

Ezekiel 16

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[0 : 00] near two pounds, a difficult entry into life under the best of circumstances. But after surviving the abortion, she was abandoned on a bitter, cold, 15-degree Nevada winter night.

She was blue and lifeless when found and rushed to a rural emergency clinic. Like Lazarus, though, she came back to life when the clinic physician placed her in a tub of warm water.

She was rushed to the medical center in Reno, Nevada, where registered nurse Susan Walker and other personnel gave her intensive, loving care. Three months after her traumatic birth, the tiny three-pound Christelle underwent and survived heart surgery.

Susan Walker and her husband adopted this throwaway miracle baby, who is now a young lady. According to Miss Walker, Christelle is bright, beautiful, strong and healthy, and probably the most loving person you could ever meet.

She is a living testimony of God's tremendous power and love and of the value of each and every unborn child.

[1 : 18] There are many great stories like this that I found over the Internet. There are many great rescue operations that I have read and even watched on television.

A few months back, I was watching a program on the telly called Expeditions Gone Wrong, the Great Rescue Mission. There are many stories like this that simply are amazing.

And they draw us in because of the rescue operation. And I remember reading stories like Christelle Morrison. And I also came across other babies who had survived abortions as well.

The likes of Baby Grace, Baby Hope, Baby Claire, Gianna Jensen. And as I read the list that was somewhat surprisingly long, I couldn't help but think that my name was on that list somewhere too. That there was a great rescue operation that came and saved me when I was born. There was a great rescue operation for many of you.

[2 : 33] Your name is probably on that list as well. And when I read these stories of Baby Christelle, Baby Hope, and Baby Grace, I realized that their birth into this world was like my birth into Christianity.

What we have here in Ezekiel is a story of a helpless babe brought into this world without a care or pity. Thrown into a field left to die.

This is a graphic picture here in Ezekiel of a helpless babe. And it simply represents that of Israel spiritually. They were lifeless, they were unclean, and they were despised since birth.

But like Susan Walker, who was the nurse on that dreadful night of Baby Christelle, she was rescued, rushed to a hospital, loved and cared for.

What we have here is the Sovereign Lord walking past a field, seeing the state of Israel wallowing in her blood. And he simply says the words, Live!

[3 : 44] Live! The Sovereign Lord cast his eye upon that helpless babe. And he simply says, I want to make you mine. This is the story that we have before us tonight.

And I want us to consider three things as we walk through this allegory. Three things that I want us to consider. Three things that are rather easy for you to remember if you are into note taking.

The first is the unthinkable father. That's the first thing I want us to consider. The second thing, the unthinkable daughter. And finally, the unthinkable son. So if you would, walk with me through this allegory of unfaithful Jerusalem, as it's titled here in the NIV.

The first thing I want us to look at is the unthinkable father. Look at verse 3 with me. This is what the Sovereign Lord says to Jerusalem. Your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites.

Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. And what the Lord is saying here is this, that Jerusalem had a pagan pedigree. They weren't, if you excuse me for the expression, they weren't pure breeds.

[4 : 56] They came from a different background. The Israelites were the lowly of all the nations. They were the outcasts of their day.

In Deuteronomy 7, chapter 7, verse 7, the Lord says this, He says, Matthew Henry, in his commentary of this passage, describes the nation of Israel this way.

He says, You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. They were not suppled, nor washed, nor swaddled. They were not at all tractable, or manageable, nor cast into any good shape.

In effect, the Lord is saying to Israel that there was nothing in you from the day that you were brought into this world that drew me to you. You were poor, lifeless, wretched, and rebellious. But what we have here in Ezekiel is the Father in heaven walking past a field, and He sees this Israel. And all of a sudden, He has a glimmer in His eye.

[6 : 13] Verse 6 says this, Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood. And as you lay there in your blood, I said to you, Live. I made you grow like a plant of the field.

You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful of jewels. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, and you were naked and bare. The Father in heaven, seeing this unwanted child of Israel, rescues them from the field, takes them to be His own, wraps them in His loving care. Folks, this is a picture of the unthinkable Father. The one who casts His eye upon a wretch. The one who looks and sees a rebellious child and says, I want to adopt you.

He takes this child in, loves them, adores them. But folks, most of us, most of us think that we have to be beautiful in order for the Father in heaven to actually take notice of us.

