

Mother's Day 2015

It's Mother's Day. Thank the Lord for Mothers! Those of us who have been blessed to have kind, loving, godly mothers – we have much for which to be thankful. I thank God for my precious mother who is in heaven these past ten years. If your mother is still with you, give thanks to God and let her know how much you love and appreciate her. Happy Mother's Day to all of you.

Since it's Mother's Day, I want to take the opportunity to talk to the ladies this morning. Not just mothers, but all of the women. I was reading this week about the role of women in the life and ministry of Jesus. The Old Testament celebrates the lives of women like Ruth and Esther, Deborah the prophetess, Proverbs 31's wife of noble character, but by the time of Jesus, it seems the role of women had deteriorated. Some of the rabbis and scholars had written negatively of women. Culturally women were often viewed as inferior to men and treated almost as the property of fathers and husbands, without legal standing. In Middle Eastern culture women were often uneducated and living in a man's world, they were often powerless and vulnerable. Certainly there were exceptions to this, but life wasn't easy for a woman, married or single, and poverty and powerlessness often led to hopelessness and despair.

In spite of all the cultural changes and progress, some of you may be feeling a bit that way today – vulnerable, powerless, hopeless, feeling like no one cares for you. You may be on your own and single, or perhaps a single mom with no help from the father, trying to make ends meet, trying to be a good mom, wondering if you can make it without a man, feeling lonely and desperate. Let me tell you something, if you are living for Jesus and God brings a godly man – I said a godly man – into your life, that's one thing. But don't think you "need a man" in order to make it and you'll just take the first guy that pays attention to you and you ignore all the warning signs that this guy is bad news. This is how you got in this mess to begin with! Somewhere along the line you started believing you had to have a man to have significance and worth, and then you decided you had to sleep with that man in order to keep him and you violated God's word when you did that and now out of guilt and desperation, not knowing what else to do, you are stuck! Now you've got this live in boyfriend and he's not working and you're supporting him and your kids and you feel guilty because you know you're setting this bad example. Does this sound familiar? Know anybody like this? Feeling unloved, helpless, broken. I've come to tell you there is hope for you today. Jesus can help you turn your life around!

Moms (and Dads) can I challenge you to model for your daughters (and sons) what a

healthy marriage and family looks like. Break this generational curse by surrendering to Jesus and making him the Lord of your life. Teach your daughters the man they need in their life first and foremost is Jesus. If you will live for him and obey him and put him first in your life, if you will commit to living a sexually pure life, living according to God's standards instead of the world's standards – moms and dads - if you will live this way, you increase the likelihood your sons and daughters will live this way! If you've got a child, you've got a responsibility to live a godly, holy life in front of your child. It may make an eternity of difference for your son or daughter!

Moms, teach your daughters they have value as children of God and they are worthy of respect! Girls, if a boy doesn't respect you and honor you with his words and his conduct, walk away! If he doesn't love God more than he loves you, don't walk away, run away! Moms, teach your sons to respect themselves and respect women and girls. Don't buy into that "boys will be boys" lie. Tell them, "Christian boys will be Christ-like!" That's how we live.

We honor and respect and value women because it's right and because Jesus did. Jesus' treatment of women was far from typical in his day. He cared for them, included them. Luke 8 tells us Jesus traveled with the twelve disciples but also some women traveled with him including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and many others. He broke tradition and cultural barriers by including women, ministering to women, telling parables and stories that included female characters. Jesus elevated the place of women throughout his life and ministry. He valued women then and he still does. Jesus still offers hope to ladies and moms today. Let me show you a couple of examples of Jesus' ministry to women.

Matthew 15 tells the story of a mother that comes to Jesus. She is referred to in the NIV as a Canaanite woman in the region of Tyre and Sidon. She had several strikes against her in this story. She was a woman in a man's world. She was not Jewish but was coming to ask for help from Jesus, a Jewish rabbi. She had a child that was afflicted by demons in some way. No mention is made of a husband or father so she may have been a single mom as well.

