

The Girl Nobody Wanted

Succumbing to the world's definition of success brings devastation and disappointment, but God works with, through, and in weak people to give satisfaction.

Timothy J. Keller *Text*: Genesis 29:15–35

Introduction

I'm going to read you a passage out of the Old Testament: Genesis 29. And one of the things we're struck with immediately is that the Bible is the most unsentimental of all books when it comes to the subject of marriage and family. It is utterly realistic about this—that it is always hard and often devastating to not be married and it is always hard and sometimes devastating to be married.

Keeping this biblical understanding is very difficult, because there's almost no support for it institutionally, structurally. Outside Christian circles, or in the secular world at large, there's a tremendous amount of fear and a tremendous amount of cynicism about marriage, and with good reason, because of one of the things I just said that the Bible talks about. On the other hand, inside Christian circles there is a tendency to say, *ah, marriage, that's what life's about*. Marriage, family, kids, white picket fence. And the Bible says both of those attitudes are utterly wrong, because the Bible does not show us Jesus Christ pointing to marriage saying, "This is what you need." But rather the Bible shows us marriage both in its strengths and even in its tremendous difficulties pointing to Jesus Christ as the thing we need.

Now it's never been more obvious when I read you this account. I'm going to read Genesis 29:15-35:

Now after Jacob had been with Laban for a month, Laban said to him, "Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be." Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah; the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form and beautiful. Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "It's better that I should give her to you than some other man. Stay here with me."

So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife. My time is completed. I want to lie with her." So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. And when evening came he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her and Laban gave his servant girl Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her maid servant.

But when morning came, behold, it was Leah. So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me. I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?" And Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Finish this daughter's bridal week, and then we'll give you the younger one also in return for another seven years of work."

And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. Laban gave his servant girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant. And Jacob lay with Rachel also and he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years. Now when the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb though Rachel was barren. And Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben for she said "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now." She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon. And again she conceived. And when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me because I have born him three sons." So he was named Levi. And she conceived yet again. And when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." So she named him Judah, and then she stopped having children.

A Family of Grace, a Family of Suffering

First of all, there are two things you have to know as background of this story. You have to know that Jacob came from a family chosen by grace and a family filled with suffering. Jacob had a grandfather named Abraham. One day God comes to Abraham and says, "Abraham, look at the world. Do you see the misery? Do you see the cruelty? Do you see the injustice? Do you see the disease? Do you see the tragedy? Do you see death itself? I'm going to do something about it. I'm going to heal it. I'm going to redeem it all. And I'm going to do it through your family. One of your descendants will be the Messiah."

God says to Abraham, "And, therefore, this is what has to happen. You need to know that, in every generation of your family there will be children, but one of the children will be the seed. One child will be the messianic seed, the bearer of the messianic strain. And that child should be head of the family, and that child must walk before me, and that child must pass the true faith along to all the family, because, of all those children, one of them will be the true seed, until someday one seed will be *the* Seed, and one prophet will be *the* Prophet, and one priest will be *the* Priest, and one king will be the King of kings and Lord of lords."

And that was why this was a very special family Jacob was part of. But also, in spite of that—and this is a lesson all by itself—this is a family filled with suffering. Abraham had one son, Isaac, and when Isaac's wife, Rebekah, was pregnant and she had two twin sons in her womb, God sent a prophecy to Isaac and said, "The elder will serve the younger." And that means God was saying to Isaac, *the second one out is the seed, not the first one; not the elder but the younger—that's the seed. That's the one I've chosen.*

But out they come, Jacob and Esau, and Isaac ignores what God says. He puts his heart on Esau and clearly favors him and loves him more than Jacob. And as a result, devastation is wreaked on both the boys as they grow up. Their characters are ravaged by this. Esau grows up to be willful, proud, and with no self-control at all because of the way that Isaac dotes on him and makes him the favorite, and Jacob turns into a liar. Jacob turns into a deceiver. Jacob turns into a manipulator.

Many of you know the story. What happens is, when they come of age, Jacob deceives his father one day. His father is old and blind, and Jacob dresses up as Esau and goes in and gets Isaac to give Jacob the blessing, to give Jacob the birthright, to give Jacob the headship of the clan. But when Esau realizes what Jacob has done, how he's been deceitful, Esau vows to kill him. And so Jacob has got to run, and he flees far, far away, to the other side of the Fertile Crescent, where his mother's relatives take him in. His uncle Laban takes him in.

