

# THE DESERT PLACE

*Faith in every season*



## Desert Places: Waiting for the Bridegroom

**Date:** Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September

**Speaker:** Fjona Hill

**Key Verses:** Genesis 3:16, John 2:4, John 4:21 & 23, John 16:20

### Talk Summary:

In Genesis, we see the original break of trust between us and God and between man and woman. As a consequence, suffering enters our world and the woman is subject to exploitation by man. Whilst the stage of our world is now set with suffering as a constant undertone, through the story of the woman, we trace how Jesus transforms this curse for us. To the woman God said 'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing, in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire will be for your husband and he shall rule over you.'

Through John's gospel we see a pattern of Jesus addressing certain woman with the title of Genesis 'Woman'. Mary asks for wine at the wedding feast but Jesus says 'his hour has not yet come'. But to the woman at the well of Samaria, he says 'the hour has come' because she is at the well which represents the place of courtship. She represents Israel, the woman who has chased after other husbands. As a result, they have ruled over her, exploited her misplaced desires and they find themselves under Roman rule. Jesus sets out to win back the heart of his bride and gives birth to the church on the cross, in great pain, like the pangs of childbearing. He becomes the true bridegroom, the one who she will desire. As the words of Genesis, he will indeed rule over her but this rule will bring her life and she will never thirst again.

But the timing of this climatic marriage is not as we hope it to be. Like Mary, we want to start with the wedding but she is told 'the hour is not here.' We are in the stages of engagement; the arrangement is sealed but we still await the marriage. We can be encouraged by the foretastes we are given, the miracle of good wine at the wedding feast and the union at Jesus' resurrection. But until then, the bridegroom must depart for 'a little while' so that the Holy Spirit can come and do the work in our lives that he needs to do. The desert place is a place of conception and we are promised that the church, as a body that lives

the life and death of Christ, we will give birth to what Christ longs for and our anguish will be forgotten. Through it all, Christ reminds us we are not alone and that the triumphant ending has already been won.

## Worship

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?
- What has God been speaking to you about this week? (*Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it*)

## Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- If you read Genesis 3, where do you see the disorder that comes out of Genesis, most disrupting your life and the life of those around you? Has this brought you to any places of grief? Eg. experiences of death, exploitation, struggle to survive
- How do these experiences affect your intimacy and trust in God?
- What Christ-like longing and thirst is being birthed in you in the desert place? What are you no longer prepared to let rest, to let pass you by, to let continue? Think about this not just as personal longings, but longings for our wider society, community, nation. (What about as a group—is there any alignment in your longings?)
- How can we, as a community, help you grow in your longing so that one day we can birth this together? You are the midwives!

## Witness

*We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:*

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?

**Note to Small Group Leaders:** Please note that if you'd like to review the sermon, or have a hard time following the video, you can use subtitles on YouTube. On the YouTube video, click the "closed captioning" button (bottom left of YouTube video screen, first button). Google "how to show subtitles on YouTube videos" if you need help with this.