Right? We think that we have to somehow clean ourselves up in order for the Father to be attracted to us. I'm not sure if that's true of you, but I know it's true of me.

[7 : 28] We somehow seem to think that the rite of passage is that I must have it all together. I must be good at what I do. I must not be a bad person.

I must live morally right. But from what we see here in this text, is that in our own state from the very beginning, we weren't any of those things, yet the Father somehow is attracted to us.

Many of us stand outside the church or the city trying to clean ourselves up, trying to get rid of the stench of the field, trying to remove the stain of our own guilt and helplessness.

If I can illustrate this properly, in November in Smithton Free Church, we had our communions. And I love communions. I always think it's a great celebration to come with God's people before the Lord's table and to celebrate what Jesus came and did for us.

And on the Monday following the communions, we were having somewhat of a staff meeting, myself and David Meredith and a lady that works at our church called Allie McDonald. And we were talking about how the communions went.

[8 : 38] And one of the... I can't remember who it was, if it was David or Allie, who made the comment about, yeah, well, in the morning there were a lot of Christians who weren't there who normally come to church. I was somewhat perplexed by this.

And I said, well, why wouldn't the Christians be there at the communions? And they kind of both looked at me with, well, you kind of have to live here longer to understand what we're talking about, but we'll explain it to you anyway.

They didn't feel that they were good enough to actually come to the communion table. They didn't see themselves of being worthy in order to take the cup, to partake with the bread.

But folks, from this text, we aren't good enough. From this text, we were rebellious from birth.

We weren't anything that would capture the attention of God at all. But the Father passes by the field in search of us, despite our filthiness, despite our lack of goodness.

[9 : 48] There is a glimmer in the eye for those who have been cast off. You know the hymn, Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that He would save a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see. Just like Christelle Morrison who was unwanted, left to die in her helpless state, Susan Walker comes and rescues her.

It's unthinkable that the Sovereign Lord would even consider taking something so wretched, something so rebellious, something so helpless.

And we tend to think that the Father would only accept us if we're good, if we're beautiful, or if we have it all together. We assume that there's something in us that somehow attracts the Father to us.

But folks, this text says it's about grace. It's grace. This is the reason why the Father comes in search for us.

[10 : 59] Not because we deserve it. Listen as I read the account of just how much the Father does love us.

here in verse 8-14. This is when He breathed life into that helpless babe. This is when He takes that unwanted child into His arms.

He says, Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign Lord, and you became mine. I bathed you with water and washed the blood from you and put ointments on you. I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put leather sandals on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments.

I adorned you with jewelry. I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck. And I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head.

[12 : 04] So you were adorned with gold and silver. Your clothes were of fine linen and of costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was fine flour and honey and olive oil.

You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen. And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty. Because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign Lord.

Now I'm not sure what the wedding tradition like in Scotland is. I've been to one or two weddings. But in the States, where I come from, the wedding tradition is a little bit different.

And one of the most amazing parts about a wedding in the States is at the reception. After the ceremony is all done with and you have the new husband and wife there.

And it's the first dance. But it's not the first dance of the newlyweds, the husband and wife. But it's the first dance of the father who's just given his daughter away.

[13 : 08] And it's one of those things where the father takes the hand of his little girl out on the dance floor. And everyone kind of closes in on them. And they just watch the father dance with his daughter, showing forth the beauty, the majesty of his daughter there in front of her peers, in front of her new husband.

The one in whom he lavished all his precious gifts upon, he is there now showing forth her to everyone around. It's a beautiful scene. It's a beautiful picture at a wedding.

Folks, that's the picture I think we have here in Ezekiel. What we have here is the father who takes this child in whom he's adopted.

He's loved her. He's cared for her. He's lavished all his precious gifts upon her. And then on her special day, he takes her out to the dance floor.

And he shows forth her beauty and splendor to all the nations. Folks, this is the picture we have here of the unthinkable father taking the daughter of Israel, taking the one thing, his adopted child, out, showing forth her beauty.

[14 : 20] Folks, this is good news in the fact that the father takes wretches, takes helpless babes and makes them as his own. Do you believe that this evening?

Do you believe that the God in whom we come to worship this evening is that good? The fact that the father walks past the field and sees a helpless babe and he takes that babe and makes him his own, makes him a part of his own family.

