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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to study a beautiful love story. According to Luke 23 and 24, the afternoon of the first resurrection Easter Sunday Jesus was walking on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus and the Bible says the two disciples did not know who he was. It says, “starting with Moses and all the prophets he showed them the things concerning himself.” I firmly believe Jesus was giving these two disciples an Old Testament commentary of the Messiah. I imagine when he came to Genesis 24, and he told them the story of Isaac and Rebekah, he told them some of the things I’m going to tell you, because it is a beautiful story.

There are four main characters in the story. I want us to appreciate these four characters not only for who they are, but also what it means to us as Christians.

I. THE FATHER’S DESIRE

The first thing I want to talk about is the father and his desire for his son.

Genesis 24:1-9. “Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed him in every way. He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, ‘Put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.’ The servant asked him, ‘What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?’ ‘Make sure that you do not take my son back there,’ Abraham said. ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father’s household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath saying, ‘To your offspring I will give this land’—He, will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there. If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there.’ So, the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.”

1. He has a plan for you

Abraham, who is now 140, was thinking about his son and because Isaac was 40 and didn’t have a wife, he wanted a wife for his son. Most parents want their children to marry the right person. So, he called his servant. Now in this chapter the servant is not mentioned, but if it’s the same one who seemed to be in charge of a lot of the earlier affairs, it is Eliezer and he said, “Eliezer, I want you to put your hand under my thigh.” That was their version of shaking hands or signing a contract. It was a sign of a covenant. Abraham told Eliezer, “We are living in this land that one day is going to be the land of all of my people and all of my descendants, but right now all that is here are Canaanites and I don’t want my son to marry a Canaanite woman.” I’m sure that there were plenty of beautiful Canaanite women who were intelligent and had great personalities. The difference is Abraham believed there was one God and the Canaanites believed there were many gods. So he said, “I want my son to marry a woman who believes the same thing we believe so I

want you to go back to my hometown to my land where I came from and I want you to look among my relatives.” Can you imagine marrying your cousin or your second cousin? They did a lot of that back then.

The servant probably asked, “How am I going to find someone I don’t even know and tell her to come back and marry someone she doesn’t even know?” And Abraham said, “Absolutely not! I don’t want my son to go back because going back would be going back on God’s promise. This is where God wants us.”

Think about God, the Father, because all of us in this room have a heavenly father and he has a desire for us and his desire is his plan for your life. God has a roadmap for every believer’s life. He has it already planned out. Just as Abraham had in mind the plan for his son, Isaac, God has a plan for your life. I like what Jack Taylor used to say. “I used to think that if I submitted to God’s will that God would make me marry a cross-eyed, fat girl and send me to Africa as a missionary and I would be miserable forever. I soon discovered that God’s will is what I would choose for myself if I had enough sense to choose it.”

2. He wants the best for you

The second thing is God wants the best for you. That’s what Abraham was saying to the servant. “None of these Canaanite women are good enough! I want the best for my son!” God has a plan for your life and he wants the best for you and I think there is somebody out there just right for you! Notice Abraham said, “I want it to be somebody who believes what we believe about God.” The New Testament says if you are a Christian, when you marry you are to only marry in the Lord. The Bible says you are not to be unequally yoked together. You are not to marry somebody who is not a believer, because God wants the very best for you! I’m not just talking to young people. I’m talking to everyone out there who is a parent. Isn’t it true you want the very best for your children? If you could make the choices for your children, you would always choose what would be best for them. Our heavenly Father always chooses and wants the best for us. So in this story, Abraham represents the Father.

II. SERVANT’S DEDICATION

There is another character in the story and most of the story is about him. Abraham represents our heavenly Father but the servant was dedicated to do what the father asked.

Genesis 24:10-16. “Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his way to the town of Nahor. He had the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water. Then he prayed. ‘O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, ‘Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too’—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.’ Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came

out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor. The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.”

What was it you think that caused this servant to talk to her? I think she was probably the most beautiful girl. Maybe he was going to check it out, but remember, he sort of made an arrangement with God. He said, “God, I need your help here. I don’t know which one to choose. When I ask one for water, if she offers to water these camels, then I’ll know she’s the one!” So, here comes Rebekah and she’s beautiful, walking along with her pot full of water. And this stranger this servant comes up to her and says, “Excuse me, ma’am, I’m mighty thirsty. Can you give me something to drink?” Right on cue she says, “Certainly. Here, have some water.” Then, she says, “By the way, I see you have some thirsty camels. Why don’t you let me water those camels as well?” Suddenly, he is thinking, “This is the one! This is it! WOW! This is it!” Those camels were tired and she had come a long way out there where they were. I did some research on this. It is said that after a day’s walk, a camel will drink at least 20 gallons of water. Here’s one woman giving ten camels 20 gallons of water that’s 200 gallons of water. Rebekah is not only beautiful she has to be “Miss Aerobic USA.” She has so much energy and is so fit that she diligently starts watering all of these ten camels until all of them are satisfied. The whole time the servant is just standing over there saying, “Oh, this has to be the one! Absolutely! This is the one!”

