

God Longs to Restore His People

DARRELL DELANEY

The book of Hosea has taken us on a raw and emotional journey through betrayal, judgment, sorrow, and persistent love. Now, in this final episode of our Hosea series on *Groundwork*, we will explore how the story does not end in devastation, but in divine invitation. Even after everything, God says: Return to me. We will uncover the powerful imagery of restoration in Hosea's closing chapters and discover how this ancient prophecy still calls us back to the heart of God today, next on *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in our concluding part of our three-part series...short series...on the book of Hosea; and if you have been following along with us, you know we have covered Hosea's unusual, prophetic call and symbolic marriage in the first episode; and in the second episode, we explored the heartache of Israel's betrayal and the sobering messages of God's judgment there; and in this final episode, we get to witness one of the most beautiful shifts in the entire Bible, from justice to mercy, and from discipline to reconciliation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, we are going to look primarily at Hosea 11 and 14 in this final episode of this series; 14 is the final chapter—there are 14 chapters in Hosea; but we are going to start with Hosea 11, where, through Hosea, God is speaking here: When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. ²But the more they were called, the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images. ³It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. ⁴I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them. ⁵Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent? ⁶A sword will flash in their cities; it will devour their false prophets and put an end to their plans. ⁷My people are determined to turn from me. Even though they call me God Most High, I will by no means exalt them. ⁸(But) how can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboyim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. ⁹I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man—the Holy One among you. I will not come against their cities.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, Scott; so, this passage is so intimate, because, I mean, it kind of reads like an anguished parent who is talking to a child who has gone astray: Wayward child—prodigal son/daughter—come back to me; I love you. I am remembering how I taught you how to walk; I am remembering how I fed you and carried you and loved you tenderly, even though you turned away to worship false gods. This is not just disobedience, this is rejection of God's love, and God is feeling that pain right now.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, we've got a little bit of an imagery shift here. Most of Hosea uses the image of marriage, like God is the spouse—the husband of Israel; but now we have had a shift to God as divine parent...as the father.

You know, I think we have all had it, maybe, sometimes with our kids; and I remember one time years ago, even though I always told my daughter: Do not walk away from me when we are at the store. You stay right with me, you know. Well, we were at a bookstore at a small mall, and Allison, she was gone...she was just gone, and I couldn't find her; and you know, panic rises in your throat very, very...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, I know that one.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Very quickly when that happens, right? So finally, you know, I mean, after the five minutes of panicking and searching, I found her; and of course, immediately I am just angry. It was like: How many times have I told you not to walk away from me? Then in the next minute it is like: Oh, man; it is so good to see you, honey. And that is God here, right? He goes from this anger that a sword will flash in their cities; and then it is like he takes a deep breath. He sighs and he says: How can I do that? No, I cannot do that; I cannot do that; my compassion is aroused. God's love is the foundation of who God is.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; even in his righteous anger, the compassion wins out: How can I give you up? Like you just mentioned there. I mean, we see here that God's judgment is never his final word. Love is his final word; and this passage can speak directly to us, too. How many of us have wandered, even after experiencing God's grace? I mean, we sometimes credit ourselves or others for what God has done, and yet, when we come to our senses, we turn back. We don't find the judge there. We find the loving Father with his arms open, ready to accept us; and I am so glad that our God does not hold our sins against us. I am glad that this is the God who knows when our heart is sincere, and when we turn to him, he is ready to shower us with mercy.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; God's love is always there. Even when we are heading the other way, God is always at our back. He is the hound of heaven. Turn around and God is there. Turning around...that is the major image for repentance in the Old Testament. Now, in the New Testament, there is a Greek word called *metanoia*, which is almost like a change of mind; but in Hebrew, the main verb for to repent is *shuv*, which literally means you turn around. You are heading one direction, you've got to turn around and go the totally opposite direction; and what Hosea 11 is saying here is that when you do that, the minute you do turn around, God is there; and all God's love is there; and all of God's compassion is aroused. Now, it's a little bit curious that God ends this part of Hosea 11 by saying: I will not come against their cities, because, as a matter of fact, in the end, Israel does get destroyed. I think what this is saying is that in the longest possible run, God is always going to come back to his people, and ultimately, his people will come back to him. So, that is the loving message here.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, there is also, too, Scott, a prophetic nod here. I mean, that verse where it says: Out of Egypt I called my son. Matthew later quotes that for Jesus. You remember when they had the census and they heard in the dream that they had to go to Egypt, and then God told them that Herod has died and you can return. In this verse is the fulfillment of that. So, Hosea has prophetic words there that reflect, not only Israel's history, but the foreshadowing of Christ, because Christ will redeem and be faithful, where Israel has failed; and where Jesus shows his obedience, even though Israel has strayed in their history and their past, and Jesus now invites us into the family of God by God's grace.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; but really, what Hosea...what God through Hosea does here, is he just sort of does a summary of redemption. He retells the whole story of the exodus from Egypt and how it was God who did all those things; and in God's eyes, that was sort of like the tender actions of a parent raising a child. So, it is a recapitulation here of the whole history of Israel's redemption; and then only to see them turn around and not give God the credit; not give God the worship; building altars to the Baal, one of the things we talked about