Some of you I know can relate. Single, a sick child, maybe no money for doctors, wondering where to turn. This mom is trying to decide what to do when she hears about a Jewish teacher that works miracles. Better still, he happens to be traveling through her part of the country. She manages to find him but the disciples of Jesus try to send her away.

Curiously, Jesus ignores her at first and then seems to insult her, perhaps in an effort to teach his disciples a lesson about their own prejudice and bigotry. If you notice the earlier

discussion of this chapter pertains to what is clean and what is unclean. Jesus made the point to his disciples that it wasn't what went into your mouth that made you unclean as much as what came out of your heart. Perhaps this encounter with this "unclean, Canaanite woman" was Jesus' way of driving home his point. He was saying to his disciples, "So this is how you suggest we treat the unclean among us? Ignore them? Refuse to help them? What do you think? Is this right or wrong? Send her away? Forget about her and her child?"

You may have had people ignore you, try to send you away, tell you that you and your kids aren't good enough, treat you like you are unclean, or tell you there is nothing anyone can do for you or your child. But Jesus sees your faith, your desperation, your persistence – the very things he saw and honored in this woman. He saw a mother that wouldn't stop, a woman that refused to be turned away. Jesus said, **“Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour.” Matthew 15:28**

Notice that Jesus said to this mother, “Your request is granted.” He didn't say “your daughter is set free and healed”, but “your request is granted”. It's because Jesus saw the concern of this mother. He saw her heart was breaking for her daughter. “Your request is granted, your burden is lifted, your pain is removed because I am healing your daughter.” You may be in a desperate place this morning, hurting because your child is hurting. Don't give up Mom. Hope in the Lord and in his power to heal and deliver you and your children.

Turn to Luke 7. Some of you may be feeling hopeless about a child caught in sin or in addiction, watching them slowly killing themselves with drugs, alcohol, a promiscuous lifestyle, dangerous relationships. They are away from God, perhaps alienated from you as well. You're feeling there is no hope for that son or daughter. Jesus met a mother in this chapter whose situation was even more hopeless. She was herself a widow and her only child, her son, had just died. It can't get any more hopeless than that. Her son was dead. Some of you have a child that is spiritually dead, lifeless and hopeless because of sin. But Jesus brings hope even to the hopeless.

Jesus walks into the little town of Nain and sees a funeral procession coming with men carrying the body of a young man, his grieving mother following behind. The bible says, **“When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don't cry.’” Luke 7:13.** Perhaps Jesus thought about his own mother and how grief-stricken she would be as she watched her son's lifeless body taken down from the cross and carried to the tomb. Maybe it was thinking forward to that moment he knew was coming that caused Jesus to feel such compassion

for this widowed mother.

“Don’t cry” sounds like a crazy thing to say to any grieving mother. She had buried her husband and now she has to bury her only son. Nothing about this was fair. Nothing about this was okay. Her son is dead, yet Jesus says to her, “Don’t cry.” Jesus knows something she doesn’t know. The one that gives life to the dead and hope to the hopeless has come to town. That’s why he can say, “Don’t cry” to this grieving mother.

The bible says Jesus walked over to the coffin and touched it. The men carrying it stopped, I’m sure surprised by a rabbi touching anything associated with the dead. Jesus then spoke directly to the lifeless body. **“Young man, I say to you, get up!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.” Luke 7:14-15**

For you that have a son or a daughter away from God, spiritually lifeless and dead, I hear Jesus saying to you, “Don’t cry. Don’t give up. I’ve come to give life.” Jesus has come to restore your child, to forgive and save and deliver. He is not willing that any should perish but that everyone would come to life. Keep believing. It’s not hopeless. Jesus still brings the dead back to life. And for those of you grieving the physical loss and death of a child, be encouraged. It’s okay to cry, but remember we don’t weep as those without hope. Jesus was speaking to a couple of ladies who were grieving the death of their brother when he said, **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.” John 11:25.** Jesus still does the impossible and that means there is still hope for you and your family!

