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**Week 16: Rescue LIFE: Last week**

**Sheila Walsh**

**"He is Risen Indeed"**

**SHEILA:** Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. Here we are in Easter week. I have to tell you this is my favorite week of the year. A lot of people if you ask, will say no, Christmas is the most exciting time! That's when Christ was born. And obviously, like everyone else, I love celebrating that. But if there was no Easter, we would have nothing to celebrate.

There have been a lot of great teachers on this earth but no one else but Jesus has been crucified, laid in a tomb, and rose again from the dead. So that's why I love this week. That's why, for me, resurrection Sunday is the most glorious day of the year.

Every now and again I will read a verse in scripture that is kind of like, wow! I need to dig a bit deeper and understand what this means. And this is one of those verses. It says this: *Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she could 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 in Isaiah chapter 49.

The Hebrew word for *engraved* there is a word *chaqqaq*: It means, literally, to be cut into or cut open. Well, I didn't realize until fairly recently that the practice of having an image on the palm of your hands was a familiar one to Jews. The practice was called "Ensigns of Jerusalem." Jewish men would engrave pictures of the temple or Jerusalem on the palms of their hands. It meant for the devout Jew that these images would be always before them.

This is what they did. They would choose an image and then have it cut into a block of wood. Then they would dip the image into powder or charcoal and apply it to the palms of their hands. Next, they would tie two needles tightly together and dip them into ink and then gently pierce along the image, careful not to draw blood. When the image was complete, it would be washed in wine. So yeah! When they looked at the palms of their hands it reminded them of the temple.

But not with the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They still had to follow the laws given to Moses. They still had to have an animal sacrificed symbolically taking their sins away. They had to do that 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 poignant words, *"Surely he has borne 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 being told in Sunday School that God had our names inscribed into the palms of his hands. I remember thinking, how big would God's hands have to be to be able to fit us all in? But now, now I think 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.

Remember this? *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, "May you have peace." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. When the followers saw the Lord, they were filled with joy.*

I can't even imagine what that day, that moment 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, they saw miracles happen before their eyes. They'd seen Jesus turn a storm into, literally, a sea of glass with a single word. 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 you and I have. All they had were the Old Testament scrolls; these had been read to them 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. Remember? A very famous passage: *For a child is born to us, a son is given. The government will rest on 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 Heaven's Armies will make this happen.*

Well, 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 waiting for Christ to take over.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey and the crowds went wild throwing palm branches at his feet, they must have believed that the reign of the Messiah was beginning. The story was beginning to unfold. But not the way they thought it would. John records much 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 the Father?' What does he mean by a little while?' We don't understand."* [Sighs]

Although they were singing hymns that night as they left the upper room and headed across the Kidron Valley, then it all started to go terribly wrong. Haven't you been there? I know I have. You're in a great place, you're loving God, family's 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 of the literally, 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 and scenarios to you but the one that hits you hardest is yours. No matter what it was, you simply didn't see it coming. It might be relational or your health, or finances, or future plans. But whatever it is, when it hits, and it feels so wrong, it's hard not to panic. We all know we'll face challenges in life but sometimes, we're hit by something that feels as if the enemy has won and that's a frightening place to be.

That must have been how the disciples felt that night. 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 would imagine they never completely trusted him. Money always seems to be disappearing, but no one expected this. They thought he probably was a thief, but this? Somehow that kiss on the cheek seemed to unlock the powers of hell, and the soldiers and temple guards moved in to arrest Christ.

I know that later that night, Peter would deny he knew Jesus, but I think we sometimes forget what he 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, they were not warriors. Think about it, they were fishermen.

I think Peter was ready to die in the garden that night. So when Jesus told him to put his sword away, and he reached out and healed the slave, it made no sense. I imagine it might have felt like a slap in the face to a proud man like Peter. From that moment on everything seemed out of control. See I believe Peter was prepared to die. He just didn't want to lay down like a lamb. He didn't know then he'd been following a lamb all along.

Finally, after a mockery of a trial and a Roman flogging, all their dreams were literally

nailed to a cross. As Christ died, the very earth literally shook underneath their feet and night fell hard. I want you to hear this. It would only be on Sunday that Friday would make sense.

