

## Dr. John Oswalt, Hosea, Session 10, Hosea 11

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We've talked about the possible structure of the book, chapters 1 to 3, and then chapters 4 to 14. 1 to 3, of course, are the parable in which Hosea is acting out God's love for his prostitute wife. 4 to 14, then, is working through all of these.

I've suggested that it's possible to see chapter 4, verse 1, through chapter 6, verse 3, as no knowledge of God. And as we've talked before, that has a double entendre, in the sense that to know is to have sex with. So, intimacy, no intimacy with him.

And the break comes at the call to seek God and repent. Then, in 6:4, through chapter 11, verse 11, I've suggested we could call this no steadfast love for God. The word, of course, is *hesed*. Knowledge is *da'at*.

Tonight, we're going to be looking at chapter 11, concluding this second part. And then 11:12, to the end of the book, I'm suggesting no faithfulness or truth.

If we were to put righteousness here, those four words, the knowledge of God, steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, would really pretty well sum up the virtues of the, I was going to say, Christian character, of the biblical character that God is asking for, and these people are not manifesting any of it. So, again, 14 also ends on a hopeful note. So, this division, but as I've said to you before, and as some of you have said to me, it's really not easy to get a nice, neat outline of the book.

It's really a repetition of a whole lot of things in different ways and different forms. To say, these people are not, in any sense, Yahweh's marriage partner, and yet Yahweh will not give up on them. That's what we see, especially in this 11th chapter. So, we see a different metaphor being used here, not husband and wife, but parent and child.

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt, I called my son. What's the significance of God using that familial metaphor here, do you think? Okay, their origin, they were, that's where they began as children in a real sense. Also, I ask you to look up Exodus 4:22 and 23, Moses' words to Pharaoh.

Then you will say to Pharaoh, thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son. I said to you, let my son go, that he may worship me, but you refused to let him go. Now, I will kill your firstborn son.

You have a choice here, Pharaoh. You can let my firstborn son go and spare the life of your firstborn son, but if you will not, then the choice that is before you is a very, very grim one. What does it mean for Israel to be God's beloved child? Relationship as we've said before many, many times, God is a God of relationships.

He's a God who is into relationships, and that grows right out of the Trinity. In the Trinity, God is in relationship, and in that sense, creation is the result of God wanting to share that relational love with the world. What else does the beloved child metaphor suggest? It suggests God's care for his son.

I said father-son relationship. The father-son relationship, the caring, the training, an air, discipline, tenderness, yes. This is not a king-subject relationship.

It's much more personal, and it's in that sense that God is saying, and there's a sense in which it goes behind marriage. It's a blood relationship right from the outset, and there it is. God is saying, this is who you are to me.

You're my subject, yes. You're my bride, yes. You're my child for whom I give my life.

So, it's in that sense that God is saying here, when Israel was a child, I loved him, right there at the outset. What is it that motivates God's interest in us? It is his love, and that reality is the reality of biblical faith. God is motivated toward us by love.

Then, there is a textual issue in verse two. The Hebrew says, they called them, thus they went away from them. Almost certainly that's in error, and probably it is the more I called them.

I've got the English Standard Version here. This says the more they were called. Trying to work out the Hebrew and make some sense out of it.

But, in any case, the more they were called, the more I called them, the more they went away. Now, why? The more I called them, or the more they were called, the more they went away. Why? Our inherently sinful nature, yes.

Two-year-olds and teenagers. We had a dog, and if you wanted the dog to run away, you called it. What lies behind that? I'm not talking about the dog necessarily, but that the calling produces the opposite result.

Okay, that calling introduces some level of fear. Why? All right. Okay.

What does relationship involve? It involves commitment. It involves submitting your desire to go in one direction to the person with whom you're walking. The very element of calling says, in some way, I submit my will to yours.

You call me, come here. Well, I don't want to come there. Why not? Because you called me to come there.

