

A Marriage Made in Heaven

Genesis 24:50-66

Last week we were introduced to Rebekah, the bride whom God had chosen for Isaac. Rebekah is presented to us with praise and honor, a godly woman. And the woman whom God himself had prepared for Isaac, truly a marriage made in heaven. We seldom use those words any more, since so many marriages don't last, but that expression is still helpful. A marriage made in heaven, and that is what is before us this morning.

It is a marriage made certain by God's unchangeable decree, a marriage arranged not merely by the servant of Abraham and the family of Rebekah, but arranged by the inspired revelation by God himself. We studied that this last week, and to continue that account today, we reach the climax. The wedding itself.

Abraham's servant finds a bride for his son Isaac. And the godly, beautiful young woman named Rebekah agrees to join herself by marriage to that chosen line of God's people. But as we study this marriage made in heaven, I don't merely want to study the lives of two human beings. I don't want merely to make applications and explanations about marriage. For this chapter is not about marriage, that isn't the highest focus. The chapter is about God. And three things about God are displayed prominently--the authority of God, the promise of God, and the goodness of God. We'll look at them in that order. First,

I. THIS MARRIAGE PROCLAIMS THE AUTHORITY OF GOD.

God's call is the dominant theme, emphasized particularly in, v.50-51

Remember where we left off this last week. Abraham's

servant had found the woman he had asked for. God had made his revelation clear. She came and offered him water, and his camels, too. And she was from Abraham's own family. Everything was in order, so Abraham's servant cut right to the chase,

v.49

The answer was so clear, verse 50. "The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you either bad or good." Now, don't take from that that Rebekah's family was neutral. Don't take that to mean that they wouldn't agree or disagree to the plan. Instead, the Hebrew expression means something close to this: "God has spoken, and there is nothing more to be said."

God has spoken, and the matter is settled. Their answer was a clear and unhesitating, "YES." God said it. I believe. And that settles it. Such simple, devout, godly faith.

And such a marvelous example for us to follow. When God speaks about a matter, that settles it. No need for debate, no need for discussion. No need for thinking, or even praying in our to decide. When God has spoken about a certain issue or a particular situation, no decision is necessary on our part. We don't need to pray about it. We just submit to his word.

In that word, God has spoken about a large number of issues and many situations, and for us,

A. God's authority calls for submission to his word in our lives.

To put that even plainer, when the Bible tells us to do something, or when it forbids us from doing something, the only appropriate response is obedience. This is sometimes called the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is Lord, that is, he speaks

with absolute authority requiring from us absolute submission.
“The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you either bad or good.”

Notice how quickly, and eagerly, both Rebekah and Abraham’s servants are to carry out what the Lord has revealed. Notice how quickly the marriage arrangements are made.

v.54

Immediately. The very next day. Now that may seem like a disrespectful request, perhaps even a little presumptuous. It certainly was sudden, and therefore quite shocking. And though the request might seem somewhat insensitive, still the servant was merely wishing to put into effect what God had revealed--with the shortest of delays. God had determined that Isaac and Rebekah should marry. Why wait even another day?

Not surprisingly, Abraham’s servant got a respectful request to delay, just for ten days or so. Enough time to say good-bye and to get everything in order. Again, both sides are acting honorably here.

v.55

But the servant persisted, again stressing this eagerness to see the Lord’s revealed will enacted.

v.56

The family responded well to that.

v.57-58

And with that, the family sent her on her way, she as eager as Abraham’s servant to see God’s will carried out.

v.59

I don’t think that you can prove from that that Rebekah had not been consulted about the original proposal. In fact, likely the opposite was true. Though her father exercised a great deal of authority in arranging this marriage, in granting permission for the betrothal to be established, Rebekah was not a silent pawn under the uncaring and absolute dominance of her father. Presumably, since her brother Laban takes such a prominent role also, and her father Bethuel may well be quite old or infirm. The point is, Rebekah gave her consent. Both her consent and her father’s agreement to the betrothal are presented here.

Everyone was so eager, so quick, to do what God had revealed to be his will. Such godly submission by everyone involved should be a great encouragement to us today. Notice further, how both Isaac and Rebekah respond when they meet each other.

First, Rebekah.

v.65

Then, Isaac.

v.67

Both of them demonstrate that,

B. God’s authority calls for submission to his will for our lives.

Submission to his will. It was God’s will for Rebekah to marry Isaac. So what did she do? Immediately, she submitted to God’s will by accepting her role as a wife, and by accepting her responsibility to honor and to submit. She would demonstrate the same godly submission as her mother-in-law Sarah.

The veil was certainly, in that age, the sign of submission.

v.65

She demonstrates an immediate and wholehearted willingness to submit to the man whom God had revealed would be her husband. The reference to Sarah, Isaac's mother, is found in,

1Pet. 3:1 "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. 3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror."

Such is her expression of godliness. Isaac, for his part, also submits to the will of God for his life. Sometimes in these sorts of discussions we forget that God has also given men instructions on being husbands. In Ephesians 5, only 3 verses of instructions are given to women. And 9 verses are given to men. In all of that, the simple, straightforward command given to men, the will of God for husbands, is simple: love your wife.

Eph. 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."

Notice Isaac's submission to God's will.

v.67

Everything in that verse communicates love. He immediately took care of Rebekah's needs. He brought her into a tent. But not just any tent, the tent left empty when his mother died. No higher honor could have been given either his mother or his wife. And he married her. He committed himself to her by oath, for the rest of his life. And he loved her.

In submission to God's will. Joyful submission, no doubt. But nonetheless, submission. This marriage, made in heaven, proclaims the authority of God. And the examples of this godly couple should stir us on to more consistent and faithful submission to God's word in our lives and God's will for our lives.

