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THE INVISIBLE GROOM, Part Two¹

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I don't know about you, but when I think of trauma-inducing movies for little tykes, I think of *Bambi*. You remember: Bambi and his mom are enjoying a beautiful day on the meadow, when all of a sudden mother becomes aware of the evil hunters. Bambi and his mother run and run, and then just when Bambi thinks they're safe, CRACK! A shot rings out and Bambi is suddenly alone. Oh, the trauma!

Yet the other scene I remember best from that movie is the scene where Bambi and his buddies fall in love. "They're twitterpated," according to the movie. Bambi and his buddies see the beautiful girls, and they suddenly feel lighter than air. Do you remember that feeling? I remember; but I'm not going to talk about it because I'm afraid I'd embarrass my first wife (for the record, my wife *is* my first wife!)

Friends, maybe you were very young when you came to saving faith in Jesus; and if that's the case, you might not remember that wonderful, liberating, joyous feeling. Maybe that day was so distant that you don't remember it now; but I would guess that there have been times across the years when you *have* felt that sweetness and that closeness with Jesus Christ. As sweet and as wonderful as that is, can you imagine—*just imagine!*—how it will be when we meet Him face to face?

Our mission here on earth is to share that experience with a lost and dying world. Everything else is secondary!

The story we have in Genesis 24 is a wonderful picture of bringing others to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Let's review briefly: Abraham is concerned that his son Isaac find a proper bride. Abraham calls on a trusted but unnamed servant and gives him a mission with three important objectives: he *must not* find a bride from among the Canaanites; he *must* find a bride from among Abraham's own people; and he *must not* take Isaac. With these objectives firmly in mind, and with all of the master's resources at his disposal, the servant begins the five hundred mile journey.

What if we were to put our own name there in the place of the servant? *God the Father is commissioning us to find a bride for His own Son.* What a great responsibility! We are on a mission in the name of God. People can't see God, but they *can* see us! We are to persuade people to come meet the Invisible Groom. But we do not go alone! In verse 7, we see the father promising this servant that God would be at work on his behalf.

We also noted the servant's prayer when he finally arrived at the right area. The servant had an *expectation of help* from God. You see, in the work of evangelism, we have a Partner, God's Holy Spirit. This unnamed servant prayed, expecting help. That is exactly what we need to do: pray, expecting God to help us share the gospel! So in Genesis 24:10–14, we can read how this servant prayed, asking God to show him the one in whom God Himself was at work.

Is that something we can do? Obviously, yes! We can and we should pray to God, asking Him to reveal

¹ The five steps in this sermon are adapted from Ray Stedman's excellent sermon, "Here Comes the Bride" (1968). Available at <http://www.raystedman.org/old-testament/genesis/here-comes-the-bride>.

to us the opportunities to witness—and then expect to find the opportunity!

I want us to look at Genesis 24:15–21. The first step was *expectation* on the part of the servant; now we will see *confirmation* from God:

¹⁵ *And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.*

¹⁶ *And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.*

¹⁷ *And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.*

¹⁸ *And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.*

¹⁹ *And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.*

²⁰ *And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.*

²¹ *And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.*

Did you notice that? Before he was even done praying to God, here comes the very one he's praying for. God was already at work, just as Abraham had promised this servant way back in verse 7. He's praying, "God, show me the one," when along comes the one!

She fits two of the three mission objectives: she *is not* from Canaan, and she *is* from Abraham's family. She's unmarried but of marriageable age; she's beautiful *and* pure, which, you know, let's assume that's about as common then as it is now.

She also shows a remarkable work ethic. She takes hospitality to strangers very seriously. When the servant asks her for a drink, she provides for him as well as his ten camels. Now, each camel can drink twenty gallons of water—this is a big job! She knew it was a big job before she even started, and she committed herself to do it until the camels were completely finished. She did not wait to be asked, and she jumped right to the task without even waiting for a "thank you."

How does the servant react? He's amazed. He's stunned. Look again at verse 21: "*And the man wondering at her held his peace.*" We don't use that phrase "held his peace" any more, but it means that he was silent. He was amazed! All he could do was watch her, trip after trip, hauling gallon after gallon of water. Would she finish the job, or would she get halfway through and quit? He had to know! He wanted to see if she was really the one he'd been praying about.

All of this is God's way of *confirming* to the servant that this young woman is indeed the one. Now, friends, there is something that we should keep in mind: we don't need a big sign from God in order to do the work of evangelism. Very often the Holy Spirit works in us subtly and quietly, and we find the opportunities to share the gospel come about through very ordinary means. Don't wait for a message in the sky! Simply pray, asking and expecting God to reveal His appointments to you—and He will!

The third step is preparation. The servant does not immediately launch into a presentation; instead, he lays the groundwork for a private discussion. Look with me at verses 22–27 if you will:

22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold;

23 And said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?

24 And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor.

25 She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.

27 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.