Now Jacob's life is over. Jacob isn't sure if it's God that screwed up, if he's the one who screwed up, if his father or his family screwed up. But he'll never fulfill his destiny now. He's got no faith. It's all ruined. He's got no money. He's got no place. He's not in his homeland anymore. It's all over. So that's the story; that's the background.

Laban's Plot and Leah's Lot

But now the story has two parts to it—Laban's plot and Leah's lot. First of all, Laban—Laban's plot. Laban is the uncle, and Laban brings Jacob in as a sort of charity case, and Jacob's working for him for a month as a shepherd. And Laban suddenly realizes something. He looks and he says, *This guy's a great shepherd. This guy's got management capabilities.* And he realizes that if Jacob becomes a foreman for him, he could tremendously expand his operation and he could make a tremendous amount of money, as long as he doesn't have to pay Jacob too much. So he comes to Jacob and he says, "I'd like to give you a contract. What do you want in order to work for me?" And Jacob says, "Rachel."

Now Jacob really screwed up here, because when you're talking to a con artist, you never let them know your area of weakness. As soon as Laban sees this, as soon as he realizes this guy will do anything for Rachel, Laban's got him. Why? Because in Laban Jacob has met his match; because Jacob's a liar, Jacob's a con artist, and so is Laban, but Laban's been at it twenty-five more years. And as a result, you see, he's much more experienced at this.

And so Laban thinks, *I got a way that I can deal with two problems at once. I will use this; I will exploit this man's weakness to deal with two problems at once.* Well, what are the two problems? The first problem is, of course, *How do I make lots and lots and lots of money? How do I get out of this guy a tremendous amount of valuable skill with very little to pay for it so I can become a wealthy man?*

But his second problem is Leah. This man had two daughters, and the verse of course you might remember. I tried to read it slowly, but I probably didn't. It says, "Now Laban had two daughters. The older was Leah and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form and beautiful."

Now if you go to diverse translations you'll find that every single one of the translations will describe Leah's eyes differently. Some will say she had tender eyes. Some will say she had delicate eyes. Some will say she had broken eyes, because what the word really means is, "a breakable, fragile thing." And nobody really quite knows exactly what the word means. But it's not that hard when you look at the context. When the text uses the word "weak," does it mean that Leah's vision was weak? Well, if it says Leah's vision was weak, it should say, "Leah had weak vision, but Rachel could see a long, long way." But that's not what it says. It's not talking about how they looked; it's talking about how they *looked*. It's not talking about how they looked with their eyes; it's talking about what they looked like.

What it's really saying is this. These were two girls. These were not women yet, almost for sure. And Laban had two girls here, and one of them had either crossed eyes or protruding eyes, or some kind of eye disorder, but whatever it was she was ugly. And Rachel was gorgeous. One was an ugly duckling who would never become a swan, and one was absolutely gorgeous; and these two girls had to grow up with each other. And Laban had a problem.

Here's where the Bible is brutally frank. And you say, ah, thank goodness we're beyond all this. But are we? Are we? Laban thinks *I'll never marry this poor woman off. I'll never marry this daughter off. I have a way to get rich and get rid of the daughter that would be around my neck for the rest of my life.* That's the kind of man he was.

And so what does he do? Well, it's pretty interesting. Jacob says, "I'll work for Rachel for seven years." What does Laban say in verse 19? "It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. So stay here with me." He didn't say yes. In other words, he said something that led Jacob to believe he was saying yes, but he would always be able to come back later and say, "Jacob, read the fine print." He says, "It's better for me that she should go to you than some stranger," but he didn't say yes.

So Jacob works for seven years and says, "Now I've done my seven years. Send me my wife." Laban says fine. And of course, at the time, a wedding feast was a week long. Jacob was happier than most people at wedding feasts because, *Now I have Rachel. Now finally something is going right in my life. Finally, something will console me for all the problems I've always had.* And so everybody begins to feast and everybody begins to get drunk. And right in the middle of the very first night in comes the wife, in comes the bride all veiled. And they embrace and they are married, and they go into the tent and they go to bed together. And the Hebrew literally says (and it's a great narrative ploy), "But when morning came, behold it was Leah."

