

Intervention – 6
When Life is At Its Worst, God Is at His Best
John 4:4-30
5/1/16

- This morning, I want to share two contrasting stories involving fathers. First, there is the story of a father who took his young son out and stood him on the railing of the back deck. He then went down, stood on the lawn, and encouraged the little fellow to jump into his arms. "I'll catch you," the father said confidently. After a lot of coaxing, the little boy finally made the leap.
 - o When he did, the father stepped back and let the child fall to the ground. The father then picked his son up, dusted him off, and dried his tears.
 - o "Let that be a lesson," he said sternly. "Don't ever trust anyone."

- Here's the other story: One day, a father took his son, Zac, out in the country for some hiking and climbing around in some cliffs. The father heard a voice from above him yell, "Hey Dad! Catch me!"
 - o He turned around to see Zac joyfully jumping off a rock straight at him. Zac had jumped and then yelled "Hey Dad!" The father became an instant circus act in order to make sure to catch his son.
 - o They both fell to the ground. For a moment after the father caught his son, he could hardly talk. When he found his voice again he gasped in exasperation: "Zac! Can you give me one good reason why you did that???"
 - o Zac responded with remarkable calmness: "Sure...because you're my Dad." His whole assurance was based in the fact that his father was trustworthy. He could live life to the hilt because his father could be trusted.

- Now let me ask you this: which scenario best reflects your trust for God? Have you learned not to trust anyone, including God or have you learned that God is completely trustworthy in your life?
 - o The answer to that question completely determines your experience and relationship with God and it also determines how God can intervene in your life.

- Today, we continue our series, "Intervention." We've looked at so many aspects of God's intervention in our lives. This week, we're going to see how God's intervention is directly related to our trust in him.
 - o Did you notice the title of today's message? It is: "When life is at its worst, God is at his best." This is a reality that God wants us to live within. He wants us to trust that reality.
 - o Do you? Do you really believe that when life it at its worst, God is at his best?

- Many here have had the benefit of seeing this reality all through your lives. I know I have.
 - o When I wasn't sure where the money was going to come to pay the bills, God showed up. When my parents were going through health issues and things seemed to be going in a downward spiral, God showed up.
 - o I shared an email prayer chain this past week about the husband of a young woman who was in the youth ministry in the Eaton First Church of God when I was the youth pastor there. In fact, she was one of my student leaders and has always been one of those solid, faithful follower of God, even as a teenager. Her husband, Vincent is 32, and has always been healthy and strong. He started getting sick until in progressed to the point that he was in critical condition in the ICU. He has been diagnosed with Acute Lymphatic Leukemia. She is also 30 weeks pregnant with their second child and they have a three year old son.
 - o Talk about stress! They are banking on God's best at this point when life seems at its worst for them. Regardless of what happens, God is going to show up for this family!

- That's the part that rocks us sometimes, though, right – the “regardless of what happens.” See, sometimes we overlook what God is doing to intervene in our lives because he didn't work in the way we wanted. But if you look back, you'll see He has always been there.
 - o And He's most powerfully there, when you need Him most. Even though you might wonder why His hand is sometimes not more obvious or why he isn't working as you desire for him to work.
 1. Even when you are thinking, *“Where is the fire falling from heaven that Elijah saw?” Or, “Why don't the walls of opposition fall down flat for me as they did at Jericho?”* God is there with you and he is showing up!

But we must remember that our God is moved by FAITH. *Hebrews 11:1 tells us that Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.*

- Faith comes as we trust, right? Believing that when life is at its worst, God is at his best requires trust – in big capital letters TRUST.
 - o And frankly, if God responded as we'd like, we would soon have no faith at all. Like we have said for several weeks, trust isn't really trust until it is tested.
 - o For your faith to continue to grow and be strong, God has to allow you to trust in some things that you simply cannot see right now.

- Maybe that's right where you are right now; looking squarely in the face of something you don't understand. Or, maybe you remember well a time when you were there and you still don't understand why you had to go through something. You want to understand, but you just can't.

