

A Gobsmacked Groom

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[0 : 00] Our reading for today is the book of Isaiah, chapter 54, verses 4 to 8. Do not be afraid, you will not suffer shame.

Do not fear disgrace, you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth, and remember no more the reproach of their widowhood.

For your maker is your husband, the Lord Almighty is his name, the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer. He is called the God of all the earth.

The Lord will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit. A wife who married young, only to be rejected, says your God. For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back.

In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer.

[1 : 11] Our second Bible reading today is taken from John, chapter 2, verses 1 to 11. On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee.

Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, They have no more wine.

Dear woman, why do you involve me? Jesus replied, My time has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you.

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, Fill the jars with water. So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.

[2 : 09] They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.

Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, Everyone brings out the choice wine first, and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink. But you have saved the best till now. This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Let's pray. Dear Lord God, We thank you for your word, and for the truth that it contains. We pray, that as Graham speaks to us now, you would speak through him, and that you would open our hearts and our minds to hear from your word.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Well, good morning folks. It's so lovely to have you with us today. Here's what we're going to do over the next number of weeks. We're going to spend time in John's gospel.

[3 : 19] This account of Jesus' life that was penned by one of his closest friends and followers, written so that everyday people of John's generation and of every generation ever since would be able to pick it up, read, understand about Jesus, believe, and have life in his name.

And it's a gospel full of encounters that Jesus had with people, different people. Different people with different stories, people doing different things, people from different places, people with all sorts of different stuff going on in their lives.

And they each meet Jesus, and an encounter with him flips the whole way that they understand themselves, and they understand the world in which they live, and the lives that they are living on its head.

So let me invite you to grab a Bible and come with me to John chapter 2. We're going to dive into the first of these today. And as we come to John chapter 2, let me go all Dr. Pepper on you.

Right, a wedding. What's the worst that could happen? Are you got any good stories about car crash moments from weddings?

[4 : 39] Let me tell you about one that I was reading about recently that will, I think, really take the biscuit when it comes to car crash moments. Right, everyone is getting ready for what do they call it? The big day. It's going great.

The service is brilliant. The dinner is exquisite. Everybody's having a ball. And the moment in the day comes for the speeches. Now, speeches are always a highlight of any wedding day, aren't they?

Well, on this wedding day, the bride's father goes first. And like any good father of the bride, he gushes with pride at his daughter and on a dry eye in the house.

And the groom's up next. He showers his bride with compliments. I mean, well played, boys. Well played. And then it comes to the best man who sits down at the end of his speech and thinking he's nailed it.

Only for somebody a few moments later to whisper in his ear and inform him that he's actually used the name of the groom's ex-girlfriend all the way through his speech.

[5 : 46] I'm no expert, but that's, in my opinion, what they'd kind of call a Dr. Pepper moment, right? That is an absolute howler from the best man. I'd love to have been a fly on the wall the first time he went round to the newlyweds house for dinner in the years to come.

John chapter 2, here's what we're doing. We're joining a wedding that is on the verge of a Dr. Pepper moment itself. All right, here is a wedding in John chapter 2 that almost all went wrong.

You see, in the first century, Jewish culture, a culture that centers on honor and shame, the worst thing that could happen at a wedding is that the guests run out of food and drink, right?

The worst thing imaginable. Now, we're in the days before outside caterers here. We're in the days before wedding planners when that job is kind of someone else's responsibility. In this day, it is one person's responsibility and that person's solely to make sure that the food and drink keeps flowing for the entirety of the feast, which in this culture could last for days.

Whose job is that? It is the job of the groom. So you've got two jobs, bro. Firstly, you need to say, I do. And secondly, you need to make sure that everyone at this feast has enough to eat and drink, right?

[7 : 14] You can nail this one. But at this wedding in Cana, do you see, if you've got the text there, how our groom learns at verse three, that he is staring a Dr. Pepper moment right in the face.

Now, why is he staring that moment right in his face? Four words. Verse three, the wine ran out. The wine ran out.

I mean, he is, he is never going to live this one down. The shame that he is about to bring on his family, on his bride, and most importantly, himself.

What's he going to do? And it's not like there's an offie just down the road that he can go down to, saying, boys, if you come down with me, we can get a crate load and bring it back. It might still be open. No, here is a groom who is living his worst nightmare.

This must have been the stuff in the days before the wedding that kept him up at night. And there ain't nothing he can do about this situation. And Jesus and his disciples are at this wedding.

