

7/5/17

Week 28: WFL

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh: *The Shelter of God's Promises: Peace*

Sheila: Hello! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. Sometimes I get the opportunity to have a guest on Wednesdays and we'll talk about what God is doing in our life and I love that. But I have to be honest, I think my favorite thing of all is when it is just you and me, when we get a chance to sit and open the word of God, which is not just an old book -- it is not an old book, it is a living love letter from God to you and me no matter what we're facing.

Remember, if you're going through some tough times, we're here for you. We have some amazing prayer counselors you maybe never see on the set but they're there and they care about you.

Today, the promise that I wanted us look at is Christ's promise of peace no matter what is going on right now in your life. Now when you think of the word *peace* what comes to your mind? Is it that last sacred hour of the day when all the children are finally in bed and asleep and you get to sit down and have a little peace? Or maybe it is when you've been able to resolve an issue with your husband or a friend and finally, in a relationship peace is restored. Or perhaps you've resigned yourself to a place where you believe that peace will only be possible when this earthly journey is through and you find yourself safely home with Christ.

Well, I wanted to remind you that Jesus promises peace, not the kind the world would offer but the kind that is found only in him. We read this in John's gospel Chapter 14. It says this:

I am leaving you with a gift -- peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world can't give. So don't be troubled or afraid.

When I was thinking of that promise, it brought back a moment when I met a man who desperately -- desperately needed the peace of Christ. I woke up one Saturday morning thinking that I should study but deciding almost immediately that I wouldn't. I could see it was such a pretty day outside my college dorm room window and after days and days of dreary rain and gray skies I was excited to be out in the fresh air and sunshine.

I was in my final year at the London school of theology and the pressure was on to finish well.

But I'd maintained a pretty consistent work and study ethic so I decided that day I was taking time away from the books, a whole day, away from the library shelves and I'd decided that's what I really needed. So I took a quick shower, dressed, walked down to the station to catch a train into central London.

Having been raised in a small town on the West Coast of Scotland, I was in love with everything that London offered. I had student tickets to the ballet, to the opera, to all the museums, to the art galleries; each presenting the finest that could be seen or heard anywhere in the country.

So I got off the train at South Kensington. It was the perfect day for a picnic. So I bought a sandwich and a soda and decided to make my way to St. James Park. I put my college sweatshirt on the grass at the base of a huge oak tree, sat down, and leaned back against a well-worn trunk.

I don't know about you but I love to people watch and a London park in May has plenty to see from little old ladies walking little old dogs to musicians playing their version of all the latest hits. As I scanned the manicured grounds my eyes met those of a man in his, I would imagine his 60s. Our eye contact was brief as he immediately lowered his to stare at the grass. For some reason there was something about this man that touched me deeply. I tried not to stare at him but I kept being drawn back. He wore an old coat, even though it was a very warm day and it was tied at the waist by a piece of rope. At his feet were two plastic shopping bags. It is a safe bet, I thought, to imagine that he was probably homeless. As I looked at his hands gently folded on his lap, I talked to God about him. I knew nothing about this man's story but was deeply aware that God knew every single line.

After a few moments he looked up at me and smiled. So I wandered over to where he was sitting and I asked if I might join him and he agreed. I asked if he had had lunch and when he said that he had not I offered him half of my sandwich which he took. "I love it here," I said. "It's so full of life." He just smiled. "I sometimes come here just to feed the ducks," I continued, trying to start a conversation. "They always seem to be starving."

He smiled at me. "I think you'll find that they are better fed than many you might encounter in this park." His voice was very gentle and compelling. "Are you a student?" He asked me.

"Yes, I'm in Bible college," I answered. "I want to be a missionary in India."

"Wow! That's a very noble calling," he said with a smile.

So I asked him this. "May I ask you a little bit about your own life, sir?"

He looked at me with the saddest eyes I had ever encountered and he told me his story. That one

time he had been a physician on Harley Street, one of the most famous streets in London with a reputation worldwide as the center of private medical excellence. Through a series of poor choices and addiction to alcohol and prescription medication, this gentle man in a coat frayed at the edges told me had lost his marriage, his family, his license, and his career. He went from being a man who earned a huge salary and the respect of his peers to someone people avoided.

