

**Perfect Love from a
Perfect Father**
Thanksgiving 2018
Hosea 11:1-11

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I. PRAYER

- i. God, I pray that this morning every person listening to your Word would encounter your love in a new and life-changing way.

II. INTRODUCTION

a. **Have you ever had an experience with a someone or a first impression with someone that negatively shaped your perception of that person only to discover that your perception was wrong?**

- i. Example: One summer while I was in Middle School...I was headed to summer camp.
 - But before I went, my mom had talked to the mother of another guy my age who was going to the same summer camp and they had just moved into the area.
 1. So, he didn't know anyone.
 2. And my mom told me that I had to be friends with him and make sure he had fun at camp.
 - So, I responded like any selfish 13-year-old would.
 1. I vowed to stay away from this guy.
 2. Why? Because my mom told me I had to be friends with him!
 3. And it shaped my perception of him.
 4. When I first met the guy, he was the guy my mom told me I had to be friends with.
 5. So, I didn't like him.
 - But what happened at camp?
 1. Well, we became best friends.



2. Stayed best friends through middle school, high school, and college.
 3. And are great friends to this day.
- I had an experience that created a bias inside me against this person, but I realized that my bias was wrong once I got to know him.
- ii. **This is what psychologists call cognitive bias.**
 - “When someone constructs their own subjective social reality based on their past perceptions and not on objective input.”¹
 - iii. **Or maybe you move into a new neighborhood and the first time you see one of your neighbors...**
 - You see him the front yard yelling at his kids.
 1. And that experience creates a bias within you.
 2. You think this guy is unhinged.
 3. You think this guy is a terrible dad.
 4. You think this guy would be a bad influence on your family.
 - So, based on that perception, you don’t engage this neighbor for a long time because of what you think about them.
 1. Until later when you actually do get to know him and you realize that he is actually a great guy.
 2. You just caught him on a bad day.
 3. You didn’t know that he had stepped on a Lego for the 8th time that week and he just lost it with his kids.

¹<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2018/09/19/understanding-biases-and-their-impact-on-our-perceptions/#50eae6817859>



b. All of us have cognitive bias in many different areas in our life.

- i. And it can impact our relationships, our morale in the workplace, our family life, and many other things.
- ii. But one area, that I have seen this impact people in the most profound way is in their view of God.
 - People who have had experiences in their life that have left them with a perception of God in their minds that is not true of the God of the Bible.
- iii. Maybe you grew up in a home that went to church, identified themselves as Christians, and aligned themselves with Christian values.
 - But that was not a good home.
 1. Maybe in that home you experienced some type of abuse.
 2. Maybe your parents were absent.
 3. Maybe you realized early on that the faith of the family was for appearance only and you acted like it at church but when it was just the family was at home it was more like hell.
 - That will shape your perception of God.
- iv. Maybe you've had experience in a church that was unhealthy.
 - Where there was a lot of conflict.
 - That will impact your view of God.
- v. Maybe you've been shamed in a church.
 - That will impact your view of God.



- vi. Maybe over time you've always carried a sense of guilt for not living up to the standard that you ought to live up to as a follower of Christ and your prayers have primarily been concerned with apologizing to God and promising that you'll be better.
 - That will impact your view of God.

c. And this morning for our Thanksgiving Service...what I want to do is I want to stoke gratitude in your heart by constructing a true, biblical image of God for us.

- i. I want to show you the character of the God of the Bible and I want you to contract that to the perception of God you've always had.
 - Because I believe that for many of us today...we need our perception of God to be healed.

III. HOSEA

a. And to do this, I want us to study Hosea 11:1-11.

- i. Let me give you a bit of context of the book of Hosea.
 - Hosea was one of God's prophets during the period of the divided Kingdom of Israel.
 - And God used Hosea to confront Israel (the northern Kingdom) and Judah (the southern Kingdom) with their unfaithfulness to God.
 1. God has made a covenant with His people that He would bless them and they would obey His Word.