[8 : 22] Do you know, as a side, I love, I love that Jesus was the kind of man who got invited to and attended weddings.

Right? How many of us have a picture of Jesus in our minds? A bit like Ned Flanders from The Simpsons, except he's slightly meaner and he's slightly stricter. Right?

He is kind of a kind of a Santa Claus kind of figure. Right? Not that he gives you presents, but it is his job to make sure and discern who has been naughty and who has been nice.

Right? But that's not the Jesus who we encounter in the pages of Scripture. In fact, later in John's Gospel, Jesus is talking about himself.

He's talking about why he has come. And he talks about, and this is John chapter 10, verse 10, he's talking about how he's come that his people may have abundant life.

[9 : 21] You see, that's what's on offer by believing in the name of Jesus Christ. And that abundant life, we have to understand, is the life that he is currently living in joyful communion with God his Father.

So, what that means, in other words, if you and I want to know what a fully human, joyful, loving human experience life is, then we need to look no further than to Jesus.

Which is an incredible claim, is it not, if you stop and think about it? An incredible claim. And yet, this is the one that Jesus makes. And of course, in the life of the Christian, this is the business that God is into as he, by his Spirit, who's indwelling us, is transforming us more as we behold the glory of Jesus Christ into his image.

Restoring that full humanity that has been broken by the sin of the fall. Jesus is living a fully human life. Into celebration, do you see him here?

Into celebration, knowing friendship, knowing joy, and enjoying the good creation according to its good design.

[10:51] And Jesus is at this wedding. And he learns, doesn't he? Do you see from his, from his mom, he learns about the looming nightmare that's facing the groom? And the question in the text is what is he going to do?

What's he going to do with this information, right? Is he going to get his smartphone out? Probably not in this day, but go with me. Is he going to get his smartphone out and film this? Probably what you and I would have done, right? If this happened in our day.

I mean, imagine how many people would watch that on Facebook. How many views, how many likes that would get. You would be an overnight sensation. But not Jesus. Because this episode here is about him displaying his glory to the world that his disciples and those watching might see and believe in him.

As we get a glimpse into who he is and why he has come. Now in the text, you see verse six. This is where we are.

John tells us that there are six stone water jars there. The type used for ceremonial washing, right? Basically the ones that people would use to make themselves clean before they eat.

[12:06] And what does John say? Verse six, that each of those jars holds 20 or 30 gallons. Now these are really important details in the text. And Jesus asks, here's another detail, that each of these be filled to the brim.

Right? Now maths was never my strong point at school. But even I can deduce that that is a huge amount of water.

Way more than I'd imagine they would actually ever need at this wedding. Here are all these stone water jars filled to the brim and Jesus turns every single drop of it into wine.

Right? You read around here some commentators they speculate that that is somewhere of being our equivalent of a thousand bottles of wine. A thousand bottles.

Get your head around that. Now I don't know if you've ever been on a tour of a vineyard before.

Right? And learned how they make wine. The only time I've ever done something like that was in Stellenbosch.

[13:17] I was there in South Africa a number of years ago and I don't remember an awful lot from that trip except for the fact that I learned that there's a lot more to making wine than for example there is to making Ribena.

Okay? This isn't 20% cordial 80% water and hey presto there you go kind of thing. Right? Making wine takes time and it's a complicated process.

So here's a question that you may be asking from this text and it's a great question to ask how?

How was Jesus able to do this?

I mean H₂O doesn't just turn into C₂H₅OH ethanol right? What a bizarre thing to believe. True. But what if Jesus the one who stepped in here is actually the one who controls the laws of chemistry? What if he is the one who controls the whole scene here? What if he is the creator who is able to do all things who stepped into the human equation and here he is.

[14:32] You see here's what John has already said about Jesus back in chapter one. If you want to flip back a page. Rightly off he said all things were made through him. That he is God in the flesh.

This is Jesus and therefore this is exactly the kind of thing that we'd expect someone making that claim would be able to do. Here's a confession. I think I would struggle more with this.

If Jesus made these claims about himself and he wasn't able to do things like this. Jesus has this kind of power. The question is what will Jesus do with this power?

It's interesting isn't it? It's a question that maybe as a society and as a world that we're asking ourselves right now about those people who are in positions of power. Right?

In those positions of influence. Having those platforms. What will they do with the power that's been given to them? What will they do with the power that they have?