Maybe it’s not children or their situation that is the problem, it’s your own circumstances that leave you feeling hopeless. Maybe choices and mistakes from your past haunt you and defeat you. Your present circumstances are messed up and you can’t see a way out or a way through. Your relationships are tangled up and you wonder if there is any hope for someone at this stage of your life. Jesus met a woman like that in John 4.

Once again Jesus is not only dealing with a woman, but this happens to be a Samaritan woman, again a woman whose ethnicity is looked down upon by the Jews. In fact, in the telling of this story in John’s gospel, the woman herself is shocked when Jesus asks her for a drink of water from the well from which she is drawing water. The bible says, **“The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)” John 4:9.**

Jesus tells the woman that if she knew who it was that was asking her for a drink, she would ask him and he would give her living water! Jesus said, “Indeed, the water I give will

become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

When the woman asked Jesus for this living water, he invited her to go get her husband and bring him back with her. When she said, “I have no husband,” Jesus replied. **“You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.” John 4:17-18** Five husbands. This lady had a past and her present wasn’t exactly the best. She was living with another man and not married to him. Perhaps the man she “had” was someone else’s husband and she was having an affair. Whatever the case, she was a mess, she was living in a mess, her past had been a mess of broken relationships and the future didn’t look much brighter or better. She was headed down the same broken road, headed for disaster, again.

Jesus was speaking about living water to a woman who was parched, dying of thirst, living in a desert and perhaps didn’t even realize it. Here she was, dying of thirst and no one cared. The ex husbands didn’t care. The women of the village didn’t care. They ignored her or worse, they probably wished she was dead, that way she couldn’t steal anyone else’s husband. The disciples returned and found Jesus talking with this woman, but they didn’t bother to ask why he was talking with her. Maybe they didn’t really care. But Jesus cared. Jesus saw something else when he looked at this woman. Not a person to be used. Not a woman to be scorned or abandoned. Not a woman to be ignored or even condemned. He saw a woman that needed hope, that needed forgiveness. He saw a woman that needed a new start, a new life, living water. Jesus had gone out of his way, to go through Samaria, because he cared about this woman, at this moment.

Today, Jesus has come to this place, at this moment, because he cares about you. He cares about your relationships, your family, your circumstances, your present and your future. He has living water available for you today.

The bible tells us the woman left her water jar and went back to town and said, **“Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” John 4:29.** I don’t think it was just that Jesus miraculously knew this woman’s past, but that he knew her past and yet he still loved her and wanted to give her this living water. He knew her and wanted to forgive her and offer life to her. This was personal. Salvation was offered to this woman, this Samaritan woman, this sinful Samaritan woman. In spite of her present living conditions and in spite of her past, Jesus had come to offer her eternal life.

The bible says after the towns people came out and met Jesus they urged him to stay with

them and he stayed two more days and because of his words many more became believers.

“They said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.’”

John 4:42

The Samaritans heard and believed for themselves that Jesus was the Savior of the world. Not the Savior of the Jews only, or of the Greeks or Romans, or of the Canaanites or of the Samaritans, but he had come to save the whole world. He has come to be our Savior, your Savior. Moms and daughters, Dad and sons, married, single, children or no children, black, white, Native, hispanic, asian, he has come to be your Savior.

He knows you, everything you have done, and he has still come to offer forgiveness and salvation to you. He knows about your desperate circumstances and he has come to offer you forgiveness and hope. He knows about your burdens. He knows about your child that is sick, your child that is lost and away from God, he knows about your pain, your sickness, your fear, and he has come to offer you help and hope and healing.

Do you need him? Do you need his help? Are you or someone you love feeling hopeless? Jesus really is the Savior of the world. He is here to rescue you and to save you and deliver you. He has come for you today! Don't believe it just because of what I've said, come and meet him and know him for yourself. He cares about you!