Jacob goes to Laban and says, "Why have you done this to me." And Laban says, "Wait. It's a custom. You can't marry the younger daughter off before the older. It's illegal here. It's the custom. This is the way we do things. The older daughter has to be married before the younger." And lovesick Jacob says, "Well, what do I do?" He says, "I'll tell you what. You can marry Rachel too, but you'll have to work another seven years for her." And Jacob says yes.

And because of all this greed and manipulation in these deceiving men, Leah is thrown into hell. Leah, who probably could have hardened her heart—had she stayed single for a long time, she could have dealt with the fact that she was unwanted, dealt with the fact that in a world like this she was not marketable. You say, *aw, we're beyond all that*. Are we beyond all that? Is our society that different? She might have been able to harden her heart, but because of these men she is now put into a situation where she is married to a man who not only doesn't love her—and many, many people have that—but the person that he does love is also the wife right there. And it's her sister. And Leah is put into hell.

The last verses of this passage are the most plaintive I know of anywhere in the Bible or any place, because every time she names a child when she begins to have children she says: Now ... now maybe my husband will love me. Now maybe I'll have some meaning in life.

And she names Rueben because Rueben means, "I'm seen." And Simeon means, "I'm heard." And Levi means, "I'm attached." And every time a child comes along she says: Now maybe, finally, I'll be visible. Now maybe, finally, I'll be heard. Now maybe, finally, he'll cleave to me. See? Surely now my husband will love me now. And it never happens.

But in the last verse, this is what we read. In the last verse we read, "And finally she conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, 'This time I will praise the Lord.' So she named him Judah, and she stopped having children."

Let's draw out the lessons and let's do the way the gospel does. Six lessons—three are bad news, three are good news. That's how the gospel goes—lots of bad news at the beginning, but then the good news is much "gooder" than the bad news was bad. Now let's take the first three. There are three things here. Let's do the bad news. There's a lot of bad news in this story.

Bad News: Sin does you.

Number one: you never do sin; sin does you. You never commit sin. Sin commits you. Look carefully. People think that when you do a sin, when you break God's law, when you lie, when you use somebody, when you trample on somebody, when you sin, you feel like that's just an event, just an action. No, it's not. The Bible says that when you sin you don't just do an event and then pass on. You create and you release a devastating power that careens around your life indefinitely. Look at what's going on here. There are so many examples of this in here.

I don't have time to trace them all out. Look at what Isaac does to Jacob. Look at how he favors Esau. Look at what he does to Jacob, and now look what's going on, reverb. Jacob is doing the very same thing to Leah that his father did to him. And not only that, because Jacob does back to Isaac what Isaac did to him. And eventually, if you keep on going down, the fact that Jacob does this to Leah means that Leah's children hate Rachel's children when they finally show up. And because Leah's children hate Rachel's children, because of the way in which Jacob sinned and deceived, they eventually sell Joseph into slavery and then they deceive Jacob and say he's dead. And Jacob goes through utter hell.

Hell begets hell. Lie begets lie. Sin begets sin. You never sin. You don't do it. It does you. You never sin and pass away. Sin is like a boulder, not a stone; sin is like dropping a boulder into water. The shock waves go out forever.

You never get away with sin. You never get away with it. Anything that's a violation of God's will for how people should live here and how people should live together, you never get away with it. You don't do sin; sin does you. That's the first bit of bad news.

Bad News: In the morning, it's always Leah.

The second bit of bad news is, all life here is marked by cosmic disappointment. Cosmic disappointment. I want to say something quickly. Having read this thing and thought about this passage, I want you to know that I love Leah and I am protective of her in this story. But for a minute I have to tell you that she represents something very bad. One of the most fascinating things in the narrative is the way it turns on you, because here is Jacob saying finally, finally I'm going to have happiness in this life. Finally, finally I've got Rachel. But, behold, in the morning it was Leah.

And there is a very interesting little commentary written by one of my favorite writers, Derrick Kidner, and he puts it this way. Derrick Kidner says, "But in the morning, behold, it was Leah. This is a miniature of our disillusionment experienced from Eden onwards." You know what he's saying? He's saying this is a miniature, a fact that everybody in this room needs to know, and that is this: No matter what your hopes for a project, no matter what your hopes for marriage, no matter what your hopes for love, no matter what your hopes for a career, no matter what you have hopes in, in the morning it will always be Leah. No matter what you think is Rachel, it will always be Leah. Nobody ever put it any better than C. S. Lewis in his chapter on hope. He says:

Most people if they really learn to look into their own heart [and that's what I'm urging you to do right now] most people if they really learn to look into their own hearts would know that they do want and want acutely something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never keep their promise. The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love or first think of some foreign country or first take up some subject that excites us are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning can ever really satisfy. I am not speaking of what would ordinarily be called unsuccessful marriages or failures of holidays and so on. I'm speaking of the very best possible ones. There is always something we have grasped at. There's always something in that first moment of longing but fades away in the reality. The spouse may be a good spouse. The scenery has been excellent. It turned out to be a good job. But it's evaded us. In the morning it's always Leah.

