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HCC Sermon
July 23, 2023

The Bride of Isaac

Gen 24:1-67

INTRODUCTION

1. Image: Josephine and I felt the prompting in to participate on a short-term mission trip to Ethiopia, but we faced obstacles.
2. Need: We fear doing God's work because we don't have the assurance of success.
3. Subject: What gives us assurance when we experience fear of doing God's work? God's work done God's way will never lack God's supply (Hudson Taylor)
4. Text: Gen 24:1-67
5. Preview: We'll see three things from the text. First, what is God's work. Second, what is God's way? Third, what does God supply us with?

BODY

- I. God's work is to bless the nations.
 - A. God's work is to bless the nations through Abraham's descendants.
 1. Abraham received his promised son (24:1-9)
 2. Abraham believed in the promise of God (24:2-4)
 - a. Note the gesture to seal oath: hand on thigh (24:2, 9)
 - b. Abraham refuses to find a wife for Isaac among the Canaanites (24:3)
 - c. Abraham trusts that God will provide a son for Isaac (24:7)
 - B. God's work is to bless the nations through believers.
 1. Believers are a blessing when they live out the greatest commandments.
 2. Believers bless the nations by sharing the gospel with them.
- II. God's way is to depend on him for guidance.
 - A. Abraham's servant depends on God to guide him to Isaac's future bride (24:12-14).
 1. The servant goes to a well where women of Nahor gather (24:11)
 2. The servant prays to God for guidance (24:12-14)
 - a. The servant addresses God as the master of Abraham (24:12)
 - b. The servant bases his prayer on the steadfast love of God (24:12, 14)
 - c. The servant prays for specific help (24:13-14)
 - B. Pray for God's guidance to do his work.
 1. Example 1
 2. Example 2
- III. God's supplies us with what we need.
 - A. God supplies Isaac with Rebekah so that he inherits the promise of Abraham.
 1. Rebekah resembles Abraham making her the perfect wife for Isaac (24:15-21; 56-58)
 - a. Rebekah comes from the line of Shem through Nahor (24:15)
 - b. Rebekah exhibits the attributes of an ideal bachelorette (24:16)

- c. Rebekah shows extraordinary hospitality to Abraham's servant (24:17-21)
 - d. Rebekah shows faith when she forsakes her family to marry Isaac (24:56-58)
2. Isaac and Rebekah inherit the promise of Abraham (24:65-67)
 - a. The servant calls Isaac his master (24:65)
 - b. Rebekah inherits Sarah's tent (24:67)
- B. God supplies us with what we need to do his work.
- C. We have assurance that God will supply what we need to do his work because he gave us his son (John 4)
 1. The scenes at the wells in the OT point to a NT well scene.
 2. Jesus invites the Samaritan woman not into a marital relationship but a relationship with God.
 3. If God was willing to give up his precious son to save us, then how will he not ensure that we have what we need to do his work? He will.

CONCLUSION

1. Summary: God's work done God's way will never lack God's supply.
2. Closing Image: God supplied us with what we needed so that we could serve Him in Ethiopia.

MANUSCRIPT

Josephine and I felt the prompting to participate on a short-term mission trip before I graduated seminary. The short-term mission trip would help us discern if missions might be something that we could see ourselves doing in the future. After all, we knew the great commission: Go and make disciples of all nations. But we didn't know if God wished for us to go or to send.

We attended a gathering at my professor's house to hear about an opportunity to serve in Ethiopia in the summer of 2016. He led a team every summer to teach at a Bible college he started in Addis. I would help him to teach two classes: Pauline Epistles and Systematic Theology. Jo could help with the VBS at the international church. The trip seemed to be a good fit for our gifts and abilities.

But we encountered two obstacles. First, it would cost four thousand dollars for each of us to participate. That came to a total of eight thousand dollars. It equaled my annual tuition at Dallas Theological Seminary. We didn't have that kind of money laying around. We feared that if we went on this trip, then would we still be able to pay for the upcoming year of school? Second, Jo and I were both working. I worked part-time as an engineering with Lockheed Martin. Jo worked as a lighting designer full-time at a firm in Dallas. We didn't have enough vacation time to take two months off. We needed the income from the two jobs to pay for school and living expenses. Leaving the jobs seemed unwise. At the time, we had no assurance that things would work out if we decided to go to Ethiopia. One might say we felt fear and anxiety.

