

If you've got your Bible, we're going to be in Luke 1. I realize I did one of those things last week where I was like, "The trick to preaching through a book is to move quickly enough that you don't lose..." and I was like, "Wait a minute. It's still chapter 1 and we're in week 5." So we're going to get out of chapter 1 this morning. That's what we're going to do. One spiritual truth, that's what we're doing here. That's it. And if you're a guest with us and not a believer, let me try to explain what that means. We believe here that God created the universe, and when He created it, He created it rhythmically and He created it in a way that it functions properly and He created it in such a way that man's joy in God's glory would be magnified and God would be worshiped. That's why God created the world. It wasn't for fellowship. That's a very sweet idea that's nowhere in the Scriptures. So God created the universe rhythmically so that He might be glorified and worshiped in our enjoyment of Him, not His stuff but Him. And that His stuff reveals to us, Him. And so, sin entered into the world and kind of fractured all those things. So when we say that there's a spiritual truth, what we're saying is that this is the way God wired the universe to be and that if we would submit to that and acknowledge that and worship the God that did that, then things work rhythmically again, they'd get back in tune. And I think the majority of us, if we were honest, once again church is not the place for that, we would admit that at times we feel like we're out of rhythm. So anytime the Scriptures have a command or they reveal to us a way that God is, it's Christ and the cross of Christ pulling us back to how God rhythmically created the earth to function before the fall, before sin entered into the world. So we've got one truth, it's going to take us a while to get there. We're going to flip a lot. I apologize for that. We normally wouldn't, but I just want to show you how consistent this is. We're going to go through and I'm going to point some things out, and at the very, very end I'll wrap it all up and we'll get out of here.

So that's what we're doing. Let's look in Luke, chapter 1. We saw a few weeks ago that Zechariah was a priest, a man of God who had never been able to have children. He and his wife were unable to have children, and they prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed for a very long period of time to have a son, it never happened for them and they're elderly, like they're beyond elderly. The Scriptures would say that they are "advanced in years," which Paul would say in the book of Romans means "as good as dead." So that's old. And the angel Gabriel comes to Zechariah and says, "Congrats, you're going to have a son. Not only are you going to have a son, he's going to be one of the greatest men ever born. He's going to be the precursor of the coming Messiah. He's going to do all these phenomenal things. You're not going to see it because you're old and going to die here soon, but it's going to be great." And Zechariah takes offense to this. And he demands signs and he demands evidences and he just is really vocal about not believing that God's going to pull this off despite the fact that, now follow me here, an angel just showed up at his house or in the temple. And so Gabriel grows indignant, seals both Zechariah's mouth and his ears so that he cannot hear and he cannot speak the entire time his wife Elizabeth is pregnant. So basically what happened here is this man who historically has had a great deal of faith, was very vocal about his doubts that God could pull this thing off, and so God rebukes him. He seals his mouth and closes his ears, and now we're going to pick up the story again. So let's look in verse 57. "Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child." That would have just been Jewish custom. "And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, 'No; he shall be called John.' And they said to her, 'None of your relatives is called by this name.'" Now, I said last week that not only could he not speak but he couldn't hear and I had people say, "Where'd you get that?" Well, here's where I get that. Look here. Verse 62. "And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called." You don't make signs for people who can hear, correct? I mean, if you do, it's insulting. "I can hear. Are you kidding me?" So

they're making signs because he also can't hear. Now let's start walking through this. That means that Zechariah for nine months is trapped in his mind. He can't hear, he can't speak, he's stuck in his mind. That sounds agonizing to me. Not only that, but for decades and decades and decades, they wanted this really beautiful thing to happen; this really beautiful thing has happened, there's family swinging by, there's these parties taking place, you've got the shower, you've got all that happening and who can't enjoy any of it? Zechariah. So watch this. "And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.'" It looks like our boy's learned some things. He didn't go, "I like John. John's a strong name." He goes, "His name is John! Hurry before God kills me." So his name's John; this is not up for debate. John's his name. Here we go, "And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed..." So you've got Zechariah, who has walked through close to 100 years of difficulty. Here he believes that God is good, He believes that God is merciful, He believes that God can save, He believes all these things about God and for his whole life, he's taught these things, he's said these things, he's walked in these things and God never answered their prayer about a son, God never answered their prayer about having children and then finally when they get told that it's impossible, God shows up and gives them a son, Zechariah grows indignant against it and God rebukes him. So now, he's got to wrestle with the shame and the frustration and the feelings of stupidity and all the things that accompany when God busts you in the middle of your doubt. And now, all these months later when his mouth is finally opened, I want you to see what he says, because what he says is profound. He's going to say a lot of things but it's really just one thing, but I'll show you that after we get done.