- o That's exactly when you MUST trust: "When life is at its worst, God is at His best!"
 - o So then, the ultimate question becomes: Do you really trust God?
- See, you can believe in God. You can respect God. You can even say that you love God and have a relationship with God. But, trusting God – that's a completely different level of intimacy. Trusting requires a deeper relationship that moves from head knowledge to deep heart knowledge.
 - o This morning, we're going to look at the story of a woman who was really in a bad place. Life was at its worst and she was trying to hide from the world.
 - o This woman knew a lot about God. She believed in God. She knew the teachings of God. She respected God. She even anticipated the coming of the Messiah. But, she didn't trust God. In fact, because life was at its worst, she didn't really trust anyone.
 - o Then, Jesus showed up. Jesus knew her and he knew that her life was at its worst, so he showed up as his best!
 - o Let's read her story in **John 4:3-30**. This is one of my favorite stories in the Bible!
 - Let's break down this story to see how we can learn to trust God's best even when life is at its worst. In order to trust God's best, you have to know that God is planning a trip to your neighborhood.
 - o Verse 4 says that Jesus had to go through Samaria on the way from Judea to Galilee. Saying that he "had" to go implicates that he needed to go through Samaria.
 - o Any good Jew knew that he didn't "have" to go through Samaria. The disciples were probably surprised when Jesus said they were going through Samaria. The reality was that Jesus broke custom by going through Samaria
 - o Because of their intense racial and religious prejudice against the Samaritans, Jews usually went well out of their way to avoid Samaria when traveling from Galilee to Judea.
 - So why did He say He "had" to go through Samaria. It was his mission that drew Him to Samaria. He didn't have to go through Samaria. He didn't even have to stop at that particular well when town was just a little farther down the road. But, he know that there was a woman who was going to show up at that well and her life was at its worst, but Jesus, God's best gift to all of humanity, was about to show up in her neighborhood!
 - o Everything about this women was calling out to God. She wanted to believe. She wanted to trust. She wanted more for her life. But, she had always been told that she deserved nothing more. Jesus was about to tell her something different!
 - See, everything Jesus did was to INTERVENE. God's plan is ALWAYS to intervene.

Just like he intervened then, he desires to intervene now.

- o If anyone here today has a need of any kind – you need healing, forgiveness, simple encouragement or rescue from dreadful circumstances – trust this – God’s hears your cries and his plan is always to intervene.
 - o The same Jesus who went to Samaria that day is still doing business today. If you need Him today...HE HAS TO GO THROUGH YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD! He has set his sights on your neighborhood to intervene in your circumstances.
- Next, to trust God’s best, you have to anticipate that Jesus desires to meet with you. You don’t have to be perfect for his intervention. The woman at the well that day serves as an example to us that Jesus wants to intervene in the lives of the imperfect.
- o See long before she was even born, Jeremiah told us that Jesus had a plan for her life. Her past could not discount that plan.
 - o Even though the most devout prophets of his day wouldn’t even speak to this woman, Jesus offered her eternal life that day!
 - o You know, sometimes religious folk run from people with problems like they are dirty or diseased and we might catch it. That’s what the Jews did to the Samaritans. That’s why they walked around Samaria.
 - o But religion couldn’t stop Jesus from coming to her.
- Social standing couldn’t hinder Christ’s hand either. We all live within the reality of social standing. We all know it shouldn’t be, but it is. All you have to do is get around a group of people and you begin to see the social standing lines being drawn.
- o When I go to pick up Josiah at school, if it’s a decent day, we stay for him to play on the playground with other kids who stay. I try to get as much energy out of him as possible before we go home!
 - o It is interesting to watch people. It’s interesting that you don’t see the social standing stuff with the kids, but you can sure see it with the adults. There’s the little groupings of parents. Sometimes, it feels like I have gone back to high school and can see the delineations of cliques. It’s like we have been socialized to do that.
- And, it’s nothing new. That’s why the Samaritan woman asked him in verse 9, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?”
- o That’s why when the disciples returned to Jesus, it says in verse 27 that they were shocked to find him talking to a woman.
 - o He was talking to a woman, a Samaritan woman, an unmarried Samaritan woman – talk about the lowest of social standing.
 - o And, unfortunately, it’s nothing new even in the church. I’ve often wondered how the American church could be so caught up with shallow rules that mean nothing, but I see it goes all the way back to the disciples.

- Listen, Jesus is not looking at you today through a filter of man-made rules or social standing or perfection.
 - o He sees your heart. He knows your mistakes, but He loves you in spite of them. His greatest desire is to meet with you and for you to meet him, the real Jesus. Not the man-made, misrepresented Jesus, but the real Jesus who can take your life when it is at its worst and do his best work in you.

- He meets with you to build your trust, especially during the hard times. Sometimes, it's only during the hard times that we are most receptive to Jesus and his intervention.

