

1/26/22

Week five: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Held by Christ

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I wanted to talk to you today about those times when it just seems like everything is going wrong. Sometimes you think, well, surely if I'm a Christian, if I place my trust in Christ, then things should kind of fall into place, and that doesn't always happen. I just wanted to ask you if you've ever had a day when every little thing went wrong -- not just one or two things but all the things? I had a day like that. Where do I even begin?

I'll begin with scene one; I slept in late. Not always a big deal, but I was supposed to speak that morning at a Christian retreat 40 minutes from the house. So I got ready quicker than any woman should, and Barry and I ran out the door to the car.

Have you ever tried to put on, and obviously, I'm addressing the ladies, mascara in the car in a rapidly moving vehicle? It doesn't usually end well. Fortunately, traffic was light that morning, so we actually got to the retreat on time. I even had a moment to use the restroom and remove the black streaks on my forehead. All is good so far. But the day had just begun. So I met with the retreat leader just before I spoke, and she was clearly intrigued by my Scottish accent. She introduced me as Shrek in a dress. There's a visual for you.

Okay, scene two: I spoke twice that morning, and then we left the retreat at noon and headed home. I had to record a *LIFE Today* show and be there by that evening, but I had plenty of time to change and get to the studio by five. Yeah! I know it's not going to work out, is it? Halfway home, we felt a big bump, and the car began to swerve. So we pulled

over to see that one of the front tires was flat. Fortunately, just a few yards down the road was a Discount Tire, so Barry drove the car at a very slow crawl, and I sang a couple of verses of "Rescue the Perishing."

Well, this sweet mechanic named Darrell looked at it and shook his head. "She's a goner," he said. "You're going to need a new tire."

"Will that take long?" I asked, hopeful that it wouldn't.

"I'll have you good as new in 20 minutes," he said.

Now just remember, this is scene two. It's not going to take 20 minutes. An hour later, he gave up. He said, "You'll laugh about this later, but I can't get the tire off. I reckon that tire is on until Jesus returns. So you'll have to have the car towed to the dealership."

Okay, scene three: The car is being towed to the dealership, and Barry and I are in an uber heading home. We're good! I still have enough time. I'm cutting it a little bit close, but I can do this. Of course, I can't! After all, it's scene three. When we get home, we can't unlock the front door. We left through the garage, and because we were running late, we didn't unlock the deadbolt or the sliding lock inside the front door. We looked at each other in disbelief for a few seconds, and then I had an epiphany. "We'll go through the garage!" I yelled in triumph.

"And how will we open the garage?" Barry asked.

I said, "With the garage door opener."

"And where would that be?" he asked.

"In the car on the tow truck."

Scene four: It began to rain. Of course, it did. Not a light drizzle but more like buckets of water being poured down from heaven.

"I'm going to have to break a window," Barry said with a kind of -- kind of like a Captain America vibe.

"Great idea," I said.

Nope! The good news, long-term, is our windows don't break. The bad news that day was that our windows don't break. Well, by now, my hair was stuck to my head like a bad Toupe, and my mascara was dripping off of my chin.

Scene five: Barry remained at home, attempting to see if anyone could help him get into the house through the garage while I got into another uber and arrived here at the studio.

I remember walking into the makeup room where several of our staff were waiting for me. Silence. No one said a word. A lot of staring but no actual words. Finally, I found my voice and said to Krisha, my makeup artist, "Darling girl, all I can say is this. If you have ever in your life desperately needed Jesus' help, you need it more right now."

Well, as you know, we all have days like that, days where nothing goes right, and we laugh about them later with family and friends. They pass, and life goes on. Well, let's be honest, there are hard seasons in life that seem to never end. You might even be in the middle of one right now. Your family might be falling apart, and you can't do anything about it. Or perhaps you live paycheck to paycheck, and if that's cut off, you're going to be in a desperate place. You might be struggling with anxiety and panic attacks. You might simply be desperately lonely and find it hard to believe that that will ever change. Perhaps you're living with a chronic illness that never seems to get better.

What if the bottom line is this? You've just lost hope. In the past year, I've become acutely aware of how little I've understood some of the issues people are dealing with

every day. And honestly, it's driven me to my knees. Day after day, I've knelt in silence in the Lord's presence. It's painfully clear that not everyone is going to get the answer, the help, the hope they long for here on this earth.

So what is the answer? If you right now are in a desperate place like that, is there an answer? It became crystal clear to me, as clear as anything I have ever known, the answer is Jesus. Now, before you write me off as some religious nut totally out of touch with reality, I have never been more in touch with reality. I am convinced that Christ is our hope, no matter what happens in this world.

Do you remember in Peter's first letter he wrote this: *So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It's being tested as fire tests and purifies gold -- though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Christ Jesus is revealed to the whole world.*

Jesus is the hope for every man, every woman, every child on this planet. If you're strong, feeling strong today, or you feel weak, if you're rich or you're desperately poor. If right now you feel happy or sad, Jesus is your hope. I don't mean in a come to Jesus and everything will be all right bumper sticker kind of way. No! In the radical truth that Jesus came to us to make everything all right eternally.