So let's pick it up in verse 67. "And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.'" Now what we could do right now is take almost every line in this prophecy and backtrack it back to the Old Testament and show where that was prophesied about the one who would come before Jesus. But on a whole, here's the message. Zechariah's prophecy here at the end, his proclamation is that, despite it looking very different than he could have ever imagined, God is good, He is merciful, He is right and all that He says is true is true, that God saves, that He delivers those who are in dark places, that He extends hope, that He extends mercy and that He gives life to those who seek it. Now this is profound because of how different it looked from how Zechariah thought it was going to. Zechariah, a young man, thinks he's going to have many sons, he's been faithful to God, he thinks he's going to have this big brood of kids, but it goes different. It goes decades and decades and decades without children. He finally gets children, children that he's not going to get to see grow up. He gets absolutely rebuked by an angel of the Lord who seals his mouth. And how does the rebuke end? How does all this end? All this difficulty, all this suffering, all this frustration, how does it end? It ends in rejoicing.

Let's look at something similar. Go over to 2 Samuel. We're going to be in chapter 12, but I'll tell you what happens in chapter 11. Most Evangelicals know the story of Samuel 11 and 12; most people outside of church don't. King David was in a war, but he decided not to go fight. He decided to hang out at the palace and send his men out to fight. And so the Scriptures tell us in chapter 11 that early in the evening he goes up and he walks around the roof. And when he gets to the roof, he looks down and sees a woman bathing. And so he doesn't hide his eyes, he doesn't run, he just kind of stands there and watches this woman bathe. And then finally, he calls a servant over. And a servant comes over and he says, "Hey, who is that? The naked woman, who is that?" And the servant tries to bail him out, because he's already

precariously close to disaster. The servant calls him out by doing this, "Oh that? That's Uriah's wife. Uriah? One of your generals? Uriah, one of your soldiers. Uriah, who's fighting your battle right now. Uriah, who's not with his wife. Uriah, who is being dutiful to you and is on a front somewhere risking his life for the kingdom. That's his wife." But David, blind with lust, says, "Bring her to me." And he sleeps with her. And this really crazy thing happens when a man and woman have sex.. Bathsheba gets pregnant. Weird. And so now David's in a lot of trouble. David's in a lot of trouble because Uriah's two countries away, and there ain't airplanes. So he's starting to do the math and he's in trouble, but he's smart. So he calls Uriah back from the front. Uriah gets back from the front and he's like, "Uriah, you've served me so faithfully. Here's a banquet for you. Why don't you eat this and then go home and sleep with your wife?" Uriah says, "Not a chance. Not a chance that I eat that food, not a chance that I lay with my wife. My men are in the field, my men are dying, the king is at war. No way I touch my wife." I mean, what a leader. He's going to die here in a minute, but a great leader. A great way of doing things, "No no no. My men are in the field. I won't touch my wife. If my men don't get the warmth of their wives, no way I'm getting the warmth of mine." And so David, crafty, says, "All right, since you're here, let's at least drink." And he opens up a real nice cab. And he starts pouring glasses and asking about the front. "So what's going on at the front?... oh, let me fill up your glass...how's our left flank?...oh, let me fill up your glass...what about the right flank?...oh, fill up your glass...throw a shot in there...do we have enough reserves?"...glug glug glug..."Hey, why don't you go home and sleep this thing off because you have no discipline? Go home and sleep this thing off." And the plan is that Uriah would go home and, in a drunken state, sleep with his wife. But Uriah won't even go in his house; he sleeps on the front porch so he's not tempted. So then David realizes he's in trouble, he's busted because Uriah won't sleep with his wife. So he picks up a piece of paper and he writes to the commanding general at the front to move Uriah to the front lines, which is a death sentence. If you've watched movies with the old English way of fighting, where we just stand in front of each other and shoot at each other and hope you don't get hit. As dumb as that is, this kind of war, that first wave or two is as good as dead and if not dead, at least maimed. "Put Uriah on the front," and then here's where it gets crazy. He finishes writing it, seals it and gives it back to Uriah to take back to the front. Uriah's riding back to the front with his own death warrant and doesn't even know it. He shows up, gives it to the general, the general opens it, reads it, folds it, "Uriah, you've been reassigned," and in the next skirmish, Uriah is killed. Whew, David made it. He marries Bathsheba, which wouldn't have been weird in that culture, brings Bathsheba on as a wife. The math added up well enough that it was going to be close but it was going to be alright. And he got away with it. Anyone who knew of it was dead or couldn't say anything lest they be killed. He made it. Now, if he can just get his conscience to shut up, he'll be able to live at peace... except those pesky prophets.