- Here's a story about trust. David, a 2-year old with leukemia, was taken by his mother, Deborah, to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, to see Dr. John Truman who specialized in treating children with cancer and various blood diseases. Dr. Truman's prognosis was devastating: "He has a 50-50 chance."
 - o The countless clinic visits, the blood tests, the intravenous drugs, the fear and pain--the mother's ordeal can be almost as bad as the child's because she must stand by, unable to bear the pain herself. But, David never cried in the waiting room, and although his friends in the clinic had to hurt him and stick needles in him, he hustled in ahead of his mother with a smile, sure of the welcome he always got.
 - o When he was three, David had to have a spinal tap--a painful procedure at any age. It was explained to him that, because he was sick, Dr. Truman had to do something to make him better. "If it hurts, remember it's because he loves you," Deborah said.
 - o The procedure was horrendous. It took three nurses to hold David still, while he yelled and sobbed and struggled. When it was almost over, the tiny boy, soaked in sweat and tears, looked up at the doctor and gasped, "Thank you, Dr. Truman, for my hurting."

- Talk about trust. What this little one went through was painful only to be compounded because he was so young.
 - o What incredible trust this little boy showed. In spite of all the pain, he trusted that the doctor did what he did because the doctor loves him and wants him to get better. He knew the doctor was intervening for him.

- Is this the same trust you display toward God? Be honest. When hard times come and life seems at its worst, is that when your trust kicks in or is that when you start questioning, blaming, and cursing God, determined that he isn't as good as he claims to be?
 - o When we really have met with Jesus, it is much harder to blame him and much easier to trust him. Have you really met with Jesus? He wants to meet with you today.

- When we really have met with Jesus, it is easier to trust him because we begin to see the next aspect of trusting God's best. That is to Know that seeing isn't always believing.
 - o A television program preceding the 1988 Winter Olympics featured blind skiers being trained for slalom skiing, impossible as that sounds. Paired with sighted skiers, the blind skiers were taught on the flats how to make right and left turns.
 - o When that was mastered, they were taken to the slalom slope, where their sighted partners skied beside them shouting, "Left!" and "Right!" As they obeyed the commands, they were able to negotiate the course and cross the finish line, depending solely on the sighted skiers' word. It was either complete trust or catastrophe.

- What a vivid picture of the Christian life! In this world, we are in reality blind about what course to take. We must rely solely on the Word of the only One who is truly sighted--God Himself. His Word gives us the direction we need to finish the course. Jesus, going to our neighborhood to meet with us does so, so that he might guide us into something better than what we can see.
 - o The woman at the well couldn't see beyond her circumstances. She was resolved to living as the whore everyone thought she was. She was resolved to having to hide out from everyone so that she didn't hear their snide remarks and feel their judgmental stares.
 - o That's why she was at that well. It was the well outside of town where most people didn't go because it meant you had to haul heavy water a longer distance. And, she went to the well in the middle of the day when everyone else went in the early morning before the sun was hot. She didn't want to be seen. She didn't even want to see herself!
 - o But Jesus saw her! And, Jesus saw what she couldn't see – he saw her having a future and a hope and a purpose!

- Just like catastrophe would come if the blind skiers did not listen to their sighted partners, not believing and trusting Jesus, will lead to catastrophe because you can't see what is ahead. All you see is what is in your face, your present circumstances. Often, those present circumstances make you want to hide, like the woman at the well. Other times, they make you want to fight.
 - o But something even worse is when we wait until we can see. We don't trust Jesus. We only trust ourselves and what we can see or do or know.
 - o That's worse than hiding or fighting because if we wait to see, complacency is around the corner.

- I believe that complacency is a disease, both spiritually and physically. Complacency is just sitting around, doing nothing, being content in what you can see or what you can do and if you don't want to do anything, that's fine.

- o Now I've found out that it actually is. Sedentary Death Syndrome (SeDS) is the 3rd leading cause of death in America (after heart disease and cancer). It kills over 300,000 Americans annually. It contributes to other debilitating ailments – diabetes, depression, osteoporosis, cancer, etc. It affects nearly 3 out of 4 adults and is projected to cost the US \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years.
- o And just sitting around is apparently a worldwide phenomenon. In 2011, the World Health Organization announced that about 2 million deaths annually worldwide are attributed to “sitting around doing nothing.”¹
- The same thing is happening with the spiritual lives of millions. Spiritual complacency is sitting around just doing spiritual things, but lacking any spiritual fire or trust in Jesus. You only believe what you see or feel and if you don't see or feel it, then you dismiss it.
 - o Complacency is the kiss of death to your relationship with Jesus and to your trust in him because you will never see what Jesus can see.
 - o The woman at the well was complacent. She knew a lot. She obviously knew a lot of the Scriptures and history of God's people, but she couldn't see beyond that. So, she was just complacent to live her worn out, meaningless life.
 - o Only when we believe Jesus even when we can't see what he sees, will we ever be able to live above complacency to trust and to have the kind of radical life that Jesus desires us to have.
- This radical life is the next aspect of trusting God's best. You have to expect radical change.
 - o Listen, Jesus didn't have to go through Samaria to stop at that well in the middle of the day to break every social custom and standard possible in order to meet that woman, living in sin, living her worst life possible in order to just leave her there. He had more for her!
- But, in order for her to experience his best for her, she had to get real. Jesus wants you to get real, too!
 - o At first the woman played the “I'm okay” game. She thought she had all that she needed in the old well of Jacob. All she needed was her half-Jewish heritage. She was banking on the fact that this well could be traced by to Jacob, so God surely notice that she still respected it and him.
 - o That well didn't do anything for her. It was just this small connection to God. It was a temporary fix. But, it wasn't a relationship.
 - o How often do folk do that? If I had a dollar for every person who has ever talked to me about their Christian connections or their connections to church, I would be rich! If every person who doesn't currently go to church, but has a connection to this church that they talk about, actually came to this church, we would have to go to 10 services!

