

上帝的愛

何西阿書 11:1-11

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有很多或者是大部份的基督徒對舊約有偏見：舊約的上帝是一個好戰和報仇的上帝，新約的是一個和平和愛的。也有人講，舊約大部份在預言耶穌來世間，它的用途大部份是指出耶穌是上帝久久以來計劃的一部份……。咱所讀的何西阿先知，互咱看到，一些咱對舊約的看法的欠缺。

咱能倘在書信裡看到超越時空的智慧和個人的愛沒？何西阿給咱的的信，是一張上帝對以色列講的話：「你親像那個很多世紀以來的囡子。」這是很奇妙的代誌。

轉一個角度，看咱文化，人對囡仔的看法佷怎？咱應該隴贊成，很多人很愛、很希望有囡仔。大部份的人，外表看起來，囡仔表現很好……，很多人很愛互人知自己是多麼好的父母。總是，很少講到做父母的，吡多少？流多少淚？有時感覺無助、孤單、失敗和很愚？

其實，這是何西阿的故事，記載上帝講出祂代代作以色列的父母的心聲。故事分四個部份，說明重要的發展。是用過去作開始，移到現在，在未來做結束。互咱一個模式來講咱的故事。

首先，先來看上帝講到**過去**。上主講：「以色列做囡仔的時，我就疼伊。」細漢囡仔能倘表現尚深驕傲、信任、好奇和歡喜的覺感。您感受上帝用滿腹的愛抱在胸前，第3節講：「我教以法連學行路，牽伊的手。」「我用慈愛的索 kah 疼心的帶牽您。」用比擬的方式表達上帝的愛，當囡子在學行路的時，祂將掛韁繩在囡仔，表明上帝愛以色列，欲互早期的以色列的腳能倘倚穩，一幅充滿愛的圖像。

第二、轉到在**以色列的現在**。突然間改變，上帝失志、頭低低，頭抱著燒，講：「我愈叫伊您，您跑離我愈遠……您繼續拜偶像……您拒絕轉來佇我……我的百姓轉離開我。」犯罪有後果。百姓已經面對下場，將欲面對受放逐、被抓、受征服和作奴隸，和內戰。很親蜜像關係變很歹，上帝非常傷心。

第三個圖像，**看見上帝的心**。在彼，咱看到通暝啲哭、有大慈悲、大生氣，上帝講：「以法連，我 na 會棄捨你？」「以色列，我 na 會 ka 你交給敵人？」……上帝講：「我回心轉意，我慈愛的心真熱真溫柔。」上帝很堅定的愛，講：「我無欲發出我猛烈的受氣，也無 koh 毀滅以法連。因為我是上帝，不是世間人，是在您中間的聖的；我無欲佇受氣中臨到您。」這是像舊約裡清楚描寫的上帝，是現在式。祂在受氣和憐憫中，祂還是選擇憐憫。

最後，我看到**上帝和以色列的未來**。上主親像獅啲哮，以色列，上帝的囡仔，會從祂走，散佈的四個角落的百姓 phih-phih-chhoah，您會回家，會和上帝閣做伙。親像浪子轉去老父，以色列被抓了後，會閣回上帝的厝，心和上帝閣一次聯合。

這個故事給有咱希望的話嗎？咱是不是能倘體會有囡仔是什麼意思？或者是了解你所愛的人，行向傷害自己、傷害周圍的人、豈才您不知您傷害你的程度佷深，您走向自我毀滅的道路。

何西阿十一章：咱是什麼款的人，也跟咱講上帝是誰？咱雖然不配，總是，上帝用無比的愛愛咱。願咱能快跑跟隨祂。

God's love
Hosea 11:1-11

Many Christians are biased against the Old Testament, wrongly thinking that God is portrayed in the Hebrew scriptures only as warlike and vengeful. They believe that the image of God as peaceful and loving is found only in the New Testament. They also commonly assume that Old Testament prophesy is mostly about the coming of Jesus. With this understanding, it is no wonder that many skip over the Hebrew Bible.

But the Hebrew Bible was the Bible of Jesus and the Disciples, and it contains many texts of incredible richness and beauty. It is the foundation for Christ's life and ministry.

In our passage today from Hosea you can see the wisdom and love of God, shining forth, transcending time and space. Here is a powerful message spoken by God to Israel centuries before the birth of Christianity, a message that makes it clear that God loves the people of Israel as a parent, who refuses to give up on the child even when it is most rebellious and disappointing. This is a wonderful text.

Most people in our culture idealize children and parenting. Many people love and hope to have a kid. And they love to boast about their kid's accomplishments. They share photos, brag about their good behavior, their good grades. They want other people to know about their successful parenting and to celebrate their kid's victories.

People much less often speak openly about the darker side of parenting. They don't talk as much about their rebellious kids, how much they scream, how many tears are shed, how often parents feel helpless, frustrated, and stupid. Parenting is tough. Kids often do not follow the path we want for them. Parents are tested.

In fact, this is the story of God and Israel as revealed in Hosea. Almost any parent in the world can see themselves in this story, which is also God's own story.

The speaker, who is God, first remembers the past, when Israel was newborn. The Lord said: "When Israel was a child, I loved him." The little child and the Father God had a close bond, marked by pride, trust, curiosity and joy. v. 3: "yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk." (Note: This is another name for Israel). "I took them up in my arms, but they did not know that I healed them." "I led them with cords of human kindness, with hands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them." This remarkable text has God speaking of his own love for Israel in the language of human parenting.

But the mood change as God recalls the growing rebelliousness of Israel in adolescence. Patient love increasingly becomes mixed with anger. Israel has turned to violence and scheming for power, and so will have to learn a painful lesson. "

They shall return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king because they have refused to return to me... my people are bent on turning away from me.' All sin brings consequences. Israel will face conquest, exile and slavery because of the evil choices they made. The relationship with God has soured, and God is very sad.

In this remarkable passage we next get a glimpse into the compassionate heart of God as he wrestles with the fate of his wayward children. The image seems to be God, crying all night in sorrow, thinking about his suffering, rebellious child. And he resolves not to give up on Israel, not to punish him further, but instead to rescue Israel and bring him home. "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel?" "I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim, for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath."

Finally, we saw the future of God and Israel. The Lord roars like a lion, a poetic way of depicting God acting in power. And Israel walks toward Him, trembling, from the west, trembling, the text says, "like birds" or "like doves," joyful to be reunited with their Father. Here we have an image that parallels Jesus' famous parable of the prodigal son, who returns home to his aged father. After the painful exile, Israel will return to God and the relationship will be healed.

Does this story give you hope? We are all children of God, and we all have brought upon ourselves and the world all sorts of pain and hurt. We have distanced ourselves from God and we are in slavery to all sorts of sin. But there is a way home!

Hosea 11 tells us what is in the heart of God, our Father. Although we are not worthy, God always loves us with incomparable love. May we run fast to follow Him.