Mark tells us that when some of the women went to the tomb on that resurrection morning, an angel told them that Jesus wasn't there -- that he had risen from the dead. The angel instructed Mary to tell the disciples and Peter. I always pause at that. How kind -- how kind to let him know that despite his denying he ever knew Jesus, he was included. Don't you think if Mary had just said, you're all invited to come, would Peter have thought, I guess not me. I just want you to know, you can never out sin the love of God.

Well, it must have sounded absolutely, too good to be true. Nothing made sense anymore. That evening they gathered together behind locked doors. Life wasn't safe or predictable now. If the Jewish leaders could take an innocent man and have him crucified, were they next?

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'd seen the bruised and battered body taken down from the cross and wrapped in linen that became as red as crimson. 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 those signs of the brutal execution he'd experienced. Perhaps one of the reasons was for his closest friends. They would have no doubt that 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 as glorious trophies of the battle he has won. The only earthly scar 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 the worship 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're 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 were worth it. The same man who wrote that slightly more well-known hymn, "Rock of Ages" in the 18th century wrote this stanza: *"My name from the palms of his hands, eternity will not erase. Impressed on his heart, it remains in marks of indelible grace."*

Are you in a Friday place? If you find yourself in a place where all your plans, all your dreams, everything seems to have fallen apart, I want to say to you, hold on! Sunday is coming!

I have learned to celebrate my own scars as tattoos of triumph. Scars are proof that God heals. So often within our Christian communities, we hide who we really are from one another because we don't want to be judged. But we are not called to be perfect. I did that for years and it almost killed me. I pursued perfection with everything in me. But now I pursue Christ who is perfect.

I don't know what your scars are. I don't know what you have been through. My scars are my father's death by suicide, my own struggles with mental illness. And I used to think I should hide that from people because of what they would think of me. But now I don't! I want to say to people, look what Jesus did! So whatever you have gone through, whatever you are going through, I encourage you to offer up those scars in an act of worship.

There is a difference between an open wound and a scar. We don't share our stories when

they're still open wounds. But once God has done a deep work of healing, then we get to show one another. I remember speaking not terribly long ago at a church in Texas. It was a women's conference. But at the end, I noticed a gentleman had been standing at the back. And once most people had gone, he approached me, and he had this daughter with him. When he turned his face completely toward me, I saw that half of his face was almost gone. Devastating scars! And he said, "When I was 15 years old, I was in despair. I didn't want to live anymore. And I took a gun and I put it under my chin. And in that millisecond before the bullet discharged and entered my head, I heard Jesus say, 'Do you want to live?' And I said, 'Yes!'"

And he's told me now that he's married now with three beautiful daughters. And I asked him this question. I said, "When you see your reflection in the mirror, is it a painful reminder of that day when you were just a boy?" He said, "No, Sheila. It is a glorious reminder that God redeems our scars."

I encourage you to offer up your scars to Christ. It is a beautiful thing that God will do with a broken life when you give him all the pieces.

One of my great joys and heartaches at life, at *LIFE Outreach*, is to get to see some of the lives that are so devastatingly broken; not by anything they have done, but by things that have been done to them. But you and I, this Easter week, can make a difference. Please watch this.

### **On the mission field**

#### **Open Captions**

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14

**SHEILA:** God's Word tells us that Jesus cares for and values little children. Well,

statistics tell us that human traffickers couldn't care less for them. The only value to them is the money they can make from the traffickers who exploit them for sex and forced labor.

Such was the case of two little girls, Abini and Belli who were five and seven years old when our mission partners in south Asia rescued them. Abini was living in the brothels with her mother who was a sex worker. Her pimp was allowed to molest little Abini.

Belli was found in a remote village with a madame who was selling her off to an old man who was already abusing and using her for himself. His next step would have been to sell her off to the local brothels in a major city. The good news is *LIFE Outreach*, along with our mission partners is rescuing trafficked children through education in their villages, SWAT team raids literally knocking down doors to brothels, and one-on-one ministry outreach efforts.