Let's check it out. Chapter 12, "And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, 'There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him.'" Don't you dare think that's weird. You watch how we treat our dogs. Don't you dare think that's weird. We're buying them clothes, gourmet food, it's just really a sad state of affairs in America, it really is. If your dog has a polo, you need to repent. Let's get back to the text. Like a legit Ralph Lauren polo. I'm worried about your soul. Let's get back to this. So he's got this one little ewe lamb that's like his family. "Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." Do you understand what's happened there? He took it, he gutted it, he took the skin off it and he cooked it for dinner. So he's got a thousand lambs and he doesn't touch any of them. This traveler comes in, he comes and grabs the poor man's lamb, kills it, guts it, cooks it up and feeds it to the traveling man. Pretty sad. "Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.'" Verse 7, horrifying. Nathan said to David, what? "You're the man. You have no pity. You stole the lamb. You killed it. You're the man." This is not taking place in some quiet back room. This is taking place in the throne room

of David where the court would have been there, the center of gossip, the center of storytelling. Here comes this very powerful prophet, everyone's going to want to know what this guy has to say. He's the one who says, "This is what comes, this is what doesn't come. Thus sayeth the Lord." He walks in, he tells the story, David just got outed in the darkest, most horrific area of his soul in front of everyone. And this leads to a horrific three or four years for David. The baby in Bathsheba's womb is going to be born still. It's going to die. One of his sons rapes one of his daughters. Another one of his sons leads a rebellion against him that has him removed from the throne for quite some time. This is the beginning of an unbelievably dark period of time in king David's life.

But let me show you something. Flip over to Psalm 51. I promise you I'll bring this all together, Zechariah, David, we're going to look at Paul, we're going to look at the woman at the well, we're going to look at the rich young ruler. I'm going to bring it all together. Now, look in Psalm 51 because I want to show you something that's not part of the text but it's in there. If you'll look in your Bible, if you look at the Psalm 51, verse 1 is where the actual hymn starts. But above it's who wrote and when they wrote it. So let's look at it. "To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba." So in the middle of his world completely unraveling at a level that most of us aren't going to know, he starts to write this. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Verse 6 is profound. "Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart." Here's what he just said there, and I think this is profound. And he's going to say it again in a different way in just a few verses. He's saying here that more than God is interested in dealing with his affair, God's wanting to deal with the places in his heart that made him capable of the affair and murder to begin with. This is profound, because I think the majority of people think God is simply wanting to alter their behavior. That's wrong. He wants to transform the very heart so that behavior flows out of a new heart. And that's what David just said here. "I've done something very wicked and very grotesque, but what God's wanting to deal with is the parts of my heart that would allow me to be such a thing and do such a thing." Pretty profound Alright, look at verse 7. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice." You know, no one has ever told me that God breaks bones too. You're always kind of told that God is love and that He's gentle and He's these things. No one ever goes, "But He'll crush your bones...come down the aisle." You just don't get that a lot, but it's there. "I'll crush your bones," God says. "Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit." Now I'm going to just stop there. I wonder if I should stop here. Let me read this, because I want specifically those who tend to struggle with religion to look at this. Verse 14. "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering." And what He's saying in here is, "You can't make up externally for sins in your past. You can't do good over here to outweigh this back here. That's not how the system works." So God shows up for Zechariah and He presses him at his most raw, softest, most difficult part of his being. He shows up in David and reveals and presses on the thing that David wants to avoid and hide more than anything else in the world. And when God exposes David, does David run from God or towards Him? Well, the answer's easy...towards Him.