Why did we fear? Why did we feel unease? Anxiety? It's because we had no assurance of success. We didn't know how things would work out. Would this trip financially ruin us? Would we go and have a miserable experience? What if it puts unforeseen stress on our marriage?

We often fear doing God's work because we don't have the assurance of success. If as a college student, I decide to devote my summer serving on a short-term mission trip, then will I have sufficient job experience to land a job after I graduate? After all, my classmates all found internships this summer. What if God calls me to end an unhealthy dating relationship? I hesitate to end it because will I ever find someone? How do I know that I might find another boyfriend? Girlfriend? Someone asked if I could lead small group. But I know it's a big-time commitment. How do I know that if I serve as a small group leader that I won't burn out? How do I know that if I step up to serve that people would still keep coming? I'm not like my small group leader. Fears. We feel fear when God calls us to do us work. Accomplish his purposes. Do his will. Obey Him. Why? No assurance of success. No confidence that things will work out.

What should we do? **What gives us assurance when we experience fear of doing God's work?** What gives us confidence to do God's work despite the anxiety we feel? What inspires us to obey God when all we see are obstacles?

Let me share with you something that Hudson Taylor a missionary to the interior of China would say: "God's work done God's way will never lack God's supply". You may have heard this quote before. I believe Melvin shared this quote at a member meeting recently. God's work done God's way will never lack God's supply.

When I read this morning's passage, I think that it exemplifies this principle. It shows us how when a person does God's work God's way, they will never lack God's supply. If you haven't turned there already, then please open your Bibles to Genesis, chapter 24. Genesis, chapter 24.

This is the longest chapter found in the book of Genesis. Sixty-seven verses. I want to show you how the characters of this text exemplify this idea: God's work done God's way will never lack God's supply.

To do this, we'll examine the elements of this idea. We'll ask three questions. First, what is God's work? What is the work that God wants us to do? What task has God entrusted to us? Second, what is God's way? What does it mean to do things God's way? What is his prescribed method for us to follow? Third, what does God supply us with? What does he give us? What does he provide for us? God's work. God's way. God's supply.

Let's look first at God's work. What is God's work? What does he want us to do? What task does he entrust us with? What assignment does he give us?

God's work is to bless the nations. God desires for us to bring his blessing to all people. People in Houston. People in Texas. People to the ends of the earth. He wants us to reveal his favor to everyone. This is our task. Our assignment. Our duty. **God's work is to bless the nations.**

Now we are currently working our way through the book of Genesis. We see God's plan in the life of Abraham. We see how God intends to accomplish the work of blessing the nations. **God's work is to bless the nations through Abraham's descendants.** We see this blessing occur repeatedly in the life of Abraham. He receives the promise of blessing when God calls him to

leave Haran. God promises that Abraham will have many descendants. Children. Offspring. The nations will be blessed through Abraham's children.

Now recall that the blessing says that God will make Abraham into a great nation. To be a nation requires land and people. Last's week sermon shows how Abraham secures a deposit of land to bury Sarah. This foreshadows his descendants obtaining the land. This morning's text focuses on the seed. The children. The offspring.

At the end of his life, Abraham believes more strongly in God's promise. Let's look at this first section from verse one through nine. I want to point out some things from this section.

First, we see that **Abraham received his promised son**. God had promised him a son through Sarah. Isaac was born. We see this in the repetition of two words. My son. Verse 3. *You will not take a wife for my son.* Verse 4. *Take a wife for my son, Isaac.* Verse 6. *See that you do not take my son back there.* Verse 7. *You will take a wife for my son from there.* Verse 8. *You must not take my son back there.* God had fulfilled a promise to Abraham.

This causes Abraham to believe in the promise of God. He has faith now that God will do what he says. **Abraham believes in the promise of God**. We see this in a few ways in the text.

First, **Abraham refuses to find a wife for Isaac among the Canaanites**. Recall that God tells Abraham in an earlier text (Gen 15:16) that God plans to judge the Canaanites. Look at verse 3. *You will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.*

Second, **Abraham trusts that God will provide a wife for Isaac**. For God to fulfil his promise to give Abraham descendants, Isaac needs to get married. But Abraham doesn't fret. He knows that God will supply his son with a wife. Look at verse 7. *The LORD, the God of*

heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and spoke to me and swore to me, "To your offspring I will give this land," he will send an angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. This is quite a change from the man who lied about his wife being his sister. Slept with his wife's servant to produce an heir. He trusts God to provide an appropriate wife.

