

A good match



Heather Smith *reflects on* Genesis 24:34-38. 42-49. 58-end

The question of their children's life partners makes many parents anxious. Ideas about what kind of person might be suitable will vary, but most parents just hope for someone who will make their child happy. Abraham wanted just that for Isaac, but he also felt the burden that this child carried. He was the promised child who would make Abraham the father of a multitude of nations. No wonder he wanted to find a suitable wife for his son. What follows is effectively an arranged marriage. It is arranged by Abraham in the sense that he has a specific family in mind. Although he does not know the details of all the family members, having left a long while before, he sends his servant with strict instructions about who would be suitable.

The servant must have felt a great weight of responsibility. He turns to God and asks that the right woman will offer him a drink at the well. But will Rebekah agree? She does, going back with the servant to meet her husband. Everyone is happy and the multitude of descendants of Abraham moves on a generation.

It's hard not to suspect that Abraham feels he has to give God a little help with the fulfilling the promise – just as he did when it seemed that Sarah couldn't bear a child and Hagar was a better prospect. Nevertheless, God worked with his insecurities, and does the same with ours. God can bring the best out of whatever situation we create for ourselves. 😊

Lord, teach us to rest in the knowledge that you will bring about the best for us. Help us to believe that we need not fear for those we love because they are safe in your hands. Amen.

Writing the journeys we never wanted to make

Part 3 – journalling the Word

by Julia McGuinness

Lectio Divina is a way of reading a sacred text where we open ourselves to the words that stand out as most significant in the present moment. Journalling what we find when we do so can make this activity especially fruitful. Try this with a familiar scriptural passage, such as Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

- Read these verses through slowly, several times. As you read, listen out for the phrase or line that particularly catches your attention. Reflect on this phrase. Does it prompt a sense of recognition, discovery, consolation or even irritation? What is it stirring within?

- Now write it out on the page. What words do you want to write beneath it? A few further poetic lines? Some free-writing? Perhaps you find yourself taking issue with the writer and want to write them a letter.

- Afterwards, re-read your writing, noting any insights that have emerged, aware of the assertion of St John of the Cross, that, "Words can do for the heart what light can do for a field."

Julia is a lay reader licensed to Chester Cathedral, where she was formerly poet-in-residence. Her book – Writing the Journeys We Never Wanted to Make: a guide to journalling for resilience – is published by Wellness Books. 😊

“The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God.”

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), writer and theologian

Summer reading

Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis

Recommended by Jane Williams

Lewis' book is an edited and expanded form of a series of radio talks that he gave in the 1940s, so he writes not necessarily for a Christian audience. Importantly, he very deliberately avoids talking in detail about the issues that divide Christians, aiming instead for "mere" Christianity – the faith that all Christians can recognise. Lewis says, surely correctly, that "the discussion of these disputed points has

no tendency at all to bring an outsider into the Christian fold". Lewis himself spent many years fighting against belief in God, and he draws on the arguments he once used against the existence of God to good effect in *Mere Christianity*. Throughout the book, he argues that Christianity is a devastatingly practical, applicable religion. It isn't a philosophy but a way of life, and its aim is to draw us into the life of God. 😊