

Redemption

By [Carol Howard Merritt](#)

July 19, 2013

I wrote an innocuous tweet yesterday. After pouring over commentaries and writing five different sermons and lectionary articles on Hosea, I simply wrote that I wished that Hosea and Philemon were not in the lectionary. My reasoning? I don't like that the books uphold the notions of people being bought and sold as property.

People complained that the passages were more nuanced, that I needed to consider the larger context of Hosea. Which--I will remind you--that I just completed my fifth sermon/lectionary article on the book. I don't know everything there is to know about Hosea, but I had delved into the minds of male commentators enough to wish that it wasn't in the lectionary.

I don't like the metaphor of God's love being equated with the purchase of a woman. Women are seen as property throughout the Bible. You don't have to look any further than the Ten Commandments to recognize that. But we don't have to look back thousands of years to see our proprietary notions of women. Just look at our modern wedding traditions, in which the father "gives away" the bride to the groom.

People don't sit down and listen to Gomer enough. We don't ask ourselves how she must have felt being a prophet's sermon illustration. We don't ask why she returned to sex work. And when we preach this text without wrestling with it, **we uphold the notion that a person (or a God) is loving when he buys another human.**

(Male pronoun for the divine is intentional here.)

I was sprinkled with replies about how beautiful the Hosea metaphor is and how it points to the redeeming work of Christ. With each reply, I got more frustrated.

It's 2013. Of course, I understand the theological notion of redemption. But we've had a couple of thousand years to figure out that **buying a human is wrong**. In our country, we've had a history of brutal slavery, in which the Bible has been used to keep men and women on the auction block. We have modern day human trafficking. And with all of this, we talk about the "beauty" of the theological idea of

redemption?

No. I'm just not buying it.