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Week 16: Mission: Rescue Life

Sheila Walsh

"He is Risen"

Sheila: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. I was out not so long ago in Oklahoma talking to a group of women; there were probably about 2,000 women. And at the end I had that privilege, one of the things I love to do is when I finish speaking is just to kind of make myself available. Because you can stand there on a platform and share things that you believe but I love to get a chance then to listen to what women have to say as to how perhaps that message hit them.

There was one woman in particular that I've thought about a lot since then and I've prayed for. Because she said, "You talked about a god who loves us all." But she said, "You don't know the things I've done in my life." She said, "I'm struggling to believe that A when my own father rejected me, and B, when I've gone on to make such terrible choices in my own life why would God love me?" So I'm thinking of her today as we share this program.

Maybe you're like that too. Maybe you think it doesn't make sense. I know what my life is like and to think that God would know all that's true about me and still love me, maybe it seems too good to be true. Well, I want to talk about that.

There's a scripture that says, it's an unusual scripture until you understand the context, and what the people listening would have heard. And this somewhat it says: "Can a woman forget her nursing child that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands. Your walls are continually before me." That's from Isaiah chapter

49.

Well, that might seem like a strange illustration but the Hebrew word used there for "engraved" is the word Chaqaq, and it means to be cut into or cut open. Well, I didn't realize until fairly recently that the practice of having an image on the palms of your hands was a very familiar concept to Jews. The practice was called "Enzymes of Jerusalem." What Jewish men would do is they would engrave pictures of the temple or of Jerusalem, of the skyline of Jerusalem on the palms of their hands. It meant for these devout Jews that these images would always be before them.

This is what they did. They would choose an image and then have it cut into a block of wood. Then they dipped the image into powder or charcoal and apply it to it palm of their hands. Next they would take two needles, tie them tightly together, and dip the needles into ink. Then gently pierce along the image careful not to draw blood. When the image was complete it would be washed in wine. I guess it was earliest version of tattoos. It reminded them of the temple but it didn't remind them of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They still had to follow all the laws given to Moses. They still had to have an animal sacrificed symbolically taking their sin away. They had to do this over and over.

But the prophet Isaiah spoke of the one to come who would step into our place, and once and for all take our punishment on himself.

Remember these words? Some of the most beautiful, painful: Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds we are healed.

I remember as a child growing up in Scotland being told in Sunday School that God had our names inscribed into the palms of his hands. I remember thinking, how big does

God's hands, I mean, how big do they have to be if he is going to fit us all in? But you know, now I think that every time God the Father sees the pierced hands of Christ he sees you and he sees me.

There is no image that displays the love of God more perfectly than the scars of Jesus. The scars tell God's story. It was evening of the first day of the week. The followers had gathered together with the doors locked because they were afraid of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said, "Peace, be still." When he had said this he showed them his hands and his side. When the followers saw the Lord they were filled with joy. That's in John's gospel, John Chapter 20.

I can only imagine what that day must have been like. Think about it. For three years these men and women had followed Jesus from town to town. They watched the crowds grow, saw miracles happen before their eyes. Think about it. They had seen Jesus turn a storm into a sea of glass with a single word. And they knew from their understanding of history, they knew that at any moment now Jesus would take his place in Jerusalem and overthrow the Roman government.

It's important to remember what they knew of scripture at that point. They didn't have what we have. All they had were the Old Testament scrolls. These would be read to him in the temple since they were children. Every Jew held on particularly to the promise of these words from the prophet Isaiah about the coming Messiah: For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest upon his shoulders. And he will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of heavens armies will make this happen.

Now think about it. If that's all you've heard since you were a child then you would expect that if Jesus was indeed the Messiah all these things were about to happen now. They had followed Jesus, watched him do the things prophesied that Messiah would do

and now they were just waiting. They were waiting for Christ to take over.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, remember Palm Sunday, on a donkey and the crowds went wild throwing palm branches at his feet, they must have believed that the reign of Messiah was beginning. The story that they had been waiting for for so long was beginning to unfold. But not the way they thought it would.

John records most of that final conversation Jesus had with his disciples on the night he was betrayed. He tried to prepare them for what was about to happen but they didn't understand. "What does he mean when he says 'In a little while you won't see me but then you will see me' and 'I'm going to see the Father'? And what does he mean by, 'A little while'? We don't understand," is what the disciples said. Yet they were singing hymns that night as they left the upper room and headed across the Kidron Valley. Then to their understanding it all started to go terribly wrong.

Have you ever been there? I know I have. Maybe you're in a great place and you're loving God, your family is intact when suddenly something you didn't see coming happens and you wonder where God is, and does he see what's going on? I'm thinking now of the thousands of messages I've received over the years asking that very question. What went wrong?

