

The Rev. Charlie Holt

So, Brooke, Brooke and I, my wife, are celebrating our 30 30th year this year. August of last year was our 30th anniversary, and I was thinking about, when we first met, I was invited to go on this trip to go and help out and hurricane flood relief after Hurricane Alberto hit Albany, Georgia. I was in seminary and a friend of mine invited me on the trip and was eager to get the help and building this mission trip, but also happened to mention.

I know and I'm going to invite this this girl along. Her name is Brooke, and, she's really pretty. I think you're going to like her. I think, you know, she's very strong in her faith and all these things. And so my interest was all piqued. I may have gone on the trip to meet Brooke. I did bring my girlfriend along as well.

But, when I, when I got, and met her for the first time, we actually, I let my girlfriend end up on the back of the bus, and I sat down right next to Brooke and talked to her all the way to Albany, Georgia. And, I knew that after that conversation, that was the girl that I wanted to marry.

And so, I met her in August and we were married the next August, so it just took a year of convincing. But, she finally succumbed, and realized that she was called to be married to me, which was really great. If we think about our gospel passage for today, there actually is this theme of a groom who is in search of a bride.

And of course, the groom is Jesus. He's looking for his bride. And this is a theme that John works and weaves all the way through the gospel story. He, begins with Jesus as God in the flesh. But he says the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. But then he says, he came to that which was his own, but his own would not receive him.

But those who did receive him, he gave the right to become children of God, heirs of God. And so the very first miracle that is right out of the gate in the Gospel of John is a wedding miracle where Jesus goes to the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee and the host runs out of wine, which is pretty shameful and socially unacceptable.

And so Jesus's mother says, you need to do something about this. And so Jesus, of course, does the famous miracle of turning water into wine. And it wasn't the cheap stuff. It was some good wine, Cabernet Sauvignon. I don't know what it was, but it was something very good. And, the host of the wedding says, you know, a lot of people, they served the cheap stuff last.

But you have saved the best for last. And that's where we get that phrase. But what John says is this the first, first miracle of Jesus where he revealed his glory. So that's the beginning of the wedding theme. And in John. And then he goes on to talk about John, the Baptist. And Jesus says of John the Baptist that if you can accept it, he is the friend of the bridegroom, who is the one who announces here comes the groom in the search for his bride.

And then you get to John chapter four, which is Jesus meeting a woman at a well. Now this is part of the wedding theme, where a lot of men and you see this all throughout the Old Testament, there are at least three scenes where men meet their brides at a well, it's kind of like the town watering hole.

And, of course, you know, it makes sense that you would meet people at a well, it would bring people together. But, that happened with, I think, Isaac and Rebecca and Moses and the poor. And there's one other scene where these men, Jacob, met his wife, and this is Jacob's well, which is all, bringing us back to that.

Well, scene of men meeting their wives at a well. But then the conversation is about what? Marriage. He has a discussion with her about marriage. Now the theme keeps going in John. John chapter 14, where Jesus says, I need to go and prepare a place for you. In my father's house are many rooms. And if it weren't, so I'm going to tell you they're going to come to bring you to myself.

That's all. Betrothal language. That's marriage language. We read that at funerals because we like the idea of the father's house and the nice big room to get there, but. But what that's about is the husband going off with the father, preparing the home for he and his bride so that he can come back and take her across the threshold.

It's a beautiful imagery of wedding. And then, of course, at the end of John's writings in revelation, you have the big marriage feast scene. And so this is a theme that John is just working all the way through. And part of what he's trying to get across is that this is a groom who is on a search for his bride.

So it is a groom who is looking for his bride. And unusually, he has found his bride in the Samaritan people in this scene. So here's Jesus, and he is described as being thirsty. I need I want something to drink. And he's also apparently hungry too, because he sends the disciples to go off and go to the fast food restaurant around there.

I don't know what they had back then. Maybe, you know, Messiah Burger or something like that, but Burger, Messiah, chick fil A probably was back then, but they, they went back and the disciples are off getting some food. And so here's Jesus and it's, it's one of those places where you see his humanity. He's thirsty and he's at this well, in the middle of, of the day.