Secondly, in keeping my focus on God, and not upon man,

II. THIS MARRIAGE REPEATS THE PROMISE OF GOD.

I won't say too much here, since this has been such a repeated emphasis in recent weeks. But I will repeat it, enough to keep that emphasis. Isaac and Rebekah inherit the marvelous covenant promises made to Abraham, a promise made so clear in,

Gen. 17:4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as

an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

Isaac is the first generation, the son of promise. And the promise is his, with his wife Rebekah. It is,

A. A promise of uncountable descendants.
v.59-60

Thousands of ten thousands. The prayer for Rebekah was for descendants who would number in the millions. The tens of millions. Even in the billions! Now that’s a big family!

Keep in mind, this whole family knew God’s promise. They didn’t content themselves to pray for Isaac and Rebekah to have a big family. They didn’t just pray for the blessing of children. They prayed for the fulfillment of God’s covenantal promise. For generations to come, Rebekah in the line of her godly mother-in-law Sarah, would be the mother of all who believe.

And he promised to Abraham an unmeasurable inheritance. Land, beyond measure. This prayer for Rebekah also includes that promise, which is,

B. A promise of ultimate victory.
v.60

This, too, was directly connected to the promises made to Abraham.

Gen. 22:16 “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the

seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

This marriage so clearly repeats the glorious covenantal promises of God. This is so much more than a delightful love story between Isaac and Rebekah. It is ultimately, the love story of Jesus Christ and his church, a church which shall increase to thousands upon ten thousands, and whose offspring shall possess the gates of their enemies.

Finally, again with our focus on God, let me say that,

III. THIS MARRIAGE MAGNIFIES THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

God’s goodness. What a delightful subject. Everything here reveals that goodness.

First, to repeat one of my points last week,

A. The goodness of God inspires our worship.
As we studied last week,
v.26-27

And, v.48

So again, v.52

The psalmist puts it this way:

Ps. 145:1 “I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever. 2 Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever. 3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable. 4 One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare

Your mighty acts. 5 I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, And on Your wondrous works. 6 Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts, And I will declare Your greatness. 7 They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness, And shall sing of Your righteousness.”

God’s goodness should be the subject of our worship. It should also be a motivation for generous giving, so we see here that,

B. The goodness of God inspires of loving generosity.
v.53

Gold and silver jewelry. Articles of clothing. Costly gifts. Certainly, there is here a sense of cultural and customary obligations, a dowry or wedding present bestowed by a bridegroom when a marriage agreement had been reached. There was also the necessary proof of financial status and stability. But this was so much more than that.

There is no sense whatsoever of purchasing a bride. There is no sense whatsoever of bribery or flattery. This was a generous gift from a man who had been richly blessed by the hand of God’s goodness. And to make a very broad application of this principle, let me read,

2Cor. 9:6 “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”

The awareness of God’s goodness should greatly inspire our

loving generosity. And then,

C. The goodness of God inspires our unhesitating eagerness.

I’ve already referred to this eagerness, both on the part of Abraham’s servant and Rebekah. It was an eagerness to put God’s will into practice, to carry through on that which had been revealed to be God’s will for their lives.

But that can seem so dry and so absent of emotion, can’t it? That can seem so cold and unloving, just bare submission. What about excitement? Well, in its highest form, submission will be combined with excitement. Or the words I’ve chosen, unhesitating eagerness.

Nothing could be better, nothing could be more enjoyable, nothing could be more fulfilling, nothing could be more exciting than doing what you are certain is God’s will for your life. I hope you have had some taste of that experience yourself. The excitement, the enjoyable pleasure of doing that which you know God would have you to do!

Along with that human excitement, there is to be the excitement of acting with the confidence that God had ordered the circumstances of our lives such that we could be sure that it was God’s will, with an eagerness to do what God had willed.

Again, the example here,
v.54-59

Now, there won’t always be such excitement, such unhesitating eagerness. Sometimes, that which God has revealed to be his will is quite difficult and strenuous. We might even obey and submit at times with a strong sense of

apprehension, and such obedience is praiseworthy. For we are called to deny ourselves, to take up our cross and to follow Jesus.

But often, when we experience God's goodness in very practical and specific ways, we are filled with this eagerness and excitement. And what an edifying and encouraging experience that is.

Finally, and very much related to that,

D. The goodness of God inspires our delight in his will for our lives.

Again, not merely submission, as in the drudgery of having to do something which we really don't want to do. But real delight. Isaac shows us such delight.

v.61-63

What was he doing meditating out in that field that night? What was he looking for? Well the answer is obvious. He was delighting himself in the fact that God had promised him a wife. And he shows that delight, even as he accepts his responsibility to love his new wife. Just as she shows her delight, even as she accepts her responsibility to love her new husband.

v.64-67

I want to end with these thoughts, because delighting in God's will for our lives is, perhaps, the greatest height to which we can attain in our relationship with God. Not just obedience and submission. But delighting ourselves in that obedience and submission.

People of God, learn to delight yourself in God's will for your life. Learn to delight yourself in his laws, for his laws are not burdensome. They are good. And delightful. Learn to delight

yourself in him, and in him alone. Learn to enjoy him forever, as the first question of our Shorter Catechism states. Delight yourself in the the Lord. With the great promise of spiritual blessing declared by Isaiah,

Is. 58:4 "Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Let this great love story remind you of God's goodness. And further, this morning, let this sacrament which lies before you remind you again of God's goodness. And with that reminder, no matter what the outward circumstances of your life might be, "delight yourself in the LORD."