We learn in the Old Testament that God intended for Israel to be a nation sold out for God. This would prompt nations to come and worship their God. This would result in blessing to the nations. But you and I know the story of Israel. They fail in their mission to represent God in the world.

But God's work to bring blessing to the nations continues through us. Through believers. Through those whom God has saved through the work of Jesus Christ. **God's work is to bless the nations through believers.** People will learn of God's plan to bring goodness and wholeness to them through Jesus Christ.

What do we do to be a blessing? **Believers are a blessing when they live out the greatest commandments.** Love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. Simple. But hard to do.

To love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength means that no one and nothing takes priority in our lives other than God. No spouse. No girlfriend. No boyfriend. No parent. No employer. No friend. No community. God takes first place in our thoughts. Our affections. Our love. Our behavior. When we do this, we demonstrate a life lived under God's leadership. Under his direction. Under his authority.

Second. Love your neighbor as yourself. This means that we care for people around us. If God highlights a need, then we do our best to meet them. Someone at work gives birth to a child. We offer to send them a meal. Someone feels down because they feel overwhelmed at work. We listen to them share their burden. Someone experiences financial hardship. We give so that they can get back on your feet.

But it's not just caring for people. Doing good deeds. Giving to those in financial need. Lend a listening ear. Provide a meal. We have to share the gospel. **Believers bless the nations by sharing the gospel with them.** To be a blessing means that we share with unbelievers the news that they can experienced a restored relationship with God through Jesus Christ. To believe in the gospel means that whatever happens to you whether good or bad means that it will turn out for your good. That's the blessing.

What is God's work? Bless the nations. Love God. Love neighbor. Share the gospel. Everything that we do should fall into those three categories. Let's move on to the second question. What is God's way? What should we do to accomplish this task? How does God want us to carry out this assignment? What is God's way?

God's way is to depend on him for guidance. We need to rely on him. Ask him for help. Look to him for aid. We need to seek him out for what to do. We need his instructions. We need his help. We need his direction. **God's way is to depend on him for guidance.**

We see this played out in the life of Abraham's servant. Abraham entrusts the servant with a mission. Go find a wife from my fatherland for my son Isaac so that the nations might be blessed. **Abraham's servant depends on God to guide him to Isaac's future bride.** Let's look at what the servant does.

The servant goes to a well where the women of Nahor gather. He goes to place that has a high concentration of women. Look at verse 11. *And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water.*

The servant and company come to this well. All these women come out of the city to draw water. Young and old. They all descend upon this well. How is he supposed to figure out which of these women will be Isaac's future wife? This prompts the servant pray. **The servant prays to God for guidance.** Look at verse 12. *And he said, "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels' – let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master.*

Let's look at three elements to his prayer. First, **the servant addresses God of his master of Abraham.** Look at verse 12. *God of my master of Abraham.* There's a lot in this phrase. To whom is the servant praying? He prays to the God who called Abraham to go into the land of Canaan. He prays to the God who saved Abraham and Sarah from the hand of Pharaoh. He prays to the God who enabled Abraham to rescue Lot. He prays to the God who saves Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah. He prays to the God who provides a sacrifice in lieu of Isaac. He prays to the God who created the heavens and earth. The God who knows all things. Only he can help him to find a bride for Isaac.

Second. **The servant bases his prayer on the steadfast love of God.** It occurs twice his prayer. Verse. 12. *Show steadfast love to my master Abraham.* Verse 14. *By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master.* The Hebrew word for steadfast love is *chesed*. It refers to loyalty found within a covenant relationship. It's where an inferior asks a superior to show kindness. The servant bases his prayer on the covenant relationship that exists between Abraham and God.

Third. **The servant prays for specific help.** There is specificity. Look at verse 14. *Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink and I will water your camels' – let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac.* The servant plans to ask a young woman for a drink. If the young woman offers him and his camels a drink, then the servant will know that this is the one.

The servant models doing things God's way. He depends on God for guidance. We should do likewise. We should pray for **God's guidance to do his work.** We should ask him for help.