- o Why do people talk about their connections to godly things? To give the illusion that they are OK. They know enough about God.
- But Jesus doesn't want you to be just "okay." He wants you to know him. And, He knows that sometimes we look okay, act okay, talk okay...and we're not okay!
 - o EVERYBODY DOES IT!!! "How are you doing today?" we're asked and what do we say, "Fine." We say it when in reality that's a lie! We're not fine. We're not OK.
 - o Hear me...If you're not okay today the one sitting next to you may not have noticed. I may not be perceptive enough to see. BUT JESUS KNOWS – that's why He's in this building today! He came through this neighborhood to meet with you and intervene for you!
- And, he came for you to get real! Jesus got really real with the woman in John 4:16-18. He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you are living with now."
 - o *"You can fool a lot of people a lot of times, but you will never fool Jesus."* Jesus gets right to the point. He says, *"Let's stop playing games here."* *"Let's start right now turning you into what you were meant to be."*
- Jesus wants to get right to the point in your life, too. He doesn't have time to play games of you thinking you are OK. You don't have time for those game, either because the only way you will get to what you were meant to be is by getting real so that Jesus can do some radical change.
 - o See, Jesus loves you like you are, but he refuses to let you stay that way!
 - o He was not about to leave that woman living in her current situation, just hiding out and holding on. And, if you will open up your life to his radical change, he is not about to leave you in your current situation. He wants to give you his best!
- His best isn't about comfort or carefree living. Jesus doesn't just want to bring comfort, he wants to turn your life upside down. Now, that might sound crazy, but if you trust God's best, then you will take God's crazy any day of the week!
 - o See, he's not only going to turn it upside down, but he's going to set it back down in perfect order. He's here today to intervene!
- In order for him to do that and for us to experience that radical change for God's best, we must be willing to abandon our solutions for His.
 - o After Jesus told this woman about how he will give water so she would never thirst again, after he told her true worshippers of God will worship not just in a certain place, but in spirit and in truth, she still didn't get what he was saying.

- o She was so wrapped up in tradition, that she couldn't see that he's trying to give her something completely new and real!
 - o She held on tightly to her old plan for a while. She actually tried to start up a religious argument with Jesus to deflect the issue in verses 20-21.
 - o See this connection to this well was just a religious exercise. Her lifestyle proved that she wasn't trying to serve the God of Jacob. In truth, she neither knew Jacob nor his God.
 - o All she knew was religious tradition. That has never been enough for Jesus!
- Tradition is not what Jesus desires. He wants you to know him personally. He wants you to have a personal experience with him. He wants you to know him enough that you actually trust him.
 - o He wanted that woman to really get it who he was, to really open her eyes and so, he told her outright, "I am the Messiah!" In other words, "You can trust me."
 - o This seemingly unworthy, sin-filled, half-breed, unholy Samaritan woman was the first one that Jesus told plainly that he is the Messiah. He did it because her life was at its worst, but he was showing up with God's best. He wanted her to know clearly that the Messiah had intervened in her life.
 - o All she had to do now was to trust his intervention, to trust his solutions rather than her own, to trust his ways above tradition, to trust and know that he is God and he is best.
- Have you trusted God's best today? Or are you still trying to find your own solutions, trusting in what you can see, doubting that Jesus really wants to meet with you and surely not open to his radical change? You have avoided getting real and, with that, you have avoided a real relationship with the only One who is really trustworthy at all.
 - o He wants us to know that he, the Messiah has intervened in our lives. We just need to trust him.
 - o You're not OK. I'm not OK. Without Jesus, we are far from OK. We need him for he works his best in the middle of our worst – whether that worst is as a result of our poor choices or because of someone else or just life circumstances.
 - o Only trust him. He will show up. He will show up with his best. Only trust him.
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