“You’re Bigger” with Jekalyn Carr

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-ZV61eDLXI>

“God Will Take Care of You” with Le’Andria Johnson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xL1yv1Ku8VM>

“The Promise” with Tiff Joy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvlYW-ap8pk>

“Wait on You” with Janice Gaines

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtdCWvnPvAw>

“Make a Way” with Janice Gaines

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESGRLpIJuhI>

The Story Behind “Make a Way” with Janice Gaines

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmMfGu8EJyw>

“You are My Strength” with Benita Washington

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q57BR3K273E>

“Better” with Jessica Reedy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PigwmR41t3E>

“Something Out of Nothing” with Jessica Reedy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lO7HbXLxOk>

“He Looked Beyond All My Faults” with Jessica Reedy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bh-M6kP0uwI>

“Worth Fighting For” with Brian Courtney Wilson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3e5qjboL8iI>

“Jesus Saves” with Marvin Winans and the Perfected Praise Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qq3OZD4-n3M>

**Worthy From Any Place in Our Lives**

***Hosea 1***

 Praise the Lord! How’s it going? We are worthy from any place in our lives because God cares for us, saves us, and makes us God’s children. This week we look at *Hosea 1:2-11,* the common lectionary selection. Perhaps it has some guidance and encouragement for us in learning to love ourselves.

 *Hosea 1:2* starts with: *The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord.*

 I thought of how unappealing it might have seemed to become the husband of a prostitute when a popular nationwide talk show asked the question of whether you would date a prostitute. The stereotype was that a prostitute is not desirable because she (or he) has been previously used and is no longer special. I actually think that the sad conclusion of most of our society is that we would have no problems dating a pornstar and would shun dating the prostitute who had no current popularity. The prostitute demands a high price and then, at some point sooner or later, becomes utterly worthless.

 I make this simple point that helps me enormously: The prostitute cannot sell himself because he was selling himself. The prostitute cannot sell herself because she was selling herself. Selling ourselves tells ourselves and others that we are just a commodity, and have no intrinsic value or worth. Selling ourselves is no way into any productive relationship.

 I asked myself whether that was possible not to do. Don’t we sell ourselves all the time, particularly in terms of entering romantic relationships and business relationships and professional relationships? Maybe, but we don’t have to.

 Working together and living together in relationships of all types – work, play, romance, friendship, and hobbies – are about how people can produce things together. You are not for sale. I am not for sale. We all have great intrinsic value and we can contribute our time to making wonderful things together.

 But many of us don’t feel worthy of producing wonderful things with somebody or some institution because we don’t feel worthy of those great relationships in the first place. So we sell ourselves with the hope that people will buy what we can give them, and overlook the unworthiness we see in ourselves. And somehow, we will magically become worthy when we are attached to them. But then, when we attach ourselves to these other people, they realize that our attachment is a sign of our sense of unworthiness. As soon as what we sold has lost its value, we are worthless to them.

 But God says to us that we are worthy. God says to us we are worthy because of what God made out of the relationship between Hosea and the prostitute, Gomer. Even as Hosea and Gomer’s children epitomized the devastating consequences of Israel and Judah’s prostitution, God used these children to display what God would make out of Judah and Israel.

In the same ways, all of us are so worthy that our unworthiness is something that God plans to use.

 Hosea *went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.*

 *4 And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.*

 *5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel, Hosea 1:3-5.*

King Jehu slaughtered the 70 children of the evil King Ahab in the gates of Jezreel. At the time this occurred, this might have been seen as a mighty act of revenge for the very bad actions of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. …*Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolk’s, and his priests, until he left him none remaining, 2 Kings 10:11.* But, to God, all lives mattered. (See <http://www.gotquestions.org/Jezreel.html>)

Hosea and Gomer had a son named Jezreel. Jezreel was the son of whoredom just as the people who died in the Valley of Jezreel were the children and relatives of a king and queen who had done evil things. But their lives mattered to God. And Jezreel, whose name came out of pain and slaughter, was worth a lot to God.

 *6 And [Gomer] conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.*

 *7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, not by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.*

God had a daughter named “I will no more have mercy” or “I will not add any more to”. Loruhamah was a tough name to start off with. And it epitomized the fact that God was not going to have any more mercy on the people of Israel. That was it.

 God may not add any more to the things we want for ourselves. God may not add any more height or natural strength to our bodies. God may leave us to face the consequences of our actions. God may leave us to explain to future employers why we were arrested or imprisoned or kicked out of school. God may leave us to explain why it has taken us so long to get our lives together. And we may not get a do-over for many of the things that we have done. And we may not get people to love us again and give us second and third and fourth chances. And we may not get to make another first impression with people. Loruhamah.

 But the God who may not add to our past experiences can do for us what God does not need us to do for ourselves. God may not need us to make up for all of our past prostitutions. God saves and God can rescue us without our help. God did not add to Judah so that they could rescue themselves by bow or sword or battle or horses or horsemen. God did not give Judah another battle to fight and win. God promised that He would save Judah by the Lord their God and God can save us by God, God’s Self.

 Our names can be stuck and done with. Our names can be Loruhamah. But we are worthy because God can save us.

 *8 Now when [Gomer] had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.*

 *9 Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.*

 *10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.*

 *11 Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel, Hosea 1:2-11.*

 It got worse for the children of Hosea and Gomer, the prostitute. The first child was named “the place of slaughter and death.” The second child was named “God shall not add any more to her.” And now the third child was named “I am not even your God and you are not my people.” But every time, these children were worth so much to God that God blessed each of them.

 God said that in the very place where Loammi was declared to not be the people of God, God would make Loammi the son of the Living God. The Israelites who lost their kingdom would become as the sand of the sea and multiply to become the precious sons of the Living God.

 These children of a prostitute were worthy of God’s love. Jezreel, in the place of slaughter and death, was worthy of God’s vengeance and care. Loruhamah, the one whom God would add not more to, was worthy of God saving her. Loammi, who was not God’s, was worthy of becoming the son of the Living God.

 How much more are all of us worthy of God’s Love? How much more are all of us worthy enough to realize that we do not have to sell ourselves? How much more are all of us worthy of productive relationships? How much more are all of us worthy enough to believe that God will qualify us for what God is calling us to?

 This passage concludes by saying that *great shall be the day of Jezreel, Hosea 1:11.* Jezreel was a place of slaughter and bloodshed. And there are places and circumstances of our lives that are memorials of places and shame. But the name “Jezreel” meant that “God will sow.” God will sow great things into our lives, and great will be those days. You are worth it and worthy of a relationship with the God who is planning all these great things for your life. May our worth define our thoughts and our actions.

Great blessings --

Tobias Pinckney at Powered to Witness University, 7/23/16

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