

A Word of Hope in Uncertain Times

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John 2:1-10; Isaiah 62:1-5

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It was just about 10 years ago, almost exactly, that I got married. I decided in honor of that time in my life, and more to the direct moment of the texts that the lectionary asks us to consider this morning, to dress the same way I did when I walked down the aisle. There was a problem however, I wasn't sure everything was going to fit. I still have my used tuxedo that I wore that day, but rather than take a chance and be disappointed, I decided to simply wear part of that day's celebration and I was pretty sure it was going to fit. (It's the bow tie!)

I took a picture of myself wearing this bow tie a couple of days ago on my anniversary and sent it to a friend. I stated with the selfie, "And to think after all these years I still can fit into my... bow tie!" The reply was simply, "It looks a little smaller for some reason!" I'm not that much bigger, although every time I place a special order at McDonalds, when they hand me my food I'm wondering if you get the same reaction I do, where they always suggest you should go on a diet, "I'm sorry for your weight, sir!" I didn't know it was that obvious!

Weddings! Perhaps, just perhaps, there is no better picture of things going well than the picture of a wedding celebration. That's the picture that the Bible uses to begin to help us understand how God has envisioned our relationship to become. When we look at the picture taken from the book of Isaiah, or the picture from John's gospel the idea is much the same. The picture of a marriage in the scriptures is one of restoration, being restored. **Here to remind us of all that restoration symbolizes, and Who it is that brings that about, is some special music.**

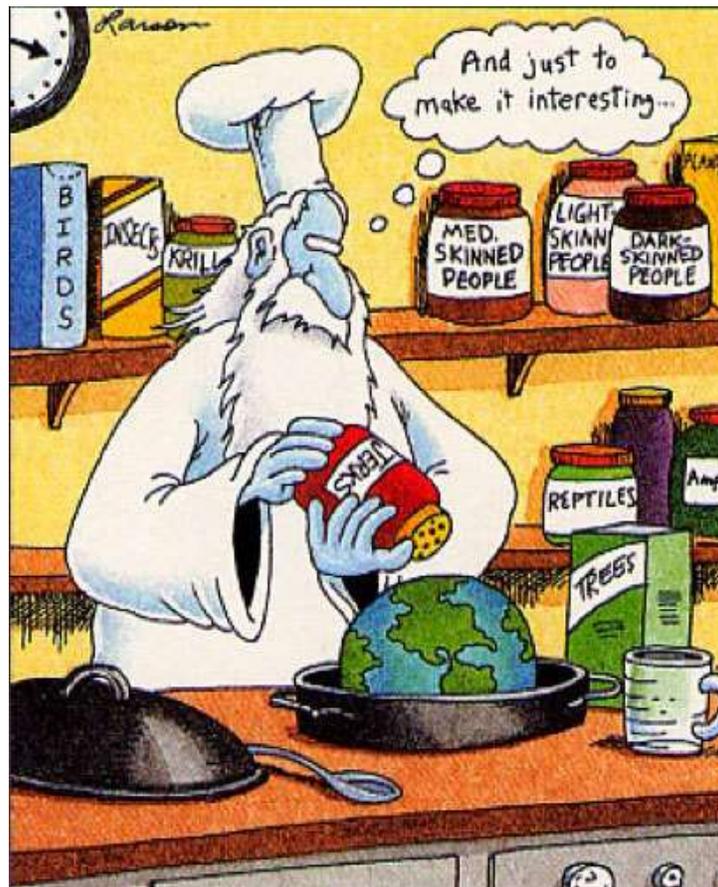
The picture of a broken relationship is introduced earlier in the book of Isaiah so that when we arrive at the picture of restoration, we have the ability to see things from God's perspective:

Isa 50:1 This is what the LORD says: "Where is your mother's certificate of divorce with which I sent her away? Or to which of my creditors did I sell you? Because of your sins you were sold; because of your transgressions your mother was sent away. Isa 50:2 When I came, why was there no one? When I called, why was there no one to answer? Was my arm too short to ransom you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you? By a mere rebuke I dry up the sea, I turn rivers into a desert; their fish rot for lack of water and die of thirst. Isa 50:3 I clothe the sky with darkness and make sackcloth its covering." Isa 50:4 The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary.

In this portion of Isaiah's text, the portion which sets up the promise of restoration spoken about in chapter 62, it's the same idea we see John picking up at the beginning of his gospel. John too, says that the Redeemer came to bring about restoration. **The sovereign LORD has**

given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. When I came, why was there no one? I suppose we still might ask the question why? What is the big deal about restoration? Why do we need it anyway? Overall, we seem to be pretty good people.

Gary Larson, the cartoonist, retired at the age of 65. Before retiring, for 15 years he drew pictures that won him global fame. Creepy monsters were always a theme of many of Larson's drawings. Larson tells the story that when he was younger, his older brother used to hide in his bedroom at night and then spring out on him without warning. I was afraid to go to bed at night without the closet door being closed because I was afraid a monster was going to pop out at me and my sister Deborah never did anything like that to me! Larson also included theology in many of his drawings.



In one particular drawing, Larson raises the issue of the problem of evil and asks the observer to consider why? Why did God decide to cook things up in His cosmic kitchen in such a way that seems to have included jerks? God is shown with a can of “jerk” salt and is getting ready to sprinkle it upon the earth. The caption reads: “And just to make it interesting!”

We live in a time that the “jerkiness” of the entire world has been pressing itself more and more upon us in America. However, we don't have to look at the world to feel intuitively that

there are plenty of jerks here in America. Just ask me, I can identify most all of them. You know, people who cut me off in traffic or text while driving. People who double dip their tortilla chips in the queso! People who act like know-it-alls all the while their ignorance is plain to see. People breaking their promises, and yes in the process, breaking our hearts as well!

That's when we come to John's gospel and Jesus shows up at a wedding in the hometown of one of his brand new disciples. His disciple's name is Nathanael and we don't know that Cana is his hometown until the very end of John's gospel, but that little fact is revealed by the end of the story (John 21:1-3) and I think it's theologically important. The name Nathanael means "gift of God." I've just recently met my first Nathanael and I have no doubt he is going to live out his name for God's glory just like Jesus original disciple!

But here's the thing. There's tons of symbolism and tons of meaning included in Jesus first miracle but I can't help but wonder if there wasn't something vitally important in this very first miracle in Jesus heart and mind just for Nathanael. Jesus had just promised Nathanael that although he was a sincere and devout Jew, (he had a daily quiet time according to the text) Nathanael himself still needed saving. Jesus saves the day in the small town of Cana, Nathanael's home town and Nathanael one day according to history, gives his life back to Jesus by dying upside down on a cross. I've always wondered if it was Nathanael's family that Jesus saved that day?

Glen McDonald in a devotion says that if God were to miraculously remove all jerks from the planet at 4:00 p.m. this afternoon, at 4:01 p.m. there wouldn't be a single person left on the planet. None of us would be left! Which causes McDonald then to ask this last question. "In light of God's mercy in allowing us to make it beyond 4:02 p.m. today, how do we plan to help redeem our broken world?" You see, I have texted while driving. I have double dipped my tortilla chips, and yes I have broken some promises as well.

This is my belief. If you and I want a picture of hope and encouragement for uncertain times, then we need to become transformed people by the only Savior God has ever offered, and because we have accepted the restoration that is offered, then our only option is to become part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.

Jn 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Jn 1:46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. May it be so... amen.