

Gospel of Glory: The Woman at the Well

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, November 10, 2024
PASSAGES	Hosea 2; John 4; 1 Thessalonians 4
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:21:09 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

John 4 is not a string of unrelated religious topics. It is a betrothal scene laid on top of Hosea 2 — Jesus at a well, an unfaithful woman, a question about who your real husband is. And the reason he names her marriages within four sentences of meeting her is the reason he names what binds any of us: not to shame, but to set free.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ “Man goes to a well and meets his bride” is a type-scene a first-century Jewish reader knows cold — Rebekah, Rachel, Zipporah. John puts Jesus in that scene on purpose.
- ◆ Hosea 2 is the key that unlocks the chapter: Israel as the wife who left, God as the husband who pursues her anyway, and the promise that she will one day call him husband and not master.
- ◆ Living water, five husbands, which mountain to worship on, food the disciples know nothing about, fields already white — one argument, not six subjects.
- ◆ The story does not end in a wedding for this woman because it ends in one for a people. The Samaritans step into the role of the returning bride.
- ◆ Hosea’s restoration is signaled by grain, wine and oil. In John 4 the sowing and the reaping happen the same afternoon.
- ◆ Jesus does not confront from a standard list. He names whatever has a strangle hold on the person in front of him — money for the rich young ruler, pride for the disciples, husbands for this woman.

- ◆ Every confrontation is an invitation. Matt's own example was fear of man, which he called a poison he drank deeply of for fifteen or twenty years.

► 1:21:09

Two weeks ago Matt traced Nicodemus through John's gospel — a man who first came to Jesus at night unsure who he was, and last appears in broad daylight burying the body and putting a target on his own back. He ended that message by asking the room where they might walk in the light even if it cost them. This week he moved to the next conversation, and warned us up front that he was about to attempt something complicated: an argument that hinges on people remembering Hosea 2.

1. A prophet's marriage, and God's

► 1:22:45

So rather than gamble on long-term memory, he read it. Hosea is told to marry a sexually immoral woman and live out a prophecy about the nation. Hosea 2:2–7 runs the metaphor hard — she chases lovers she believes are feeding her, when it was her husband giving her the grain and the wine and the oil the whole time. Then the turn:

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her... And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’”

HOSEA 2:13–16 ↗

► 1:25:53

Matt paused on the wordplay. *Baal* is not a proper name — it means master, and it can also mean husband. God is saying he will take that word out of her mouth along with the idolatry it carries. This is not really about a woman. It is a courageous and humble husband pursuing a wife who left him for many lovers, and the irony is that she credited them with everything he gave her.

“And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord.”

HOSEA 2:19–20 ↗

2. Boy meets girl at a well

► 1:27:29

The second thread is a stock scene. In Genesis 24, Abraham's servant goes to a well to find Isaac a wife and prays for a sign: he will ask for a drink, and the girl who offers water for the camels too is the one. That is Rebekah. Jacob goes to a well in [Genesis 29](#), and Rachel arrives. Moses flees Egypt, sits down by a well in [Exodus 2](#), and meets Zipporah. "Ancient Near Eastern romcom level," Matt called it. Which means a Jewish reader who knows these stories hits John 4 and thinks: *what on earth is going on here*.

3. Noon, alone, and a Jew asking her for a drink

► 1:29:41

Jesus arrives at Jacob's well in Samaria at the sixth hour — the middle of the day, not the evening when the women come as a group ([John 4:1–9](#)). Matt let the oddities stand as questions rather than answers. Is she avoiding the others? Is she ostracized? And why did Jesus send every single disciple into town for food? "I don't think this is a chance encounter." His opening line — *give me a drink* — is the exact request Abraham's servant used as his test, and it doubles as a request for welcome, the way Elijah asked the widow for water in [1 Kings 17](#).