There is no doubt we'll all lose some battles along the way; you know that to be true in your own life. But because of what Jesus has done for us, every single one who places their trust in him will win in bigger ways than we can even begin to imagine right now. Jesus changes everything.

I was thinking today when I was driving in that it will be quite something when we're all home one day. We'll understand the whole amazing redemptive story when every single piece is placed in the puzzle. I know that we will fall at his feet and worship. See, Christ

came for one purpose. He came to pay the price for sin to give us a way back home to God our Father. He left the glory of heaven to be born to dirt-poor parents.

According to the law of Moses, a first-born boy had to be brought to the temple in Jerusalem when he was 40 days old and presented to the Lord. A sacrifice was brought so that the mother could be declared ceremonially clean. Wealthy parents brought a lamb as a sacrifice, but there was a provision in the law for those who couldn't afford a lamb. We read: *And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtle doves or two pigeons.*

So that's what Mary did that day. To anyone who saw Mary approach the temple, it would have appeared that a poor young girl was bringing two turtle doves. They wouldn't have understood that. Think about this. She was carrying the Lamb of God.

You know we live in a world where people are always struggling for position and influence. Being called "an influencer" these days comes with a cash value. If you have enough followers on social media channels, advertisers will pay to be on your site. I get asked all the time and say "no" all the time. The life that Christ lived from beginning to end was the total opposite of that kind of self-promotion. His life was one of pure humility. Think about the day even that he was baptized.

My friend, my darling friend Angie Smith, wrote a beautiful Bible study called *Matchless*: "The life and love of Jesus." She wrote this: *"Picture the crowds staring as John wraps an arm around his cousin -- the One whom the world had waited for. For one split second, the weight of Jesus is being lowered and lifted by a mere man... he came to lower Himself to lift you and I."*

I'm honestly stunned and so moved by the humility, the Son of God, the One who spoke the world into existence, being lowered into the water, trusting his cousin to hold him. Never doubt this truth. The one who allowed himself to be lowered did this so that you could be held forever. That Christ, he lowered himself even more on the cross.

We've taught before about what took place on the cross, but I didn't realize until fairly recently the awful significance of the fact that Christ was crucified on the middle cross. This is what John Calvin wrote. By hanging him in the middle, *they gave him first place as though he were the thieves' leader*. To onlookers or passerby's that day, Jesus looked like a ringleader of a bunch of crooks. Even more devastating, it looked like he was permanently cursed by God. Devout Jews coming from around the world for Passover would turn their faces away from him. And Paul reminds us why: *When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the scriptures, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.*

I didn't realize the significance of being the center cross. But Martin Luther paints an even more shocking reality of what actually happened to Jesus during his crucifixion. This is what he wrote: *"He bore the person of a sinner and of a thief -- and not of one but of all sinners and thieves... All the prophets saw this, that Christ was to become the greatest thief, murderer, adulterer, robber, desecrator, blasphemer, etc., there has ever been in the world."*

I can't even begin to wrap my mind around that kind of love that would do that for you and for me. And not only that, from noon that day until 3:00 p.m. for the first time in all eternity, Christ was totally alone. From the cross, he spoke to his mother and John.

We read: *When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son." And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother."*

God, the Father, had turned away, and now Jesus was giving his mother to his friend. So on the cross for those hours, he was no one's son, and he had no father. Whatever you and I face, we'll never be in that place. You're being held by the one who changed everything. You will never ever be alone. You will always be loved. You will always be held by the one who lowered himself to lift you up. And just as that tiny baby was wrapped in cloths

and laid in a manger, now Jesus was laid in cloths and laid in a tomb.

If Christ's story had ended there, you and I would have no reason to hope. He would have been a good, kind man but we would still be lost and alone. But the story was far from over. The largest piece of humanity's puzzle that had been missing since sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden was about to be put in place once and for all.

Early on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb with spices and ointments for Christ's bruised and bloodied body only to discover that the stone had been rolled away. She ran as fast as she could to tell the disciples. He had died, but he rose again! And one day, he is coming to take you and I home, and we'll be with him forever.

I know -- I know that life can be hard, but because of Jesus, we are never ever alone. We win! Now I know that sometimes, some of you are just flipping through channels, and you stop because that woman has a funny accent, and you may listen in for a bit. Perhaps, even as you've been watching this program today or listening, you think, wow, I don't know this Jesus at all. Do you know that today you could meet him face to face?

I get quite a lot of letters from men and from women who are in prison and somehow in the silence and the solitude, given time to think about life and where they're going. Or maybe you're somebody who used to be part of a church, and you just got tired of it all, or maybe somebody offended you, and you walked away. Or perhaps, the pandemic impacted you in such a way that you've kind of let go of your faith. You've kind of lost hope.

