

## IN TOUCH

### “MARRY WHO?”

I HAVE PERFORMED SOME PRETTY INTERESTING WEDDDINGS OVER THE YEARS. Two or three at the Franklin Park Conservatory, two at the Park of Reses, weddings in downtown Columbus with beautiful stained glass windows, one at a very upscale restaurant in the Philippines, etc. One of my favorite weddings was on a beach on Anna Marie Island in Florida. The beautiful bride and beautiful sunset made a great couple. The groom wasn't too bad looking either (at least the bride said so).

A more unusual wedding than any of these took place in the Bible in the book of Hosea. Hosea was a prophet in Israel around 780 B.C. – 720 B.C. During his lifetime the moral and spiritual life of Israel was in great decline. Talk about an unusual wedding, God tells Hosea to go out and find a prostitute, marry her, and have children. Why would God tell Hosea to do such a thing? He wanted to bring Israel back to him and things were so bad he went to great lengths to get their attention AND teach them about how much he loved them. It doesn't say in Hosea's book that Hosea argued with God, it doesn't even say he questioned God. Hosea was a better man than I. Anyway....God teaches Israel 3 lessons in regard to his instructions for this unusual marriage.

First, God says his love is a relentless love in Hosea chapter 1 Hosea marries his prostitute wife and together they have 2 sons and a daughter. By chapter 3 she has already gone AWOL on him, returned to prostitution and had multiple affairs. God tells Hosea: “Go show your love to here again”. The first lesson: God loves Israel with a relentless love, just like the love Hosea showed to his wife and subsequently to all Israel. The second lesson: God says that when Hosea finds her, pay the price to buy her back (she had actually become a slave by the time Hosea finds her). Buy her back? I would have paid someone to keep her! God tells Hosea to buy her back, to redeem her. God was demonstrating that he was willing to pay a cost to keep Israel in relationship with him. (We know that about 800 years later God would pay the ultimate cost of his Son Jesus to redeem all mankind). Third lesson: God tells Hosea to confront her behavior and put some boundaries on her behavior when she returns home. Tough love. A life with no boundaries has consequences not only on the one who practices no boundaries but also has consequences on those close to him or her.

Hosea's quite unusual wedding/marriage has a clear message for us today: God loves us with a relentless love, God paid the price to redeem us, and God wants us to turn from any sinful ways and live withing his boundaries. If we don't turn, he still loves us but we will not enjoy the life that God has planned for us.

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Mike

Events: Listen this Sunday to information about a new Women's Ministry opportunity

Prayer: Clarabell Hand surgery recovery, Pastor Rick Tawney (pneumonia recovery), Jeanne Teele

P.S. No In Touch next week, I won't be out of touch, just on vacation Mon-Fri