When Jo and I were trying to discern whether we should go to Ethiopia, we prayed. We asked God to show us what to do. But of course, God didn't give us a burning bush moment. We didn't hear his voice. But we decided to trust him. We decided to go on this summer mission trip to Ethiopia. We asked him to help us overcome the obstacles. The finances we needed to raise to go on the trip. Our job situations.

Some of you might be praying about how to do God's work. Guidance on whether to serve at church. The worship team. The council. Children's ministry. Youth ministry. Small Group. Guidance in your relationship. How do I date in a way that pleases God? Should I continue this relationship. Guidance in your work. Should I continue to serve on my team? Should I stay?

Should I move on? Where could I make the greatest impact for God's kingdom. Guidance on how to steward your resources. Should I give to his organization? Should I support this missionary? How much should I give to the church? **Pray for God's guidance to do his work.**

God's work done God's way will never lack God's supply. What does God supply us with? What do we receive from God? What will he give us?

God supplies us with what we need. He doesn't give us what we want. He gives us what is necessary to accomplish his work. He provides for us the resources to do his will. He furnishes us with what is essential to accomplish the task he entrusts to us. **God supplies us with what we need.**

What is the need in the text? A wife for Isaac. And God provides the wife. **God supplies Isaac with Rebekah so that he inherits the promise of Abraham.** Now why is Rebekah the ideal wife for Isaac? Why is she depicted as the best fit for him?

Rebekah resembles Abraham and Sarah. This makes her the perfect wife. The best fit for Isaac. **Rebekah resembles Abraham and Sarah making her the perfect wife for Isaac.** There are four reasons.

First reason. **Rebekah's ancestry resembles Abraham's ancestry.** She comes from the line of Shem through Nahor. Look at verse 15. *Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder.* Rebekah is Abraham's grandniece. She comes from good stock. Ideal family.

Second reason. Rebekah resembles Sarah's beauty. Gorgeous in appearance. She is also a virgin. That means if Isaac marries her. The children will be his offspring alone. There are no

other kids. She's as a pastor once said a 3 G woman. A gorgeous godly gal. Look at verse 16. *The young woman was attractive in appearance, a maiden whom no man had known.*

Third reason. **Rebekah resembles Abraham's generous hospitality.** Look at verse 17.

Then the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please give me a little water to drink from your jar." She said, "Drink, my lord." And she quickly let down her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking. So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw water, and she drew for all his camels. The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the LORD had prospered his journey or not.

Why is hospitality important? Abraham exhibits generous hospitality when he entertains the three guests before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He provides for them bread, curds, milk, and a calf. It's a generous meal. Here, Rebekah exhibits a similar generosity when she labors to provide drink for the camels.

Let's think for a moment how much water she had to draw. A camel can drink up to 25 gallons of water. There are ten camels. That means she needed to potentially draw up 250 gallons of water. Rebekah's jar could hold three gallons of water. This means she would need to make about 84 round trips to the well. I imagine this servant watching this woman working up a sweat. Pour the water into the trough. Run back to the well. Lower her jar. Pull up her jar. Empty her jar. She does this 84 times.

Note she doesn't do this at a leisurely pace. Everything in the text notes haste. Look at the text. Verse 18. *She quickly let down her jar.* Verse 20. *She quickly emptied her jar. She ran again to the well.* It's more intense than an orange theory workout.

Rebekah exhibits hospitality. Let's look at the last reason. **Rebekah resembles Abraham's faith.** After the events at the well. The servant returns with Rebekah to her home. The servant recounts his prayer and God's response. He believes that Rebekah is the woman that he's looking for. He asks if he can return to Abraham with Rebekah immediately. The family prefers that Rebekah stay ten more days. But they leave it up to Rebekah. Look at verse 56. *But he said to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master." They said, "Let us call the young woman and ask her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will go."*

What does this sound like? It sounds like when the LORD asks Abraham to forsake his family and his home and go to the land, he would show him. Rebekah does the same thing. She forsakes her home. Her family. She goes to marry a man she has never met before. This requires faith. It requires trust. It resembles Abraham.

For these four reasons. Ancestry. Beauty. Hospitality. Faith. Rebekah is the ideal wife for Isaac. God supplies Isaac with the ideal wife.

