

HIS OWN SPECIAL PEOPLE

Speaker: Cdr. Suresh Peter

Date: 09/07/2023

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:6-10

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⁶Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be confounded.

⁷Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is become the head of the corner,

⁸And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

⁹But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;

¹⁰Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

Father, we come at this time into your hands. We ask you to take complete control. We pray that you would touch my lips from live coal from off the altar. Lord, not my thoughts, but Yours; not my words, but Yours be heard. Not I, but You be seen and Yours be the glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

Today I want to lay before you a story which never ceases to amaze, a story which is exhilarating and extremely comforting to hear. It's a love story and an extraordinary love story at that.

There was a man called Hosea. He lived several hundred years before the Lord came, and this man was one that was committed to doing the will of God in his life. one day the Word of the Lord came to Hosea and said, "Hosea, you and I are going to enact a story, and it's going to cost you." Nothing really gets done without a cost, without a price. So the Lord said to Hosea, "I want you to marry a woman who's going to be unfaithful to you." Now most of us would shirk, would run away from this kind of a call. We struggle with our little hearts; we struggle to forgive people. And how much more to forgive your own spouse if he/she strays away. But Hosea was not an ordinary man. He said, "Yes, I will obey." And so, the Bible records that Hosea went ahead and married this lady called Gomer.

Hosea 1:3 ³So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bore him a son.

⁶She conceived again, and bore a daughter. (Please note that in both instances, there is no mention of who the father is).

⁸now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived, and bore a son. (again, no mention of who the father is). Hosea married this lady who soon after bearing the first son, started straying. And this we know from 2:4 "they are the children of whoredoms."

Gomer started straying maybe a year or so after the wedding. Just put yourself in Hosea's place. His heart would have been rent asunder, though he knew what was going to come when he married Gomer. Still, to live through this process of this kind of disruptive behavior would have absolutely torn him. But have you ever paused to wonder what it would have cost God to go through with you and me – when He chose to forgive us, to sanctify us and adopt us into His family? He did not do it because you and I were going to be good. Or you and I were going to be faithful. He knew the day He accepted you that soon you would fail Him. He knew on that day exactly at what point of time you

would let Him down. He knew everything about you. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows our worst secrets. And yet, He chose to love.

Hosea's heart was broken. But even more, was the breaking of God's heart. And at this point, we would also do well to remember that when God saw Adam and Eve sin, He was not surprised. He was heartbroken for sure, but not surprised. Even before He created them, He knew that they would sin and that the only way to redeem them would be to send His only begotten Son to suffer and die a shameful and painful death on the cross. And that's why in Revelation 13:8, He is called "The Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world." Before the foundation of the world was laid, it was decided between the Father and the Son that the Son would go and be slain as the sacrifice, taking your sin and mine upon Himself. He got ready and then He created Adam and Eve. That is how God cares for us.

So He created Adam and Eve, gave them a beautiful world and they blew it. He called Abraham and his descendants, gave them the promises and they blew it. In the book of Judges, we read again and again. Seven times He redeemed them from their enemies, restored them, gave them a fresh beginning and they blew it. Sin will find you out. Sin will not go unpunished. Sin has to be dealt with. And there are only two places where sin will be dealt with.

- One is at Calvary. If you have chosen to put your trust in the Savior, your sins are dealt one and for all at Calvary.
- But if you are among those who said, "This is not for me. I am not a sinner. I have not done anything wrong." Then your sins will be dealt with also, but at the great White Throne. And that is a fearful thing. The Bible says it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

And here lies that unfathomable mystery – the mystery of the love which comes to seek and to save. Jesus said the Son of man has come to see and to save the lost. The love of God, yes, but also the divine humility which comes seeking. You run away; He comes after you. You say I don't want you; He still comes after you. You say leave me alone; He still comes after you. He never, never leaves you. I will never leave you nor forsake you, that is the Word of God to you. He comes after again and again and again. You let Him down, He never gives up on you. You fail Him, He doesn't give up. He comes again and again and again – that's the divine humility.

