

3/15/17
Week 12: Mission: Rescue Life
Wednesdays in the Word
Sheila Walsh
“Through the Eyes of Christ”

Sheila: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*.

I don't take it for granted that you pause here and you take time out of your day so that we can sit together and talk through things. Really what's been on my heart for the last few days is I'm profoundly grateful for the way that so many of you help us do what we do. You help us to reach those who are broken and hurting.

But I don't want you to ever forget that we remember you. And maybe, where this catches you at this moment in your life is that you're hurting or you're broken or you feel a little lost. I just want you to know we're here for you. You may just be seeing me sitting here in a chair but there is a lot of us here, we're a big family and we pray for you. So always feel free to let us know what your prayer requests are and it would be an honor to stand shoulder by shoulder with you.

Today, I've been thinking a lot about, we're slightly further along in this new year but New Year's Eve has always been a very important time for me just personally. It is a time when I like to reflect on the last year and it is a time that I like to look forward to a brand-new year where you've just got a journal with blank pages. I began to ask the Lord, maybe in the last week or so of December, "Father, what do you want... where do you want me to study and focus my attention and my life in this coming year?"

And it was such a simple message but so profound and honestly I can say, even up to this point in this year, it's really changing me. It's changing how I see life and how I see other people. And the simple answer was "to become more like Christ." We all know if you are a follower of Christ as I am, we know that's kind of the bottom line but I've really been asking God to unpack that for me to see well, what does that look like on a Monday morning not just on a Sunday evening?

And I was reading my darling friend, Ann Voskamp, she has this fantastic blog. And she had a guest blogger on some time back, his name is Scott Saul and I was really arrested by an observation he made about an encounter Jesus had. You remember there is a whole crowd of people, Jesus is teaching and then suddenly these religious leaders drag in a woman who was

caught in the very act of adultery and they throw her at the feet of Jesus.

And basically, they wait to see what are you going to do? If you stick to the Jewish law and you condemn her then all these people who are following you who think you are so kind and so compassionate, they're going to leave. But if you don't uphold the law then how can you possibly say that you are the son of God -- that you came in God's name?

And you might remember that Jesus just writes very slowly in the sand and says, "Whoever of you, I'm just going to give you the privilege if you've never committed any sin, why don't you pick up that first stone and throw it on the earth at this woman who is lying here in shame and in humiliation?" And you might remember the story, they eventually all disappear.

But here's what's interesting and this was the observation that this gentleman made. He said Christ makes two statements to the woman and the order of those statements is hugely important. He asks her the question, "Where are your accusers?" And she said they were gone. And Jesus says this, "Neither do I condemn you. Now go and sin no more."

The sequence of those two phrases are hugely significant. I think we're a lot more comfortable with saying, "Go and sin no more. And neither do I condemn you." But that's not what Jesus said. Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Now, in light of that love, you're seen, you're known, you're accepted, go and live differently. Go and sin no more."

There is something about that that has given me such a hunger to learn in this culture because if you think of the times we're living in, we're very divided. I've just never known an angrier time in our nation. I'm sure there have been some but I've never known them. So my prayer has been, Lord, how do I have your eyes to see people?

And I've been very drawn back to the book of Philippians. When Paul writes to the church in Philippi, you might remember how it began; he took a trip and discovered there was no synagogue there but he found a group of women led by a woman named Lydia and they were just worshipping, gathering by the riverside. And Paul talked to them about the love of Christ. So Lydia accepted Christ into her life as did her family and her home became the nucleus of the very first European church.

But now Paul is writing to these people that he loves so much. He's in prison in Rome himself but it's Philippians Chapter two that I find so compelling. Let me just read you a few verses. This is Philippians two and I'm reading from 5-11.

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead he gave up his divine privileges. He took the

humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

That is actually called, if you look in any theological book it's called a Christological hymn. We're not sure. Did Paul write this part himself? Or was it just a hymn that they had begun to sing in the church? But Paul includes it here. There is a couple of things I wanted to draw your attention to.

In verse seven it says, "Though he was God he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to." It goes on to say, "Instead he gave up his divine privileges."

Some people have wondered, what does that mean? Didn't think of being God as something to cling to? Was he trying to hold on and not have to come to this earth? Was there anything in Christ that resisted coming? The meaning is far from that. It means that the son of God, the perfect son of God willingly relinquished all those privileges to come, out of pure love for you and I.

I read an interesting thing, a commentary by a man called Warren Wiersbe, whose commentaries I read a lot. He was talking about that. He tells a story of a job recruiter that has become kind of renowned in his city; that if you want the best workers possible for your company go to this guy because he delivers every single time.

So a reporter decided to go in and interview this man and said, "How is it that you consistently find such top quality employees?"

And the man replied, "Oh it's very simple actually. I've discovered if you want to find a true leader, don't just give him responsibility, give him privilege. Most people will respond to responsibility and do a good job if they're being paid for it. But the deciding line, the definitive issue is how will they handle privilege?"