We'll look at two more. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 12. I've always said this and I really believe it's so. The apostle Paul is the Superman of the New Testament. What I mean by that is, almost everybody else in the Bible has this moment where they're just a wreck and they completely break down, don't trust God or something else goes bad for them. So you've got Moses who has his doubts, you've got David that's, "How long, O Lord, will You forsake me?," you've got Peter that's

pretty much a moron almost anytime that you look at him, Jeremiah that's, "You have seduced me," Elijah goes, "I'm the only prophet left that loves You." God's like, "Give Me a break. There's 700 people down in the valley. Quit crying. Go." You've got these men. But Paul, Paul stands on the Statue of Liberty with his cape waving in the wind going, "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." He's kind of this Superman in the New Testament. But I want to show you where God presses him. I want you to see where God presses Superman. The apostle Paul operates in a power that most of us don't know and are not going to know. Like I'll give you this example. When someone gets sick around us, we lay hands on them and we say, "Jesus, will You heal them?" In the New Testament, Paul walks up to lame, sick people and goes, "Get up and walk." Do you see the difference there? We're going, "We think the Lord wants to heal you. Let's pray." Paul goes, "God already told me. Get up." Now that's different. If it's not different, please call us. We've got some people we want you to talk to. Now, the second thing I would tell you about Paul is so powerful is Paul in the things of the Holy Spirit that even his apron and things on him would be used to heal people. So you've got this instance where Paul, he was a tent maker by trade, he was working, he took off his outer garment, his apron that he was working with, he lays it down, somebody took it, threw it on somebody who was sick and that person got well. So he walks in a power that's beyond us. Now, if your shirt is healing people, once again, please call us. We've got some things we want to do with your shirt. Look at verse 7 of 2 Corinthians 12. "So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations..." Let's stop here. Why is it so necessary for Paul not to become proud, not to become too elated, not to become boastful in the power that God's put in him? Think back to last week. Because God exalts the lowly, but He humbles the proud. And so in order for Paul to continually operate in power, he needs to humbly walk with God.

So look at what God does. I'm telling you, this is going to be difficult. "So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" This is unbelievably difficult and rarely gets preached to Christians. So when it happens to some of us, we have a very difficult time seeing God in it. Here's what just happened. God says, "I'm going to put a thorn in your flesh. I'm going to cause you physical pain, and it's going to harass you for the rest of your life." And Paul pleads with God three times, "Please take this away. Please take this away. Please take this away." And what's God's ultimate response? "No. The tormentor from Satan stays. Get all the Spirit-filled people around you to pray, fast all you want, get the whole church praying, this tormentor's going nowhere. It's from Me." You don't grow your church preaching that one. You create seats with that one. But here's what's so profound, and this is going to get us to the spiritual truth. Look at the response. The response is unreal. "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." Now this man is unreal and his joy goes beyond what most of us can comprehend. Most of us feel joy and walk in joy due to circumstance. "I am happy and filled with joy because marriage is good and we've got money in the bank and I've got a little vacation and I've got..." Joy for us is built around circumstance. Paul just says, "I'm alright when everything's dark, everything's horrible, calamities gone bad..." I mean, this is a man who was always physically in pain. He was beaten... I don't think many of us even want this level of joy. I think most of us are like, "I'm alright with JV. I'm alright with playing on Thursday nights, baby. I have no problem just being the good Christian guy. I don't want that kind of power. Don't need that kind of joy. I'm alright." But what's happening here is Paul is spending the night on the open sea going, "Ah, nothing." He's getting pelted with rocks to where the people who have pelted him with rocks think he's dead and he's wiping the blood off his face, going, "I'm alright. That was awesome. I survived." So although this seems very, very difficult, very harsh and like a reality most of us don't want, look what it produced. He's definitely more free than you, definitely more free than me, definitely walking in a depth most of us don't know. Because circumstances don't dictate his joy. Joy is just there. That's profound.