The second thing we want to see, hopefully, is the unthinkable daughter. This is the second thing that I want us to consider. What if I was to tell you, rather, do you think that the family of Christelle Morrison actually forget the day that Christelle was rescued?

Do you ever think a day goes by when that family does not remember that cold Nevada night? I doubt it. And do you think Christelle ever forgets the day that she was brought into this world?

Every gift that she is given is stamped with that love, with that care. Everything that is given to her is somehow a reminder of the fact that she comes into this world, into a family that has adored her, that has loved her, that has rescued her.

[15 : 56] But what if I was to suggest to you this, that Christelle Morrison, who grew up to be a beautiful girl as we read earlier, went off and became educated, became a nurse. What if I was to suggest to you that this Christelle Morrison went and became a nurse in an abortion clinic?

I mean, it's awful to even suggest, right? It's a repulsive thing to think that Christelle Morrison would go and become a nurse in a place that almost took her life.

What if I was to tell you that Christelle ended up becoming a loud voice for pro-choice? that she was picketing lines saying, you know what, you should have got it right the first time or I am but a choice, right?

I mean, it's odious to think such a thing that someone who has been rescued would go then in return and destroy others.

And I ask you, who would do such a thing? Folks, from this text it says, we would. We would do such a thing.

[17:16] Read with me from verse 15 down to verse 19. The account of the unthinkable daughter. But you trusted in your beauty and you used your fame to become a prostitute.

You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his. You took some of your garments to make gaudy high places where you carried on your prostitution.

Such things should not happen nor should they ever occur. You also took the fine jewelry I gave you, the jewelry made of my gold and silver and you made for yourself male idols and engaged in prostitution with them.

And you took your embroidered clothes to put on them and you offered my oil and incense before them. Also, the food I provided for you, the fine flour, olive oil and honey I gave to you to eat.

You offered as fragrant incense before them. This is what happened, declares the Sovereign Lord. How does that sit with you to know that we have taken the very gift of God and from what this text says we have prostituted it?

[18:32] It's unthinkable to imagine the possibility that we have here in Ezekiel. And folks, as I read this and studied this, I denied it myself. I said, no, this can't be true.

But then, as I began to consider my own heart, I found out that what Ezekiel testifies to be true is true of me.

That I have taken the very gift of God and used that gift to fulfill my own selfish pleasure. God I have taken the money that He has given me and used that money to fulfill my own addiction of materialism.

I have used the education that the Father has given me and I have used that education to talk away the very existence of God sometimes and the fact that He has my best interest at heart.

I have used relationships I have taken the church the very bride of Christ and have used that church to fulfill my own neuroses of tradition.

[19:47] Folks, if you knew who I really was, I guarantee you would not have me standing here. I have taken the very breath that the Father has given me and I have sat where you have sat and I have spoken about a person on my right and in return gone to the person on my left and said something awful about him.

I have taken the very gift that the Father has given me and I have prostituted it. I have used that gift to fulfill my own selfish pleasure.

Folks, I would ask you to be so bold to examine your own heart. Because I think that this text begs us to ask that very question.

It begs us to examine our own lives. Have you prostituted the things that God has given you in order to fulfill your own selfish desires?

others? Can you imagine Susan Walker walking into that abortion clinic and seeing her daughter standing there helping with abortions?

[21:08] Can you imagine the scene of Susan Walker walking in and seeing her daughter whom she rescued from the very thing that she was then doing herself?

Folks, I don't know what that scene would be like, but I know the shame and guilt that would be upon Christelle Morrison seeing her mother walk in. Can you imagine the scene of when the father walks in to the living rooms of our own heart and sees what we have done and sees what we are doing with the thing that he has given us?

I am not sure what Susan Walker would do, but I know what the Lord would do. Look at verse 36 and verse 37 with me.

This is what the Sovereign Lord says, Because you poured out your wealth and exposed your nakedness and your promised beauty with your lovers, and because of all your tedeftible idols and because you gave them your children's blood, therefore I am going to gather all your lovers with whom you found pleasure, those you loved as well as those you hated.

I will gather them against you from all around and will strip you in front of them and they will see your nakedness. Folks, our God will not be mocked and our sin will be dealt with.