Both girls are now loved, safe, and cared for in our LIFE Center getting an education, learning about the Lord, praying, and singing as little children should be doing. Stories like these would not have been possible without the help of our viewers! But there are still thousands of children around the world crying out for someone to rescue them.

At *LIFE Outreach*, we have partnered with missionaries on the ground to reach, to rescue, to restore these children of all ages caught in the grip of human trafficking. The only way we can continue this work is with your help and the time to act is now.

**End of video**

**In the studio**

**SHEILA:** It's hard to take it in but that's happening right now. Whatever time of the day you're watching this program, that is going on right now. When you look at Abini and Belli, they are just two precious little girls who should be running about in the sun



playing with their puppy. Instead, they're born into such hellish darkness because of some of the decisions that their mothers perhaps had to make. Who knows what the story is for those mothers?

But the thing is, as long as you and I were on this planet as followers of Christ, we think about this week in particular, that Christ died, that he took the punishment for everything that you and I have ever done. He took it upon himself so that we could be free. And because of that, I think the natural response is to reach out and let other people know Jesus died for you too.

This is our last week of Rescue LIFE. This part, this one of our missions is so important to me. I'd had the privilege of sitting with these young girls and praying over them, leading some of them into a relationship with Jesus. But the need is great! Our partners are on the ground right now waiting to hear how our programs have gone during this.

We have some amazing viewers who have put up, I mean they are friends of *LIFE*, have been for some time, they've put up a \$320,000 matching gift. What that means is simply whatever you're able to give, they will match. It normally takes about \$128 to reach, to rescue, to restore a girl. If you're able to do that, they will match that and now, we'll see two girls brought out of darkness into light.

If that's too much and I understand, many are on limited budgets, \$64 will now be matched and one girl will find that door thrown open to freedom. We don't just rescue them and abandon them. You saw that beautiful place where the children were running, I've been there. I've sat on the bed with the girls as they played the guitar and sang me worship songs.

This works! I have seen it with my own eyes. I've seen the worst of the worst, and I've seen the door of hope that has been thrown open because of viewers like you. So please, this is our last week. Will you help us? If you'll just go to the phone number on the screen and dial that number and give the best gift you can. The Lord never expects us to give

more than we can but when we give what we can, can you imagine the joy in heaven? And one day, maybe you'll get to meet some of those little ones who were brought out of darkness into light. So please, would you go to your phone, call now and just give the best gift you can? Thank you!

### **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, forced into the evil industry of human trafficking.

Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to warn children who are at risk for sex trafficking, rescue those already enslaved, restore young lives and give them a future.

We have 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 the *Prayers For Life* Journal, a perfect book to write down your prayers as you reflect on your relationship with Christ. With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll also receive the N.I.V. Thinline Bible, along with 365 days of *Prayer For Life*, a beautiful devotional filled with scriptures and key thoughts for each day of the year. Keep all three resources close by for your daily prayer time as you meditate on God's Word.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280, which will now help save 20 children. And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Let the Children Come."

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

### **End of video**

**On the mission field**

**Sheila:** Honestly, I don't think anything quite prepared me for this trip. I sat down and talked to a young girl who was basically sold into trafficking by her mother and father. When they need more money, instead of them finding a way to get it, they turn to their daughters. One of them is 15 now and the other one is 17. They have been basically sold every night in a karaoke bar where they have to persuade these men to drink a lot, and then they have to be willing to go and sleep with these men.

I feel that once we know something, you can't unknow it and that's why we're here. We have to reach these girls before we can rescue them, before we can restore them. That's our commitment to these girls, "We want to get you out of the place where you are and put you in a safe place so that you can begin the healing process of being restored." And we're doing it all in the name of Jesus.

**End of clip****In the studio**

**SHEILA:** We can bring such joy, such light into the darkest places. It is the most amazing thing when you see a little girl who has only known darkness suddenly brought to a place where she's told, "Remember you used to throw prayers up at the ceiling in those dark rooms hoping someone heard? Well, God heard you and he sent us to let you know you are loved." What a way to celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ by reaching into the darkness and seeing some other children.

Remember this is our very last week! So thank you so much! And let me just say to you, Christ is risen, and I hear you calling it back, he is risen indeed! God bless you!