Now the reason you have to understand that is because it's painful to overhear people's lives. You notice what I said. I didn't say overhear people's words, because people don't say these things out loud. But you hear it in their life. You hear it. I overhear it when I see people's choices. I overhear it when I see people's attitudes, when I see what they're doing. And that is this. You overhear people saying, essentially, *Oh, I'm going to have such a career. I'm going to get myself a hunk. I'm going to get myself a babe. And I'm going to live in this place, and I'm going to live in this place, and I'm going to live in this place. And I am going to have a life.* In the morning it's always Leah. This is a miniature of the disillusionment which is our lot from Eden onwards.

Eventually, it is definitely going to come through. Eventually, you're going to see it. And when you do there are only four possible ways of responding to that. There are only four ways to go, and you're going to have to choose one of them and it will totally shape the rest of your life.

1. You'll either blame the things you have and say I've got to get better ones—better woman, better man, better job.
2. Or secondly, you'll blame yourself and just hate yourself.
3. Or thirdly, you'll blame life and you'll harden yourself so you'll never hope for anything at all.
4. Or fourthly, you can blame the theory of reality and you can say if there's nothing in this world that ever is Rachel, then Rachel must be beyond this world. If there's nothing in this world that will ever satisfy me, then it means that I am made for something beyond this world.

Now there are only four possible responses. Which one is it going to be?

1. One makes you a fool.
2. One makes you a self-hater.
3. One makes you an utterly hard cynic.
4. And one makes you a Christian.

So, the first bit of bad news is sin. You never do sin; sin does you. Secondly, all life is marked by cosmic disappointment. In the morning it's always Leah. Always. Thirdly, as bad as life is, you make it much worse through idolatry, and especially the idolatry of a family.

Bad News: We make our own lives worse through idolizing family.

Now I know this may sound very strange, but what we have here is a form of idolatry where you put your hope in something to give you a sense of being loved, of being valuable, of giving your life meaning. And these are not idols of the liberal world. These are idols of the conservative world, because Jacob says, *if I get this gorgeous wife on my arm, if I am married, then I finally will have happiness*. And it didn't work. And poor Leah turns and says, *if I have a child, if I have children, if I have sons, if I have this wonderful family then I'll be worth something. Then I'll be loved*. And it never works.

Don't you know that when you build your life on a white picket fence, when you build your life on being married and having a perfect family and all of your children growing up to be so happy, the Bible comes against that. Huh? Well, doesn't the Bible come against immorality and adultery and orgies and living together and, you know? Well, yeah, some other place. That's not the text we have here.

We have a text coming against conservative idols here. We have a text coming against traditional values. We have a text that's saying if you build your life on a spouse then, at the very best, you'll be emotionally dependent or controlling or judgmental; and if anything goes wrong with that spouse, if that spouse has any problems, you will go to pieces and you'll be of no help to that spouse or anybody else. If you build your life on your children then, at the very least, you'll try to live your life out through your children till they either hate you or they just don't have any identity of their own. And at worst, you'll end up abusing them because they have got to be good, they have got to be right, they have got to love you or you don't have a life. Again and again you see Leah saying, *ah, a son. Now ...* She just fit right in with traditional values, especially at the time. You're nobody unless you have children. You're a woman, so you must have children. And she does, and it doesn't work.

If she had a nicer husband she might have been able to live in a delusion for a longer time. But, fortunately for her, she didn't, and she came to see that idols always make the disappointment of this world far, far, far worse. Now that's the bad news.

But what's the good news? The good news is "gooder" than the bad news was bad.

Good News: God works with weak people.