[22 : 33] For those of us who are in God's family, there is an amount of discipline that is administered. I remember growing up in Hereford, Texas, which is just outside of Amarillo.

And I can remember in my household, there were many rules that must have been followed. And if I ever broke those rules, then I got what we call the spanking at home.

My father was always the one to administer the spanking because mother never seemed fit to do it. It just didn't seem right, her hitting me. My mother is very small and it just didn't go over very well. But I can remember one day at school when I got in a fight with a new kid. And I'll tell you from the beginning, it wasn't my fault.

He prompted it. He started it. And after the fight, we got sent to the head teacher's office. And he went in first, pled his case. I went in next to plead my case.

[23 : 31] And the head teacher at that time was a man named Mr. Oaks. And he was in fact an oak tree. He was huge. About 6'6 and very wide. And I can remember the thought of me sitting in the office waiting to see Mr.

Oaks. And I wasn't so scared of him as I was the reaction of my father when I was going to get home because I knew the school was going to be calling.

And I remember Mr. Oaks looking at me and he points me to come in and I sat down. And I told him my story. And of course I'm the first time ever sent to the head teacher's office. I'm in absolute tears, crying my eyes out, hoping that that was going to somehow, you know, accumulate some points with the man.

It didn't. He looked at me and he goes, son, I do believe you, but you still fought, which is against the rules. He goes, I'm going to make a deal with you. He goes, one, he goes, I'll give you one swat and I'll tell your parents or I'll give you two swats and I won't tell your parents.

And I said, right away, two swats, two swats. And I can remember him, he kept for the effect, both paddles up on the wall like a trophy. One paddle was completely, you know, it was just a solid piece of wood.

[24 : 46] The other paddle was one with a few holes in it. And I came to learn later that the one with holes in it was a little bit stronger because he could pick up a little bit more velocity as he came through with the swing.

Air would pass through it, he could get a lot more speed with it. And he didn't give me the option of which one he chose, he just went with the one without the holes, the one with the holes. And he had me look, first he had me grab a chair and he had me look at a picture.

And he told me to count to three. And of course I'm thinking that after three the punishment will begin. I never got past one. I said one and he went right away with the two swats.

And I can remember that day as a young peace seven year old, you know, walking home and the guilt of disobeying was just overwhelming even at ten years old.

And I can remember going home thinking, yes, I got away with it. My folks aren't going to find out. But the guilt was so overwhelming. I couldn't do it. My dad walks home from work. He looks at me and he says, son, what's wrong?

[25 : 52] I said, dad, there's something I got to tell you. He goes, all right. He goes, well, I got in trouble at school today and I told him what happened. And he looked at me and he said, son, I appreciate you being honest with me and I appreciate you coming forth telling me what happened.

He goes, but son, I've got to discipline you because you broke the rules of this household. And I was like, what? You know, this is unreal, you know. And he took him back to my room and he sat me on the bed and he said, son, I'm going to have to give you two swats as well.

I gritted my teeth. I said, OK. And he gave me those two swats and immediately he took me in his arms and he said, son, if I did not discipline you, then I wouldn't be loving you.

And that has stayed with me till this day. And folks, it's the same with God. If he does not discipline us, he is not loving us.

There's a quote by Becky Pippert in her book, Hope Has Its Reasons. She says, think of how we feel when we see someone ravaged by unwise actions or relationships.

[27 : 02] Real love stands against the deception, the lie, the sin that destroys. Nearly a century ago, the theologian E.H. Gifford wrote, human love here offers a true analogy.

The more a father loves his son, the more he hates in him, the drunkard, the liar and the traitor. The fact is, anger isn't the opposite of love.

Hate is. And the final form of hate is indifference. The unthinkable daughter receives discipline, tough love, as we would say, as any child.

And we agree with that. The rod that God uses for discipline is for his children's children only. There must be a distinction made here because those who are outside God's family do not receive discipline, but the hand of wrath.

We need to recognize this because I think it's important. That's just a side note, but we need tough love. The father needs to correct our behavior. Sin has to be dealt with.

[28 : 08] Sin must be atoned for. And this leads me into the last point. this is where we see the unthinkable son. Look at verse 62 with me.

So I will establish my covenant with you and you will know that I am the Lord. Then when I make atonement for you, for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation, declares the Lord.

