

Jesus Unfiltered

Session 10: No Matter What You've Done You Can Be Forgiven

Unedited Transcript

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Good morning, men. If you would, please turn in your Bibles to John chapter 4, verse 5, and let's get kicked off with a shout out. We have a shout out. Well, we have a malfunction. Today we want to welcome the group Squad, led by Trevor Hall from Blaine, Minnesota. This group has been meeting at 8:00 in one of the men's homes, and they say that our vision is that we give up our personal desires and let God's heart take control to make our hearts more like his. What a great mission. I wonder if you would join me in giving Squad a very warm and arousing Man in the Mirror welcome this morning. One, two, three. Hoo-ah! Welcome, men. We're glad to have you as part of the group. Thank you.

In our last session that I taught, we were looking at the story of Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night and Jesus told him that he did not come to condemn the world but to save the world. The big idea for that session was if Jesus thinks the world is worth saving, or if Jesus came to save the world, it just be worth saving. If Jesus came to the world, it must be worth saving.

Now, just picture yourself for a moment as John the writer who is recording that, writing that down. You are probably thinking, "Wow, that's pretty cool." Just think about all of the people that Jesus has come to save, but by no means would John have been thinking in the same way that Jesus was thinking. In fact, when the rich, young ruler came to Jesus and asked what he must do to be saved, Jesus told him to go and sell everything and come follow me. The disciples, what did they do? They said, "What?" Because Jesus said, "It's harder for a rich man to go through the eye of a needle than for ... for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven." They go, "Wow! If that's true, if a rich guy can't get saved, then who can get saved? We've given up everything to follow you. What's going to become of us?"

The concept of who it was that Jesus came, this world that Jesus came to save, would have been very, at this particular point early on, a little opaque to the disciples. Now, John has been there presumably witnessing this conversation with Nicodemus. We don't know that for sure, but presumably. Otherwise, how would he have gotten the story, right? Then they go through where Jesus does some baptizing or is there while his disciples do some baptizing. Then they're going through Samaria and we come to this scenario here today in John chapter 4.

The title of the message today is No Matter What You Have Done, You Can Be Forgiven. We're going to see who is it that's savable. We're going to see Jesus begin to flesh out who is this world that he came to save. The title is No Matter What You Have Done, You Can Be Forgiven. I must be way off track here somehow. I have no idea what I'm doing here. Yeah, well this is the big idea from last time that I spoke to you. If Jesus came to save the world, it must be worth saving.

JESUS DIDN'T COME JUST TO SAVE "THE GOOD PEOPLE"

The first thing we're going to look at, and this is going to be an epiphany for the disciples and really for a lot of people who are out in the world right now who are thinking that they're done something so egregious that there would just be no way that God could ever forgive what they've done, or they maybe feel like they could get back in God's good graces but they're going to have to do something in order to prove that they are worthy or have enough good in them to outweigh the bad that's in them. You have all these different kinds of things going on. What we want to take a look at here this morning is this story about the Samaritan woman as Jesus begins to reveal to his disciples and to the world just exactly who is savable and who is this world that he came to save and not condemn. The first thing we're going to see here is that Jesus didn't come just to save the good people.

Like I said, John chapter 4, verse 5. They came to a town in Samaria called Sychar near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. There's a place today called Jacob's well. It's probably the real Jacob's well. It's probably on this plot of land. Hard to know for sure, but it's interesting because it's claimed by the Jews, the Christians, the Muslims, and the Samaritans. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired or weary as he was from the journey, sat down by the well and it was about the sixth hour.

What's the situation here? Well, Jesus and presumably John have been on a journey with the other disciples, we'll see that in a moment, and he's tired. This is part of the humanity of Jesus. It's actually part of the emotions of Jesus, which I'm going to go into a great amount of detail with you at some future date, just show you the entire spectrum of emotions that Jesus displays. We won't go into that today, but just take note that here there is an emotion that comes with weariness. You know what it is. They sit down.

Now, imagine you're John. You're just getting to know Jesus, and your admiration for him is incredible. I mean you've never known anybody like this. He's the most wise, kindest, most loving person you ever ... When he looks at you, he sees you. He sees in you. You feel like he knows who you are. You feel like he understands you. You feel like this is a man like no other. You've seen what he did to Nicodemus, and now you're wondering, "Okay. Well, what is he getting ready to do here?" Because a woman walks up, verse 7.

It could be noon. The sixth hour, it could be early in the morning. It could be the six hour after noon. Who knows? But it's at a time when there are not other people at this well, so it's probably about the noon hour. It's probably midday. It says because they've had enough time to be on a journey to be weary, so it's probably not the beginning of the day. Probably midday. Verse 7, When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink." It says his disciples, John says his disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

What happens? Well, you have a three striker shows up. This woman, she's got three strikes against her. She goes on to say, verse 9, 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?" Number one, she was a Samaritan. Jesus was a Jew. While Samaritans and Jews lived in the same country and the same area, they didn't really associate with each other. That doesn't mean that they were like hostile enemies and they couldn't go into each other's territory, but I was thinking it's probably like Irish Catholics in New York at the turn of the 20th century. They were not exactly the most popular people in New York at the time, but they lived, worked, and played in New York and they co-mingled with the other ethnicities in New York City. That's what was going on here you know that's true. You know that they weren't

completely separated the disciples had gone into the Samaritan city to buy food, so they weren't afraid to go into the city to buy food. They did business with each other. They had some kind of associations with each other, but they kept to themselves.

