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## *The Father's Love and Grief*

[Hosea Series, Part 15]

*July 31, 2022*

**Sermon Text:** Hosea 11

**Scripture Reading:** Psalm  
107:17-43

Parents often think back in time and remember the days our children were little. Hopefully for most of you, those were pleasant days, the memory of which makes you want to relive them.

This is true even for parents of a very wicked child. I have no doubt, for instance, that many mothers and fathers of a son or daughter who has grown up to be very wicked, still remember back when.... Who would have thought it? That such a little boy or girl would grow up to cause so much

grief?

Here in Hosea chapter 11, we find the Lord doing something very similar in regard to His child, Israel. Listen to it –

**Hos 11:1-12 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.

(12) Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One.

We see in this chapter the covenant love of the Lord for His people. His kindness to them is recounted. Even when He will execute justice upon them, His “heart recoils” and His “compassion grows warm and tender.”

And we also see the stubborn, persistent, rebellion of those whom the Lord even showers with favor –

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

We saw the same thing in the previous chapter:

Hos 10:1 Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars.

All of this great kindness and mercy of the Lord and yet the more He showed His love for them, the more idol altars they built. And so Assyria is coming as the instrument of the Lord's wrath.

This is the unconverted heart of the sinner. The Lord gives life and breath, food and shelter, creates him in the Lord's own image, reveals His saving gospel to him, and left to his own devices the sinner will always despise these blessings and the One who gives them. As Paul put it in Romans 1, the sinner will refuse to give thanks or to even acknowledge the Lord. He will turn instead to dumb idols and chase after his sin with even more gusto.

Look again at verse 1 –

**Hos 11:1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I**

**called my son.**

The latter part of this verse is, of course, quoted in Matthew's Gospel-

Mat 2:13-15 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."

Hosea's words then are a prophecy of Christ. We could spend quite some time examining the theme of Christ as Israel, coming out of Egypt, entering into the wilderness to be tempted, and continuing a great and final Exodus, succeeding where the nation Israel failed.

God's call of the Israelites to come

out of Egypt, His raising up of Moses as deliverer, His plague judgments over Pharaoh, the Passover deliverance, the crossing of the Red Sea – ALL of these things and more are wrapped up in the word “called.” I “called” my son. Showered them with blessings. And the result? The more He called, the more He blessed them, the more they clung to their idols.

We see in this the Father’s love for His people – for us! Think on this. These few verses tell us much about the nature of God:

- He is like a Father who teaches His children to walk. Where to walk. Where not to walk. When they fall, He picks them up.
- He heals His people
- He leads His people, and He does so with *cords and bands*, but the cords are kindness and the bands are love.

Mat 11:29-30 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you

will find rest for your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

- He is like a plowman who reins us in when we stray, but the yoke he puts upon us is not cruel. In fact, like that plowman, He feeds us.

THIS is the Lord, and yet Israel would not have Him. So it is with the wicked today. They hear about the great blessings which come to the person who repents of his sin and turns to Christ in faith:

Psa 23:1-6 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. (3) He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (4) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (6)

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

But most, like Israel, choose to die on their sins instead. In fact, all do so and unless the Lord had, as Scripture puts it, left a *remnant, a true Israel by election*, the entire human race would become like Sodom and Gomorrah. An ash heap.

There is more to the Person and character of the Lord. Alternating in this chapter with the theme of God's Fatherly love, and really throughout the Bible, God's wrath and justice are presented. Look at vs 5-7 once more:

Hos 11:5-7 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.

The Lord is not co-dependent upon His creatures! He does not enable them in their sin. His love and His kindness abound, but there comes a time for those persisting in sin and refusing to repent to find that the Lord's patience has run out. And that is the very point Israel in Hosea's day had come to. Listen again:

Hos 11:5-7 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.

Assyria is coming. The Israelites had rejected the Lord as their king, so He will give them another. They will be slaughtered and the survivors carried off. The northern

kingdom had been founded upon rebellion against Yahweh and now it would be no more. In 722 BC it happened.

Did you notice this –

*They shall not return to the land of Egypt. (vs 5)*

From the earliest days of Israel, even when they were in the wilderness under Moses, they grumbled and complained by saying it would have been better for them if they had remained in Egypt:

Num 11:4-6 Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! (5) We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. (6) But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”

Grumblers against the Lord. Really? It was better in Egypt?!