One more, and then we'll contrast it. Let's go to John 4, one of my favorite stories. I used to take a group of college students out to Los Angeles, I was working at a Baptist church. I was kind of a utility back for them, which was just basically any kind of new initiative or new thing like that, they would have me do on top of doing some college stuff and some small group stuff. And I would take the college students out to Los Angeles to a place called the Dream Center, which was this giant Assembly of God place down there. So anytime you can take the Baptist kids to play with the AoG kids, it's a good time. And here's why I did it, because people ask me all the time, "Don't they have really wacky theology?" I was like, "Yeah, but so do the Baptists." So if you can mix them and you can try to take the good from both of them, you have Spirit-filled men and women who submit to the word of God, and that's a pretty powerful combination. So that's what we were doing out there. But they had tons of different ministries, really cool ministries. Like at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, they would take white roses out to the prostitutes, give them white roses and talk to them about the grace and mercy of Christ. One of my favorites, because it kind of felt like entrapment, was they would fill up a van with auto parts, and a mechanic and a pastor and they would cruise the L.A. expressway for someone just broken down with no chance of going anywhere. The mechanic would work on the car and the minister would be like, "Let me tell you about Christ." I mean, where you going to go? You can rush into traffic and die or you just have to sit there and hear the gospel. And I even wondered if they had code. Like if the minister wanted more time, he could go, "Transmission...It's going to be a while. Why don't you get saved and we'll see if it miraculously starts?" It's kind of shady. Some of it's shady. I go out one night with a team that was just ministering to people on Sunset Boulevard, and they would just kind of talk with people about Christ out on the street. It was a lot of fun. I met two guys that claimed to be King David and another guy that claimed to be Jesus. It was awesome. I was able to go, "Listen, seven blocks up there is your great-great-great-great-great grandfather. You should run up there and meet him." It was awesome. There was a guy that stopped to talk, and I'm just sitting next to the minister. I mean, my role is an inactive one, I'm just kind of observing. And the guy shared the gospel with him and the man responded, "If God is such a God of love, then I'm going to need one of you to explain to me how my father can waste away and how God can let cancer eat away at my father for six years and have him die. I'm going to need one of you to explain that to me." And so I just let the guy take the lead, and here's his answer, "Because he lacked faith." Oh, man. And so, I just kind of let the absurdity of this finish and then I try to have a small conversation with him afterwards. But surprisingly, he was pretty much done with us at that moment.

I tell that story that because there's going to be something that happens in this story in John 4 that seems like it goes the wrong way. Because that night I was like, "I would have gone right there. I would not have gone left. I would have gone right." And Jesus is going to do something here where, in the middle of something that looks normal and looks like it's working really well, He's going to take this crazy right hand turn. At least it appears that way at first, and then you'll understand why He does near the end of the story. So let's look at this. We'll pick it up in verse 7. "A woman from Samaria came to draw water." Now this is in the sixth hour. I'll tell you just a little bit about her to catch up. Women don't draw water in the 1st century in the sixth hour. It's the heat of the day. They go in the morning. This woman has a very bad reputation, and according to the law, she could have been spit on, mocked, had her hair pulled, even pelted with rocks, so she goes when nobody is there. This is a woman that's got major issues. "Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?' (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)" Not only is that true, but if Jesus touches the cup that she's about to hand Him, He's ceremonially unclean according to the Jews. "Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.'" Look at verse 13. In verse 13, it becomes evident to everyone at the well that He's not actually talking about water. "Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'" So Jesus flips it on her and He's basically being the prophet that He is