► 1:31:48

She does not answer yes or no. She asks how a Jew is speaking to her at all, and Jesus answers a question she has not asked yet, about the gift of God and living water. She is practical: you have no bucket, the well is deep, [are you greater than our father Jacob](#)? Matt loves this about John's gospel — characters keep asking enormously important questions without knowing how important they are. Later Jesus will say plainly what the living water is: [the Spirit given to those who come to him and drink](#).

"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

JOHN 4:13–14 ↗

4. Go call your husband

► 1:33:56

She asks for the water so she will not have to keep coming out here. And then the gears grind: “Go, call your husband, and come here.” She says she has none. Matt wondered aloud whether there was a dramatic pause or whether Jesus did not skip a beat before naming the five, and the man she has now who is not her husband.

► 1:34:31

“Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.” Well perceived. Here the two threads fuse. This is a well, with all the romantic freight a well carries, and the subject on the table is now husbands — false ones and true. Under Jewish practice three successive husbands would not have been permitted; how she got to five, the text does not say, and Matt refused to speculate past that. What matters is that the Hosea question has surfaced in a Samaritan woman’s life: who is your real husband, your real Lord?

5. Which mountain

► 1:36:28

Which is why her next line is not a change of subject or a dodge. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; you say Jerusalem. False husbands, false worship — in Hosea they are the same sentence.

“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

JOHN 4:20–24 ↗

She reaches for the one thing she is sure of — the Messiah will come and sort all this out. And Jesus says: I who speak to you am he.

6. She left her water jar

► 1:38:10

The disciples return, marvel that he is talking to a woman, and say nothing. Meanwhile she abandons her jar and goes into town: come see a man who told me all that I ever did. What was almost certainly her source of isolation and embarrassment is now the testimony she offers freely, without shame, to the whole town — and the town comes out.

► 1:40:18

Keep those people moving toward the well in the background, because the next conversation happens while they walk. The disciples urge him to eat.

“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” Then, with a crowd of Samaritans in view, lift up your eyes, the fields are white for harvest already.

► 1:42:06

Hosea 2 ends with exactly that promise: wheat, new wine and oil as the sign of a nation restored to her husband. Israel’s sowing finished by December and the harvest began in April — the four months Jesus names. Here sowing and reaping land on the same day. Which is, Matt noted, a little scandalous, because the abundance is being spent on Samaritans.

7. A people in the bride’s place

► 1:43:15

The chapter closes with the town believing on her testimony, asking Jesus to stay, and then telling her it is no longer her word they are standing on:

we have heard for ourselves, and we know this is indeed the Savior of the world. He asked for a drink and got his welcome — two days of it. There is no marriage ceremony at the end of this well story because none is needed. Gomer did not need to be remarried to Hosea. What was needed was restoration, forgiveness, blessing. The woman’s role as returning bride is picked up by her people, and the Samaritans of all people are the first group in John’s gospel to name Jesus as Savior of the world.

8. Why he went straight for it

► 1:48:36

Then Matt took what he called a bunny trail, and it is where the message lands. Jesus confronted her sin fast, by any modern standard of conversation. Why? He does not work from a list of the nation’s failings, and he does not confront at random. Preachers like him often say all sins are the same to God, which Matt does not think holds — Jesus told Pilate the one who handed him over was guilty of a greater sin. What Jesus does is name the thing that has a strangle hold on the person in front of him. Religious hypocrisy with the rabbis. Sell what you have with the rich young ruler. Pride with the disciples arguing about greatness. Dishonest gain with Zacchaeus. Go and sin no more with the woman caught in adultery. Husbands with this woman.

► 1:49:57

“Why does he pinpoint stuff, the open nerve, the thing — why would you bring that up? To set her free. To set you free.” Every time the Lord confronts us in our sin, Matt said, it is an invitation into deeper relationship and greater trust. Which is why he can be trusted with it.