Finally, he approaches her and he reveals the deal to her. He says, “I’ve come from my master, Abraham and he has a son who is an only son. He probably said to her, “He’s at the top of the list of the ten most eligible bachelors in the Middle East.” No doubt Isaac was one of the most eligible bachelors of that time. He was very wealthy and came from a wonderful family that had a super future in front of them. So, he starts telling her about this man, Isaac and she starts getting a little interested in it. Then, the servant gives her gifts and the Bible says one is a big old gold nose ring. Wouldn’t you like to have one of those? She had this gold nose ring and all of these bracelets on her arms. We are talking HEAVY gold here. I imagine it hung down long because it was heavy, the Bible says 5 shekels worth. Then he says, “Are you interested in this deal?” She says, “Yes I want to learn more about it. Why don’t you come and stay at my house tonight. We have plenty of room, plenty of food and we have a place for your camels to bed down.”

So, the servant comes there that night and meets the family and one of her relatives named Laban. We’re going to hear more about him later. He’s a wheeler-dealer. To compress the story a little bit, the servant shares his story with Rebekah’s family. He says, “I have a wealthy master who has a handsome, rich son who will inherit everything and this son is looking for a wife. I have come and I went to the well and I prayed, ‘God, when a woman comes by and she gives me water and offers to water the camels, I will know that’s the one. Rebekah did this so she’s the one. What about it?’” The family starts considering this. They see all these camels and all these people and all the gold rings and bracelets and they start thinking, “This guy probably is telling the truth. So, they begin to think about it and pretty soon they decide, “This is probably a good deal! Let’s let her do it!” So the servant is the one who goes out and finds the bride.

1. The servant represents the Holy Spirit

There is also a beautiful picture here. The servant represents two things. Number one the servant is a picture of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is sent from the Father seeking us. Jesus said, “No man can come to the Father except he be drawn.” and Jesus said, “When the Holy Spirit comes he will convict you of sin.” There was one time that God, the Father, loved you so much that he wanted you to know his son, Jesus. So God, the Father, sent his servant, the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit that came and spoke to your heart and said, “You’re a sinner! But there is a Savior and there is a great future for you if you will just enter this wonderful family the family of God.” That’s what the Holy Spirit did. I think it is probably significant that in chapter 24 the servant is not even named. The Holy Spirit never wants to draw attention to himself. Jesus said, “When he comes, he will not bear witness of himself. He will testify of me.” The Holy Spirit always comes to point us to Jesus Christ and to draw us to the Father. That’s exactly what this servant has done. He is sent by the father and he is drawing her to the son. You say, “The servant is unnamed, could it have been Eliezer?” Eliezer means “God’s guide” and Jesus said, “When the Holy Spirit comes, he will guide you into all truth.”

2. The servant represents us

Number two the servant is also a picture of us, because we are servants of God. He is a picture of us wanting to please our master. Once you become a member of the family of God, you are a child of God, but you also become a servant. That was the favorite designation of the apostle Paul. He always started his letters with *doulos*, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ. All a servant wants to do is please his master. In Genesis 24 the word “master” appears 44 times. The servant keeps talking about his “master.” Jesus said, “The servant is not greater than his master.” Well, that’s the second character of the servant and he’s a beautiful picture of the Holy Spirit and us.

III. THE BRIDE’S DECISION

But there’s a third character, Rebekah, the bride. So thirdly I want to talk about the bride’s decision. Rebekah’s family negotiates this deal and they figure it’s okay for Rebekah to go home with the servant. But in verse 55 they get a little reluctant about it.

Genesis 24:55-56. “But her brother and her mother replied, ‘Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you may go. But he said to them, ‘Do not detain me, now that the Lord has granted success in my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master.

Any time the Holy Spirit convicts you and tries to draw you to the Father there are always going to be people who say, “Wait a minute now, not so fast! No hurry here. What’s the rush? Why don’t you just stay where you are for a while?” There may be some people here today who are born again but have never been baptized. The Holy Spirit is saying, “Obey the Lord! Get baptized.” but there is another voice inside and maybe even family or friends saying, “What’s the rush? You don’t need to do it right now!” That’s what Rebekah’s family was saying but the servant said, “Yes, there is. I need to go back right now!” So that leads us to the bride’s decision in verse 57.