in this moment. He's saying, "No no no. The water that I'm talking about cleans the soul. The water I'm talking about satisfies forever. The water that I'm talking about heals. The water I'm talking about makes whole." This is the imagery He's giving her. Now look at her response. She wants this water. Look at verse 15, "The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.'" Here's what she's saying. She's going, "If this is true, if this is true and I can be healed and made whole and I can be washed clean and I never have to be thirsty again, then give me this water." Basically, Jesus has just thrown out the gospel to her, and she's going, "I want it. How do I get whole? How do I find healing? How do I get right before God? How does it happen?" Watch Jesus here. I mean, it completely turns here, or so it appears. "Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.'" This lady's like, "I want the gospel. How? Tell me how." "Go get your husband." "I don't have a husband." "You're right, you don't have a husband. You've had five, and the dude you're living with now, you're exchanging sex for rent. So I guess you're kind of telling the truth." Now, I would have probably played that differently. I probably would have gone, "Bow your heads, let's pray. Repeat after me..." I would have probably played it like that.

But let's go back to the beginning, not the beginning of the story but back to the beginning of tonight. God presses Zechariah at the raw nerve, at the one place he wants to avoid, at the one place he's frustrated, at the one place he has issue. God presses him. The end result is joy. God tears the scab off of David's life, and all that is dirty and disgusting goes public. God presses him there. The end result is joy, fullness, depth. God comes to Paul in his strength and wounds him, wounds him for good. And the end result is depth, salvation, rejoicing. He comes to this woman and says, "There's a kind of water where you'll never thirst again." She says, "How do I get there? How do I get to full life? How do I get to deepness? How do I find salvation?" And once again, Jesus presses at the deepest point of her shame, the one area she doesn't want to address, the one area that's caused her the most grief. And then here's what she does from there. She wants to make it a matter of religion. Like, she immediately goes, "Oh, well I don't even know what you're talking about because they're supposed to worship here..." And Jesus is like, "Uh uh, I've come here to kill religion." And I wish we had time for me to tell you exactly how this thing ends, but here's what happens. She leaves there completely transformed, runs into the town... Now this is a lady that lays low because she can be killed for her past sins. This is a really weird culture... She runs into the town and she just starts telling everybody about this man that she just met at the well that transformed her heart. So listen to what just happened to her, because this is a pretty significant emotional/spiritual shift. Here's a woman that's hiding, avoiding people at all cost because of her shame, who is now running through the city going, "Guess what!" It's a pretty big shift for a morning at the well, huh? Just look at this real quick. Look at verse 39, "Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me all that I ever did.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word." How did it happen? Through a woman of ill repute whose life was transformed at the well because Jesus, with His sovereign scalpel, cut as deep as He could. And then it ends once again in transformation, joy, life, salvation.

Let's look at one more, and then we'll go ice down our drinks. Let's go to Matthew 19. We'll pick it up in verse 16. "And behold, a man came up to him, saying, 'Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?' And he said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.' He said to him, 'Which ones?'" I love this dude. He is all of us. "You want eternal life? Keep the commands." "All of them?" I love this guy. He's like, "Surely there are certain ones that are more varsity and then other ones that I don't really have to follow." I love this guy because he is us. Jesus goes, "Keep the commands." "Which ones?" I love it. So Jesus plays the game and He says to him, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Now, let me talk with you because I want to give you a type of person in here, I want to give you some insight. If you tend

