**8. The Beloved Child**

*Read Hosea 11:1-11*

Having seen a number of metaphors for Israel (grapes in the wilderness, a luxuriant vine, a heifer), now we come to the most tender of all descriptions. Here Hosea shows us that God sees his people as his beloved children – in fact it is as if God takes us through the family photo album to reminisce on special moments he had with his children.

**A. The Father’s Heart *(Hosea 11:1-4)***

1. Read through vv1-4 and note down all the references to how tenderly God has dealt with his children. (N.B. v4c could read *I had lifted them up as an infant to my cheek* – like the NIV.)

2. How does this imagery help us understand God’s commitment to his people?

(cp. Exodus 4:21-23)

3. Consider the following quotation from John Owen:

*“Flesh and blood is apt to have very hard thoughts of God – to think he is always angry…that it is not for poor creatures to draw near to him… Now, there is not anything more grievous to the Lord, nor more subservient to the design of Satan…than such thoughts as these… How unwilling is a child to come into the presence of an angry father! Assure yourself, then, there is nothing more acceptable to the Father, than for us to keep up our hearts to him as the eternal fountain of all that rich grace which flows out to sinners in the blood of Jesus.”*

***John Owen, Communion with God***

1. Does this help us understand how Israel could behave in the way they do in v2?
2. How would you counsel someone who doubted the love of God for them?

**B. The Father’s Grief *(Hosea 11:5-7)***

4. Verse 5 reads *Will they not return to Egypt…* Even though Israel wasn’t physically going to Egypt, they would return to the condition of slavery under the Assyrians (cp. Hosea 8:13; 9:3). **From vv5-7**,

1. What’s going to happen to Israel?
2. Why is this going to happen to Israel?

**C. The Father’s Compassion *(Hosea 11:8-11)***

These verses make up the very heart of Hosea’s prophecy – God’s love has been met with Israel’s rejection and this deserves God’s judgement. Notice the tension here between God’s holiness and God’s love. Admah and Zeboiim (v8) are two of the other cities destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Genesis 19, mentioned in Deuteronomy 29:23).

5. Israel could not be more guilty and more deserving of God’s judgement.

1. But how does God respond here?
2. What has Israel’s rebellion against God done to God’s love for them?

6. In v9 God says he won’t execute his *fierce anger* by destroying Ephraim. Notice that he follows this by explaining why: *For I am God, and not a man – the Holy One among you*.

1. What is it about God being God and not a man that explains why he relents here?
2. Here we find God’s simultaneous commitment to judgement and to salvation. Consider a passage like Galatians 3:10-14. Do we see these elements here? Where do we most clearly see God’s judgement and salvation simultaneously displayed? Why doesn’t God treat us like Admah and Zeboiim?

7. Verses 10-11 reveal the effects of God’s grace towards his people – here God is pictured as a lion. How does this compare to when Hosea previously described God as a lion (5:14-15)?

8. What attributes of God have been revealed as you have studied these verses of Scripture?

*To think about:*

Through so much negativity and stern warnings of judgement, these verses bring this section of Hosea to a close with beautiful words of hope. But what is the fulfilment of this hope? In Matthew’s gospel Hosea 11:1 is quoted – in relation to Jesus having been hidden in Egypt to avoid Herod’s threats, Matthew writes: *And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’ (Matthew 2:15)* Having studied Hosea 11, this application of that verse should puzzle us – after all Hosea 11:1 is not a passage that is pointing forward to the Messiah, but pointing back to Israel’s history. Does Matthew not know how to read his Bible?

The answer is that Matthew’s gospel presents Jesus as the One who succeeded where Israel failed. Israel was called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1), but what follows is her unfaithfulness (*the more they were called, the more they went away from me – v2*). But Jesus was called out of Egypt (Matthew 2:15); passed through the waters (of baptism) (Matthew 3); was tested in the wilderness (Matthew 4); went onto a mountain to speak the Law (Matthew 5-7) and in all of these things he was faithful and obedient to his Father. So when Matthew points us to Hosea 11:1, he wants to point us to Jesus the true and perfect Israel.

*In your group…*

Share points for prayer.

Worship God for his attributes revealed in this passage

Ask God to reveal more and more of who he is to you through his word.

Pray over what has challenged you about this passage of Scripture?

Pray for each other’s needs.