[15:37] Now part of the question and we'll come back to it. What would Jesus do with the power that he has? But there's a question you might have in your mind. How is Jesus able to do this? Secondly, you might be thinking well people back then didn't know as much about science as we do today.

I mean Einstein didn't come up with the equals mc squared until 1905. What do these guys know? Well true. But these people probably knew enough about the way things work in the world to know that this isn't normally how you make wine.

In other words these people who taste, it's important to see that as well, the taste is included here, they taste the water turned into wine, these people aren't fools.

Right? They know how this process normally goes, they aren't fools. In fact, do you see how the proof is in the pudding here? Which is probably completely the wrong metaphor to use here but we'll go with it.

Do you see at verse 9 how the master of the ceremonies comes on the scene? Right? He's probably been to a wedding or two, I'd imagine in his lifetime he tastes the wine.

[16:46] Right? Another detail important to see here, he tastes the wine, a physical thing. Right? He doesn't get his wine app out on his phone and say it looks to me like a Pinot Noir.

He doesn't do the smell test that we all do with wine, pretending we know what's going on when actually we don't and saying it smells like the good stuff. This man tastes the wine and his palate can detect when wine is wine and it can detect when wine is bad and it can detect when wine is good and when it is good.

wine. And he tastes this wine and you see how he concludes that this wine is the best. This is wonderful stuff that's been brought out here.

I mean this is the first century equivalent of the Screaming Eagle Cabernet Sauvignon which somebody paid \$500,000 for recently at a charity auction. This stuff is the best.

Here's the point. Jesus hasn't just provided quantity. Jesus has provided quality. Do you see it?

[17:56] Both of those things. His provision in other words is extravagantly abundant. Way more than anything we could possibly conceive of.

And verse 10 here's what's going on. The MC calls for the groom because the usual thing to do in this culture is to bring out the good wine first. And once your guests were tired and they're full you bring out the cheap stuff because they won't really notice.

But not so this groom. So thinks the MC. This groom has done the opposite. He's not gone for the downward curve on the day. He's gone for the upward curve. To quote Vanessa Williams he's gone and saved the best to last.

And you see maybe zooming out here what's going on. This groom he hasn't just been spared shame. Actually he's been given honor in the wedding that almost all went wrong.

But you see there's way more going on here than simply Jesus pulling off a neat trick. right like some kind of first century David Blaine.

[19:16] More going on here and to see it and I pray that we see it and savor it. A good question to ask ourselves from the text is who is Jesus standing in for here at this wedding.

Now the culture vultures out there might know that that huge painting of this scene by Paolo Veronese hangs proudly in the Louvre in Paris.

Some of you might have gone and seen it. And it's a huge picture. And if you look carefully at it there's something really strange actually about this scene. And the strange part of it is when you look at the head of the table the positions of honor.

And the strange thing is it's not the groom that's sitting in that position where you normally expect him to be sitting. Actually is Jesus sitting in that position? Now I've got no idea whether Veronese meant that or not.

But that is profoundly the point of the passage. Who is Jesus standing in for here friends? He's standing in for the groom.

[20:31] Isn't he? And when you add to that the fact that this little episode and as it follows John chapter 1 and on to John chapter 2 as he presents it it takes place at the end of the first week of Jesus' public ministry as John records it here i.e.

it happens on the seventh day the perfect day you begin to see that there's more going on here than we might first see. you know I want you to think back did you catch the reading from Isaiah that we heard earlier what God had said to his people centuries before Jesus arrived God calling his

people to turn back to him to stop running their way their sinful way following and worshipping idols to turn back to him and to trust him why?

What will God do for them and be for them in the years to come? Here's what Isaiah records God says do not be afraid you will not be put to shame do not fear disgrace you will not be humiliated you will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood for your maker is your husband the Lord Almighty is his name the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer he is called the God of all the earth so God is promising to come and rescue his people and be for them a perfect husband and here is Jesus the perfect divine groom who has come for that express reason to rescue his bride his people because the wedding that almost all went wrong it points us to consider the wedding where all will be right because the