There's something in the very nature of the calling that demands submission, that demands a degree of surrender, that we are unwilling to give. And as Gary has said, in many ways, at the very root of the sinful disposition is the stubborn will that says, I want. I want what I want, when I want it, where I want it.

And in a real sense, there is the problem. They kept sacrificing to the bales and burning offerings to the idols. Now, we've talked about this a bit before.

Why do we make idols? Control. Gold stars all around. Yes, I have the illusion that I, with my hands, can supply my needs.

That I can fulfill what I really desire, and so that they kept sacrificing, they kept burning offerings to the bales, though I, who brought them into existence as their father. God brought Israel into existence through Abraham and then again through Moses.

God brought them into existence, but no. So, this whole issue of wanting to control my life. And it's an illusion.

It's an illusion. And this is why, as I've said to you before, God started where he did with Abraham. Abraham, I know you have desires.

You have a desire for land. You have a desire for children. You have a desire for a reputation that will outlast you.

Would you let me give those to you? All the angels held their breath. The whole future of the human race hung on that moment. Would Abraham surrender control of his needs and wants to God's hands? I've often wondered how many people he made that offer to before he got a taker.

Thanks. I mean, this sort of compares to what we're going through now. People are so elusive, but why would they trust the bales and the idols rather than God when he's shown them so many things? It's because God asks us to surrender.

God says, number one, let me determine what your needs really are. And that's a bad place to start. No, no, I know what my needs are.

I'll decide what I need. And God says, let me tell you what your needs are, then let me meet them. Oh, my goodness.

My friend, the snake, says he doesn't want to meet them. My friend, the snake, says you can't trust him. He's out for what he wants.

He's not out for what you want. So that's what it is: the idols give me the illusion of control. And we need then to apply that to our own lives.

What is it? In our situation, that gives us the illusion of control. Money. If I had enough money, nobody could do anything to me.

And Jesus has it right when he says you can't serve God and mammon. Pornography. We talk about artificial intelligence destroying the human race.

I think pornography will do it first. Eight-year-old boys who are addicted to it. And these people are after them.

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

Now, that verb is a little odd. I would have expected they didn't know that I taught them. They didn't know that I trained them.

Where does healing come into that, do you think? I think it's when a child is walking, learning to walk. He stumbles, he falls, he hurts himself. Mom and Dad pick him up, hold him, and make it better.

Yep, the oopsies. It's compassion.

It's not just teaching, and it's not just training. Well, because the Baals were powerless to do anything. Yes.

When we're in the reality, I'm the one who taught them to walk, and I'm the one who healed them. They didn't realize I had healed them. That's what the Baals did.

Yeah. What he's saying is that God healed them from what the Baals had done to them. Yeah, yeah.

But I think that's exactly what he's getting at here is as the child walks and falls or bumps into something and gets a cut or something, the parent is wanting to make it better. Yeah, kiss it. And so again, it's deepening, I think, the parental love relationship that's there.

It's not just me as the instructor teaching you how to do things. It's me as your father, your mother being with you and for you when you fall down and hurt yourself. There's a sense of healing where you're restored.

Yes, yes. You were broken, and now the healing process is restored. Yes, yes, yes, yes.

So, it's giving another deeper compassionate aspect to this training. I'm teaching you how to walk, and when you fall down, I'm making it better. So, God is saying, this is who I was.

This is what I have done. I overlooked the last part of verse 11, or verse 1, which is what I wanted to talk about. Out of Egypt, I called my son.

Matthew chapter 2 relates that to the journey into Egypt that Jesus and his mother and father took, and then after Herod was dead, they came back from Egypt, and Matthew says, this was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Out of Egypt, I called my son. So, the question we ask then in fulfillment, is that what God was talking about in Hosea 11:1? And what we're dealing with is the meaning of this word fulfill.

We tend to give it a narrower meaning than the Bible does. There's a sense in which this word can mean correspond to, and it can also mean, and everything in between. Demonstrate the meaning of.