And here's a woman and he says, woman, would you give me something to drink? And, and she says, what are you doing talking to me? I'm a Samaritan woman. You're a Jewish man. You. We don't we don't associate Jews in Samaritan. So I don't I don't understand why you're talking to me. And then he says to her, well, if you knew who you were talking with, you actually would ask me for a drink.

He's. And she looks at him and says, well, you don't even have a bucket. I it's funny, my, daughter, is kind of at the marrying age. And she has these three rules about guys that she would be willing to marry. One is they, they need to have a job. Number two, they need to know Jesus and to be close to him.

And number three, they need to drink, drink a little less. And so, not too much alcohol. So if you're listening, as a young man in here and in young men, let me just tell you, these three rules are pretty good rules. If you're looking to get married one day is to have a job, know Jesus and don't drink so much.

And, and, and so, you know, here's this Samaritan woman. She's like, you don't even have a bucket. And Jesus says, well, if you knew who you were talking with, you would have not just asked me for water, but you would ask me for living water. Living water, she says, what is that? It says, well, whoever drinks of this living water will never have to come back and drink this water, because this water, you'll drink it and you'll be thirsty again.

But if you drink the living water that I have come to give you will never be thirsty. It will satisfy you so much that actually you will become a source of this living water to other people. That sounded pretty good to her, sir. Give me this water. You know, there's something, in us that is connected with eating.

Drinking. There's a physical component to that, and there's a spiritual component to it. One of the reasons why we fast during lent is to, get in touch with those physical longings and physical yearnings and hunger and thirst in order that we might somehow get in touch with the spiritual hungers and thirsting. So there's something, something interesting about withholding physical food or physical drink that makes us, in touch with our spiritual hunger and thirst.

I, my wife, tells me she's, you know, I did marry a health coach. That was a good thing on my part, but it also has its challenges. But one of the things that, one of the things that she always encourages me to do is to drink a lot of water. And I think you're supposed to drink your body weight and water or something like that in the day.

Probably not that much, but I, I carry I carry a Stanley Cup around with me, which I affectionately call my saint and Cup and I've, I've realized by paying attention to my body that sometimes and my wife's told me about this is sometimes you think that you're hungry and actually you're thirsty. Have you ever noticed that that that sometimes you're actually trying to feed a thirst when you really just need to drink some water, and that will satisfy your thirst, and you don't need to put food in your body.

Well, think about that. With respect to spiritual hunger and thirst, sometimes we have spiritual hunger and thirst, and we mistakenly try to satisfy those spiritual hunger and thirst with material things. And this true where we long for something very deep within us. And we think

that, well, if we had more money, I would be satisfied, or if I could meet that guy that doesn't drink too much, that would be pretty good and had a job and knows Jesus.

Or if I could, if I could just, have people appreciate me more or respect me more, or if I had this position or that position or this thing, or go do that thing, and we have all of this stuff, let's just call it stuff that we think if we could just get the stuff in there, we would be satisfied.

But ultimately what we realize is we get thirsty again and we get hungry again because whatever that is, fill in the blank. It doesn't really satisfy Jesus with the Samaritan woman puts his finger right on the hole that is in her heart and her longings when he says, go get your husband. Now all of a sudden she says, well, I don't really have a husband.

And he says, that's correct. I know all about you. Not only do you not have a husband, but the guy that you're living with, it's not your husband. And in fact, you've had five husbands. You remember that old country song looking for love in all the wrong places, looking for love. Too many faces keep going. No, but you remember that song.

That's what she is. She's looking for love in all of the wrong places. And. And she's trying to fill the heart. Saint Augustine, he says, our hearts are restless until we find our rest. And in God and the. Is Blaise Pascal, famous for his book called *The Pensees*, which was really just a collection of his little notes that he wrote there.

Pensees is in French his thoughts. And Blaise Pascal would have a thought, and he'd write it down on a piece of paper and throw it in a drawer. And after he died, people took somebody, took those thoughts and compiled it into a beautiful book, which is really very devotional to read. One of the things Blaise Pascal said is, that we all have a God shaped vacuum in our hearts and a vacuum is a void.

It's a, it's a place where there's no air there. And if you crack open the vacuum, it will suck something in there. And that's the idea, is that we all have something inside of us that wants to pull something in there, and the something that only really fits is the Lord. Do you have that feeling inside of you?