The Samaritans, by the way, they didn't believe in the law and the prophets. They believed in the Pentateuch, the first five chapters of the Bible, but they didn't accept any of the rest of it. Their faith was different than the faith of the Jews, and that was in part responsible for why there was this difference between them. Samaritans were despised by the Jews. They were looked down on, so that was strike one.

Then strike two is that she was a woman. She says, "You're a Jew and I am a Samaritan," and she adds, "Woman," because women were just not ... Women's rights is something that has taken on a great ... It's a great social cause of our time, but back then women were, they were close to being property, okay they were close to being property. They weren't, but they were close to being property and treated like property. I guess that's a better way of saying it.

Then strike three we'll see here in a moment, she also didn't have the highest morals. Today, we would think of her as being words like a slut, or a tramp, or there are other words like that, and she fell into that category. In spite of all this, Jesus says, "Will you give me a drink? Will you give me a drink?" Sending an incredible signal to her, and then following that on in verse 10, Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

She came out to the well to get water. He asked her for a drink. He opened conversation with her. Jesus was a great conversationalist. He knew how to engage people. He was very engaging to people, and he also knew how to turn the conversations to spiritual things. Are you a good conversationalist? I mean do you know how to ask good question? Do you know how to engage people? Do you know how to turn things to a spiritual conversation? This is a good example of one way to do that.

Then she goes in verse 11, "Sir," the woman said, "You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" He has aroused her curiosity. "Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him." It's interesting he says, "I give him," since him is a she in this case. I think he's probably speaking obviously in a general way. "But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

He's gone all the way from asking for a cup of water to talking to her now about eternal life, and she takes the bait. Verse 15, the woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming back here to draw water." Then Jesus said, "Go back and call your husband, and then come back." She said, "I have no husband." Jesus said, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands. The man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." At this point, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is Jerusalem." He goes on to say, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when true worshipers will worship me in both spirit and truth."

What does Jesus do? He just explodes the concept of who is savable. We already know that the Pharisees had created a religion where there were good people and there were bad people. We know that in the religion of the Pharisees that they looked down on tax collectors and sinners. They looked down on prostitutes. They looked down on drug dealers. They looked down on alcoholics. They looked down on people who were the tax collectors. They were down on tax collectors because the tax collectors were basically cheaters who had aligned themselves. They would charge too much in taxes. We know that from John the Baptist telling the tax collectors not to collect more than they should. They were taking too much money, and there were Jews who were aligned with an occupying country. There was a lot of hostility towards them.

We have this religion that was basically based on merit. It was based on how good you were, your performance, your works of righteousness. Well, does that sound like anything you're familiar with in our culture today? I mean even in the churches with best intentions, there still ends up being this ethos that seems to develop that if you really want to be right with God, there's certain things you must do, there's certain behaviors you should do, there's certain good deeds that you should perform if you want to be good enough to be part of God's kingdom. Jesus is sending a very strong message. John is watching him presumably, so John is seeing that, "Oh, my gosh. The gospel is not just for the good people. The gospel is for people who have three strikes against them."

I don't know. You're coming here. I hope that you have the living water. I hope that you have the living water that wells up to eternal life, and I hope that you understand that Jesus is not just for the good people. I hope that you don't think that you're one of the good people.

It's like the Pharisees. As soon as you start thinking that you're one of the good people, you start becoming one of the bad people. The happiest Christians I've ever known, including myself, are the ones who understand that they are capable of doing almost any sinful behavior, and as a result of that are coming humbly to the foot of the cross every day and making a full, total, complete surrender of their lives to the lordship of Jesus. They understand that Jesus is not coming to save good people. He's coming to save sinners. Jesus himself said, he said, "It's not healthy people who need a doctor. It's sick people who need a doctor." He said, "I did not come to call the righteous, but I came to call sinners to salvation." Throughout this book of John and the rest of the gospels, we're early in his career, but he immediately is beginning to show us that he's not just for the good people.

This is the Big Idea for the day. It's the same as the title to the message. **No matter what you've done, you can be forgiven.** This is the message that Jesus is bringing, beginning to flesh out here in this message. It's just this idea that you have not done anything nor has anyone you know done anything, no one in your family has ever done anything that can't be forgiven. You may not feel worthy. That's fine, because we're not going to be depending on our worth. We're going to be depending on the worth of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for this salvation. Maybe you think you have committed too many sins.

This story is sending a strong signal. It's not one marriage that didn't work out for her. It's like five marriages that didn't work out for her, and then she's living with a guy in an immoral relationship at the time that they meet, and Jesus is still extending her the gospel, the living water. He's talking to her about the gospel, the living water.