First of all, the good news is that God works with a very weak people. Now surely somebody out there is saying, *This is the stuff I hate in the Bible. Why did you bring something out like this? Here you've got Jacob, and look how he's oppressing his women. Look at how he's acting. Polygamy, bigamy. Look at women being moved around and abused and sold. Look at this. This is what I hate about the Bible.*

Now, dear friends, we could spend a little bit of time on that. In every place, the Bible condemns bigamy and polygamy—every part of God's law. This text is showing us the absolute misery and hell that comes when women are treated like this; if you think this text in any way condones that behavior, this text is a screed against that. That's not your real problem. The reason why people that read these kinds of stories get so bummed out and confused is this: they have a spiritual paradigm I want to shatter right now.

When you read the Bible and you see all this stupidity and all this stabbing in the back and all this foolishness on the part of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and David and everything, you say "What's going on here?" You know why you're so upset? Because you think the Bible should be a book of virtues. You think the Bible should be a series of inspirational stories with role models. You think the Bible should be a series of stories of heroes. And that proves that you don't understand the gospel.

The Bible is not about role models. It's not about emulating these great people. The Bible gives you, again and again and again, men and women whom God continues to work with even though they resist his grace, they don't deserve his grace, they don't seek his grace, and then they don't even appreciate after they've been saved by his grace. And it's story after story after story. Now why would God give us stories like that? Why would God continue to work with this guy?

My dear friends, listen. If you think the Bible should be a book of virtues or inspirational stories of role models we should be emulating, that means you think that the Bible should be like all the other scriptures and all the other religions. Every other religion says god is at the top of the ladder. He's put a ladder down between you and heaven, heaven and earth, and he's standing at the top of the ladder and he's saying, "Perform. Do good. Live right. Emulate the heroes. If you try real hard you can come up the ladder to heaven."

But Jesus Christ said, you will see angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man, because Christ said you'll never come up the ladder. You'll never emulate. Look at all these guys. Look at all that they have—revelation from God, miracles in their lives—they have all kinds of incredible things happen to them and they screw up again and again and again. Our Bible, our God, the Christian God is not a God who stands at the top of the ladder, but one who sent his Son down to be the ladder. He's not a God who says *perform*. But he says my Son, Jesus Christ, will come down and live the life you should have lived and die the death you should have died. And that's the reason why Bible stories are not a series of stories of role models to emulate, but of weak people like you and me whom a strong God had to come down and become weak and die on the cross to save. God works with weak people. That's the first good news.

Good News: God works through weak people.

Second good news: God works through weak people. Laban really hurt Leah, didn't he? Laban really hurt Jacob, didn't he? And yet, if you understand how God used Laban in their lives, you'll see that it was only because of Laban and all of his tricks and all of his meanness that Jacob finally began to get humbled.

A lot of commentators say, oh my goodness, why didn't Jacob put up more of a fuss when he realized what Laban was doing? He could have insisted. He could have said no way to seven more years for

Rachel. Why didn't he? Because he realized what was happening to him was exactly what he had been doing. He saw himself in Laban and he hated it. He finally began to come around. He finally began to get some perspective. He finally began to realize who he really was and what he'd really done.

God works in your life through weak people. Right now there's a Laban in your life. Instead of just screaming, *Why in the world, Lord, have you put this Laban in my life?* you have to realize that God works not just *with* weak people but he works in your life *through* weak people.

Good News: God works in the weakest.

Lastly, God is attracted to the weakest. He doesn't just work with and work through but he works *in* the weakest and the most broken of all. This is what is so astounding about Leah. One thing you can't realize as you watch her cry out to God and talk about how she wants her husband to love her is that she uses a vocabulary that commentators over the years have been struck by.

There are two words that are used for God in the Old Testament in your English translation. The one word is the Hebrew word translated *Elohim*. It's a generic name for God. It just means God, and everybody used the word. All religions, all people, everybody used the word *God*. It meant "the great one."

But when God came down to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob he gave them a new name. He gave them a personal name. It was the name Yahweh. This word, *Yahweh*, was a name he only gave to people to whom he was also giving the story of salvation. He only said *Yahweh* to people to whom he said "I want you to believe my promise that through a descendant I will save the world." And every place the word *Yahweh* shows up in the English Old Testament you don't see the word *God* translated. What do you see? The LORD.

And Leah, floundering around like a mad woman, doing anything she can to deal with the hell she's in, anything, feeling like, *How do I get out of this? I always knew I was homely. I always knew in the world's eyes I was nothing. And now every day it's just pushed into my face. How am I going to survive this?* And she says *a child, a child*. But every time she has a child she cries out and she faces her husband. *Now my husband will save me. Now my husband will love me*. And she looks at her child but she also says, every time, *the Lord*.