And now the same plan was afoot in Hosea’s day. The people fancied that they would be able to find refuge in Egypt and be protected against the Assyrians, thus escaping God’s judgment. *It was not going to happen.* Assyrian would come.

The same sin was in the people Jeremiah lived among when the Lord was bringing the Babylonians against them:

Jer 42:13-18 But if you say, ‘We will not remain in this land,’ disobeying the voice of the LORD your God (14) and saying, ‘No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war or hear the sound of the trumpet or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there,’ (15) then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: If you set your faces to enter Egypt and go to live there, (16) then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the land of

Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and there you shall die. (17) All the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to live there shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. They shall have no remnant or survivor from the disaster that I will bring upon them. (18) “For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: As my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so my wrath will be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You shall become an execration, a horror, a curse, and a taunt. You shall see this place no more.

Egypt was not their friend! It never had been. Egypt was Israel’s oppressor from the beginning. A place of slavery and bondage and misery.

Egypt is a picture of Satan’s kingdom – the kingdom of this world. And in the sinner there is always this bent to reject the Lord’s freedom and choose slavery in Egypt. *How many people have heard the gospel, and perhaps even*

*started out to follow Christ, but at the first sign of trouble – back to Egypt!*

Mat 13:20-21 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

They shall not return to the land of Egypt for refuge. They shall be put in bondage to Assyria and the Lord will no longer hear their cries. Such is the holiness and justice of the Lord against the wicked.

And yet we know this:

Eze 18:23 Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

No one will ever end in Hell because the Lord refused to save him. If a man departs this life in his

sins and is cast into that outer darkness, it is only because *he would not turn from his evil way and live*. The sword shall rage against their cities because they were *bent on turning away from the Lord*.

In verses 8-9 we see the heart of the Lord in all this judgment:

Hos 11:8-9 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.

Admah and Zeboiim were kings in the Battle of the Kings back in Genesis chapter 14 when Lot had been taken captive and Abraham defeated them.

In this justice, in His holy anger against Israel and His

pronouncement of certain judgment upon them, the Lord's Fatherly compassion "grew warm and tender" for them. He resolved not to completely destroy His people, and in doing so – listen to it again – He declares:

*"...for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath."*

What is this? It is the covenant love of God. It is that "lovingkindness" which the Bible speaks of so often. It is the heart of God which motivated His promise to Abraham, by which Promise we are saved.

Isa 55:6-13 "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; (7) let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

**(8) For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways**

**my ways, declares the LORD. (9)**

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

(10) “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, (11) so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (12) “For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. (13) Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

How is the Lord different from man? What is the greatest contrast? God is true, man is a liar. God is

eternal, man is temporal. But it seems that the most fundamental difference between God and the sinner is *His dealings with the wicked in His compassion, even to the very last moment before His judgment falls, to all who will turn and repent.* Human beings do not do this for their enemies. Man is not given to forgiveness.

Hos 11:8-9 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.

Here is the prophet Micah announcing the very same thing:

Mic 7:18-20 Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever,

because he delights in steadfast love. (19) He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. (20) You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

God's remnant, you see. His elect. The true Israel of God. His Church. This is the only reason we as His people in Christ exist. It is the only reason there is a gospel of salvation. Because the Lord has made a way in Christ to deal with our sin – to remain just and yet be the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The good news of the gospel is that God is not like us. He pardons iniquity and casts our sins into the depths of the sea – *for His remnant*. He keeps a people for Himself and makes us holy, giving us hearts to love and serve Him. He effects a New Covenant which is not like the Old one that the nation Israel broke. This one is unbreakable,

having been perfectly kept by Christ for us.

And even in those dark days in which Hosea lived when the storm clouds of judgment were coming to wipe Israel out, the Lord had His remnant. He always, always has His remnant, and this is how the chapter ends:

Hos 11:12 Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One.

There was till a Judah. Even in 587 BC when Jerusalem and the southern kingdom were wiped out by Babylon for their sins, there would still be a Judah. A people who walk with God, faithful to the Holy One – and it was all brought about by Christ, whose people we are if we have been born again.