I could relay so many of the different situations to you but the one that hits you hardest is your own. No matter what it was, you simply didn't see it coming. It might be relational or your health. It could be your finances or future plans. But whatever it was when it hits, and it feels wrong, it's hard not to panic. I mean we all know that we'll face challenges in life but sometimes we're hit by something that feels as if -- it almost feels as if the enemy has won. That's a frightening place to be.

And that must have been how the disciples felt that night. Think about it. Try and put yourself there. It's dark and the first thing they saw were flaming torches approaching them. The sound of boots on the ground. And then Judas stepped out of the shadows and

kissed Jesus on the cheek. I'm sure they never quite trusted him. Money always seemed to be disappearing but no one could have expected this. Somehow that kiss on the cheek seemed to unlock the powers of hell, and the soldiers and the temple guards moved in to arrest Christ.

I know that later that night Peter would deny he knew Jesus but I think that sometimes we think we forget what Peter did in the garden. When Peter saw what was happening he drew out his sword and sliced off the ear of the high priest's slave. Peter was ready to fight. They were vastly outnumbered by the soldiers and Christ's friends were not warriors.

Think about it. They were fishermen. I believe -- I believe Peter was ready to die in the garden that night. So when Jesus told him to put his sword away and then he went on to heal the slave, it made no sense. It must have felt a bit like a slap in the face to a proud man like Peter.

From that moment on everything seemed out of control. Finally after a mockery of a trial and a Roman flogging, all their dreams, all their hopes for the future were nailed to a cross. As Christ died, the very earth literally shook underneath their feet. And then night fell hard. Mark tells us that when some of the women went to the tomb on that resurrection morning an angel told them that Christ wasn't there; that he had risen from the dead. The angel instructed Mary to tell the disciples, and Peter...

How kind to let Peter know that despite the fact he had denied Christ he was included. The angel told them that Jesus had gone ahead of them to Galilee. That must have sounded way too good to be true. Nothing made sense anymore.

Well, that evening they gathered together behind locked doors. Life was not safe or predictable anymore. If the Jewish leaders could take an innocent man and have him crucified were they next? Well suddenly, they all stopped talking. Then Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you." Having said this, he showed them

his hands and his side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. "Peace to you."

Can you even begin to imagine the pure unadulterated joy of that moment? They had seen the bruised and battered body taken down from the cross and wrapped in linen that became as red as crimson. But now, here he was alive again!

Have you ever wondered why Christ kept the scars after his resurrection? He could have chosen to rise without the signs of that brutal execution. He'd experienced so much pain but he kept the marks. Perhaps one of the reasons was for his closest friends. They would have no doubt this was Jesus the Christ who had been crucified. As Christ held out his nail-pierced hands and wounded side they were no longer marks of death. They were signs of the ultimate victory declaring that death was overcome by the blood of the lamb.

Christ wears those scars in heaven today as glorious trophies of the battle he has won. Have you ever thought about the only earthly thing in eternity will be the scars of Christ. I wonder what the angels thought when they saw the holy one return marked like this? I think it would only make sense that the worship in heaven would become much more intense. The praise even more glorious. The wonder of what God in Christ had been willing to do for those he loves. These scars are trophies of grace.

If you are ever tempted for a moment to doubt your worth, remember this. The only innocent one who ever lived is marked forever because he thought you -- he thought you were worth it. The same man who wrote that beautiful hymn you might remember, "Rock of Ages" in the 18th century wrote this: "My name from the palms of his hands eternity will not erase. Impressed on his heart it remains in marks of indelible grace."

I don't know how you feel as you think about that but Easter week is the most glorious week in all of the calendar year. Good Friday is the darkest night this earth has ever known. When the very ground shook and some of the tombs opened. But do you remember reading that the curtain in the temple, which is not like the drapes you and I probably have in our house. The drapes, that curtain in the temple was the width of a

man's hand and you might remember this detail, that it was ripped from top to bottom. Not from the bottom up as if some men could have done it but from the top to the bottom because only God himself could have ripped that curtain and said, "There is no more barrier between God and man because of the shed blood of Christ." You and I get to come into the very presence of God. I wonder if you might be ready to come to a place of taking a fresh look at your own life through the cross and through the resurrection.

My husband and I were selling a home and we were trying to put a value on it. I remember saying to the realtor, "How do you decide what to price a house at?" She said, "Well, you price it at whatever people are willing to pay for it."

That's the value that Christ places on your life, his own life. That's how much he thought that you were worth. I want you to remember that even though we asked you here to help us in some of the missions we're involved with and you always are so faithful. You do such an amazing job. I never want you to forget that we're here for you as well. If you would love somebody to pray with you, if you're going through a real struggle and you feel all alone, just know that we're always here and you can call. We have an amazing team of prayer warriors who would count it a privilege.

But now I want to show you the people who are still living literally, perhaps not in physical chains, although some of them do, but locked away thinking there is no hope, there's no help for me. But I want to show you that you and I when we determine together because of what Jesus did on the cross and because of the fact that he rose again, the freedom that we have received in Christ is something that we want to extend to so many people around the world who are living today in modern slavery.