He said something to me that afternoon that I've never forgotten. He said that he was walking along Oxford Street one day when he passed a store that had mirrored doors. Just out of the corner of his eye something caused him to take a second look. "I saw an old man in a dirty shirt and unkempt hair," he said. "And as my distaste for him rose, I realized that it was me. This is what I had become."

Wow! I was so impacted by that one statement: "This is what I had become." How sad to be almost unrecognizable to yourself? To have lost everything that you feel makes you who you are.

So in the context of our study today on Christ's promise of peace, I'm reminded of another man who had lost himself until he came face to face with Christ the author and the source of all peace. We find the story in Mark Chapter 5. If you'd like to read along with me I'm reading in the New Living Translation, verses 1-13:

So they arrived at the other side of the lake in the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came from a cemetery to meet him. This man lived among the burial caves and could no longer be restrained even with a chain. Whenever he was put into chains and shackles, as he often was, he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and the hills howling and cutting himself with sharp stones. When Jesus was still some distance away the man saw him and ran to meet him and bowed low before him.

With a shriek he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you don't torture me."

For Jesus had already said to the spirit, "Come out of the man, you evil spirit."

Then Jesus demanded, "What is your name?"

He replied, "My name is Legion because there are many of us inside this man."

Then the evil spirits begged him again and again not to send them to some distant place.

There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby. "Send us into those pigs the spirits begged. Let us enter them."

So Jesus gave them permission. The evil spirits came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the entire herd of 2,000 pigs plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the nearby water.

Wow! What a story! Can you imagine being an onlooker that day as 2,000 squealing pigs went careening off the edge of a cliff? I find it fascinating that this tormented man ran to Jesus and fell on his knees. How did this man living in this terrible place know who Jesus was? Up until this point, Jesus had never been there before. This territory was a very pagan, godless location. It was unfriendly on many levels, not the least of which was that it was an area of pagan cult worship. Their favorite animal sacrifice was the pig, which as you probably know is an unclean animal to the Jews. So with herds of pigs about the place in itself was repellant, an absolute abomination to any Jew.

Well, it is to this area, across the Galilee that Jesus sailed to meet this man of the tombs. Do you think that was any coincidence?

As Jesus stepped out of the boat the man ran to him. Why? Perhaps it was because for the first time in his life he felt the demons inside of him cower in the darkness. And he grabbed that moment and he ran as fast as he could to the only one who had ever been able to make that happen.

See here's the deal. He didn't know who Jesus was but the demons did. Wow! It is hard for us to put ourselves in this man's broken tormented frame but it is safe to assume that the noise inside his head and heart must have been deafening. Then suddenly, silence! As he looked up there was Jesus standing, looking at him. What a moment! For the first time, probably in his whole life there was a possibility of peace.

Let's back up a little here and look at what had happened just before the disciples dropped anchor on this side of the lake. These men were not at all happy about heading to this area of the Gerasenes and the crossing to get there had been no pleasure cruise either. They came upon stormy seas that night, a storm so fierce that their boat began to sink. The disciples thought they would surely die.

In fact, they say in verse 37:

Soon a fierce storm came up, high waves were breaking into the boat and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The

disciples woke him up shouting, "Teacher, don't you care? We're about to drown!"

When Jesus woke up he rebuked the waves, the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!"

Suddenly, the wind stopped and there was a great calm.

It's worth noting the command that Jesus gave to the waves was the same command he had given to an evil spirit in Mark Chapter 1, verse 25. You see this was no regular storm. The disciples were used to storms but this -- this was a demonic assault to try and stop Christ from his mission of rescuing one tormented man.

We read that the disciples became afraid mumbling to one another, "Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

They had no idea that they were about to witness the radical truth that when Jesus speaks to storms outside and inside the human heart both must obey.