She begins to call on the name Yahweh. Now, wait a minute. What happened? Where did Leah hear about this? Leah must have heard the promise, the promise of the seed, the promise of salvation. And she began not just to believe in a general God at the top of the ladder to whom she must submit, which is what everybody else in the world believed; but she began to grab hold of the idea of the Lord, Yahweh, the God who will save by grace.

And what's so fascinating is, look carefully and you will see if you go back and read this passage, that she's turning to her husband until the very end. And at the very, very end something changes. Something radically changes. Every time she says, "Now my husband will love me." "Now my husband will love me." "Now my husband will love me." And then it says she conceived again, and then she gave birth to a son and she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." Finally, no talk about her husband. What had happened? Through this suffering she stopped turning to her husband, she stopped looking to her children, she stopped looking to anything else and she said I'm going to praise the Lord. And at that moment she got her life back. At that moment, Laban and Jacob and all the people who had used her and abused her as long as she had stayed in the idolatry fell away; at that point she stood up and she got her life back.

And more than that, look—who was the child? When she finally stopped looking to her husband for those things that only God can give and when she finally turned to God, she said, "This time I will praise the Lord," and the child was who? It was Judah. Who's Judah? Get this. God comes to Leah and says, "You'll be the mother of Jesus," because Judah was the seed.

But more than that, Leah became the seed—Leah the outsider, the Leah the ugly, Leah the rejected. Because she grabbed hold with faith, she got her life back from all the people that had ruined it for her. She got it back. And God comes down and makes her into the seed. She goes ahead of her husband. She understands the gospel better than her husband. And at the very end God says, *Now through your suffering, because you have come to understand the gospel of grace, you are the seed and your son Judah is the seed, and you become the mother of Jesus.*

Now how could this be? How could this possibly be? Why would God choose Leah to do that? And the answer is right here. "When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved he came to her." And now we know. The Old Testament shows us what the New Testament really, really tells us. God loves those who others don't love. God is attracted to the weak because of his gracious nature and he wants the ones that no one else wants.

But more than that, when he sees a wife who's not loved, he shows her that there's a heavenly Bridegroom. He shows her that there's a heavenly Husband. Jesus Christ, the Bible tells us, is the Bridegroom. He's not just the King and we're the servants. He's not just the Shepherd, and we're the sheep. He's the Bridegroom, and we're the bride. And what happened is, Jesus Christ came to earth and died. He lost his true beauty, the beauty of a noble soul, the beauty of holiness. He lost his true beauty to live a life we should have lived and die the death we should have died, so that when we believe in him we become his bride.

I'll tell you what it is. Though we may look like Leah, to Jesus Christ we look like Rachel. That's the gospel. We might look like Leah in ourselves, but to Jesus Christ we look gorgeous. And that is exactly what God does here. We see here in the Old Testament a foretaste and a hint of the fact that God is the heavenly Bridegroom. He sees the wife who's unwanted. That's the reason why God chooses the foolish to shame the wise. God chooses the weak to shame the strong. God chooses the things that are despised, even the things that not, to bring to nothing the things that are, so that we might understand God's grace.

Conclusion

If you're a person here who's still searching for God you need to understand this: God is not the top of the ladder. He sent his Son to be the ladder.

Secondly, if you're a person who is very upset whenever you get near a wedding because you're so angry that you're not married, or if you're still just incredibly desperate to be married, you've missed the point. In the morning it's never what you thought. You cannot look to anything but Jesus. In heaven we have a Father that will deal with all of our imperfect fathers here. In heaven we have a Brother that will deal with all our imperfect families. In heaven we have a Spouse that will deal with all our imperfect spouses. And until we make him the One, until we say "this time I will praise the Lord," we'll never be able to deal with all the imperfection around us.

If there's anybody in this building right now that feels like *somebody else has ruined my life*, look at Leah. Leah gets her life back. She doesn't have to be bitter. She doesn't have to hate. She doesn't have to deceive back. She says, "This time I will praise the Lord." I won't look to anything else to give me what only

Jesus Christ can be for me. I will not add anything to Jesus Christ as a requirement for being happy. Do that, and you'll get your life back.

Is there anybody here who feels ugly? The only eyes that count are radiant with you. The only eyes that count are ravished by you. And that's the only comfort that can't be quenched.

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