Would you watch this? And then I'll talk to you about something you and I can do to change that.

On the mission field

Sheila: Who's your best friend?

Open Captions:

>> She said no... Nobody.

Sheila: Do you have anyone that you trust?

Open Captions:

>> No.

Sheila: Some of these are like 14, 15-year old girls and they wake up beside some 50, 60-year old man. And they're held for weeks and months.

Do you remember that first night? Do you remember what that felt like?

Open Captions:

>> It was painful. I cried and ran away. But they hit me and brought me back. I have to sleep with the clients and drink with them. They can do whatever they want.

Sheila: You and I as God's sons and daughters, we've got to be the ones telling these girls, "You have a future and you have a purpose. And you have a hope and there is a God who loves you. And there are people on this planet who know this God and want to share this love with you. You are not worthless. You are not worth \$10 every time a man comes through the door."

If we don't help, nobody is going to help.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I don't know how you respond when you see something like that, I don't know how it hits you but I have to tell you there's something that rises up in me and it makes me so angry that this is happening on our planet in this day in time. What makes me even more frustrated is that the body of Christ is still on this earth. We are here.

I open my Bible to Psalm ten and it says this. This is verses 17 and 18: "Lord, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them. You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed so mere people can no longer terrify them."

Some of the girls we show you there, they're probably in their mid to late teens. We don't show you the ones that we actually spend much more time with. They're little girls. They're eight and nine and ten years old. And some of them have been abandoned by their parents.

One particular little girl that we just fell in love with, her dad was in prison and her mom had run off with a younger man. She is 12 years old and she's the breadwinner in the family. She has to take care of her three younger brothers and sisters so she goes out late at night gathering beer cans to sell. And that's when she gets snatched and locked up in a room and drugged and forced to have sex with sometimes 10, 12 men a night.

I'm a mom, and when I look into the eyes of these little girls it breaks my heart. Scripture tells us God hears their cries. But we need to hear their cries too. So many times when we go there it's -- I'll hear anything from like a ten-year old to a 22-year old who now has perhaps been rescued because that's the thing I want to be clear to you, this isn't just about showing you the worst of the worst.

Yes, sometimes you need to see that but our whole mission here is threefold. It is reach, rescue, and restore. The reach part is we want to go into the villages and warn these young girls, educate them so that when some stranger shows up and says, "Hey! Would you like to hear about a great job available in town?" They know to run for their lives.

But then when the girls have already been captured, I just heard last night from some of the people we work with in Southeast Asia that they broke in. They had a raid in the middle of the night, kicked down the door, rescued nine girls and the youngest was nine years old. But then we bring them to a place where they can be restored.

So I need you to help us. This is the last week of Rescue Life. We've been given a \$320,000 matching gift. It used to be if you could write a check for \$128 that would reach, rescue, and restore one girl. And for some of you that's honestly just too much for your budget. But now because of this matching gift, if you can do \$64 it will be matched by one of our partners and you will have been able to help reach, rescue, and restore one girl. If some of you that have been blessed by God, you might be able to write a check for \$1280. Normally that would have reached, rescued, and restored ten young girls!

This time, last week, you can rescue 20. So please go to your phone, call that number, go online. Give the best gift possible. Let's make sure that we as God's children hear their cries and we do something about it and we do it now.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Human trafficking is one of the world's darkest sources of criminal activity and money. As a result, children and young people are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators into a never-ending nightmare.

Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to warn children who are at the risk of being trafficked, rescue those already enslaved and restore young lives giving them a

future. With a generous \$320,000 matching gift now your gift of \$128 to help reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift today, we'll send you *Natural Remedies*. This beautifully illustrated and essential book explores ancient nutrition and the health benefits found in God's creation. A valuable reference with biblical insight to help you live your best life.

With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive the *Jesus My Refuge* journal and pen set filled with scriptures reminding you of God's covering in times of need. You'll also be reminded to pray for those seeking refuge from the horrors of human trafficking.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280, which will now help rescue 20 children! And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. If the lines are busy please be persistent. This is our last week. We need to make a difference in the lives of these little girls who are calling out for help.

Now for any gift at all we will give you this beautiful book called *The Promises of Christ*. And I know you don't do it for the gifts. It is just our way of saying thank you. But I guess I just feel such an urgency for this mission because I was there just a few weeks ago. When you sit down with these precious little girls who are longing for someone to care, and I think here's the great news. We can bring the mission field to your own Lazy Boy recliner. You just have to help us and we will get that help to them. Thanks so much

for all you do. Just know here at *LIFE Today* we love you. I'm Sheila Walsh saying see you next time.

Announcer: If you're in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, come be a part of the *Life Today* studio audience. Go to: LifeToday.org/tickets