

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
February 15, 2015**

A Husband Renews His Vows

- 1. Motivated by amazing love**
- 2. Vowing undeserved blessings to his wife**

Hymns: 92 – “Come, Glory in his Name” –
Distribution: 81, 134 – Closing: “Farewell to
Alleluia”

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Hosea 2:14-17,19,20 –

“Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. ¹⁵ There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt.

¹⁶ “In that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’ ¹⁷ I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked.

¹⁹ I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. ²⁰ I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.

Yesterday, all across our country couples were renewing their love for each other. As Valentine’s Day was celebrated, couples who are dating shared their love and feelings with each other. And married couples, in a way, renewed their vows to each other. Words were said. Gifts were given. Time was shared.

From a pastor’s perspective, Valentine’s Day is a wonderful holiday, both for themselves and also as their members’ marriages are given a boost in renewing their love and commitment.

I would imagine that there were even couples who formally renewed their wedding vows yesterday. Pastors love presiding over the

renewal of vows! We’ve done a number of those down through the years here at Holy Trinity. What a happy occasion it is when two people who have been married for five, twenty-five, or fifty years desire to publicly express their love and commitment to each other and to God as they renew their vows!

On this Valentine’s weekend, we will see the same thing happen in the sermon text before us. We will read about a renewal of wedding vows. But this is a strange scene, for only one of the two parties is present. Can you imagine that? What a strange scene it would be for a pastor to be called by a husband to set up a renewal of vows at church, and for him to announce, “She won’t be coming; only I will be there!” Yet this morning, that strange scene will play out. **Today, let’s focus on the theme, “A Husband Renews His Vows,” and learn two important lessons about this strange situation.**

1. Motivated by amazing love

We read the Old Testament lesson from Hosea 2: *“Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt.”*

What do you remember about the prophet Hosea? Has he crossed your desk in your Bible reading lately?

If it’s been a while, here are some basics. Hosea served as a prophet during the Old Testament times when the nation was divided into two kingdoms. Up until the time of Solomon, there had been one united country, but then civil war divided the nation into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Hosea served primarily as a prophet to the northern kingdom. He served during the last years before God allowed the Assyrians to carry the north off into exile. He preached for anywhere from 40-80 years to the people of Israel.

It was a bad time. It was a time when the nation did not deserve to have God speak words of love and faithfulness to his people.

Instead, Hosea repeatedly had to preach words of law and judgment. Listen to some words from the first two chapters of his book: *“When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, ‘Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife woman and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD.’”*³ *So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.*⁴ *Then the LORD said to Hosea, ‘Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel...’*⁶ *Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, ‘Call her Lo-Ruhamah (‘not loved’), for I will no longer show love to the house of Israel, that I should at all forgive them.’*⁷ *Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the LORD their God, will save them.’*⁸ *After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son.*⁹ *Then the LORD said, ‘Call him Lo-Ammi (‘not my people’), for you are not my people, and I am not your God. ... Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink.’ ... She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold—which they used for Baal.’”*

Did you catch the object lesson that Hosea was to use? As the prophet sent by God, he was supposed to marry a whore. He was to marry a woman who publicly was known as promiscuous. He, the pastor, would be an object lesson on what the country was doing to the Lord! It was indeed a bad time in Israel.

What were their sins?

- They had made and found other gods.
- Their leaders had fashioned two golden calves to worship, at Bethel and Dan.
- They had made sacrifices to them.
- They had worshiped the dirty God named Baal, imported from Phoenicia.

- Their dirty worship of this dirty god included lewd, immoral, unspeakable acts. They didn’t need cable TV or the Internet to bring immoral images into their sight. You just had to find a grove or hill to see them.
- Materialism and chasing after luxuries are mentioned as problematic.
- And international treaties with godless countries had angered the Lord.

It was a bad time in Israel. What should the Lord do?