One day, after all this started happening in Hosea's life, he came back from work to find his three children crying. Their mother had left the home and run away with one of her lovers. Hosea was heartbroken once more. He tried to pick up the broken pieces. He tried his best to care for the children. And soon news reached him that Gomer, his wife, didn't have food to eat, didn't have clothes to wear. Do you know what Hosea did? He said, "I'll go and woo her again to myself." So he went and knocked at the door of the man with whom Gomer was living. I'm paraphrasing now. And he had a bag in his hand. He said, "I have come to give these things to Gomer because I came to know that she is hungry. I came to know that she doesn't have clothes to wear. So here is some food for her and some clothes." That man slammed the door shut in his face, took the bag inside and went and gave it to Gomer as though they were gifts from him.

Hosea 2:5b She said, "I will go after my lovers, they give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." ⁸She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold." She didn't know who had given her. She thought her lovers had given what Hosea had given. So also, do you realize that when you were wandering from God, running after your own heart, doing what pleased you? The good things that came your way did not come from the world or from your friends or through your own efforts. They still came from the One whom you spurned. Every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights with whom there is no

shadow of turning. Even at your lowest point, the good things that come your way have been sent by the Father.

So Hosea did that and Gomer did not realize. She thought it was a gift from her lover. Things went from bad to worse. When this man grew tired of Gomer, he left her and she went into the arms of another man. He used her and he threw her out and she went to another and another and another. Soon enough, there came a time when everybody grew tired of her. All her beauty had gone. She had nothing to eat, nothing to wear, no place to go to. Then she found herself at the marketplace being sold as a slave.

At that point of time, the Word of God came to Hosea saying, "Hosea, go and buy her back."

3:2 "So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and one and a half homers of barley." Hosea went to the slave market, paid for his wife who had strayed and bought her back. And this time, he bought her not to be his slave. He could have said, "I purchased you paying the price of a slave; now you have to serve me all your days." That's not what he did.

3:3 "And so I said unto her, 'you shall abide with me many days; you shall not be for another man, so will I also be for you.'" He restored Gomer to her original state as his wife. That's what Hosea did. Incredible love story! But that's precisely what God has done for you and for me.

Francis Thompson wrote a poem called 'The Hound of Heaven'. It's a long poem – 300 lines. And he says, "I was running away and the Hound of Heaven came after me. I kicked and I struggled. He came after me. I didn't want him, yet the Hound of Heaven came after me. I kicked and I struggled, He came after me. I didn't want him, yet the Hound of Heaven came after me." And it goes on and on. At the end of the poem, the Hound of Heaven which is the Lord Jesus, finds this man who is fleeing. And He says, "Won't you put your hand in mine?" The one whom. You have been seeking without knowing is I. I will provide for you. The divine humility which makes God come after us, even when we say "I don't want you, leave me alone. I have nothing to do with you. This is my life. I know and I'm old enough to choose." He still comes after us.

C.S. Lewis, the great philosopher and writer, has an amazing story of how he came to Christ. He calls himself the most reluctant sinner of all. He says: On that day, I came kicking and struggling. I was brought into the kingdom of God, the most reluctant sinner of all. The divine humility which accepts even that kind of a person, that is the love of God. So the people of God, including you and me, were miserable, lost and sold into sin and slavery. Everything was bleak and dark, hopeless; and then Jesus came! As the word records so neatly, so blithely in Galatians 4:4 "In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." And then Jesus came!

Psalm 85:10 "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." On the one hand, there was the truth of God and the righteousness of God which said the soul that sins shall die and the wages of sin is death. On the other hand, there was the mercy of God and the love of God which wanted to forgive and love and restore. There was no meeting ground between these two. Mercy and love on one hand, righteousness and truth on the other. No meeting place, and yet God, who is never at a loss for what to do, found a way to bring them together. That happened on the cross.