in Deuteronomy earlier. The other thing that you find in the book of Deuteronomy is that God says: Remove all the altars. Once you get into Canaan...it is a pagan land...take down all those Baal altars...take down all those Asherah poles. Don't leave them up there so you will be tempted to worship, but they didn't remove all of them. Oh, they removed some, but not all—not all. So, this...you know, this is gratitude? God brings them out of Egypt and raises them tenderly like lifting a child to the cheek? What a tender image that was; but then, they turn right around and do exactly what God specifically warned them not to do and they worshiped Baal...they worshiped Asherah. No wonder God gets so angry in the verses we just read.

DARRELL DELANEY

You know what is interesting is that even though God had that anger, he does not ignore it or brush it under the rug and act like it is not happening. He still does not give up on them. He still makes a way back to him. That is actually good for us as well, because our lives are messy and our lives are stained by sin, and we have often turned to false gods and other idols and things like that, metaphorically speaking; and we can still hear in the background God's voice saying: *Shuv*; return; come back. I am waiting for you; turn with your whole heart and I will restore you. That is what God wants to do because that longing ache for him to see us come back home? It will never leave God; it will never leave his heart, and it is really beautiful to see.

As we continue in this episode, we want to look at what true love and repentance looks like in Hosea 14, so stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Darrell, let's move to the last chapter of the prophetic book of Hosea: Hosea Chapter 14. If Hosea 11 showed us the tender ache in God's fatherly, parental heart, Hosea 14 kind of gives the roadmap to come home. This is both a plea and a promise. It is a final invitation to repentance and restoration from Hosea 14.

DARRELL DELANEY

It says: Return, Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall! ²Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. ³Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount warhorses. We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion." ⁴"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. ⁵I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; ⁶his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon. ⁷People will dwell again in his shade; they will flourish like the grain, they will blossom like the vine—Israel's fame will be like the wine of Lebanon. ⁸Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a flourishing juniper; your faithfulness comes from me." ⁹Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, here is a chapter, Hosea 14, I think you could read it over and over and not get tired of the sincerity of it; the loveliness of these words. In all, it is just a great imagery—all this agricultural imagery, right? Young shoots, cedars of Lebanon, olive trees; beautiful, beautiful imagery that if we do return...we said that in the previous segment... *shuv*...the Hebrew word for literally to turn around. Stop walking the direction you are going, which only led to idolatry; turn around and walk back to the Father who is right at your back ready to lavish love and compassion; and if you do, and if you let the people realize these things...let them

understand. We said in the previous episode that the people lacked knowledge of God. So, now God wants them to get that knowledge back, so that they can then flourish like all of these crops and trees and olive branches and vineyards that God uses here as imagery.

DARRELL DELANEY

The beautiful thing about God is that he gives you the words that he wants you to use. So, he is saying: Hey, why don't you come in my presence and bring your heartfelt repentance. Take your words with you and return to the Lord. Remember what I have done for you in Egypt; remember how I brought you out; remember how I fed you in the desert; remember how I blessed you, protected you; your clothes never wore out, your shoes never wore out; remember and return to me. Sometimes we make repentance a little harder than it needs to be, Scott. I mean, sometimes we think we need to, metaphorically speaking, clean ourselves up before we get in the bath: I've got to get my life together before I come to church...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

I've got to get my life together before I come to God; but God is just saying: Will you just come? Will you just acknowledge your sin and just come to me and I will help you with all the details.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Bring your words to me. What an interesting image. Don't bring sacrifices with all its kinds of bells and whistles, just bring sincere words and say: Please forgive me. That is what God says here: Just come and say: Please forgive me; and I will. That is all it takes. They cannot be saved by their idols; they are powerless; any other false securities. We all have this in our lives, right? What are the things we cling to, even today, that gives us a false sense of security? If it isn't God, then it is a false sense of security. So, God says, you know, you come to me; and in verse 4, God's gorgeous response here:

"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely.