Now that Isaac has a wife. It makes him the heir to God's promise to Abraham. **Isaac and Rebekah inherit the promise of Abraham.** Where do we see this in the text?

First, **the servant calls Isaac his master when he returns to the land.** Look at verse 64. *And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel and said to the servant, "Who is that man, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." Why is that important? Who has the servant been identifying as his master this entire narrative? Abraham. But now he acknowledges Isaac as the master.*

Second, **Rebekah inherits Sarah's tent**. She occupies the tent reserved for the matriarch. Look at verse 67. *Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sara his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.* When Isaac brings Rebekah into Sarah's tent, it represents Rebekah taking up a new position in the Abrahamic family. The matriarch. The wife of Isaac. They both inherit the promises of God.

What does this mean for us? **God supplies us with what we need to do his work.** He provides us what is necessary to get the job done. He will furnish us with the resources needed to accomplish the task.

For instance, I remember when we trying to raise support to go to Ethiopia, we had only raised about 50% of the required funding. A person, whom we have never met before but had connections to our professor, provided a substantial amount to bump up our support. A week before our trip, we were still short about 1000 dollars. A brother asked after our service, how support raising was going? We shared with him that we were still short by 1000 dollars. That evening, he gave the rest of what we needed to go. God provided all the funding necessary for us to go.

Let's say you pray for where to serve. An announcement about help in the children's ministry catches your eye. You pray for wisdom in what to do in your relationship. You may receive a text message from a friend. She shares with you a message about relationships that you she found helpful. You pray for where to give. You discover a need at the church. This prompts you think to think about giving to meet that need. I'm not sure how God will answer your prayer. What I do know is that God will supply you with what you need?

How can I be so sure? We have assurance that God will supply what need do this work. Why? He gave us his son. **We have assurance that God will supply what we need to do his work because he gave us his son.**

Let's think a little bit about this well scene. Abraham's servant shows up at the well in Nahor to find a wife for Isaac. Another well scene will occur later in Genesis. Jacob shows up at a well and finds his future wife, Rachel. Later, Moses also arrives at a well and find his wife Zipporah. Does this mean that God sets a pattern for us to go to the well to find a wife? Nope. All these scenes at the well point to another well scene. The scenes at wells in the Old testament point to a New Testament well scene.

The perfect servant. The perfect Israel. The perfect prophet. Jesus Christ shows up at a well. This well is in Samaria. A Samaritan woman shows up. She's had five husbands. She's no Rebekah. No Rachel. No Zipporah. **Jesus invites the Samaritan woman not into a marital relationship. He invites her into something even better. He invites her into a relationship with God.**

Jesus invites not only this woman but all who believe in him into a relationship with God. He will allow them to worship God in spirit and in truth. He is the messiah. He will give up his life to pay the penalty for our sin, so that we can be saved from our sin. **If God was willing to give up his precious son to save us, then how will he not ensure that we have what we need to do his work? He will.**

Caveat. The way that God provides for this work may not always be what we expect. He may not supply what you need to do what you perceive to be your work to direct you on the

path he wants to be. But know this. No matter what happens in your life. Good. Bad. Ugly. God can and will use it in your life to accomplish his work through you.

What is God's work? God's work is to bless the nations. What is God's way? God's way is to depend on him for guidance. What does God supply us with? God supplies us with what we need. **God's work done God's way will never lack God's supply.**

I already shared with you that the Lord helped Jo and me overcome the financial obstacle to serve in Ethiopia. But some of you may be wondering: so what did you all do with work? For myself, I shared with boss that I planned on serving on a short-term mission trip to Ethiopia for two months. I would be willing to step down from my position early so that they could train up my replacement. But my boss put his hand up. He asked: "Why don't you just take two months of unpaid leave of absence and return to work after?"

What about Josephine's job? That was a difficult obstacle to overcome. But I remember that spring before the mission trip, Josephine came home a little down. She shared that her company was not doing well financially. Her boss laid off two of her co-workers. She might be next. As we talked about it, we wondered: Maybe God is telling us that Josephine should resign her position because the company would lay her off anyways. She tenured her resignation. We went to Ethiopia. When she returned, she connected with someone in the lighting industry. This contact arranged an interview with Jo's current company. This company provided a better salary and better work life balance. God provided all that we needed. I'm sure that he'll do the same for you. Let's pray.