to fall into the category of those who struggle with religion, and what I mean by that is if I could type cast it, it's a person who's grown up in church their whole life and for whatever reason, everything in you makes you want to be the "good kid" and you do everything you can to follow all the rules and you do everything you can to appear like you're perfect, if you struggle with that, then you need to pay attention to what happens next, because listen to what the rich young ruler says. "The young man said to him, 'All these I have kept. What do I still lack?'" Did you see what just happened here? All the rules, everything he's supposed to follow, everything externally that he's supposed to look like, he looks like. He's obeyed the commands, he's done what he's supposed to do and he's following Jesus around now going, "Something's still missing. Something's still wrong." Could it be that observing religious rituals just might not bring you anywhere close to salvation? It seems so. Let's finish this story out because Jesus is going to do what Jesus does. Verse 21, "Jesus said to him, 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.'" He just did it again. Jesus never asked that of anyone else. He goes to the fishermen and goes, "Hey, follow Me and I'll make you fishers of men." He never tells the Pharisees, "Quit being Pharisees." But this guy? This guy says, "How do I follow you? How do I have eternal life?" "Alright, sell all you have, give it to the poor and come on." Now his response is going to be wildly different from everyone else's response that we've read so far. So let's watch him. "When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." Now, the similarity is the sorrow. Zechariah had sorrow, David had sorrow, Paul has some sorrow in him and the woman at the well definitely had sorrow. So the sorrow isn't the difference. The difference is this man's sorrow led him away from the Lord rather than towards Him. So in every other moment, this kind of catastrophic thing occurs and men and women humble themselves before God as God presses on that raw nerve, they press into Him and they find joy, depth, salvation. This man gets that nerve pressed, and instead of submitting to it, immediately goes, "I'll find another way," and he leaves the Messiah and we never hear from him again. The difference between this man and everyone else we read is that in everyone else we read, there is a rejoicing, a transformation of life, a fullness of life, a conversion that takes place. And in this man's life, we never hear from him again. The last we hear from him is he's filled with sorrow as he walks away.

So here's the spiritual truth. It's going to be hard to get, hard for us to believe. Maybe when we get busted in our sin, when He disciplines us when we're defiant, when He confronts us in our ignorance or He wounds us in our strength, when business starts to fail, when marriage gets difficult and we don't understand calamity, when disease infects the body and isn't going anywhere, when sorrow enters the life, what if these things aren't happening to us because God is angry with us? What if they're happening because God loves us too much to save us from them? What if in them God is displaying His deepest mercy? Because God could have left Zechariah alone in his doubts, growing in bitterness. God didn't have to tell Nathan. God could have let David live out all the days of his life under the weight of that shame. God doesn't have to humble Paul. He could let Paul get all arrogant and then destroy him like He said He would. He doesn't have to pour love out on this woman who's been so overtly promiscuous that everyone in the town makes a joke out of her and pelts her with rocks when she shows her face. And in each one of these circumstances, the men and women that humble themselves before God, believe that He is who He says and press into Him, the end's joy, the end's deeper life, the end's fuller existence. And in the one case, I could have given you dozens more, in the one case where a man said, "Forget that route," put that response into the other brackets, "I'm not confessing my sin. I'm not letting go of my anger, my bitterness. I'm not letting go of my ignorance. I don't want to know any more than I know right now. I want to be right where I am right now. I'm not humbling myself in my strengths. I'll find another way." In that moment, sorrow follows and we never get the picture of rejoicing, we never get the picture of transformation, we never get the picture of freedom that this guy's so hungry for despite the fact that he's done so well religiously. Could it be that He's not angry with you, that you're not under wrath but under mercy? Sometimes it just plays out differently than we think.

Let's pray. "I thank You for the truth that You put over Your children, those who trust You, that we are not under wrath but under mercy. And for those who trust You, we can sit under this banner of knowing that everything that comes through our life comes through Your hands for the purpose of our good and Your glory. I praise You that You are after our joy,

ferociously after our joy. And I thank You that You love us enough to, if need be, wound us. And so I pray that we could sit under Your love in this place this morning, we can leave here being confident that our present sufferings and our present difficulties might not just be Your wrath towards us, but Your doing something in us. I know there are men and women in here who this particular message probably makes angry because of where they are, the difficulty of where they find their lives. And for others, it will just kind of be this cognitive thing we just file away, but I know it eventually comes for us all. You will eventually press the nerve on all of us. My prayer is that in that moment, we might run toward You and in that moment, we might humble ourselves and find joy. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

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