Genesis 24:57. “Then they said, ‘Let’s call the girl and ask her about it.’ So they called

Rebekah and asked her, ‘Will you go with this man?’ [and if I understand this story, she couldn’t have said it fast enough] ‘I will go,’ she said.”

Let’s go! Let’s do it right now! Her bags were packed. I like the fact that in the gospel whenever Jesus called somebody to follow him, it was a call to follow him immediately. He didn’t say, “All right. Leave your nets and follow me tomorrow or the next day.” He said, “Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest?’ I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” (John 4:35) Follow me right now! When Matthew was sitting at his job collecting taxes, Jesus walked by and said, “Follow me!” Matthew had to make a snap decision. “Am I going to leave my job? Am I going to leave my money? Am I going to follow Jesus?” And Matthew said, “Yes, I’m going to do it right now.” That’s why I sometimes think these long, drawn-out invitations when you sing 23 verses of “Just As I Am” I think is probably not true to the character of Jesus Christ, because Jesus never begged anybody to follow him. He was too much of a gentleman to beg. He said, “Follow me!” and he expected you to make a decision. So, when the servant said, “It’s time for you to make a decision, Rebekah. Are you going to go or are you going to stay?” She said, “I’m going to go!”

Genesis 24:59-61. “So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham’s servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her. ‘Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the gates of their enemies.’ Then Rebekah and her maids got ready and mounted their camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.”

1. Rebekah represents the bride of Christ

Rebekah is a picture of the bride of Christ, and of course, the bride is the church—us. God, the Father loves you so much that he wants you to be part of his family. So he has sent his servant, the Holy Spirit, to say, “I want to draw you to the Father,” but the Holy Spirit will never kidnap you or force you to be a part of the family of God. It’s *your decision*, just as it was Rebekah’s decision. Rebekah could have said, “No, thanks. I don’t want to go. I don’t want to do it.” It was her decision but she said, “I’ll go.” When you say, “I’ll go,” you are doing the same thing Rebekah did.

a. She accepts the offer

Let me show you some parallels. Like us, the church, Rebekah accepts the offer. The servant said, “Here’s the offer. I will take you to my master’s house. You can be a part of his family and all of the riches that are his can be yours.” Did you notice there was nothing that said she had to pay for that? It was an offer, like a gift. You can’t earn salvation. You don’t have to buy salvation. Salvation is an offer, a free gift, and the only thing you can do is accept it or reject it. And Rebekah accepted it

b. She proceeds by faith

She proceeded by faith. She was asked to believe a man she didn’t know. A servant asked to travel to a land she had never been to and she was asked to commit herself to marry a man she

had never even seen before. How many of you ladies would be willing to marry a guy you had never laid eyes on before? It took FAITH.

c. She was rewarded

Then number three her faith was rewarded. That's exactly what we do when we follow Jesus Christ. We accept his free offer of eternal life. We proceed in the Christian life by faith, because we believe one day we are going to go to heaven to the Father's house. But we've never seen it. But it's there—believe me. There's a land there and you have to trust God that it is there and if you proceed by faith and follow the Holy Spirit's leading, one day you'll be rewarded.

As I read between the lines in this story, I think about the trip back from her hometown to Abraham's home. I think about the long camel rides during the day and the cold desert nights as they sat around talking. Can you ladies imagine what must have been going through Rebekah's mind? "Am I an idiot? What's he going to look like? What's he going to be like? Is this guy telling me the truth? Or is he going to sell me into slavery? Can I really trust him?" There had to be a lot of uncertainty. I imagine as they sat around the campfires on those cold desert nights she would turn to that servant and say, "Tell me everything you know about Isaac." And the servant would probably say, "Isaac was born when Abraham and Sarah were really old, in fact some angels had to come and tell them they were going to have a baby and when the angel told Sarah, she laughed. That's how Isaac got his name. It means 'laughter.'" I'm sure he told her all those stories. He probably told her all the family stories about all the other things that had been going on in the family. I imagine the servant told her the story about the time when Isaac was a teenager and his father took him up to Mt. Moriah and he was going to kill him. I'll bet her eyes got big as she heard that story of how her future husband was almost killed as a sacrifice on Mt. Moriah. I imagine she wanted him to tell her every detail about Isaac. "Tell me again! Tell me again!"

IV. THE SON'S DELIGHT

Well here's the final episode and the final character: The son's delight! Isaac is almost the unmentioned character in all this.