Truth and righteousness and mercy and love met together on the cross. God was perfectly holy, perfectly righteous. He demanded that sin should be judged. He was perfectly loving, perfectly merciful. He paid the ransom price. That is the love of God and that is the humility. Even there when He was hanging on the cross, people mocking Him, making fun of Him, spitting on Him, what not. And He says, "Father, forgive them. The divine humility!

But isn't that what the Christmas story is all about? I love to talk of the Christmas story.

Luke 2: When the angels appeared to the shepherds, the message that they brought was "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior which is Christ the Lord." and I love this. They didn't say unto all of mankind. They didn't say for the good people or for the nation of Israel. They didn't say all that. Unto you, and you, and you, is born in the city of David, a Savior which is Christ the Lord.

Moving on a couple of verses – Peace on earth and goodwill among men, or towards men. When sin came, it separated man from God. Don't you remember what Isaiah says? The Lord's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear nor His hand shortened that it cannot save. But your sins have separated you from God. There was a separation. And yet Jesus, King – peace on earth, goodwill towards men. He reconciled man with God.

2 Corinthians 5:20 "Those of us who are born again, to us has been given the ministry of reconciliation. We are ambassadors of Christ pleading with the world, be reconciled unto God." That is the ministry of Christ which has been given to you and to me.

Let me draw your attention to one last verse in Hosea. When God saw the ingratitude of Israel and how many times they were wandering, He said "enough is enough."

1:6b "I will no longer have mercy upon the house of Israel."

1:9b "You are not my people. I will not be your God." He's rejecting them. And yet, even in the rejection, look at 1:10b "It shall come to pass that in the place where it was said to them 'You are not my people' there it shall be said unto them 'You are the sons of the living God.'" Even in the rejection, He leaves them with some hope. Rejected but not utterly forsaken. There is still a glimmer of hope. You shall be called the sons of the living God of the children of the living God.

1 Peter 2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

What Hosea prophesied hundreds of years before Christ has been fulfilled because of the Cross. You were not a people, but now you are the people of God. You had not obtained mercy but have now obtained mercy. And it doesn't stop there. Go back one verse – You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and best of all, His own special people. This is the same phrase which is used in the Old Testament to talk of Israel. We read this in Exodus 19:5-6, Deuteronomy 7:6 "My special people." And now the same phrase is used in the New Testament to talk of every blood-bought son and daughter of the Most High. He delights to call us His own special people. And who are these special people? The outcasts of the world; the rejected, the despised. Why do I say this? For the Bible says very clearly. For you know your calling, brethren, that not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty have been called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. The weak things to confound the mighty. So that's what you and I are – foolish, weak, the base people of the world. And God delights to call us His own special people because Jesus came.

Hosea was a great man. His love for Gomer was incredible. But what Jesus did is at a totally different level. Hosea bought back his wife by paying for her, money and some goods. Jesus bought you and me back by paying for us with His own blood. And therefore, He says: What more could I have done? In Isaiah 5 in the Song of the Vine: What more could I have done? God the Father gave His very best for you. His Son. And He bought you and me back by paying for us with His own blood. We were His; we had strayed and He purchased us back paying His own blood.

Here I want to point out one more thing before we move on, and that is that Jesus bought back far more than what Adam lost. Now we are conditioned to thinking that Adam lost his walk with God

and so on, and Jesus bought it back. But I want to point out here a nuance that that is this: Adam's walk with God, he could see God and talk with God. His walk with God was conditional upon his obedience and upon his righteousness. Your walk with God is conditional upon the righteousness and obedience of the Son, the Lord Jesus.

Adam walked with God as long as he obeyed. At any moment he could have fallen, and he did fall one day. We know that. but the day is coming when the born-again children of God will. Be in their redeemed bodies. The nature of sin would be removed, and then you will never ever lose your walk with God. Even the thought of sin will be taken away from you. They will never again come, even a shadow between you and your God. And on that day you will be able to truly sing, "I am my beloved's and He is mine, and His banner over me is love." Because Jesus came. A right standing with God is what He purchased for us.