Flash forward to the Apostle Paul in Ephesians: 2:8 paraphrased It is by grace you have been saved and not by works that you should boast. You are saved by grace alone; and that is exactly what we see in Hosea Chapter 14, a book that has been full of doom and gloom, as we have seen in the previous two episodes as well; and yet, it concludes on this note of God's *chesed*—his core characteristic, lovingkindness—and I think *chesed* is the Old Testament version of what is *charis* in the New Testament: grace.

DARRELL DELANEY

It's a beautiful thing, because God is looking to renew them spiritually. He is saying: Could you get rid of the false securities; the things you are holding onto? You think it is Assyria and their war chariots; you think it is financial security; whatever your safety net is, if you think it is political power...whatever...I want you to know that only God saves. Hosea reminds them that only God saves. None of these things save; and so, we see a God whose anger has passed, and now his love remains for them. And we live in a time where we need God to makes us as fruitful as these images that you just read, Scott. We need God to restore us; to bring us to fruition so that we can be a blessing; so people can, so to speak, hide under our shade, because we have laid our lives out to God and allowed him to use us. Now, we are a blessing to other people. It is really about us being a blessing to other people and bringing glory to God; and that is hard to do in our time, isn't it? Sometimes it is hard to receive the true change that comes from being forgiven by God so that we can live that way.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The final verse of Hosea, again, in a book full of some very raw imagery; full of some booming words of doom and judgment from God; and yet, it just kind of ends with saying: Who is wise? Let them realize these things. It is kind of like, oh, I thought this book would end with a bang, but it just is sort of like, you know: Now realize this, right? But it says: Who is wise; and that connects with the wisdom, right? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, we read in Proverbs. Having the right knowledge of God, having

reverential fear of God, that is what wisdom is all about; and so here, kind of touching on that, God says through Hosea: Who is wise? Well, if you are wise, then you will realize these things. And you know, we do this every day, Darrell. Repentance is not often a one-and-done thing. We all, you know, are still struggling with the old self, and that is why the New Testament calls us to this daily pattern of dying and rising...dying and rising...dying with Christ so that we can rise with Christ is a perpetual process of staying with the God who always stays with us.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, the end of this book kind of reads like a proverb. You mentioned that: Who is wise? Let him realize this; and when you realize it, you are invited to ponder and discern or recognize God's ways that are good. I mean, he wants us to live the lifestyle of repentance. I mean, basically it tells us in the New Testament to keep in step with the Spirit of God...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, Galatians 5.

DARRELL DELANEY

Not just to do something...oh, I said I was sorry that one time, and now we are good. No; we are living the life of repentance; and it is not just my repentance that will be affected. It will be the community that I live in; the neighbor that I am in contact with; the co-worker that I am in contact with; everybody in the environment will see and live into how we live, love, and serve.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, as we wrap up this episode, and this three-part series, we will just kind of look back and summarize the entire book of Hosea. So, stay tuned for that.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and over the past few episodes of this series, we have seen this arc, Scott. We have seen the symbolic marriage of Hosea and Gomer in the first few chapters of the book. We have also seen the indictments and the grief that God has in Chapters 4-13; and now we have this hopeful invitation in Chapter 14; and as we reflect on this book, there are many different currents running through the book of Hosea, and what they reveal about God, and how he wants discipleship, repentance, and his persistent love to look in their lives; and we touched on the beauty of Hosea 14. We realized that it is not just the final chapter, but is definitely a through line that has been echoing through even the darkest moments; and we see it again in Chapter 6.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. ²After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence. ³Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.