Can you imagine counseling a husband whose wife had left him for other women, who had deserted him and gone her way with others? Scripture certainly tells us that a spouse is not bound to the marriage in that case. What should he be counseled to do? What might counselors, even Christian counselors, tell a husband to do whose wife has become a whore? **In incredible words of amazing love, God renews his marriage vow to his people. He says he loves her and wants to woo her back. His love burns hotter than his justice! How can this be?**

His love burns so hot that he will exercise tough love and chasten his people. He will lead her to the desert. He will give her bad times in order to bring her to her senses. In verses preceding our text, the Lord says, *“I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.’”*

The Lord would do what it would take to win his wife back. He would send troubles. And eventually he would be forced to send them into exile. Would this be a blessing to them? Yes, for it was done in love with a purpose! It was intended to win his love back. **This amazing love is what motivated the Lord!**

Isn’t it amazing that God felt that way about them? Isn’t it incredible that he would go to such lengths to win them back? If that’s where our lesson ends today, we have fallen short of

applying it. It is amazing that the Lord would feel this way about us.

After all, the shoe fits in describing our situation. Our Baals and idols might not be shaped out of wood and stone and placed on altars, but you certainly have them. They can take many shapes. What excites your heart more than the Lord?

- Do your idols take the shape of the toys that fill your house and garage?
- Do they take the shape of the treasures of the world?
- Do they take the shape of dollar bills and credit cards?
- Do they take the shape of your job and schedule to the extent that they sacrifice the importance of worship at God's house or daily devotion to his Word?
- Do they take the shape of secret, sinful activities that you would not care to divulge?
- Does your Baal take the shape of yourself, your selfishness and stubbornness?
- If security cameras and microphones could follow you around for a week, what Baals and idols would they reveal?

Yet what does our Lord do? He summons. He calls. He woos. He courts. And when necessary, he chastens. All to bring us back to him. **All done in love, motivated by his amazing grace.**

2. Vowing undeserved blessings to his wife

The husband speaks again. The Lord speaks and describes not only his feelings but also the future. How will things be? What does he intend, as he courts his unfaithful wife back to him? We read, *"In that day," declares the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.' I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked."*

The first of the blessings that the husband will do for his wife is to remove the Baals and idols that plague her. There is a play on words here in the original language. The words "my

master" literally say, "My Baal." The word Baal can be a generic word for master or lord. It also was the proper name for this dirty god that the Israelites had been plagued by. Perhaps this Baal had been so associated with the Lord from Israel's past that they thought he was really Baal! If so, a deeper meaning than our translation says that **they will no longer call the Lord "my Baal" because he is going to remove those false gods from among them, no matter what it takes!**

Then the Lord pours forth a number of blessings that will be present in the future for his wife: *"I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD."* Look at that list of undeserved blessings. He will betroth her in RIGHTEOUSNESS and JUSTICE. These are words that describe a legal situation:

- Righteousness – Literally, what is right and proper. A relationship of perfection, with perfect actions and a perfect standing.
- Justice – Properly, a verdict. This relationship would be declared perfect in any court of law.

These blessings can only be secured and granted because of what their promised Messiah would do. The Messiah whom God had promised – his own Son Jesus Christ – would come to live a holy life for them and to die on the cross to wash them clean of their sins. This is how they could be declared holy and righteous in God's sight! It's reminiscent of the familiar hymn verse:

**Jesus, your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Mid flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.**

The husband would also betroth the wife to himself in LOVE and COMPASSION. These are words that describe the emotional attachment that these two would share:

- Love – This Old Testament word for love focuses on kindness, mercy, and pity. It's been translated loving-

kindness in older translations. It especially emphasizes the favor that a superior individual grants to one lower than himself. This is a comforting word to us, as the almighty God has had such mercy on us.

- Compassion – This word comes from the Hebrew word for “womb.” Overtones of it are that such deep feelings come from the seat of the emotions, the deep insides of an individual, and that it’s similar to the deep connection a parent has for their child. This is how deep God’s love runs!
- And finally, God says he will betroth his beloved in FAITHFULNESS, literally stability, steadiness, firmness, unmoving and faithful. Always there.

All of this is reminiscent of the words of Ephesians 5: *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”*

Dear friends, such blessings are yours from your Lord, your husband. Undeserved blessings, yet blessings freely given!

On this Valentine’s weekend, what precious lessons we learn from our faithful spiritual husband:

Our Husband Renews His Vows

- 1. Motivated by amazing love**
- 2. Vowing undeserved blessings to his wife**

As we close our look at his renewal of vows today, we can joyfully recognize that this will all culminate in a wedding reception that will be a banquet like we have never seen. This will all culminate in heaven itself, where we will rejoice eternally with the One who has loved us, saved us, and preserved our faith.

“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the

Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” (Revelation 19:6-9) Amen.