HOW TO TALK TO PEOPLE IN THE WAY THEY'RE MOST LIKELY TO HEAR

Well, next up is how to talk to people in the way they're most likely to hear. I don't think I'm going to spend as much time on this as I originally was thinking I would, but I just wanted to point out that Jesus is a great conversationalist. You can see that. He engaged her in such a big way in this text. You see this throughout the gospels, that he speaks to people about what they're interested in or with analogies and illustrations out of their world, the agricultural society and so forth.

I've watched my wife do this, Patsy. She's unbelievable. She's especially good with middle school and high school girls. The way she's able to engage them ... and not many people feel comfortable trying to engage students, even if they're your children. You know what I'm saying? They're hard to engage, but she's able to engage them by talking to them about the daily activities that they're interested in. "Well, how was your day at school? Hey, how was your soccer game?"

I've learned a lot from her. In fact, typically what I'll do when I'm in a conversation with somebody now or trying to start a conversation, I'll just say, "Well, how's your day been going," or, "What'd you do this weekend?" Those are a couple of the kinds of questions, just dealing in the real concrete minutia, because this is where people are living. Then you can expand out from there. You saw the way that Jesus did that from the water at the well.

I remember a guy. It was in a little Mexican restaurant. I was by myself, and I looked over, and he was like covered, I mean covered, with ink. It was beautiful. I mean it was oranges, and reds, and purples, and greens, and yellows. You could tell he had this incredible story on his body. Well, for a lot of people that might be uncomfortable or awkward. There was a point where it'd be uncomfortable and awkward for me too, but I've asked this question so many times now I've come to realize that people who have ink all over their body did that because they love it. They had a story they wanted to tell.

I walked over to this guy. I said, "Wow, that's some pretty impressive ink that you have." Man, boom, he's off to the races. It felt like 15 minutes, because I know my tacos were cold by the time I got back to them, but that was his interest so I engaged him on that level. Then the conversation, not in that particular case but in other cases, has led to somewhere else.

Michael, I can move this thing again if you want me to, but I'm kind of tired of moving it. It's made me feel very uncomfortable and awkward up here this morning trying to think about the sun and giving a message at the same time. Hopefully you can figure that out for the next time. That's all I want to say about that for right now today. Again, the Big Idea here is **no matter what you've done, you can be forgiven.**

WHO ARE THE THREE STRIKERS IN YOUR WORLD?

Just finally, who are the three strikers in your world? Who are the three strikers in your world? Okay, so they might be someone in your family, someone who has stolen money from you, lied to you, betrayed your trust in some way, and they've done it three strikes. They've struck out. Three strikes and you're out. Or it might be someone from work who has taken credit for your work, or thrown you under the bus, and they've done this multiple times. Or maybe it's someone in the neighborhood who just is a crappy neighbor. I mean they just really ... There are neighbors who are just like that. They play loud music when you're trying to sleep and things like that.

Or maybe it could be at your church. My heart's heavy. I know multiple situations right now of churches that are in turmoil because there are three strikers running around who they're trying to disrupt the church. They don't have a servant heart. They don't ask what does the master need. They have their will. They're trying to impose their will on the church. They're trying to control the direction of the church without regard to what God might want to do in the church. They're three strikers in their own way.

Who are the three strikers in your world? It could be you. Are you a three striker? I mean how many strikes does your wife think you have? How about your own kids? The problem with being the three striker and forgiving the three striker is really the same, and that is it's understanding this big idea today that no matter what you've done, you can be forgiven.

I've done this illustration here. I think I've done it once. How many of you remember me doing an illustration with a \$100 bill here? Raise your hand if you remember. A few of you do. When the Great Recession hit in 2008, I was trying to think of a way to help people understand how God saw them. I have this \$100 bill. Would anybody like to have this \$100 bill as a gift? Well, a few of you would. All right. All right, now how many of you would like this \$100 bill? See, actually more people want it now, right? All right, well then, now how many of you want the \$100 bill? Everybody still wants the \$100 bill. Why do you want the \$100 bill? It's still \$100, right? Yeah.

The point is that the value of the bill is not determined by its condition. No matter how tattered it might look, it's still equally valuable as \$100, and that's exactly how you are, and that's exactly how every other three striker is. No matter how tattered that woman at the well might have been, no matter how many strikes she had against her, no matter how many strike you have against you, or your wife has against you, or your children, or vice versa, or in your church, or in your community, or at your place of work, every person that you know was meant to be included when Jesus said that he came to save the world, not condemn the world. They are the world that Jesus came to save. You are the world that Jesus came to save. Every tattered person that you know is someone that Jesus came to save. No matter what that person has done, they can be forgiven. No matter what you've done, you can be forgiven. Let's pray.

Our dearest Father, on this day we come to you, many of us are tattered. Many of us don't feel the full value that we have in our hearts. We may even know this intellectually, but we don't actually feel it in our hearts. Father, I just pray that you would release each and every one of us to fully embrace the fact that, no, we're not worthy in ourself, but in you we are worthy, and in you there is forgiveness, and that no matter what we've done we can be forgiven. Father, you have in Jesus Christ forgiven every sin we've ever done or ever will do. Lord, help us to believe in us as much as you believe in us, and forgive ourselves, and then forgive those around us as well. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.