And a right standing with God banishes fear of every kind, loneliness of every kind. These are two of our greatest enemies.

- **Fear:** Why? if those people were to know what all I have done. All of us have got some dirty secrets hidden in the cupboard which we don't want anyone to know about. What if the other person knows? But Jesus knows the worst things about us. Everything that you have done is laid bare before His eyes. All your worst secrets, He knows, and yet He loves us. His love is not conditional upon your being good. He loves you anyway. That is how He is. So fear goes out. What have I to be afraid of? You want to play my entire life as a movie before everybody along with all its dirty secrets? I don't have to be afraid. And I will be the first person to stand up and say, "Yes, I did all those things. But I'm washed. I'm redeemed. I'm sanctified. I'm righteous in God's sight. Go on! Nothing to be afraid of. No fear of anything.
- **Loneliness:** No loneliness either. In today's complex, complicated world that we are living in, you can be in the middle of a crowd of people and yet be very, very lonely. But when Jesus comes into the heart, when He reconciles God with man, loneliness goes out of the window. You can be all alone without anybody around you and still be at peace. Before coming to Christ, you are in a crowd and you feel lonely. After coming to Christ, you can be alone without anybody around you for miles and you would be at peace. That is what He came into our life to do.

But it was not easy. And here I'll tell a story and then bring it all to a close. I don't know whether you've heard of a man called Sankey. All of us have heard of D.L. Moody. He had a partner called Ira Sankey. It is said that Moody preached the gospel, but Sankey sang the Gospel. Moody and Sankey went to England for a series of meetings. They were travelling from one place to another by train and they had some time to pass. So Sankey bought a newspaper and started reading it. at the end of the paper, there was a poem written by somebody whom he had never heard of. It was a poem called "There were Ninety and Nine." He read it and was impressed by the lyrics. He cut it out of the paper and put it in his pocket.

Soon they reached their destination where they were to host another series of meetings. And people had come to the station to receive them. Moody had a very peculiar habit – he would suddenly announce so-and-so is going to talk or sing or whatever without giving them notice. So without saying a word to Sankey, Moody announced that Sankey was going to sing a special song for the people. Sankey was list because he was not prepared. He didn't know what to sing. And then suddenly, this song came to his mind. He didn't know any tune for the song; he just prayed a quick prayer, sat at the piano, started playing the tune as it flowed, and he started singing 'There were Ninety and Nine'.

There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold,
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold –
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"Lord, Thou has here Thy ninety and nine;
Are they not enough for Thee?"
But the Shepherd mad answer: "This of mine
Has wandered away from me;
And although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find my sheep,
I go to the desert to find my sheep."

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Now how dark was the night the Lord passed thro'
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry –
So sick and helpless and ready to die;
So sick and helpless and ready to die.

"Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way
That mark out the mountain's track?"
"They were shed for one who had gone astray
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back."
"Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?"
"They are pierced tonight by many a thorn,
They are pierced tonight by many a thorn."

And all through the mountains, thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a glad cry to the gate of heaven,
"Rejoice! I have found my sheep!"
And the angels echoed around the throne,
"Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own,
Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!"

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou was slain, and has redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

¹⁰ And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

¹¹ And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

¹² Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

¹³ And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

¹⁴ And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that lives for ever and ever.

What else can I do? How else can we respond to this amazing love, to this divine humility, to this Hound of Heaven, to the One who loves us in spite of what we are, who looks at us through the Blood and sees not our sin, our failure, our shortcoming, our wrinkle, our spot? But He sees us pure. He sees us holy. He sees us with the righteousness of Christ. What else can we do but fall down and worship Him, and live for Him? May we lay down our lives on the altar, living as living sacrifices; that's what the Word says. Offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God.

We serve a great God. May our lives reflect our gratitude, remembering that we are His workmanship, created unto good works before the world began.

May the Lord bless this meditation to our hearts.