Well, I want you to know that today you can find that hope again. When Jesus cried out at the last on the cross, he said, "It is finished!" Tetelestai -- bill paid in full. If you would like to know this Jesus, you could pray with me right now. There is nothing special about me or my words. It is simply that the Bible tells us in Romans, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Not might be or if you've led a good life. The path to where you are right now doesn't matter. It is where you stand right now. And if you want to

know this Jesus, you can pray something as simple as this: Father God, thank you for sending Jesus. Jesus Christ, thank you that you were willing to come and die for me. I know I'm a sinner, and I ask you to forgive me. I believe you're the Son of God; that you died, and I believe you rose again. And one day soon you're coming back, and I want to be part of your family. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Do you know this? It's in the Bible. Do you know if you prayed that prayer, there is a party going in heaven, and your name is on every one of the balloons. The balloon bit I made up myself. But that's the great news! You prayed that prayer, and your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. And no matter what happens today or tomorrow, you can know one thing for certain, that you're going to be with Jesus eternally.

Now find a good church. Don't look for a perfect one; they don't exist. Find a place where they teach and believe the Word of God and where they love you and welcome you. And just throw yourself in. One of the things you'll discover when Christ has come in and changed your life is almost like he washes your eyes and you see differently.

That's one of the things that are really important to us here at *LIFE*. We have heard the cries of some mothers who are saying, "If you hear my prayer, please, please will you bring an answer?" Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Open captions:

>> We get our water from the river. My first child got sick from drinking the water. We took her to the hospital, but she still died. Two of my kids died because of contaminated water. I loved my kids...

Announcer: We do all we can to protect our kids. But beneath the blazing sun, thirst is a powerful force that can drive a child to drink the unthinkable.

Open captions:

>> I'm so afraid... our water is so far and very bad. I'm afraid my remaining family will have a very bad life.

Announcer: What took her children continues to threaten those who remain, as well as the other survivors in this village.

Open captions:

>> I feel so bad... We can't provide clean water for our children and grandchildren. They are really struggling.

End of clip

In the studio

SHEILA: Every time we take a trip to Africa, I learn something that I didn't understand before. On our last trip, which was to Zambia, one of the things I realized is how far so many of these mothers have to walk to get *bad* water. It's not as if we walk for a few hours we can get some nice clean water. They walk for an hour, two hours and what they come to is the only source for miles. It's a hand-dug well, usually about six feet deep, and the water is filthy. I didn't even want to stand near the well, honestly, at the beginning. I mean, there are all sorts of flying creatures. There are snakes in it. There's just everything you can imagine. And the water, even when they bring it up in whatever container they have, and they pour it into something for their children to drink, I mean you would be horrified at the color of the water.

But not just that, realizing the disease -- and the most vulnerable are the little ones. So many of the children who die are under five because their immune system is already compromised because they usually don't have adequate food resources either. And so when they do drink this water, and it's contaminated, they get devastating diarrhea. I've

talked to so many moms who say when my child got sick, I tried to take them to the nearest clinic. But often, on the way there, that child dies in their arms.

These mothers, they're just like you and me. They're just parents who love their children, and they're asking for our help. This is something that James and Betty have been committed to for years. Our fresh commitment for this year is to drill 350 wells in over 20 nations. That might seem like a lot. To drill one well is \$4800, which actually is amazing. And these wells go down deep to clean water sources, and they'll usually last for about 70 years. So literally, that's why we call it Water for LIFE because it will give water for a whole village for their lifetime.

That's a lot for some of you, but could you do \$48? \$48 would provide clean drinking water for ten. \$144 will give clean drinking water for 30. I've seen the difference it makes, and for any gift at all, you can request my book *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*. We've lots of things we'd love to send you as a thank you. But I'm asking you, would you do something now? These mothers, so many of them are faithful mothers who get down on their knees at night and pray, God, would you hear our prayer?

You and I have the privilege of being able to respond. The last time I got on a flight to Africa, I picked up a bottle of water at the airport and then thought, this is worth more than gold in Africa. So let's be the answer to their prayers. Would you go online and make the best gift possible? Will you call that number on your screen now, and let's be the answer. Let's bring Water for LIFE in Jesus' name. Thank you.

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: Waterborne illness is a killer that strikes the most vulnerable. For many impoverished families, the death of a child is the tragic result of having no choice but to drink contaminated water. But with your help, they won't have to make this choice ever again. Mission: Water for LIFE provides clean, fresh drinking water for thousands of

children and their families, giving them a life free from the fear of death.

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 350 water wells this year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will provide for 15. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With your gift, we'll send you *Bible Promises For Life*, the ultimate handbook to everything God guarantees you in his word. A powerful resource that will give you the confidence to face life's troubles. With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the "I Will Give You Rest" throw. It is a reminder of our Savior's promise of rest to those who trust in His grace and love.

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. You may request our new, inspiring bronze sculpture, "Let the Children Come."

Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Don't you love that we get to do something like this? So often, I don't know -- I remember when I was young thinking, Lord, I would love to do something that I know would make you happy. And then you read in Matthew's gospel, "Whenever you give a drink of water in my name, you give it to me." So let's do this. Let's be, instead of being the bad news on the earth, sometimes Christians are identified by what we stand against; let's be the good news. Let's be the ones who respond and care.

For any gift at all, request my book *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*. We have lots of gifts that we'd love to send you to encourage you. And if you did make a commitment to Christ, tell

somebody. We have a wonderful prayer line. People would love to hear! I just want to thank you so much for supporting us here at *LIFE Today*. We will see you next time!