



Church of St. John the Evangelist, Elora
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Do you remember the first sight of your beloved? The first time you met the one you betrothed yourself to?

Troth is an interesting word. It means faith or loyalty when pledged in a solemn agreement. For someone to give you their troth means that each day as foolish as it seems they willingly give you their loyalty and forsake all others. It is a tremendous gift. They pledge themselves to love, comfort, honour and protect you so long as you both shall live. It's astonishing that people actually do this, and even more so, it's astonishing that for some people it actually works out.

June Callwood, Canadian author, writer, broadcaster and social activist, at the end of her life, was asked about her marriage. "Oh," she said, "we were married five times." The interviewer was a bit astonished about this and asked her to clarify what she meant. "Well," she said, "the first time we got married was when we had stars in our eyes and birds in our heads and we each foolishly said, "I will"; the second time was when we had four children, and we had to renegotiate everything; the third time was when all the children left the nest, and we had to renegotiate everything again; the fourth time was when we both

retired; and the fifth time was when one of us was diagnosed with a critical illness." At the changing seasons of life, with different circumstances each person is required to renegotiate what it means to pledge loyalty to the other.

But in all of that she could recall when they first met like it was yesterday.

The story of Isaac and Rebecca is the story of when they first met - when they first saw one another.

It all happened at Beer-lahai-roi in the Negeb dessert. It means, "The well of him that lives and sees me."

Isaac's father's servant, Eliezer, is recalling the time when he was sent back to look for a someone who would be most suitable.

Now this is *not* a recommended strategy for finding a life partner.

Eliezer prayed, "may the one whom I say at the well, 'Give me a little water from your jar,' and she responds, 'Let me also offer water to your camels;' may *she* be the one whom Isaac marries."

Before he finished praying, he looked up and *there* was Rebekah coming towards him in all her fair beauty with a water jar on her shoulder; and he said, "Give me a little water." And she said, "Oh let me also give some water to your camels."

At that this Eliezer is overcome and falls to the ground to worship God.

It's all a little much. And it's meant to be.

Eliezer showers Rebekah with gifts and has the audacity to invite himself over to meet the rest of the family. She says "come on over." Eliezer arrives and they offer them their hospitality, but before he accepts he comes clear why he's here: "I'm here to ask if Rebekah is willing to leave home, come to Canaan, and marry my master's son, Isaac."

So they ask her, "Do you want to leave?"

She says, "I will."

As foolish as it seems, Rebekah agrees to go. So they pack up all the camels, set off into the desert not knowing if they will ever see Rebekah again. It was a huge risk and a long journey.

Finally, as they approached Abraham's camp, it was evening, Isaac comes out for a walk in the field and something catches his eye. There is cloud of dust on the horizon and he learns that it is a caravan of camels coming towards him. His heart rate increases as he wonders what news they would bring.

Rebekah looks up and sees Isaac and she says "Stop." Completely captivated by who she sees, she dismounts from her camel and asks, "Who is that?"

"That is my master, Isaac."

The orchestral music swells in the background as across the field their eyes fix on one another for the first time. This is an ancient love story that is so good it has been told over thousands of generations.

Do you know how Rebekah met Isaac? Let me tell you. This story is told with hands clutched to bosoms, hearts in throats and eyes filled with tears.

To hear how Eliezer met Rebekah at the well; how Rebekah took the risk to leave home; how Isaac and Rebekah were so captivated by each other; and how Rebekah covered herself with a veil, like Moses covered his face with a veil when he came down the mountain, because her face, like Moses' face, was glowing with the radiant beauty of the glory of God.

We hear this love story, because it is a story of God's gaze upon us. When God sees you God is so captivated and drawn to you that he must cover himself with a veil.

Jesus says these things are hidden from the wise and intelligent and revealed to infants. So, come all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And as you gaze on the beauty of God, the one at the well, you echo the words of Rebekah and Isaac, and the words of the Samaritan woman at the well, and say, "I will." I will come and serve you and be loyal to you, as you have served me and promised to be loyal to me for ever.