

Introduction

- Books or plays:
 - fiction, made up...
 - but "say something" about an issue that the author is concerned about...
 - when Tolkien wrote "Lord of the Rings" shortly after WW2 many people asked him whether Sauron = Hitler, Mordor = Nazi Germany, etc! (It wasn't...)
 - but that instinct is within us...
- And in a sense that is what God, through Hosea is doing - exploring the story of God's dealings with his people people through the picture/the analogy of Hosea's marriage:
 - been set-up in chapter one, the intro to the characters
 - in chapter two he drifts in and out of the analogy of the relationship between God and his people being like the relationship between Hosea and his wife
 - its always the backdrop - but sometimes he writes as if he's writing about his marriage, and sometimes the writing is explicitly about Israel's relationship with God

Made for each other

- The setup, the context, is that God and his people are meant to be in a covenant - a promise based - relationship
 - like a marriage...
 - God has woo'ed them, reached out to them, drawn them to himself over the years, in the time of Abraham and the patriarchs
 - formalised the relationship in the time of Moses, and the written commandments
 - worked out what it means to live in that covenant through the time of the Judges and into the period of the Kings - where we are in Hosea's time...
- Marriage meant to be an exclusive, faithful, devoted, fulfilling, life-bringing relationship

Rebuke and Rejection (v.2-13)

- *Rebuke, call for repentance* - v.2
- Consequence of failing to repent: v.3
 - shame, strip, parched - unfruitful?
 - no love for her children - v.4
- Explanation of the sin - why so serious? v.5
 - judgement again in v.6 - blocked path, thornbushes, lost...
 - loss of lovers/relationship/things that make life worth living... v.7
- Partial turning of v.7b, but only partial - not really acknowledging all of who God really is, just in it for self
- More judgement in v.9 - food, wine, clothing taken away
 - more shame v.10, before those she formerly consorted with
 - good times stopped - v.11 - is this pretense of religious faith?
 - long-term food and wealth security (fig trees, vines) destroyed - more judgement - v.12
 - v.13 we are out of the marriage analogy, speaking directly to Israel, punishment is for unfaithfulness to God

Restoration and Recovery (v.14-23)

- As any couple where there has been marital unfaithfulness, there is a decision following that breaking of the relationship about what to do next:
 - fix or flee?
 - (in the world of marriage relationship, fixing isn't always possible, and certainly isn't in the hands of just one party...)
- What will God do?
- God sets about a conscious path towards the restoration of relationship

- v.14, analogy of rekindling love
- and then, once relationship is restored, the benefits of relationship with God are restored - outward signs, vineyards, inward signs of hope and rejoicing... v.15
- Relationship is newly secure - husband, not master - hints towards transformation from sacrificial system to certainty and confidence of the Cross - v.16
 - names, signs of past loves removed - old tattoos? old love letters?
 - Security/peace/wholeness/shalom comes as a result of renewed relationship with God - v.18
- Power of the analogy: loving exclusivity towards God - v.19/20
- Meet Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi again - and the sin and judgements implied by their names are reversed:
 - rather than a "Aushwitz"/Jezreel being a shameful name, a place associated with evil, God now plants good in the land there - v.21,22
 - the not love is replaced by love - v.23
 - the rejected is replaced by made my people - v.23
- Eliciting the response of faith: you are my God

Conclusion: That's us!

- Big picture: this is the story of God's dealing with sinful humanity
 - but it also allows us to see something of how God deals with each of us as individuals...
- We are unfaithful to the one who made us to whom we owe allegiance
 - and face and will face the consequences of our sinful choices in judgement
- Yet, compassionately, miraculously God seeks us out, woos us, and draws us to himself:
 - into a new relationship with him, to be betrothed to him, to enter into lasting covenant relationship with him...
 - ...at his instigation, made possible by his actions (Cross), and on his terms
 - and that relationship has benefits! (Life, and life in all its fullness)
- Cause for rejoicing!
 - and for asking am I living in that covenant relationship, and remaining true to the one who sought me and loves me?