So back to this poor tormented man who lived with the shame and shamelessness that must be inherent in a life of demon possession. Jesus spoke to the demons and commanded them to enter into the pigs and in a moment -- gone! If I were one of the disciples, I would have seen this as a three Advil moment. Just when you think life with Jesus can't get any more unpredictable, you're confronted with that day's menu. The moment you step off a treacherous boat ride, a crazed demon-possessed man rushes to you only to have his internal tormenters flinging pigs off a cliff.

And yet as crazy as this scene is, in the presence of Christ there was total peace. I imagine Christ looking upon the man, ragged, fatigued to his very soul, prostrate in the sand. For the first time in a long time the man is serene. Quietly, at the feet of Christ, this man who had torn his clothes and cut his flesh is now according to Mark 5:15 clothed and in his right mind.

Within 24 hours the disciples witnessed that Christ's power is over the storms that rage in the world and within the human heart. They watched as Jesus spoke "peace" turning the violent waves into a sea of glass, and they witnessed the most tormented man they had encountered so far being set free. And the constant was the presence of Christ.

As you reflect on your own life, how long has the storm been raging all around you? Perhaps like the disciples you've cried out, "Don't you see what's happening here, Lord? Don't you care that I'm drowning?"

Perhaps more isolating and brutal, the storm that rages is inside your soul. What the disciples

witnessed that day was the shelter that Christ not only offers but the truth that he himself is our shelter. He is the one who brings peace.

I love that promise today: "I'm leaving you with a gift -- peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."

Maybe you think the situation is so far removed from your own life. Maybe you think, well, I'm not talking about some physical storm, I'm not a demon-possessed person, I just don't have any peace. The fact that Christ says, "The peace that I give is different from the world," is hugely significant. For peace in the world to happen, when people get together and they're try come up with a peace treaty, one of them has to give in some way. What Christ has promised you and I is peace is possible. And where is it found? -- At his feet.

It was quite a scene on the shore that day: Noise, craziness, people yelling, animals squealing. There is one place where we're told that there was absolute peace. It was the man kneeling at the feet of Christ.

I have to tell you sometimes I literally in an airport will find a restroom and close the door and it might look like I'm at Dallas airport or London Heathrow, but in reality I'm kneeling at the feet of Christ.

What you're walking through right now might seem insurmountable but the thing that we have been promised no matter how huge the attacks outside or inside are, is if you'll just close the door for a minute on everything else, and kneel at the feet of Christ and allow him to speak peace over you, he has promised that we will know his peace.

I've had the privilege with *LIFE* of traveling to so many different places where there is very little peace. Sometimes it is because of war, sometimes it is because of desperate famine and the children are literally starving to death. And sometimes, like what I'm about to show you, it's because they simply don't have access to the very thing you need to survive and that is clean water. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Announcer: They say that the sure sign of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. For Nayore, she has no choice but to repeat her steps even when she knows those same steps cost the life of her baby girl.

Now, as she draws water yet again from the same contaminated source, she hopes this time will

be different, that her older daughter won't fall ill and die the same terrible death as her baby girl.

[Open captions]

>> My baby girl became ill so I took her to the clinic. They said nothing was wrong with my baby and they sent us home. She died that night. [Weeping] My baby needed clean water. If I was not so poor my baby would still be alive.

Tammy: It's so hard for me to sit here and listen to her story and see such pain in her eyes and it's so raw, it's so fresh. But the biggest thing is just hearing her say that all she needs is clean water and knowing that that could have changed everything for her but she's fully aware of what she needs but she can't do anything about it.

I would love to be able to speak hope into her life and tell her that things are about to change.

Announcer: Indeed! Change began that day as Nayore prayed to receive Jesus as her Lord and savior. Now her soul will never thirst again and it's our prayer that, like so many others around the world, with your help she will no longer thirst for clean drinking water for her family and village.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I can't imagine as a mom being told, "Your child is fine; go home." Moms have instincts. If you're a mom you know, you know when something is not right and you keep pressing and keep pressing. But that darling mother was told there is nothing else, there is nothing wrong with your child and sent home only to have her little one die in her arms that night.

There was something about her cry where it was almost like she felt it was her fault. Like, if I wasn't poor my child would still be alive. That is not her fault -- that is not her fault! These mothers that we've had the privilege of meeting and that Tammy -- I just love watching Tammy Trent leading that woman into a relationship with Christ! That's -- that's what we're about at *LIFE*, life today right now.