Perhaps you're promoted in a job, do you use that privilege for yourself or do you use that to serve those around you? He determined that that was the sign of a great leader. A great leader would always use privilege to serve those who work with him.

There is no greater example of someone who could have held on to privilege but for love of us laid aside than Christ. It goes on to say, "He humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."

I don't think it is possible for you and I to understand exactly what that means, how humiliating it was in those days. In fact, in those days if you were a Roman and you had just convicted someone and sentenced them to die on a cross you would never ever utter the word cross. It was looked on as the utmost of humiliation. So they came up with an old word that they used when they were sentencing anyone. But even to those, particularly to the Jews, it was looked on as a curse from God if you were hung on a tree.

Galatians two, verse 20: My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

But he goes on in Chapter three, verse 13 to say this and this is really the key for all the Jewish people who watched the crucifixion. It said: But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrong doing; for it is written in the scriptures, "Cursed is anyone who is hung on a tree."

For all the bystanders that day, on that time when Christ was hung on a cross, to every single Jewish person, apart from one or two, like the mother of Jesus and one of the others who maybe still held on to some faith, it looked to everyone that Christ was a criminal who was under the curse of God.

I think the fact that we have -- think about it, we wear little crosses around our necks. We have little crosses. Maybe you have one on your desk or in your home. Back then that would be as obscene as having a little electric chair on a chain around your neck. It was the most degrading sort of punishment and death, and Christ willingly took that on for you and me.

Then it goes on to say that God has highly elevated him; that there is a day coming, I don't care what it looks like in the news or in the newspaper, there is a day coming when every single tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But maybe you're tempted to ask, "Sheila, that's great and I love that passage. How does that change how I see people? How does that change how I live in these days?"

Well, there's a beautiful painting that's hung in one of the art galleries in London and there is a whole floor that's given over to Italian renaissance paintings. When I was a student in London I used to go and there were one or two paintings that I would just literally sit and look at the beautiful detail. But there is a painting by an Italian renaissance painter; he painted this beautiful oil of Christ being held by his mother. And it's quite a large painting and it's hung in this gallery.

There is a very famous British art critic, his name is Robert Cummings and he describes a day where he goes to that particular art gallery and he stands in front of that painting and he looks at it. And even though he can recognize the skill of the brush stroke, the beauty of the color, he wrote, "There is something wrong with this painting. The angle of the mother, the way she is holding her baby, the hills in the background, something is just not right here."

He stood there. It was a very busy day in the art gallery. He surveyed the painting for some time. And then this thought came to him, what if this was never meant to be hung in an art gallery? What if this painting was meant to be hung in a place of prayer?

So this very well-dressed, very well-known art critic did something that he says he's never done before in his life. He got down on his knees in the art gallery in front of the painting and he looked up and it changed everything. He realized, this was not a painting that was supposed to be stood and stared at. This was a painting that had been commissioned to be seen through the eyes of worship. From that place on his knees as he gazed up, everything about the painting had changed. Mary was holding the baby close, the hills were in the background, everything was beautiful because he changed his stance.

And honestly, that's my prayer for us this year. We can stand and stare at our world and all we're going to see is what's wrong; we're going to see what everybody is doing wrong, how they're expressing it wrongly. How would it change your life, how would it change my life if we viewed this world instead from a position of worship? If we got on our knees before we ever headed out the door on any given day, would we begin to see this world with the eyes of Christ?

I can only tell you from my own life, when I stand and where I stand changes what I see. But when I kneel in worship, it changes who I am.

Humility is an interesting word. I've heard people say, "Oh, she is such a humble person" or "I'm really so humble." I think we misunderstand. Humility is not thinking badly of yourself. Humility is not thinking of yourself. Pride and false humility are very closely related whether you think I've got this and nobody does it better or I'm terrible and nobody could love me. The underbelly of both of those is shame because honestly, we're never going to measure up quite the way we thought. When you look at yourself and you think, well, I'm not worth loving, the soft underbelly of that is shame.

True Christian humility is when we kneel at the feet of Christ and we hear him say, "Neither do I condemn you. Now go and live differently." I think that would change our world if we began to see with the eyes of Jesus.

I had that privilege not so long ago. Of going to the darkest place but seeing it through different eyes. Watch this.

On the mission field

Sheila: My first night on the streets in Southeast Asia was devastating. I never thought I would see something like that in my life. A sex trafficker can make \$200,000 a year on one -- one little girl. And she's just a child.

Interpreter: When I was 12, I got a job doing housework. I worked very hard. One time I met a lady who said she could get me a job as a hairdresser. They would train me and it would be a well-paid job. I believed her and so did my mother. So I went with her to the Thai border. But once I got there I was sold as a prostitute. They forced me to have sex with many men; up to 20 men a night.

Sheila: And some of my friends, before I even went said to me, "Why don't these people just get out of it? If they don't like that lifestyle why don't they just leave?"

But when you begin to understand what happens, so many of these girls, they're brought to a place, they're thrown into a room with other girls and they're not allowed to sleep, they're not allowed to eat, and at some point after several days one of them is removed and never comes back. The message to the girls is, if you don't do what we tell you to do, if you don't smile and look like this is what you want to do, the same thing can happen to you.