2. But God's people didn't obey.
 3. In fact, God's people began to stop worshiping God and began to worship pagan idols instead!
- So, the book of Hosea is famous for its first three chapters where God has Hosea marry a prostitute named Gomer.
 1. And Gomer is unfaithful to Hosea. But Hosea continues to love her and eventually he redeems her. He stays true to the marriage covenant.
 2. And the book of Hosea compares Gomer's infidelity to Israel's infidelity to God.
 3. Even though Israel is unfaithful, God remains faithfully committed to his people and to the covenant he made with them.
- ii. **And I believe that for many followers of Christ, they have a perception of God in their head that the more unfaithful they are in their walk with Christ, the more God distances Himself from them, and the more faithful and disciplined they are, the more God draws near to them.**
- We say things if we haven't been diligently spending time with God...that we are far from God.
 - But the book of Hosea depicts for us an image of God that although we might be all over the map when it comes to our faithfulness...he never waivers in his faithfulness, his nearness, and his fatherly love for us.



iii. And later in Hosea, in ch.11, we get this beautiful description of God's perfect fatherly love for us.

- And I want us to study Hosea 11 as a way of experiencing God's love together this morning.

b. Read Hosea 11:1-11.

i. I want to break this passage down into four sections and in each section we will learn of a different aspect of God's love for us.

IV. #1 – GOD WANTS YOU

a. Have you ever thought about the idea that God wants a relationship you?

i. And the current you, not the future you.

ii. Our relationship with God is not this cold, religious relationship where he establishes rules, we follow, and that defines our relationship.

- No God wants to be with you.
- And I know this because God is the one who took the first step to come and get you.

b. Read Hosea 11:1-4

i. Hosea is referring here to God rescuing Israel from their slavery in Egypt.

- When God's people were in bondage, it was God who came and broke their chains and led them to freedom.



- It was God who had the idea, God who made the plan, and God who initiated that plan.
- ii. And even though the people of God were still complaining and still being unfaithful while God was rescuing them, he still wanted them.
 - Israel didn't even know it, but they were the recipients of God's tender care.
 1. **Re-read v.3-4** [with commentary].

c. As many of you know, my wife and I are foster parents for Fairfax County.

- We don't have a child with us now but did earlier in the year and our youngest daughter we adopted through the foster care system.
- i. And doing this means we have an understanding of the trauma that many children experience here in our area and we also know about the many kids who right now do not have a home, they don't have parents, and there is no one willing to adopt them.
 - They are waiting children.
 1. Many of the children who reach the point where it is difficult to find them a home are children who are older, have health problems, or behavioral problems.
 2. It's a lot for a family to take on. It's a lot of sacrifice.
 - But the reality is that many of these kids have developed behavioral issues because they've never experienced a stable home with parents that love them faithfully even if they are unfaithful.



ii. And in Hosea's depiction of God rescuing Israel from Egypt and in your own life if you are a follower of Jesus...

- What God has done is like a family coming to a child who has been waiting years for someone to lovingly take him or her in...and saying: You can be forever a part of our family."
 1. You don't have to earn it.
 2. You don't have to prove yourself.
 3. This was our idea. It's at our expense.
 4. We want you in our home.
 5. We want to give you our love.
 6. We want to be the ones who raise you in this life to be successful.
 7. We want to be the ones to take care of your needs.
 8. And you can't mess this up...because we want you.
 9. Not a future version of you...the current version of you.

iii. This is what God has done for you in Christ...because he loves you and he wants you.

- He, at the expense of His Son Jesus on the cross, made a way that we could be reconciled to God.
- He did this without being prompted by us.
- He did this not because we proved our faithfulness to him.
- No, in love he adopted us into his family.
 1. Ephesians 1:3-6 -³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,* ⁴ *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should*



be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

d. Many of us think of God as a harsh authority who is frustrated with us because we just can't get it right.

- i. Maybe we envision a Father who regrets bringing us home, who regrets the decision to adopt us.
 - Because he doesn't like us and he doesn't want us.
- ii. But that's a perception of God that needs to be thrown out and replaced by the image of the Father of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15.
 - Jesus tells a parable of a son who demands his inheritance early from his Father.
 1. Leaves home and spends it all in wild living.
 2. Ends up homeless and with nothing.
 - The son decides to move back home thinking his Father would let him be a slave on his estate.
 1. He believed his own unfaithfulness caused his Father to no longer love him and no longer want him.
 - And on his journey home, when he expected to encounter the anger and shame of his Father...what happened?
 1. Luke 15:20-24 - *"²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and*



felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'²² But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate."