But there is also so many people who what they need right now is clean water. I love the fact we call it *Water for Life* because when we put a well into a village do you know that that one well will last for 70 years -- almost the whole lifetime of a village? -- And the look on their faces when clean water springs up for the first time.

See it is not her fault because there is nothing more that mother can do. She has two choices, give your child bad contaminated water and the possibility that she will die or give them no water at all and that is a barbaric way to die.

But here's the deal. You and I get to change that. We have the joyful privilege of being those who were born in a different part of the world with access to so many resources. Do you know that so little does so much? Do you know that for \$48 you can provide water for ten people? \$144 provides clean water for 30 people. And in fact, you can actually put a whole well -- and our goal here at *LIFE Today* for this year is 400 wells. But for \$4800 that will provide for 1,000 people. It is amazing what we can do.

If you feel moved to give an additional \$100 gift that provides these life filter kits because there are some areas we can't get to. It is too hard to drill. We can't. But we can give these filter kits that for \$100 will give three families clean water. The water comes out crystal clear.

So you might not be able to do a whole well. You might not be able to do \$4800 for 1,000 people but every single one of us could do something. And if we all do something we can help dry the eyes of so many of these moms who simply want to be able to say to their child, "Here you go. Here's a glass of clean water." Would you please go to your phone and make the very best gift possible?

Begin video clip

Announcer: Every day children living in extreme poverty are forced to make a dreadful choice: Drink polluted water filled with deadly disease or perhaps die of thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision.

The good news is there is a solution. **Mission:** Water for Life is one of the most proven and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything!

With your gift today you can help drill 400 water wells in remote villages in 15 nations. A gift of \$48 will provide disease-free water for ten people, \$72 will provide for 15 people, and \$144 will help provide clean water straight from the ground for 30 people.

Please also consider an additional gift of \$100 to help provide three families with water filtration kits in emergency areas where our drilling rigs are unable to reach. As our thank you, we'll send you the books, *Words of Jesus* and *Words of Healing*. One contains only the words of Jesus and the other scriptures for healing in your body, mind, and soul. With your \$100 gift you can receive both hardbound and softbound editions of these scripture promise books.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people. Or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well and you may request our beautiful hand sculpted "Determined Eagle" bronze. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

In the studio

On the mission field

James: This mother has four children. Last summer a year ago, they had an outbreak of intestinal disease from contaminated water. Two of her children got very, very sick.

Now she's got a little baby just a few months old and this baby is living on her mother's milk, this baby is nursing. Betty, pretty soon this little baby is going to be drinking that water and oftentimes it takes their lives.

Betty: It really does, James. And they can't do anything about it because it's all the water they have. I can't even imagine! This little baby is so precious, so beautiful! Do you know that there is 10,000 people a day that die from the waterborne diseases, and most of them are children five and under? We can stop that. We can make the difference by doing the water wells and giving them a fresh cup of water.

James: I'd like you to be one of the hands to reach out and dial the telephone number and take your bankcard and use it like a check or write a check and make it to *LIFE* and say "I want to give life to children like this and keep them healthy."

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! If the lines are busy, please write the number down and try again. Honestly, what a gift to be able to care for the poor.

I was reading this morning in proverbs and it says when you ignore the cry of the poor then the Lord ignores your cry when you're in a time of need. It is not just something God wants us to do so we'll be good Christians. No! It's a joyful privilege to be able to help those.

And if you send in a gift then we would love to send you a copy of my book, *The Shelter of God's Promises*. We've lots of other gifts for different amounts but please, just do what you can. I want that the next time that we go and visit that village, maybe meet that mom again, she will be able to tell us how well her daughter is doing, thriving in school, the one who is still with her here on earth and be able to say to other mothers, "Listen. Help is on the way!"

I'm so grateful for all you do and I thank you for joining me on *Wednesdays in the Word*. I'm Sheila Walsh. God bless you! We'll see you next time.

Announcer: When planning your future keep their future in mind. Contact *Life Planning Services* today.