9. So what would he name here?

► 1:52:07

He asks the Lord that question about himself, and about Hope Chapel, and admits he does not always get an answer — which is part of why he preaches through so much scripture. Then he named the candidates. Sexual purity came up constantly in his summer tour of tiny texts:

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:3-8 ↗

► 1:54:41

“It’s not because we’re obsessed. This is important to the Lord.” But he was careful to distinguish what the American church at large might hear from what this room might. He is not convinced Jesus would confront Hope Chapel over affirming theology — no one in leadership is pushing for it, all of the church’s leaders have signed that they will not perform gay marriages, and some of them have paid dearly, socially, for that faithfulness. More likely for us, he said: boundaries around marriage, where the envelope gets pushed with the opposite sex, holding the line on premarital sex in a church raising this many kids, and what we are looking at online.

► 1:56:29

Underneath the affirming drift, though, he suspects fear of man more than defiance — and fear of man is not a temptation a non-affirming church is immune to. He named it in himself. Fifteen or twenty years ago he was “a devotee of niceness, the Church of Jehovah Sweet Pea,” working the fantasy that someone would wake up one morning and love Jesus because Matt had been so pleasant all week. When the Lord confronted him on it, it was not finger-wagging. It was release, and it is still in progress.

► 1:57:52

He still feels it. He goes out to preach and pray for the sick — Walmart for years, because there is privacy in the chaos, lately UT campus — and every time he is about to name the name of Jesus to a stranger, something rises up. “Every time I follow through and I obey Jesus instead of my fears, I feel like I get to stab that thing with prejudice.” Obedience instead of fear is liberating, not condemning.

► 1:59:02

Two more, quickly. Greed, which Paul flatly calls idolatry ([Ephesians 5:5](#), [Colossians 3:5](#)) — and he cut off the obvious escape hatch: “You can be poor and greedy. It’s totally easy to do.” Our true husband takes care of us.

► 2:01:06

Then pride, which he called almost impossible to admit to — if anyone has ever confronted you on it, bless them, because that was hard to do. He tied it to spiritual warfare. Principalities and dark powers the Lord handles easily; there is exactly one opponent you will never overcome, and that is God himself. So when you feel throttled, step one is to ask whether he opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. Sexual purity, greed, pride and fear versus faith are, not coincidentally, what Jesus raises with the [seven churches in Revelation](#).

► 2:03:27

He ended where he ended the Nicodemus message: where is God challenging you to act? And he pointed back to the woman for what the fruit of repentance looks like. She dropped her jar. She ran. She acted immediately, and the harvest that came of it was a town. “There’s no one more trustworthy to deal with the secret deep places in your life.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Hosea 2:2–7](#)
- [Hosea 2:13–16](#)
- [Hosea 2:19–20](#)
- [Genesis 24](#)
- [Genesis 29](#)
- [Exodus 2](#)
- [1 Kings 17](#)
- [John 4:1–9](#)
- [John 4:10–12](#)
- [John 7:37–39](#)
- [John 4:13–14](#)
- [John 4:16–18](#)
- [John 4:20–24](#)
- [John 4:28–30](#)
- [John 4:34](#)
- [John 4:35–38](#)
- [John 4:39–42](#)
- [John 19:11](#)
- [Mark 10:21](#)
- [Luke 19:8](#)
- [John 8:11](#)
- [1 Thessalonians 4:3–8](#)
- [Ephesians 5:5](#)
- [Colossians 3:5](#)
- [James 4:6](#)
- [Revelation 2–3](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Hosea 2 says God's people credited their lovers with what he had been providing all along. Where have you been thanking the wrong provider?
2. The woman came to the well at noon, alone. What have you arranged your life to avoid other people finding out?
3. She asked which mountain was the right one to worship on. What version of that question — a technicality about religion — are you using to keep a harder conversation at arm's length?
4. Matt says Jesus names the one thing that has a strangle hold on the person in front of him. If he walked in and spoke to you, where do you suspect he would go, and why does that spot feel dangerous rather than freeing?
5. She dropped her jar and ran. What is the equivalent action for you this week — the thing you would do immediately if you believed the confrontation was an invitation?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZ6Rz2yseQU&t=4869s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.