Genesis 24:62-66. Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. He went out to the field one evening to meditate, and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching. Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel and asked the servant, [let me translate the Hebrew here for you. Literally, she said, "Is that good-looking hunk who I think he is?" That's what it says in Hebrew] 'Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?' 'He is my master,' the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself. Then the servant told Isaac all that he had done. Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

Use your spiritual imagination a bit. Isaac is standing out in the field one afternoon, the sun is setting, and in the distance he sees the dust some camels and he sees recognizes the servant, but he notices there is a female in this entourage he doesn't recognize. He looks and they get closer

and finally, they stop on the other side of this beautiful grassy field and she climbs down from her camel, turns to the servant and says, “Is that Isaac?” he says, “Yes, that is Isaac.” And the servant comes over there and tells Isaac, “This is your woman! She’s the one for you!” Can’t you picture Isaac running in slow motion as they fall into each other’s arms? What a beautiful love story it was!” And he had his wife! And she had her husband and he was delighted that his father had chosen and the servant had sought out and brought to him the very best! That is a beautiful love story and it is an important part of the history of the nation of Israel, because God had promised Abraham’s seed would multiply so much, that they would be more numerous than the stars in the sky and the sands on the seashore. Here Isaac was 40 years old and Abraham is getting ready to die, so it’s very important for him to find the right wife for them to have children. We’ll be talking later about Jacob and Esau and what happened after that but these two coming together. I love the part there where it says, “He loved her.” This was not some marriage simply arranged legally between two families. They really had a love for one another.

1. The son represents Jesus at Calvary

The son is a picture of Jesus. Like Jesus, Isaac walked away from Moriah. That’s very important. The last time we saw Isaac was in Genesis 22. He had been taken up to Mt. Moriah to be offered as a sacrifice, but Isaac walked away from it *alive*! Moriah is where Calvary is today. Moriah was where Jerusalem would later be built and just on one of the subsequent hills of Moriah there would be Mt. Calvary. Just like Isaac, in a sense, was resurrected from the sacrifice Jesus Christ, himself, walked away from Calvary *alive*!

2. The son represents Jesus waiting for his bride

There’s another way he is like Jesus. Isaac waited at the Father’s house for the bride to come to him. Where is Jesus right now? He said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you.” He said, “I go to prepare a place for you and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also.” Right now our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is in his Father’s house waiting for the time for the bride the church of the Lord Jesus Christ to be caught up to be reunited with the bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The son represents Jesus welcoming his bride with joy

Now here’s the final application. Like Jesus, Isaac welcomed his bride with joy! The bride is the picture of the church and one day we as the church are going to be caught up and taken to be with our bridegroom, the Lord Jesus. Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing her with water through the word and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain, or wrinkle, or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” The last time Jesus had the Lord’s Supper with his Disciples he said, “You’re not going to eat this bread and drink this cup again I won’t do it with you until we do it anew in the kingdom.”

There is going to be a party in heaven and it’s called “The Marriage Supper of the Lamb.” Revelation 19:7 says, “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory for the wedding of the

Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Right now the bride is not all that beautiful. The bride—the church—has some blemishes. When Jesus as the bridegroom welcomes the church into the Father’s house and we sit down for the marriage supper of the Lamb, that’s the time he’s going to make it a bride without spots, without blemish, the perfect church triumphant.

So the story of Isaac and Rebekah is a beautiful love story in and of itself but it’s also a beautiful story of how God, the Father, loves you and wants the best for you. He sends the Holy Spirit to draw you to the Father and then you as a person, like Rebekah, chooses whether or not to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit but when you do, you are entered into an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

There is one final thing I want to say and apply to your walk with Jesus. All the way back across the desert Rebekah said, “Tell me about Isaac. Tell me about Isaac. Tell me about Isaac. Tell me about Isaac.” She knew a lot him, but it wasn’t until they ran into each other’s arms and were alone on their wedding night that she really knew Isaac. The sad thing is there are a lot of people here who know all about Jesus but don’t know Jesus! She knew all about Isaac, but it wasn’t until she met him that she knew him. You can know all the facts about Jesus and still not know him. Have you ever entered into an intimate union with Jesus Christ? You can and that’s what God wants for you!

OUTLINE

I. THE FATHER’S DESIRE

1. He has a plan for you
2. He wants the best for you

II. THE SERVANT’S DEDICATION

The servant represents:

1. The Holy Spirit
2. Us

III. THE BRIDE’S DECISION

Rebekah represents:

1. The bride of Christ
She:
 - a. Accepts the offer
 - b. Proceeds by faith
 - c. Was rewarded

IV. THE SON’S DELIGHT

The son represents Jesus:

1. At Calvary
2. Waiting for his bride
3. Welcoming his bride with joy