Interpreter: What I miss most is my mother's love and comfort. When I'm in the brothels I feel hopeless -- that I'll never get out.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I've never experienced anything like it in my life. I've traveled all over the world but in the darkness that we encountered in Southeast Asia where these little girls are kidnapped from their villages, these guys have it down to a fine art. It is a billion dollar business, they know what they're doing. And they'll offer these little girls something that sounds promising and hopeful, and then they'll discover that they are trapped and they're imprisoned and they cannot get away.

I had an opportunity of talking to a girl who had been rescued and I said to her, "Did you ever consider just running? Was there ever a moment when you thought I could run." And she

said, "Yes. But one of my captors told me, we know where you live. If you leave we're going after your eight-year-old sister." What choice did she have?

I'm so compelled by the words in Isaiah, Isaiah 61 says: He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed.

And that's what these young girls are. They are being held captive -- they're prisoners. So many of the young people that I had an opportunity later on in our trip to visit with who had been rescued and now were being restored said, "You have no idea how many nights I would lie in my bed after the last man had gone and cry out, 'If there is a God, do you hear me?'" Because they had lost their identity. They were no longer Mary or Samantha, they were a number. They were just number 24 and they felt they had no future.

But what I saw with my own eyes is there is no place too far that the love of God cannot reach you, cannot rescue you, and cannot restore you. And you and I can do it. It doesn't even cost that much. For \$128 that helps us to reach, to rescue, and to restore one child.

Now some of you might think, I'd love to do that but honestly, it doesn't fit my monthly budget. Well, we have some amazing people who are going to partner with us for this outreach which means if you can work say, \$64 into your budget, you have in effect rescued a child because they will match that.

I've seen also what happens to the youngest of these when they're finally brought to a place of hope, like *LIFE Today's* Destiny House. The difference it makes when they learn that not only did God hear them and that God saw them but that God has given them a new name: Daughter, son -- it changes everything.

I had the privilege of leading a worship service with about 150 boys and girls who had been rescued out of trafficking. They worshipped with tears rolling down their face because when you've tasted of darkness you run to Christ who is the light. Would you help us? We can do this if you'll help us right now.

[Begin video clip]

Announcer: Innocent children and young people longing to be loved and cared for are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators; their spirit and bodies broken under horrific emotional and physical abuse. Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to warn children vulnerable to sex traffickers. You can help rescue those already enslaved. And you can help

restore young lives and give them a future.

And now a generous opportunity of a \$320,000 matching gift means your gift of \$128 to help rescue a child will be matched to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help rescue one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 Rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift we'll send you *The Age of Promise*, Randy Robison reveals ten promises woven through all of scripture that will transform the way you view God, yourself, and others. With your gift of \$128 or more you'll receive "The Prayer is Powerful" wood plaque. This unique scripture art piece is printed on premium Birchwood, a beautiful reminder of the power of prayer.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280, which will now help rescue 20 children and you may request the beautiful "Bridge of Faith" framed canvas print by Thomas Kinkade. Please call, write, or make your secure gift online today.

[End of clip]

On the mission field

Lisa: I've spent the last few days walking the streets of Mumbai. I have seen brothels. I have seen children. I have seen women. But they all have one thing in common, none of them chose to be here. The women I've talked to, they were either kidnapped from Nepal or other places in India, brought to Mumbai with the hope of something bigger, something better, a future, an opportunity to improve their lives. And what they found was torture, captivity, and bondage. It is an overwhelming hopeless cycle.

But you know what? We can do something about this. First it's preventative; we want to spread the word to the people that are lying and taking these young women captive, these women that all they want is a hope and a future. We want to educate and equip them so they don't fall captive to this.

But secondly, the ones that are captive, we want to rescue them. We want to give them enough hope that they will be brave enough to step out, and when they step out we want to give them a place where they can be restored. We want to restore their lives. We want to give them skills so that they can have a dream. We need partners for rescue.

But you know what? We need you to go to the phone. We need you to go online. We need you to be generous. I know what you've seen, I know what you've heard is uncomfortable but we need you to move into action. Thank you!

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. Please go to the phones. Please call and make the best gift possible. And remember, it doesn't take much; \$128 will rescue one girl. If you'd do just \$64, our partners will come in with that and match it. So for \$1280 you can rescue ten children but because of our matching gift, that will now be 20 children. It's a joy, it's a privilege -- you're literally seeing them going from the darkest night into the light of Christ who heard their cries, who loves them and is going to use them to make a difference in their nation.

Thanks for being with us again. I'm Sheila Walsh for *Wednesdays in the Word* and I'll see you next time.

Announcer: Regardless of your net worth, estate planning benefits you and your family before and after death, and results in peace of mind. As a free service to our friends and partners, *LIFE Planning Services*, a ministry of LIFE Outreach International can help you with your estate planning needs and chart your financial future! Don't put off this important step to peace of mind through better planning. Contact *LIFE Planning Services* today!