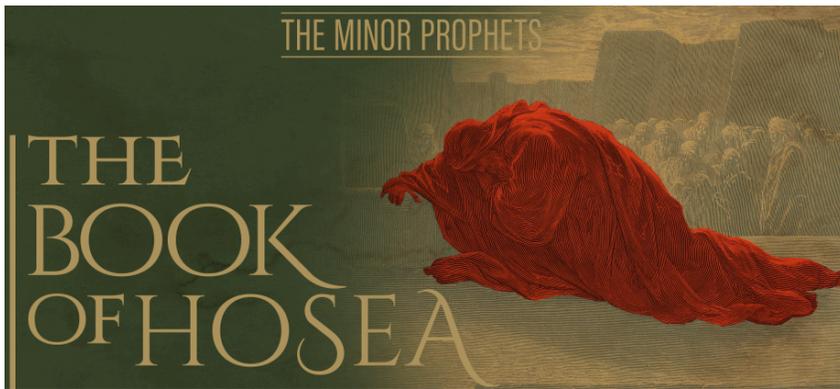


# HOSEA

## Faithful Love for the Unfaithful Lover

*A St. Paul's Lutheran Bible Study*



Hosea chapter 12 focuses on the Canaanite Merchants who were gnawers and money-lovers. They would work with dishonest ways to gain the upper financial hand, resulting in them having financial power and control over those they did business with. Israel, though, was not like Jacob (who wrestled with God), but instead they were like Canaan – they sought financial advantages through deceit and oppression.

In America we praise the free market system, which has proven to be very good for all people of society – raising many from poverty and allowing the flow of goods and services to flourish. However, regardless of the economic system that a society has, deceit and oppression will always be present in the hearts of sinful people looking to make a cheap dishonest buck. For example, we have the old saying, “Buyer beware,” which basically puts the due diligence on the buyer of a good or service to make sure they examine the risk and product before they make a transaction. In other words, in America, we often put the blame on a buyer for buying a defective good or service, instead of putting the blame on the seller. In fact, we often congratulate a person for *pulling the wool over the eyes* of the buyer. Needless to say, this kind of thinking is outright sinful. It is breaking the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Commandments.

You see, due to mankind’s weakness, many give into sin and operate with deceit. Deceit functions in the realm of trickery. Furthermore, when mankind thirsts for power, many give into sin and work to oppress their fellow neighbor. In the realm of money, this works itself out in devilish ways – exercising clever and cunning skills to outwit a neighbor and make the best financial gain as possible through dishonest ways.

### HOSEA 12:1-14

Author:

Hosea the Prophet

Date:

740-715 BC

Place:

Israel

Purpose:

Israel was like an unfaithful wife. She was attracted away from her husband (the Lord) to other lovers (idols). In the book of Hosea, the Lord calls Israel back to Himself. It is a call for Israel to forsake her unfaithfulness and be restored in the Lord’s faithfulness.

Other:

Hosea is the most quoted book of the Minor Prophets in the New Testament.

But why are we so prone to do this kind of trickery? Frankly, it comes back to fear and pride. We are afraid of our weakness, we are afraid of the sting of death, and we are afraid of limited resources. And so, we operate with deceit to accumulate mammon (i.e., material things) that supposedly prop us up and put a layer between the sting of death and us. Furthermore, pride enters into the picture, and then we end up prideful over the ways that we deceived our neighbor. Yes, like Israel and Canaan, we become prideful in our unrighteous wealth - we become prideful in the way in which we have deceitfully acquired our wealth and riches. And finally, we actually feel empowered when we have other people underneath us. Tragically, wealth has a way of making a person feel better than a person who does not have as much. Don't believe this? Why do Americans strive for bigger houses, bigger/newer/faster vehicles, better clothing, and higher educational degrees? Do we do this to be a good steward of our money in serving our families and neighbors? Hardly!

Let's give another example. Let's pretend for a moment that you have a town of 100 families. And let's pretend that a natural disaster leveled the town and nobody was harmed. Now let's pretend that a donor gives every family 2 acres of land with a 2,000 sq./ft. house, two vehicles, and a monthly stipend of \$8,000 a month (no one has to work). Would they live happily ever after? They should! All their needs are being met; they have plenty of income and resources. All should be well! But it won't be well. After six months time, greed, deceit, oppression, laziness, and covetous desires will fracture this utopic and uniform community. The point; we hear much about 'equality' these days; however, it is a pipe dream because much of the talk about equality does not recognize the sinful human condition, and it does not seek equality via the Gospel.

As we look back at Hosea 12, the Lord is very clear that he does not only oppose deceit and oppression in finances, but he also despises arrogance and pride that are attached to dishonest wealth. And to drive the point home further, the Lord does not look at the outward importance and prosperity of mankind (as we are so often prone to do), but instead, the Lord looks at the spiritual and moral conditions of mankind's heart. As the Lord examines our hearts, there is only one response: repent. Yes, the poor and rich, male and female, powerful and timid, wise and fool, etc., must all repent. There are no exclusions. The Lord desires repentance of wickedness in all of its forms so that *all* might be given forgiveness, life, and salvation in Him.

Think of it this way; justice, mercy, integrity, compassion, truthfulness, and transparency are not fruits of the sinful nature. The sinful nature seeks the exact opposite because the sinful nature is hell-bent on serving not one's neighbor but *self*. The Gospel frees us from ourselves and places us into the kingdom of God that functions with justice, mercy, integrity, compassion, truthfulness, and transparency.

But what if the old Adam will not surrender? Well, that is where the Lord is then compelled to bring about judgment. This is what He did to Israel; He proclaimed judgment upon them through Hosea and Amos for the purpose of driving them to repentance. And when repentance did not happen? The Lord God then used the Assyrians to accomplish His will.

May the Lord crucify the sinful nature within us and resurrect us in Him