So, this is aspirational at this point in Hosea. It does not fully happen, of course, but this is what God wants to hear. He wants the people to turn around; to change the direction in which they have been walking; acknowledge the Lord. As surely as the sun rises; as surely as the spring rains have come, God will shower us with mercy and blessing; and we saw that promised also in Hosea Chapter 11, where God really just shows his fatherly heart in all the compassion of God that gets aroused.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it is a beautiful thing, this discipleship in poetic form. It does not ignore the sin that they have done, and the consequences of that sin, but it also underlines the certainty of God's ability to restore them. Remember; he wants them to remember, repent, and return to him...*shuv*...like we have been saying the Hebrew word to return, 180 degrees; and when we see that happening as an ongoing movement in a life that is directed toward

God, God can do some beautiful things there.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, it is interesting, Hosea may not...for a lot of us...may not be the most familiar book in the Bible...that Chapter 11 that we looked at...that beautiful portrait of the loving Father, that is quite well-known, but a lot of the book is not very well known; but Paul picks up on it, actually, in Romans—in Romans Chapter 9. So, we remember in the first episode, we looked at the fact that Hosea was told to marry a promiscuous woman named Gomer. They have children together, and they get symbolic names; so, one child is named, you know: Not My People. Another one is named: Not Loved. I mean, terrible names to give kids, right? But they were loaded with meaning. So, Paul picks up this in Romans 9:25, 26, where God says: ²⁵[As he says in Hosea:] “I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people; and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one,” ²⁶and “In the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘children of the living God.’”

This is, of course, in that part of Romans 9-11 where Paul is wrestling with what is God going to do with the Jewish people now that they rejected Jesus Christ as their true Messiah. What is going to happen? Paul is just torn apart here: Are they gone forever? Will they ever accept Jesus as their Messiah? And he keeps holding out the hope that, yes, yes, yes; someday all Israel will be saved, and that just reminds him of Hosea and the quirky names Hosea and Gomer had to give their kids, and he turns it on its head here.

DARRELL DELANEY

I love when scripture interprets scripture like that. Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, sees this in Hosea and he says: You are a people when you were not people. I mean, Peter picks it up in 1 Peter 2. He says that: verse 9 paraphrased They are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. So, it is really beautiful how we see scripture interpreting itself in that way, because the Holy Spirit is making sure that we tie all the pieces together to see the heart of God.

We have a few takeaways here, as we wrap up this program, and we want to talk about them. I think one of the first things that we need to remember is that God’s love is unrelenting, even when we are unfaithful; even when we pursue other gods or chase hollow promises; go through the motions, God is still pursuing us; even though he will discipline us because he is holy, he never lets us go because the covenant love of God...the chesed that you were mentioning earlier...means that he won’t give up on us, no matter what we have done.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; the second takeaway: Repentance is relational; so, true repentance is not just, you know, behavior modification or something like that. It is about returning our whole person to God’s person. The call to return in Hosea is a call to come home; come home to God. You know, I think of Psalm 90: Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. And that is what God wants to see, for wayward people to come home to God; to make God their spiritual home. Today, I think, Darrell, in a world of substitutes and distractions; with so much going on that could bring us down; so much that causes us grief and upset; nevertheless, God says: Cut through all the noise and come to me. I think that call is more urgent than ever.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it just reminds me, too, Scott, of when the Israelites were thinking that their worship, their singing, their sacrifices were going to be sufficient; and we understand that God wants a heart, and he wants someone to stand in the offering plate with their lives, if you will. I come here to do your will, Father; obeying your voice is better than sacrifices; and so, Lord, I thank you that you are showing us this is the way to true repentance. The third thing that we think about here is that restoration is real. He does not just forgive us...God doesn’t. He transforms us...he brings us into growth and flourishing and new life; as we change with the grace that we live in from him, we bloom and we blossom.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; that is the thing. We always say, like in baptism, baptism washes away our sins...yes; but it also baptizes us with the Holy Spirit so that we are changed people. Paul at one point in Roman 6 says, you know:

Some of the people were saying: Well, let's sin more so that grace can abound. You know, God likes to forgive us; let's give him lots to forgive. Paul says: If you have been changed in baptism...if you have been transformed...if you have been restored by God, you cannot even want that anymore. Thankfully, God does do that for us.

So, you know, as the story of Hosea closes, Darrell; the invitation remains open. Return to me, God says; come back; be healed; live in my presence. Darrell, that is the message, not just for ancient Israel, but it is for every one of us today. Thanks be to God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee, and we hope you will join us again next time as we continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

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