

“A Love That Never Dies”
8-1-10 Calvary sermon by Brian Henderson

Text: Hosea 11:1-11

Have you ever been in a situation where someone or something doesn't make sense? During the construction phase of our renovation project, we had some conversations and meetings with inspectors from Denver's Building Department. Some of these meetings left some of us on the renovation committee scratching our heads.

Admittedly, we have to respect the decisions of the Building Department and I can't begin to imagine what it must be like for a Building Department to have all the responsibility it does for a city the size of Denver.

Through our project we had the chance to interact with the primary individual responsible for the Building Department...and this person reports directly to the Mayor. He made our experience be as positive as it could have been.

But...there was one decision that still doesn't make complete sense. You can see this decision first hand the next time you visit the atrium. To comply with the most current code, we had to reverse the swing of both hallway entrances into the atrium. Additionally, to be in compliance with code, we had to add a fairly pricey crash bar to these doors. These are the primary entrances and exits for the atrium.

The crash bar however had to indicate: “Push to Open—Alarm Will Sound.” So...once you've been in the atrium and you're ready to leave...you must walk through a door that has a sign on it indicating that if you use this door, an alarm will go off.

The interesting thing is...we didn't have to attach an actual alarm to the door. As long as the sign was and is in place...we're in compliance with code.

You're probably thinking to yourself right now, "This doesn't make sense Brian." And I'd say, "Exactly."

Hopefully most of you are now curious about this and will take time to visit the atrium soon. It's a wonderful space that is already getting great use. Check it out and look for the alarm sign...but don't worry about tripping the alarm.

Things that don't make sense. We've all had situations with people or we've been in places where things haven't completed added up to what we consider logical. This is part and parcel for our human experience...I'm sure.

As if the Building Department and life don't give us enough to make sense of...

Whenever we pick up the Bible to read...we are also bound to come across texts and sections of scripture that like the sign in our atrium don't make sense. The book of Hosea is no exception.

And within the brief selection of verses from Hosea chapter eleven we heard proclaimed this morning...there are aspects of it that don't make a lot of sense either.

The divine-human drama that unfolds here depicts Yahweh—depicts God—as struggling to know what to do with the people of Israel. From one perspective, because of their faithlessness...and lack of commitment to faith in Yahweh...God would have had every right to pronounce stern judgment and discipline upon them.

And yet...as the text shows...Yahweh chooses not to employ such judgment and discipline...instead...God is seen as a parent...who can not and will not give up on her

or his child or children. Like a loving parent...Yahweh chooses to love a people that has in so many ways...turned its back on God and has abandoned their faith.

As we think about things that don't make sense...it's fair to say...that the Love of God...God's love...does not make sense. The Bible is replete with accounts of how God loves women and men—especially those that would ordinarily be considered as unlovable...and yet God loves them.

God's compassion, as verse eight explains, grows warm and tender.

God's love does not make sense. God loves and cares for the marginalized and outcast. God loves and cares for folk who are faithless and can not seem to get it right.

Isn't it tempting for us to consider who we think God will love and who God does not love? Generally...it's the folk that don't think like us...look like us...and talk like us...

But you see...the voice of this ancient prophet from antiquity echoes through the corridors of time to remind you and me that as long as we stand on this side of eternity we can not and will not understand completely the love of the Holy One.

As Paul said...there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from God's love...

Contrary to what folk in antiquity would have thought about the faithless group of people known as the Northern Kingdom of Israel...God still loved them.

I wonder if these words from Hosea give us cause to pause. Obviously...none of us are God...however...I wonder if Hosea's words challenge us to think about how we look at others...how we offer support and care...how we, in essence, show love to folk in our day.

With all the realities of social and racial profiling...while there are and always will be rules for living...I wonder if Hosea challenges us to love people when it does not make sense.

Before we judge folk...before we right folk off because of who they are...or from the place they come...before determine who is legal and illegal...I wonder if we ought to determine *first* how we should express a love that is genuinely sincere and wants the best for the other—regardless of who she or he may be.

And while we struggle to make sense out of God's love and compassion displayed in Hosea...let's not forget the radical love demonstrated to the entire world through the life, sayings and actions of Jesus.

And truth of the matter is...as we gather around the Lord's Table today...this table reminds us of a love that didn't and doesn't make sense.

The elements before us—the Bread and the Cup—remind us of a love that went to the cross for us and the world...these elements remind us of a love that hung between two alleged criminals...a love that reached out to these two even though they did something that followed not the laws of their day...

Don't get me wrong...there are always consequences to our actions with which we must always live...but it seems to me...that even when we suffer our consequences...the message of Scripture...the way of Jesus is still to love.

God's love didn't make sense in Hosea's day and it doesn't make sense in ours today. How might we seek to emulate this incredibly deep love and concern for others through our own lives and ways of loving today...beginning...even now? Amen.