayed…
  o Paying the penalties for the grave errors she has made.

• But thank God for his boundless mercy – the spirit of God directs Hosea again to go find his wife and bring her home.
  o Hosea finds her broken and bound and, in a perfect demonstration of the love of God, He buys what was already rightfully his!
  o My friend, this is the love of God, that when we turned away from him, he never turned away from us.
    ▪ He sought me and he bought me…
    ▪ He paid a price for me that I wasn’t worthy of!
  o Not only did he buy her but he immediately set her free.
    ▪ By law she was his slave, he could have forced her to go home and perform her duties as a wife but instead he said to her, you are not a slave, you are my bride and I have bought you to set you free!

Message of mercy

• God wants to bring you home
  o He wants to restore the simplicity of serving Christ to your life.

• He is reaching for you tonight
  o He doesn’t care where you’ve been or what you’ve done – He still loves you and he’s still willing to redeem you.
    ▪ You may have squandered opportunities,
      • you have failed your potential,
      • you haven’t been faithful in your relationship with God
    ▪ Yet still you find him calling to you, reaching for you, beckoning you to a closer walk with him!
• This is the simplicity of Christ – that even now all he asks is not that you prove yourself again, but instead that you simply turn to him and seek him!
  o This is the simplicity that is in Christ that if you will simply turn your attention to him, you will find that he is reaching for you.
  o This is not complicated, it’s as simple as taking a first step towards him and seeing that he has taken a giant stride towards you!

Close

• As Gomer returns home to Hosea God pronounces a prophecy thru Hosea that he will undo all the judgments that he has pronounced upon his people for their unfaithfulness.
  o Using the names of the three children but completely overturning their meanings God says that instead of scattering you, I will sow you unto myself,
    ▪ instead of showing you no mercy I will have mercy on you,
    ▪ and I will say to those who were not my people, You are my people and they shall say, You are my God!

• Can I tell you tonight that God wants to show you mercy!
  o Even the judgments that he has already pronounced for your failings and shortcomings can be overturned by the mercies of God.
    ▪ Life is much simpler when you put Christ in his proper place!

• Tonight, He is calling to you to return to him,
  o to draw near to him,
  o to lay aside other pursuits
  o To turn you attention back to the simplicity that is in Christ.

• Think about it for a moment, remember how much simple things were when you first came to know him,
  o when everything seem so clear and concise,
  o when the only thing that mattered was getting closer to him
    ▪ This is what God is calling you back to – the simplicity that is in Christ.
    ▪ It doesn’t matter tonight where you are spiritually, or what you might have done wrong.
    ▪ God is calling each of us to get closer to him, to return to the simplicity of seeking him, serving him and walking with him!

• It is time that we put away the pursuit of the trivial things of this life and turned ourselves fully to the pursuit of God and all of His blessings for our lives!