Bible story it ends with a wedding it ends with Jesus the groom and his people the bride God finally and fully dwelling with his people which has been his intention all along dwelling with them fully in his new creation and we get the scene there in revelation of a great multitude of people are there from every tribe from every tongue from every nation gathered together singing one song glory to the lamb who was slain worshipping their heavenly father gathered together as one people of faith and feasting with Jesus in his new and in his perfect kingdom now let me ask you is a wonderful thing to consider and know to be true in light of everything that's gone on in recent days a people many people of different tribes tongues and nations gathered together what a wonderful scene and I want you to know that if you're a Christian

I want you to be edified as you think about this scene because in all your difficulties that you might be facing right now and all the questions that you might have all the anxiety that might be lingering in your heart as you view the world and as you live your life in it that right here is your untouchable hope the one that you have for the future and how will Jesus bring this about it's a wonderful picture but how will he bring it about well do you see how Jesus is like the groom in this episode but in a sense friends we all too are like the groom in this episode world because we deserve shame for our failure to do something for our failure to honour our creator God as he deserves to be honoured and our desire to our hearts kind of bent inward on themselves our natural inclination to want to honour ourselves rather than him it's the very essence of sin the plagues deep inside of all of us and with that in mind do you see how there's a wonderful picture of the good news of the gospel here as we see

[25 : 26] Jesus standing in for this groom taking the shame that should have been rightfully his and instead bestowing on him honour in fact it's essentially what the rest of John's gospel is about for what does he say to see Jesus back at verse four what does he say has not yet come his hour in fact you'll get that phrase repeatedly in John's gospel all the way through Jesus saying my hour has not yet come my hour has not yet come my hour has not yet come until he's on the verge of his death on the cross and he says my hour has come the cross the place where he goes to bear our shame on himself as he hangs there as he sheds his blood as he bears the wrath of God on himself the one that we deserve so that we through faith in him and purely by faith in him as he brings us to himself and as he makes us his own can know the status the privilege the right of being honored in the eyes of our creator because our lives are found in the son because what will Jesus do with the power that he has answer he will use it to serve he will use it to serve the beating heart of a loving heavenly father for a world that is turned against him the devotion and the desire and the determination of Jesus the son to win his bride for himself as he goes to the cross this is what's driving this

Jesus will use his power not to lord it but to serve you know I was reflecting with somebody recently on the phone in our church and we were talking about everything that's going on in our world just now and we were mentioning that as we look at everything that's happening in our world at the minute the uncertainty the pain the sense of helplessness the abuse that's going on when you behold the world and in you behold God's king we reflected that at perhaps no other time in our lives has following Jesus being his disciple both made more sense and felt more attractive here is God's king here is Jesus so friends a wedding what's the worst that could happen well according to John it's as he records this wedding here actually the worst thing that you and I could do is that we could read of this wedding and we would fail to see the glory of and believe in Jesus the perfect divine groom so my question as we finish is do you know him as your lord and king and saviour and if not what a wonderful opportunity you have now to believe in the name of Jesus and have life in his name so why don't I pray and during this time why don't you just use it to

reflect on everything that we've spoken about just in the silence before I pray from heaven you came helpless babe entered our world your glory veiled not to be served but to serve and give your life that we might live this is our God the servant king he calls us now to follow him to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the servant king and so father we thank you so much for your precious word oh help us to savor and see

Jesus more off the back of this today may these words linger long in our hearts and in our minds in Jesus precious name we pray and ask amen well I trust that as we've heard God's word this morning and as we've responded to it individually in our own lives that it's caused us to think to stop in our tracks and to consider both the world in which we live and the lives that we are currently leading our day to day lives let me just encourage you if you want to read John's gospel if you've never read it before and you're thinking that may be something you might want to do or you can think of a friend or family member who might be interested in doing that let me just encourage you to consider the words one-to-one this is John's gospel is designed in a really accessible format to be read one-to-one with somebody with the aim of introducing them to the

Jesus that we meet in the Bible so if you'd be interested in that again just email questions at Brunfield we would love to be able to do that with you you know one of the things that we've been doing over the last few Sundays and has been a great encouragement to many of us is to hear from different people in our congregation and to hear them tell us their stories about how they came to meet Jesus and know him as their Lord and as their king and as their saviour and what it means for them to follow him be his disciple as they live their daily lives and to hear a bit about what the Lord has been teaching them during this season of lockdown so I'm delighted to say we're going to hear now from one of our members called Bobby and Bobby is just going to tell us a little bit about his story and after Bobby has spoken to us we will have our final song hi there my name is