So, what did that original passage really mean? The fulfillment shows this is what it meant. I would say an example of this is, and a virgin shall conceive. What did that passage in Isaiah mean? Ultimately, it was talking about the virgin birth of Christ.

Here, though, we have something more like this top one. The same sort of thing, and I've got several possibilities there. The direct quotation, a prediction, an illusion, where you're picking up something.

Isaiah talks about a voice crying in the wilderness, made straight away. This passage says a voice crying in the wilderness. Between the Hebrew and the Greek, there's a semicolon.

But what you have is the New Testament saying this is the same kind of thing, an illusion. You also have the analogy or another word typology, and that is, you have something in the Old Testament that parallels something in the New Testament. When you look at the life of Joseph and Jesus, you see a number of parallels, and the argument that the scholars will go through is how intentional that was. Joseph, is he described in such a way in Genesis that it will indeed parallel Jesus? Some will say yes. Some will say no.

I tend to fall, as I often do, in the middle between the two, that yes, there's an intentionality there, but perhaps not in the details that some would see. And then

the illustration and there would be those who would say illustration and illusion are really the same things. Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like these flowers are.

Well, that's simply using the Old Testament language as a picture to work with. The literary would correspond to a similar kind of thing, and I think, in fact, that's what we have here, that it is as God called Israel out of Egypt, in the same way he called Jesus out of Egypt. But Hosea is not written to predict this, but like that, it demonstrates the meaning of the two, which correspond to each other in a literary fashion.

Doctor, is there a parallel between the exile in Egypt and the exile in Assyria? I mean, it talks here, it talks about how they shall go to Egypt, and the Assyrians shall be their king. Is there a parallel there? Yes, there is. You do remember that after the Babylonians won, they put in a good man, an Israelite man, as their governor, and the terrorists among the Israelites killed him, after which the terrorists said, oh, that probably wasn't really bright.

Maybe the Babylonians will come to us and do bad things to us. Oh, we better go to Egypt. And they went to Egypt.

So, there's a sense in which he is saying, yeah, you're going to go right back to the slavery in which you were. And so, yeah. Okay, questions or comments about this? This is fairly technical stuff.

But when you see fulfillment, you've got to just remember, you've got this range of possibilities working, okay? I ask you to think about the exodus of the 20s and 30s that is occurring right now. These are kids upon whom the church spent millions for youth ministry, and they're leaving in droves. What's happened? Okay, yes, yes.

And you used a keyword there: parents. We thought that we could do youth ministry and that that would fill the gap. It won't.

It will indeed add to the foundation that has been laid in the home and build upon it. But if there's no foundation in the home, I discovered when we were general contractors for a house, which, by the grace of God, we won't do again, that it's very difficult to start a house with a second story. The boards won't stay up there long enough to nail them together.

Foundation, foundation. And of course, as these 20s and 30s leave the church, they're not going to give their kids a foundation. So, the problem cycles.

But it is this issue of what the church is about. Church isn't fun. Church isn't entertaining. Church demands commitment, surrender.

I'm not into that. I've got needs that I've got to meet. Nobody else is going to meet them.

So, in many ways, it seems to me it's the same cycle that we see going on here 2,700 years ago that still plays itself out in our world. Okay, in verse 4, he changes his metaphor again. Here, it seems as though he's talking about a farmer with his animals.

I led them with cords of kindness, with bands of love. As I commented in the background, love here is the Hebrew word *aha*. Affection.

When Israel was a child, I had a deep affection for them. Now here, having grown up on the farm, I understand this a bit. If you've got 1,600 dairy cattle, you don't love any of them.

If you've got 10, you know every one of them. And you know what they're like. And when they took Blossom away in the butcher's truck, it hurt.

She was a good cow. She was past her prime. She wasn't giving so much milk anymore.

But I led them with cords of kindness and with bands of love. I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws. I bent down to them and fed them.

So, the picture is of a farmer who loves his animals. Not acid. We're talking about affection.