Have you ever tried to stuff something in that vacuum that doesn't belong there or doesn't really satisfy? Have you mistaken your hunger and your thirst in the wrong way? I think on an honest honesty, and this is part of what Lent is all about, is that we do that kind of self introspection and we think about evaluate our selves in light of these stories and ask ourselves, where are my longings?

What is my hunger? What am I trying to feed inside me? What am I trying to satisfy? Is my thirst?

Jesus. After pointing the finger and she goes after he mentioned the husbands and so on, she says, let me ask you a worship question. And now we're really getting to it because the husband thing was really just masking that she really didn't know how to worship God. And so she asked this question. He says, well, you know, you, you Jews say you got to worship over in Jerusalem.

And the Samaritans say you have to worship on this mountain. Mount Ebel. And so what is it? How do you do it? I'm confused about how to worship God, and Jesus just gives her something that is so helpful for all of us is he says it's not about this mountain or that mountain. True worshipers will worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

We had a fascinating conversation and my staff meeting, this past week about the different types of worship that we offer here at Saint Mark's, where we have the traditional style and we have one that doesn't have any music at 8:00. And then we have the, the band, that plays more contemporary type music. At 5:00, the River service and, and, and one of the things that we all started to really realize is every way that we worship the Lord, it doesn't so much matter.

And the technique and the style and the time slot or the location, but what matters is whether we're worshipping in spirit and in truth, whether we are actually really grabbing the gospel and applying it to our lives with the truth of God's Word. And that's being properly proclaimed. And we're ministering and marveling in the truth of God.

And whether we have the Holy Spirit working in our hearts. And if the spirit in the truth is there, we can worship in a traditional setting or a contemporary setting in a small group or a large gathering, and God shows up and the and the zeal is there. Right? And so what the woman at the well reveals to us is, is that our hearts are deeply longing to worship the Lord, and that and when we fully enter into and engage and, and passionate worship of God, no matter where, which mountain or what style or what place you do it, that's the key to satisfying the deep, deep, deep longings of the heart.

It's fascinating. The Messiah also was getting his longings satisfied in this because, the contrast here is with Nicodemus. Nicodemus was, comes to Jesus at night. He's more worried about people and status and his reputation. The Samaritan woman, really, she had nothing to lose. The contrast is stark. She's actually meeting Jesus in the middle of the day.

And the reason for that is because her reputation has been trashed and her heart has been broken again and again and again. And what's fascinating is she's actually much more receptive to worshipping the Lord than the guy that's got everything together. And going for him, Nicodemus. And so Jesus actually finds greater depth of faith and the place where he really would least you would least expect it from a worldly point of view, a non-religious type place.

And that's often the case with us that, that those who have broken hearts, who have who've gone through the school of hard knocks and, and maybe are, not socially at the top, are much more receptive to having their hearts opened up to the Lord. And the wonderful thing about this story is that that kind of heart actually brings tremendous, delight to the heart of Jesus and deeply satisfies him.

When the disciples come back from Messiah King with the bag of hamburgers. They're surprised. He says, I don't need any food. I'm. I'm good. Like, well, who brought him food? Did somebody go get Chick-Fil-A? Jesus says no. Chick fil A's closed on Sundays. He goes, no, I have food to eat that you do not know about.

My food that is satisfying me is to see these people coming to the father and being reconciled with him. And because of that woman's testimony, the entire village of the Samaritans gave their lives to Jesus and recognized him as the Savior. He calls it a great harvest. He says, put

those bags of food away. It's harvest time. Let's eat this and let's fill our hearts up with people who want to worship me.

What a beautiful scene about hearts desires, not just the heart of the Lord, but also our hearts desires and a heart that is aimed at him. Let us pray. Heavenly father, thank you so much for the gift of your Word, where you call us to be surrendered to you and to give our hearts to you, and to find satisfaction in you and you alone.

So I pray that if anyone here has come with a broken heart or a deep need or desire, and have been trying to fill that in other places, but for some reason they're here, that you would be the one that they would find their satisfaction. And that's your longing, Lord, is that you desire worshipers, people who worship in spirit and in truth.

And that's the kind of worshipers we want to be, ones that drink deeply of your living water so that we could be filled with all of your fullness. It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen.