

The Rev. Charlie Holt

This. This year, I'm celebrating the whole year. Brooke and I are celebrating the whole year. Is our 30th year of marriage. Last August, we were married. August, I want to say 12th, but I think it's the 15th. It's been so long. It's been so long. But, it was, about 31 years that that I met my wife.

I was talking to one of my friends who was putting together a mission trip. Hurricane Alberto had come up into the Gulf and flooded the, city of Albany, actually, and Georgia. And so there was a church up there that was doing flood relief work and my friend was talking me into going on the trip. I was in seminary at the time, and, and so I was, interested in the trip.

And then, and then she said, and there's going to be this really pretty girl that's going to be on the trip. Her name's Brooke Holt, or actually, was Brooke Edgerton at that time. Brooke. And, and she's deep. And you're going to like her. She's really, really neat person. And so my interest was all piqued about this, girl named Brooke that was going.

So I signed up for the trip, to do the Lord's work, of course. And the, I brought my girlfriend along at the time. Tanya. She was on the trip to. And we met the group in Gainesville, which is where my girlfriend, Tanya lived at the time, and, and, I sort of let.

Don't tell anybody this. Just stop the tape for a moment. But I let Tanya get to the back of the of the van, and I sat next to Brooke so I could get to know this person. And we talked all the way up to Albany, and I realized that I had met the girl that I was going to marry.

And it was, love at first sight for me at least. Brooke, it took a little more convincing, but when I got back from that trip, I had to break up with Tanya, and Tanya said, you're going to think I'm crazy, but I really I really think you. I'd ask Brooke out. Well, that's interesting. I was kind of thinking the same thing.

So that was how it started. And, we got married one year after we met, which was really, really a great adventure. And it has been ever since. When, when I, am reading this gospel passage, I'm very much reminded that in this instance, it's not me as a groom on the hunt for a bride, but actually it's Jesus as the bridegroom who is on the hunt for his bride.

There's a wedding theme that runs all through the Gospel of John. It starts in John chapter one. When Jesus comes to that which is his own, but his own would not receive him. And he promises that those who do receive him, he will give the right to become children of God. And. And so, right after the first calling of the disciples, there's a, a miracle that happens at a wedding.

It's in Cana of Galilee. And there was, a big party, like a lot of weddings have. And what doesn't typically happen at a wedding, they ran out of wine. I guess they were some very thirsty guests. And so this was a crisis because the Mary Jesus's mother said, we can't have this happen at this party. Jesus. This would be this would be disastrous for the couple and for the families.

And so she encouraged Jesus to reveal his power at this wedding. And he at first pushed her off, but then he submitted to his mother like a good son. And this is the famous miracle where Jesus turned the water into wine. And it wasn't the cheap stuff either. It was, you know, like Cabernet Sauvignon or something like that.

And the, the host of the wedding, this is at the famous line from that scene where the host says, many, many people wait till all the guests are had too much wine, and then they serve the cheap stuff. Last. But you saved the best for last. That's where we get that phrase. But this was described by John in his gospel as the first miracle of Jesus, where he displayed his glory.

So that's the beginning of the wedding theme through the through the gospel. And then the very next thing is Jesus says of John the Baptist, who was the one who pointed the finger at Jesus and said, he's the one. He said, John the Baptist is the friend of the bridegroom. He's like the best man who announces that famous song, here Comes the Groom.

That's John the Baptist. Job was to announce the coming of the bridegroom. And then right after that, you have the story of the good or not the good. The Samaritan woman meeting Jesus at the well. Now, why? Why is that part of the wedding theme? Well, because the well seen is actually a very famous scene all throughout Genesis and even into the book of Exodus.

Men meet their wives at Wells. It's the town watering hole. That kind of makes sense if you think about it. The, this is where a lot of people would gather and you could meet new people. And this was often the place where men would come across a good looking girl and, and say, hey, I love at first sight, I'd like to go after that one.

And that happened with, with actually the one that this particular well was named after. This is Jacob's Well, where he met his bride. And so all of this Old Testament significance is there, and this. And then what do they happen to have a conversation about marriage? The fact that she'd been married five times? We'll get to that in a second.

John keeps going with the wedding theme throughout his gospel and into his other, writings. The very famous passage. It's often done at funerals where the, the John chapter 14, where the Jesus is about to leave to die on the cross, and he says, I have to leave you. I'm going to go with my father and prepare a place for you.

But after that I'll come back and bring you to myself. That's all. Betrothal. Imagery of a groom that is going off with his father to make the house for his bride, so that they can then come back and bring his bride with their right. We do it at funerals, but it would be a great passage at a wedding as well.

And then, of course, the very end of John's writings, the Book of Revelation is the grand marriage feast of the of the lamb with the Bride of Christ, which is the church. One of the reasons why we say it at a wedding dearly beloved, is because Jesus is the groom and the church. The people that have been called into relationship with him are the beloved, the bride of Christ.

It's a beautiful, beautiful imagery that really finds its heart in the Gospel of John. And so on one level, Jesus is a groom on the hunt for a bride. He's looking for his people, and he's wanting to find the one which he will be in covenant relationship, the one that he will marry. And remember the line from John chapter one he came to that which was his own.

But his own did not receive him. He came to Jerusalem, and he found that they were skeptical of him. Even the most, seeking of the seekers. Nicodemus came to him at night, not wanting to ruffle anybody's feathers, and just check Jesus out on the side. Nobody from Jerusalem, the place where you would think that the Messiah would be embraced, embraced him.

So here he is, out in the in the edges, the Samaritan region, which is where all of the half breeds lived, and people that were a bit outcast. And Jesus comes to this woman and he says to her, would you give me a drink? And she's taken aback because Jews don't associate with Samaritans. And here he is asking her for a drink.

But Jesus is thirsty for something. And it's interesting the relationship between thirst and hunger and, one it's interesting that Jesus is thirsty and hungry here. He's this God from God, light from light. He's God, but he's also God in the flesh. He's fully human. And we see these human elements all throughout the pages of the gospel.

And this is one of those places where Jesus is thirsty and he's hungry. Since the disciples away to go get some food, I don't I don't know where you pick up fast food and Samaria, you know, is it, you know, burger, Burger King, maybe Burger Messiah. They have chick fil A's back then, but wherever, wherever they went, they went off to go and get some food.

And, and there he is, left alone with, with this woman asking her for something to drink. My wife is a health coach, so she's constantly on to me about doing things that are healthy, like lifting weights and eating right and drinking the right things. And one of the things that she'll say is that you need to drink a lot of water.

And I've, I've paid attention to how I feel sometimes through the day. I sometimes forget that I need to drink some water, and all of a sudden I get a pain in my stomach. And one of the things

Brooke says is she says, sometimes you can mistake thirst for hunger and you think that you're hungry, but what you really are is you're dehydrated and you're really just thirsty.

And then if you'll just drink some water that that pain will, will go away. And this is the interesting thing about thirst and hunger and why we ask people to or encourage people to fast during lent. And sometimes, just like you can be even physically mistaking thirst and hunger and get these things wrong. Well, we actually have something similar going on with physical thirst and physical hunger and spiritual thirst and spiritual hunger, where we may think that we're hungry for something material, but really we're spiritually hungry for something.

And we don't often think about this, but Jesus was spiritually hungry in this moment. He was spiritually thirsty. Yes, he was thirsty. Thirsty, but he was thirsting for a relationship with the people that would worship him, that would love him back, that would respond, and the word of the gospel that would receive him. And he hadn't received too much of that up to this point.

A couple of disciples, yes, but not like large groups of people grabbing a hold of the message of his messianic ministry and saying, we are here to follow and worship you. So he was hungry for that and eager to see it happening. And it was a bit surprising to see that hunger satisfied in a group of people that lived in the region of Samaria, when, the woman, is asked for the, the, the water and she says, you know, how did you associate with me?

And so on. He says, you know, if you knew who it was, who was asking you for this drink of water, you would have asked me for water, but you would have asked me for a certain kind of water. Special water? What living water. What is this living water says, sir, you don't even have a bucket. Where are you going to get this living water from?

My daughter. Is of the marrying age, and, she has a couple of rules about guys. Actually. Three rules. And there there's some decent rules. If we have some single guys in the room. I want to encourage you to just listen up for a minute here, because it's instructive, but, my daughter has dated some guys, but she said, if dad if these guys would just get three things straight, they would become marriage material, so.

Well, what are. That's interesting. What are the three things she says? Well, one, they need a job that makes sense. Okay. She goes, they need to be a little closer to Jesus. And then the third thing is they need to drink a little less. But if they would get those three things, I might be more interested in marrying them.

You hear that? And so here's this woman. She says, you don't seem to even have a bucket, sir.

And Jesus says, I'm going to give you living water. Let me tell you about this living water. If you drink this water, it will go into your soul and fill you so full, but it'll fill you forever. And your life will, will begin to well up from the inside out. So much so that you would actually have like a spring inside of you.

A spring of eternal life and eternal water coming from within your heart and flowing out so that not only are you receiving this living water, but now you become a source of the living water. He says, okay, I'll bite. Give me this water. I want that water. That sounds good to me. Jesus then turns the tables on this woman, and just as he had a physical thirst and hunger that was longing for a deeper spiritual thirst and hunger, he knew that she had a physical thirst and hunger that was manifesting, but it was really a spiritual thirst and a spiritual hunger.

And he puts his finger right on the issue with her. He says, why don't you go get your husband and she honestly says, I don't have a husband. This is you're right, you've had five husbands, and the man that you're with right now is not your husband. Remember that old country song looking for love and all the wrong place is looking for love and too many faces.

When we keep going. No.

This is what she was doing. She was looking for love in all the wrong places. As Saint Augustine. He put it this way. He said, we all have hearts that are restless. He's actually describing himself. He says, my heart is restless until it finds its rest in you. Lord. That's what she had is a restless heart. Blaise Pascal put it another way that I think is really great.

Blaise Pascal, author of a little book called *Pensées*, says he actually didn't write it as a book. They were thoughts. That's French word for thoughts. And he would write these little thoughts down on a piece of paper, and he would throw them in a drawer. And after he died, somebody took all of those thoughts and compiled them into a devotional book.

And they're just beautiful. They're beautiful, beautiful old thoughts. But one of his thoughts was, that we have a God shaped vacuum. And in every heart, every human heart has a God shaped vacuum. He was a scientist and he was actually studying this principle, this idea of a vacuum. And you know how you kind of pierce the seal and open it up and all of a sudden, if it's a vacuum, it would suck air into it.

It would suck things into it because it's a void. What he's saying is that we have this void in our hearts that we are constantly wanting to fill with the wrong things, and that, in the case of the Samaritan woman, may very well have been men that she was trying to satisfy. This God shaped vacuum with human beings and its greatest guys are and men are men are fantastic.

We love men, but they cannot satisfy and fulfill the deepest longings of the human heart. And anybody that that takes another human being and puts them in that place is actually made an idol out of another human being. And again and again those people will let you down, which could very well be why she had five husbands, and the guy that she was currently living with was not her husband, because maybe she had been, we're just speculating here that maybe she had been hurt so many times and her heart had been so damaged by those relationships that she was afraid to enter into a covenant with another one.

And so here, here is a woman who has desperate need. It's worth comparing her to Nicodemus, who had everything to lose and coming to Jesus. And so he comes to him by night. You know, here's a man that's got it all together. He's got a great reputation among the Jewish community. He's, he's a leader. He's a Pharisee.

He's on the on the Sanhedrin council. He's really, really high up and part of the Jewish elite. And yet his approach to Jesus was, I'm going to come to the to the night time visitation. I don't want anybody to know that I'm checking them out. And his heart, for that reason was a little bit hard towards the Lord, a Samaritan woman.

This is middle of day. Why? Because nobody goes to the well at noon. Because she goes to the well at noon. So she doesn't have to be around other people and see their judging eyes and their and hear their, their gossip on their lips and their slander. She's a broken person who has nothing to lose and everything to gain by giving her life to Jesus as her Lord and Savior.

Often thing is very interesting about people, and it's oftentimes the people that have it all together, that have it hardest to get to know the Lord and those that don't have it all together, that have been broken, that have had their lives, are a bit of a mess. These are the people that know their need. They understand the invitation of grace and Jesus's offer of living water.

They're desperate for it. They're hungry for it. They're craving it because they have tried the material fillings and they have found them wanting and heartbreaking. Whereas those that are over here with it all together, they're still trying. The world's fillings and they're earthly, satisfied and not hungry for spiritual things at all. Can almost say which category do you find yourself in?

Which group, mostly describes you? One thing I also know about people that have it all together, at least on the outside, seem like they do. Most of the time they don't. We often judge. And this is another great little line from my wife, by the way, since we're talking about her. But, she, she says we often judge our insides by other people's outsides.

An interesting way to think about it. And what that means is we look at somebody and they're wearing these beautiful clothes, and they look so together, and they seem like they got it all together. But we don't know their backstory. We don't know whether they've been married five times or whether they have, griefs or challenges or addictions or problems or whatever it is.

We don't know anything about that. But the Lord does. And he's on the hunt for his people and some of the best ones that have ever been. His people are the ones that have come to him in the greatest need, with the most brokenness, like the Samaritan woman, she was so excited to tell everybody about Jesus. She ran back to her village and she said, he told me everything that I had ever done, which was not a great story.

Apparently. And yet she was so excited to be loved and known by the Messiah that she just told it all to everybody that perhaps had ever judged her. She was out in the open with them as well, because she knew that she had found the Messiah, the Savior. The disciples get back and they're still concerned about Jesus getting enough physical food.

They I guess they'd gone come back from Burger King or wherever it was, Burger Messiah. And they brought their bags of their fast food and they said, here's your lunch, Jesus. And Jesus replies to them, I have food to eat that you don't know about. Who brought him lunch? Start wondering, you know, just there. Somebody else went to Chick-Fil-A.

Jesus responds Goi very. You know, chick fil A is closed on Sundays now, that's not what he said. He said, my food, what is satisfying me right now and my soul and my hunger is to do the will of my father. He says. I am so fed right now because I am seeing this incredible harvest of souls is being reaped right now, as this entire region of Samaria are coming to me and giving their life to me.

He was so filled up because he was, a groom that had found his bride and his heart was full, and his life was, coursing out of him and into them. And the whole village begged Jesus to stay there and to keep teaching them for more. And he stayed a couple more days and it was funny, the people they said, well, we first believe because of what you said, Samaritan woman.

But now we believe because we have heard it for ourselves. You are the Savior of the world. Jesus, wants to satisfy the deepest longings of your heart, wherever they are. And yeah, we often take worldly things, anything from new cars to houses to jobs to people, whatever it is we try to cram that whole with, the stuff of this world.

And yet it can only be satisfied by him. And he knows that. And he is hungry for you and desirous to have you be receiving his grace and his living water. Let us pray. Heavenly father, thank you so much for the gift of your Son Jesus, who alone can satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart. We pray that you would fill us.

Fill me with your living water. But if there's somebody here who has come broken and needy and in need of your grace and your salvation, I pray that you would just pour out your blessing and your grace on their life. Fill them from the top of their toe to the bottom of their feet with your living water.

Make us spring well up inside of their hearts so that they can be filled with all of your fullness. And know and know that they know that they are your child, redeemed and saved and filled with your grace, your bride, the beloved. It's in Jesus name that we pray. Amen.