The servant gives her a rich reward for her trouble: a golden earring and two golden bracelets. He makes sure she is paid what is fair and then some.

Let me interject here with something that bothers me greatly. My mother was a waitress for many years, and her experience with “church people” on Sunday was a very bad reflection on the name of Christ. Here’s why: very often the “church people” would fill the restaurant after church, and the waitresses would do their best to give good service, but the “church people” were known to be notoriously poor tippers. They were stingy! And to make matters worse, quite a lot of them would leave a gospel tract in place of a tip! Then they would piously say, “I’ve given something better than a tip—I’ve given the gospel!” Look, folks, do you really think those waitresses were impressed with that representation of the gospel?

One more story: When I lived in Savannah, I went to a luncheon with about eight local pastors. The pastors gave our waitress a very hard time. They were demanding and they were difficult. Then, to make matters worse, they started trying to outdo each other in witnessing to the very waitress that they’d just bullied around. Do you think that waitress was very impressed?

I’ll tell you something which I hope you won’t spread around too much: *preachers tend to be my least favorite class of people.* I like some of them very well, and we have some very fine men within our local association; but on the whole, I’ve grown suspicious of them as a class. I wish it weren’t this way, but when I find out that someone is a preacher, I automatically go on guard. Now, if that’s the case in my life, wouldn’t you say that we have our work cut out for us as Christians? Many people simply have a bad impression of Christians in general. Like it or not, we are “guilty by association,” and we must find ways to earn their trust.

That is why, to me, it is significant that this servant shows the young woman that she has value. The gifts he gives her are far beyond what a person could expect to receive as a paid laborer. He is saying to her, “You have value.” Folks, money is not the only way to show that a person has value; and I’m certainly not suggesting that every time you share the gospel, you have to give someone money! You do, however, have to show them that they are valuable. After all, Jesus thinks they’re valuable, right? We are His servants, sent to persuade the people of this world that they have so much value that God

sent His son to die for them. I urge you to treat people as valuable.

Moving on! The servant asks two questions: Who is your father, and is there room for us in your father's house? He doesn't launch right into the presentation; instead, he asks her questions, he listens to what she has to say, and then he sets up a private meeting. That's really good advice for soul winners!

The young woman's answers confirm for this servant that yes, she is the one. She is from Abraham's family. She fits all the criteria so far; but will she come back with him to meet and marry a man she's never seen? That remains to be seen; but it is best to discuss it with her and her family in a private setting.

The young woman assures him that her father's house has room enough for the servant and straw enough for the camels. The servant immediately prays, thanking God for his guidance and worshipping Him.

So far we've seen the *expectation*, the *confirmation*, and the *preparation*. Rather than read the entire next portion to you, let me summarize up through verse 54. The servant begins his presentation to the young woman and her family by telling them about the riches of his master Abraham: his great number of livestock, his silver and gold. Abraham is the recipient of God's great blessing. The servant then details the mission his master had given him about finding a wife for his son—the son who will inherit everything. Then he tells his personal story of how God had shown him the exact young woman, showing that without a doubt she is the right one to marry the master's son. He concludes with giving gifts from his master to the girl and her family.

In other words, the whole presentation is about the master. Evangelism is really telling people how good God is and showing what he's done for you. Has God been good to you? Good! Can you tell someone else about how good He's been to you? Great! We can begin to share the great spiritual riches that God has given to us. You know, Peter and John said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, I give unto you." Obviously we're not going to make a lame person walk, but what do we have to offer? We have a *rich spiritual life* and the blessing of *peace which passes understanding*. On the other hand, if you're not really right with God, you won't have those riches to share, now will you?

The gospel will change the lives of those who accept it; but folks, it is not our job to bring about the change. So often God's people are very critical of unbelievers, thinking that we have to somehow change them to make them right for our church culture; but let me ask you a question: Do we clean fish before we catch them? I'm not a fisherman—at all!—but even I know the answer to that! Just remember that God loves them as they are, and that He will begin to speak into their lives once they have accepted the truth of the gospel. It's a process—one that is still at work in me and in you!

After the *presentation* comes the *invitation*, and after the *invitation* comes *communion*. We're going to come back to this passage and finish it up in a future sermon; but for today, let's take this story as it stands so far. Our mission is to take the love of Jesus to a lost and dying world, and to take people from that lost and dying world into the love of Jesus. We have a mission from God—"Go ye!"—and the partnership of the Holy Spirit. Be the best representative of God you can be this week, pray and ask God to reveal the opportunities to share that He's already appointed for you, show people that they have value to you and to God, and then tell them the story. Tell of the riches of the Master, showing what He's done *for you* and *for them*. Can we step out in faith and tell the story? We can, and we must!