I didn't beat them with a rod. I didn't make the yoke as heavy as I possibly could. And one says, I pulled them along with cords of humane.

Yes. It's a humane cord. So, it's our English word humane from a human. It is connected with the same thing here.

I led them with human cords. Humane cords. Not a choke collar.

Precisely, precisely. The thought is continuing from how I taught the child to walk and how I took this heifer and taught her how to function here. Exactly, exactly.

No, no. Yeah, it's, it's, I didn't beat them into submission. I didn't break their will in the most severe sense of that.

But they were not interested. So, he says, they're going to go into captivity. They've, they've chosen, they've chosen their way.

The sword is going to rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels. My people are bent on turning away from me. And though they call out to the most high, he'll not raise them up at all.

Why not? Why won't he respond to them when they call out? The past proves they're not going to listen. What else? They don't honor him. Yes, here's the deal.

They were not abandoning the worship of Yahweh to worship the idols. And we're doing a little mixing and matching here. They were treating Yahweh as an idol.

So, oh Yahweh, help us, help us. And he says, I'd like to, but I can't because you're trying to use me. You're trying to make me your idol to meet your needs in your ways.

And it won't work. It doesn't work. And that's, again, forgive me for harping on these things.

But again, it is not. The sword is not going to rage against their cities because God says, I've had it up to here with you. I'm going to get you. No, it's if you won't live according to the way I designed the world to function, then it's going to hurt.

They call out to me without ever repenting, without ever admitting that they have tried to use him for their own ends. So, in various places, the same thought crops up in the prophets. Isaiah says these are people who call on me as if they wanted my way.

No, no, I don't want your way. I want my way. And I want you to give me my way.

I want you to bless my way. Mm-hmm, yes. I want you to bless my way, bless my choices.

But now look at verse eight. How can I give you up? How can I hand you over, oh Israel? How can I make you like Adma or Zeboim? That's one of the five cities of the plain with, or two of the five cities of the plain with Sodom and Gomorrah. How can I wipe you off the face of the earth? My heart recoils within me.

My compassion grows warm and tender. I'll not execute my burning anger. I'll not again destroy Ephraim, for I'm God and not a man.

The Holy One in your midst, I won't come in wrath. Well, now, wait a minute. He certainly was going to come in wrath.



They were going to go into exile. What are we saying here? What is he saying? It sounds like he's saying it's not his intention. Yep, yep.

Communicate that if you get exiled, it is not to destroy you. It's how Ephraim was going to happen. Yes.

I don't want you to go there, but if you're going there, it's not because I want to wipe you off the earth, like exile certainly meant that then. Yes, yes, yes. Somebody once said God's final word is never destruction.

I guess I don't have to take up truck driving after all. Yes, yes. I'm not going to destroy you.

Now, so why is he God and not a man? If he gets mad at him, isn't that like a man? How is he different? It's a righteous anger. It's not just selfish; you can't do that to me. Yes, he controls himself.

And it's justified because he always warns them ahead of time. It's justifiable. Straight in the brick wall, straight off the cliff.

Yes, yes. Give me a chance. Yes, yes.

A human response was, you had one chance; you blew it, and I'm done with you. God says, how can I let you go? After a thousand years of covenant-breaking, how can I let you go? There's one sense in which I have to let you go. I can't keep you back from the consequences of your choices anymore, but it doesn't mean I want to.

In many ways, it seems to me that these two verses, Hosea 11:8 and 9, are one of the most poignant glimpses into the heart of God in the Bible. I see where you're headed. I see what has to happen.

But I hate it. I'm so sorry for it. Humanly, I see where you're headed, and I'm glad.

You're going to get it. And I'm going to laugh. Because I told you again and again, don't do that.

Now you've done it. Not God. Not God.

And this is why I think it's very important to remind ourselves that God will not send anybody to hell. He will let them go with a broken heart. But he won't send somebody.

We have this picture of, you know, this poor repentant sinner. Oh, I didn't understand while I was alive. But now, now I understand.

And yes, God, yes, I repent. What it will be is, and I think this is so significant. Let the hills and the rocks fall on me rather than having to face the righteous truth about myself and my life.

If all your life you have lived for yourself, it's not going to be heaven if you're invited to give up yourself and spend eternity with God. Now, again, is he wrathful? Yes, he is. But not so much at the individual wanting to destroy the individual but at the sin which has destroyed the individual.

I am God and not a man, the holy one in your midst. There's a very profound statement. I am, and I've talked about this many times before, but I want to talk about it again.

The holy is the absolutely other, in whose presence we cannot exist. That's what the whole sacrificial system is about making it possible for people who want to live in the covenant to live with the Holy One and not be destroyed by him. Think of it this way.

Who is he? He is a blast furnace. Who are we? Bales of hay. And the blast furnace invites us to come in.

He is the holy one in your midst. The tabernacle, the temple, Jesus. Is it possible for God to do something so that we can survive and even share? And the answer is yes, yes, and yes.

Emmanuel, I am the holy one in your midst. And you remember, the devils recognized him, and he told him, shut up. I don't want to hear it from you.

So, in a real sense, this passage, the holy one in your midst, I will not come in wrath. It's what Jesus said. I didn't come to condemn the world.

I came to save the world. And so you have this beautiful picture in verses 10 and 11. They will go after the Lord.

He will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west. They'll come trembling like birds from Egypt, like doves from the land of Assyria.

And I will return them to their homes, declares the Lord. Mm-hmm. I'm going to call.

I'm not going to wipe you off the face of the earth. I, in fact, am going to use the exile to refine you. Many scholars today say, well, the whole Hebrew faith was created after the exile, to which I say reverently, hogwash.

No, the Hebrew faith existed long, long before the exile. But the exile is what refined it. The fire of the exile was what refined it.

But now look, you've got a rather classic case here of a wrong chapter division. Yeah. Look at verse 12.

Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, the house of Israel with deceit. But Judah still, for the moment, walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One. Ephraim feeds on the wind, pursues the east wind all the day long.

Ah, ay-yi-yi, ay-yi-yi, no faithfulness to God. No truth in their relationship with Him. But the good news, how can I give you up, O Ephraim? And I'll close with this.

That's something that we, Wesleyan Armenians, need to remember. Sometimes we preach eternal insecurity. That God will take care of you just as long as you don't do anything wrong.

No. Is it possible to sin away your faith? Yes, it is. But it's not easy.

It's not easy. How can I let you go? How can I give you up? And that's the point I think we need to make. All right, questions, comments, observations? Totally put you to sleep.

Okay. How amazingly different He is from our world. Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

I am God and not a man. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yes.

What's a really good thing? Oh, oh. Okay. I would say without that, this is existence.

Bales of hay falling apart, decaying, disappearing. The good news is we can be transformed into Damascus steel. Refiner's fire, exactly.

So, the blast furnace is not primarily the experience of life. The blast furnace is God, who then invites us into a transformative experience.

So much of religion today is a transaction. You do this for me, and I'll do that for you. And you better keep your word if you don't forget it.

This is transformation. That God can take our broken, decaying pieces and put them together. And He can make it possible for the only answer, a person who has been abused, to forgive.

That's the only hope. Otherwise, you live in hatred your whole life. And the hope is that we can come to the place where we can let those people go.

You know, what's the title? I'm not going to remember it now. The Rime of the Something Sailor--The Ancient Mariner, yeah.

He is doomed to wear the dead albatross that he killed around his neck. Well, there are scads of people in the world today who are wearing dead albatrosses around their necks. And the stories can just be multiplied.

Until we come to the place where we can sincerely forgive that person, they are hanging around our necks and killing us. And there's the hope.

And the blast furnace can do that for us. And that's the good news. He takes us through the fire to bring us forth as gold.

Yes. All right. God bless you.

See you next week. Bye.