- A Father sprinting out of pure joy and compassion because His Son or Daughter is home [PICTURE THAT] is the image of God you need to have in your head.

V. #2 – GOD WILL DISCIPLINE YOU

a. Read Hosea 11:5-7.

b. And you might go...oh man that is not as cozy as the first one you talked about.

- i. But see, I am talking about God's perfect love for us.
 - And true love does not sweep problems and issues under the rug.
 1. Many of you grew up in homes where issues were ignored and swept under the rug.
 2. Only to fester...
- ii. Parents who truly love their kids discipline their kids.
 - On one side, it's unloving to ignore your child's unloving or disrespectful behavior.



- On the other side, it's unloving to harshly punish your children out of anger as if they owe you something.
- But it is truly loving to discipline your kids in order to teach them what is good for them.

c. Hosea prophesies that due to Israel's unfaithfulness, God is going to allow them to be defeated by the Assyrians.

- i. And as we'll learn in v.8-9, this is not God giving up on Israel but this is God disciplining Israel so that they will learn that it is for their good and joy to be faithful to God and it is destructive in their life to worship idols.
- ii. God does not want you to sin.
 - It is an assault on God's glory when we sin.
 1. It is destructive to ourselves and to others when we sin.
 2. He commands us to be faithful.
 - And sin does produce wrath and anger in God.
 1. He cannot let it go. He cannot ignore it.
 2. That would be against God's character.
 3. God is not a passive and absent Father.
 4. He will deal with sin.
- iii. But, in God's love, he sent Jesus to come and stand in our place and absorb God's wrath for our sin.
 - So, that we could stand before God as holy and righteous.
 - Where God has no wrath against our sin.



- And he can deal with us as sons and daughters whom he wants to lead into a life of joyful faithfulness.
- And that leadership will include discipline.
 1. Hebrews 12:7-8 - *"7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons and daughters. For what son or daughter is there whom their father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons and daughters."*
- iv. **There are times that God allows you to go through hard circumstances and to face the consequences of your actions.**
 - But I think the perception of God that we have when we go through hard times is God angrily punishing us.
 1. Where he sends hard things into our life as a form of retribution kind of like bad karma.
 2. Maybe this was your experience with your parents.
 3. They took their anger out on you instead of lovingly disciplining you.
 4. When you did something wrong. They gave you the silent treatment, treated you as if you didn't belong in the family.
- v. **Our loving Father disciplines us not because he's angry or will disown us, but precisely because he loves us.**
 - And the cross of Jesus Christ declares that God has no more anger towards us.
 1. There is no more punishment to be had.



2. Any discipline in your life is done with love, it is controlled, and God has a plan for you to grow in joy and faithfulness through it.

d. And that is what this next aspect of God's love is all about.

VI. #3 – YOU WARM GOD'S HEART

a. Read v.8-9.

- [Admah & Zoboim are cities God has destroyed earlier in Scripture.]
- i. The reason why God does not rain his wrath down upon us is because Jesus came and took the wrath of God in our place.
 - But the reason that God engineered the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the first place is because His children warm his heart and he has compassion on us.
- ii. If you are a parent, you know what it's like to have compassion on your children and for your heart to be warmed toward them, even when they mess up.

b. The other day my wife had to discipline my son Leland for something.

- i. And she sat him down on the stairs and was explaining to him the consequences he was going to have to receive for what he did.
 - And my Son looks at my wife in the eyes and says: "But mommy, Jesus already took away all of the consequences."



ii. What happened in that moment?

- It warmed our heart towards him!
 1. This was a teaching moment.
 2. Well, buddy, Jesus did take the punishment that we deserve for our sin but our sin still has consequences, so we can learn and grow.
 3. Which is not what he wanted to hear.
- But even though he still got his consequence, it didn't mean that our hearts weren't warm toward him.
 1. We want our son to grow with joy.

iii. And for many of us, when we mess up, when we're not faithful, we're not consistent...we picture God in Heaven just shaking his head in annoyance and frustration at us with a cold heart.

- It seems like in Christianity today we believe that when people come to faith in Christ, they should instantly be fully grown mature followers of Jesus rather than a spiritual infant.
 1. Immediately, you should love the Bible, know how to read it, and do it daily.
 2. You should immediately know how to be obedient to all of God's Word.
 3. You should be an expert in theology and learn to love church overnight.
 4. The fruits of the spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, self-control – should be fully present in your life.
 5. And if not, God is annoyed and frustrated.



- iv. **If you are helping a little 12-month old learn to walk...what do you do?**
- You stand over him. Hold on to him. Cheer him on.
 1. Maybe you have someone sitting on the ground on the other side.
 2. Then you eventually let him go to see if he takes a step or two into the arms of the other person.
 - And what do you do when he takes those steps for the first time?
 1. You cheer! Great job!
 2. You don't say....can't believe you can't take more than two steps.
 - And if that child doesn't make it. He immediately falls when you let go and he can't even take two steps...what do you do?
 1. You cheer! Almost! You're so proud of you! You'll get it!
 - No one says to that child:
 1. "You idiot! Why can't you get your act together. It's just two steps."
 - But listen, for many of us, as we grow and as we mess up, that is our perception of God.
 1. But remember **Hosea 11:3a.**
- v. **See, I believe that for many of us, our Christian walk would be marked by more joy...**
- If we would take the perception of God as being coldly mad at us for not being able to take a few steps on our own...
 - And replace it with an image of God who is warmly cheering for us, coaching us, teaching us, and picking us back up to give it another try.



- He sent Jesus so he could lavish his grace on us and raise us patiently as his adopted children.
 - And we are all still learning how to fully walk...
- vi. You warm his heart and he is a patient Father...which leads to our final aspect of God's love...

VII. #4 – GOD WILL KEEP YOU

a. Read v.10-11

- i. Hosea is giving Israel the good news that although they have been exiled from their promised land, God will one day bring them home.
- And for all of us as followers of Jesus, we are in a bit of an exile experience here in this world.
 - We are God's children but not yet living in God's perfect Kingdom.
 - But God has promised us that he will bring us home at the end of this life for all of eternity.
- ii. God promises to keep his children within his love and his family until it's time to come home.
- If you have been walking with Jesus for a long time, you are not still a follower of Jesus because of you and your strength, you are still a follower of Jesus because of Him!
 1. He has kept you and he will continue to keep you.



- Jude 24
 1. “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy...”
- iii. If you are a child of God...that will never change.
 - You can’t change your identity and if you are a child of God, then you are a child of God.
 - My Son, Leland (who is biological), and my daughter, Christy (who is adopted), will always be my kids.
 1. They’re stuck with me! I’ll always be their daddy.
 2. Even if they mess up.
 - If you didn’t do anything to get salvation...it was all Jesus...then there is nothing you can do to lose salvation.
 1. You are His and He will keep you and He will bring you home.

VIII. CONCLUSION & COMMUNION

a. So, this morning, here is what I want you to do.

- i. I want you to think about all we talked about today.
 - How God wants you.
 - How he does discipline us in love.
 - How we warm his heart.
 - How he will faithfully keep us.
- ii. And I want you to contrast that with the image of God that you have in your head.



- Where does your perception of God need to be more aligned with the perfect love of our perfect Father in Heaven?

b. And if you are a follower of Jesus, I want you to then come forward to the communion table.

i. And I want you to take bread.

- Bread that has been broken to remind us of the broken body of Christ.
 1. And let this remind you that God wanted you so much that he purchased you through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus.
 2. And let it remind you that any discipline in your life is just that, loving discipline, because Jesus' body was broken under the wrath of God.

ii. And I want you to take the cup of juice.

- Deep, dark, red juice that reminds us of the shed blood of Jesus.
 1. And let it remind you that because the blood of Jesus has cleansed from all your sin, you as a child of God warm the heart of God.
 2. And let it remind you that it is because of the blood of Jesus that you will forever be a part of God's family and He will bring you home.

c. If you are not a follower of Jesus...

i. This is the God of the Bible.

- Maybe you have had experiences that has given you a wrong perception of God.
- And I want you to know this morning that you can become His child by placing your faith in Jesus.



d. But, Church, you have a perfect Father in heaven who perfectly loves you.

- i. Let me pray right now that you would believe that and the communion table would remind you.

IX. PRAY