[32 : 02] Bobby and my wife Joanna and I are members here at Brunfield in Edinburgh I wanted to take just a short amount of your time to let you know what we've learned faith-wise during the lockdown and also a reminder of a story that happened to us about a year ago which I think is very relevant right now now obviously we've found this time a little odd and I guess not exactly as we'd imagined especially because we're expecting our first child in around a month so it's been an exciting time but also an anxious time I guess like many of you being stuck inside one thing that's important to note is that we find ourselves very fortunate and blessed at the moment I've remained in work and within a job we haven't been furloughed we haven't lost our jobs and Joanna has been safe at home at the moment which is great so I guess in the large scheme of things we have very few worries which we can be thankful to God for and this uncertain time has made me think a little bit about trust what it means to trust in

God in good times and what it means to trust in God in bad times as well or in uncertain times and this whole situation we're in has reminded me of a difficult time for our family which happened around this time last year it was the day before my birthday and I'd woken up to about 20 missed calls from my mum and upon calling her back she said to me your brother is really unwell your brother David we think he's going to die and obviously this was devastating he took the rug out from underneath us and what happened was my brother had gone into work a normal day at work and soon after had collapsed an infection in his tooth had spread to his heart and caused the condition called endocarditis now this condition pumps blood clots around the body and had pumped two blood clots either side of his head which subsequently had caused an aneurysm on both sides of his head so two explosions within his head and then short after in the hospital we found out that the doctors the consultants the surgeons at the Glasgow

Queen Elizabeth told us to expect the worst that people don't survive these things and that if he did recover which is super unlikely that they don't normally see that he wouldn't be himself he'd be a vegetable he'd be unresponsive and this was obviously devastating news for us but it's important to note that the story didn't end there there were months of prayer there were months of uncertainty and heartbreak while David remained on a ventilator unresponsive we would go to visit him and there would be nothing there and it was hard to remain positive and upbeat and hard to keep trusting God during that time but he pulled through I'm pleased to say and rather than give the full story here I thought it would be nice if we heard from David directly now he's got a strong Glaswegian accent and speaks pretty quickly so I thought it'd be nice to put some subtitles below because it's really important that people understand his story firstly thanks for agreeing to do this

David I'm sure a lot of people at Bruntsfield and in other places that have been praying for you will love to put a face to the name I guess firstly it's a miracle that you're here right I mean the doctors didn't think you would make it my brother I mean it's crazy to think that they'd written you off I mean it's definitely a miracle and the beard am I right in saying that's going to be shaving off when you go back to work yeah you know when this had all first kicked off and you know we'd heard what happened to you I didn't know what to do and I'd sent a text to a few people at Bruntsfield telling them the situation and asking for prayer and at that point you know it was when the doctors said that you wouldn't survive so things weren't looking great for you how does it feel that hundreds of people in Edinburgh in Perth and around the world were praying for you it is humbling to just think about it because it's one of the ones that I don't I can't entirely sort of fathom the amount of people that they've not even met me they don't know me but have prayed for me because they've heard so much about me and all that and I think that's amazing

I can't put it in the words how grateful I am that these people have actually taken their time out to think about me and to pray for me I was in death's door and it was because people were praying for me and people were like it was because of that that I became better it's nothing to do with me I was just lying around my thumb for about two of it was to do with everyone who was praying for me got me better and brought me to where I'm now so it's a big thank you to each and every one of them yeah amazing and I guess what did the people who had looked after you early on in your illness think of your recovery am I right in saying that you met one of the nurses from early on you know I had the medicine I was in with my dad and it was a woman who was kind of looking after a few of the other residents or a few of the patients and she told me to stay at me for about five minutes and I was around and she was one of the nurses who was there when they were told

[37 : 41] I wasn't going to make it and she she would phone up 20 thousand people to tell David saw out basically miracle well thanks for taking the time David it's been good to interview to hear just a small part of your journey and your story so thanks for taking the time to do this not a problem now from that short interview with David it's clear that God had answered our prayer David's living proof of that but thinking back to the time it was hard for us as a family to trust in God we had so many questions why is this happening God but ultimately I think we knew that God was in control and for Joanna and I the faith and the trust that my mum and my stepdad Robert had in God during this time was really inspiring you know and this whole situation proved to me that you know if God was at work then he can still be at work now he can answer prayers now and he can be with us he can be with you in a difficult situation now just like he was with us last year so trust in God and remember that prayer works and that he still answers prayers may be you you you you