Folks, the Lord in his divine sovereignty decided before he even walked past the field to make atonement for our sins. The unthinkable father sending his son to do the unthinkable.

Taking all that we had done, all of our prostitution, all of our squandering, all of our wretchedness, he takes that to the cross and the son bears our punishment for us.

The father who so loved the world. He gave up his only beloved to die, as this text says, for prostitutes, for the wretch.

[29 : 29] It's unimaginable. The unthinkable son dying for the father's daughter. The unthinkable. But did you notice that the father's love never changed?

The father's love never changed, even when the daughter was out squandering away the wealth. It was always there. He was always beaming for delight for his daughter.

In some sense, the father still wants to dance, right? He still wants a dance. And here in 62, when he says, I will establish my covenant with you and you will know that I am the Lord.

When I make atonement for you for all that you have done. In effect, what he's doing is making his daughter even more beautiful. He washes his daughter once again, but this time with the blood of his own son.

He says, I love you that much that even the covenant I made with you before you went out, I'm going to renew that covenant with the blood of my own son. Folks, I've recently been battling with this.

[30 : 42] It's kind of been an ongoing thing that I wrestle with my own sin, especially the more I come in contact with the whole idea of the gospel. The fact that the father takes sinners to be his own.

And I sometimes question the whole idea that it can't be that good. Right? Have you ever thought about that? That this message, it just simply can't be that good.

You know? Well, but it is that good that the father would keep his covenant. He would keep his covenant that Jesus Christ on the cross cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The father walks past his own son on Golgotha in order to rescue us. Jesus was abandoned, left to die by his own father so that we might be rescued.

Isn't it backwards? We cry out and the natural tendency of our heart says, wait, there's got to be some exchange.

[31 : 59] I've got to be able to do something for this. It simply can't be that good that you would take me no matter what. I don't know if you're familiar with the hymn that goes, nothing in my hands I bring, but simply to the cross I cling.

Folks, the only thing that we contribute to this relationship with God is our sin. The only thing that we bring. Is our sin.

And it's to the cross that we cling. This is an amazing rescue operation that goes against all of what society says would be the right rescue. That would be the right way.

You see, most of your Bible says that the allegory is of unfaithful Jerusalem. Folks, I think they got it wrong. This is an allegory.

Or rather, this is the reality of how good the father is. of the unforgettable father looking upon a wretch with a gleam in his eye, loving that child, adoring that child, rescuing that child.

[33 : 10] This is the unthinkable father who sees his daughter go off and squander everything that he has given her. And she comes running back and he still wants a dance.

Yes, this may be about unfaithful Jerusalem. But folks, I think it's more about the father and his love and care for his daughter.

This is the same father who loves her so much. That he sent his only son to die for her. Folks, oftentimes in the Bible, it uses graphic descriptions to get our attention.

And oftentimes we have graphic pictures of infidelity. And folks, I've got a question for you. Has your attention been caught this evening? Has the love of the father been shown to you this evening by hearing about unfaithful Israel and relating it to your own self?

Folks, I would ask that you would put on the wedding dress of Christ. Run down the aisle. Run to him. Knowing that you were accepted. Knowing that you were loved.

[34 : 25] And folks, if you find yourself to be far off this evening, be encouraged to know that no matter where you've been or what you've done or where you're going just now, the father has a gleam in his eye.

The father still is longing for you. He loves you despite your filthiness. And folks, if you find yourself to be struggling with your own sin tonight, be encouraged.

Know that you're not the only one. You've got someone standing here before you right now who admits that he doesn't have it all together. Be encouraged to know that you're not alone in this fight, but look to the father this evening.

See his love for you through his through his son, Jesus Christ. May God apply his word to us this evening.

Let us pray. Our father in heaven, it is often a difficult thing to consider how good you are to us despite all of our disobedience, despite all of our own selfishness.

[35 : 51] Father, would you break us with the gospel? Would you allow us to love you because you are good? Would you allow us to obey you because we want to please you for all that you've done for us?

Father, we thank you that you are a God who is mighty to save, who delights to save those.

And you're so mighty that you save the helpless, the unwanted, the rebellious, the outcast. You save even the good people, not just the bad, but those who are good as well.

Father, we thank you for this this allegory, this story that we have here in Ezekiel. We thank you for its bluntness, for its harshness. Father, we thank you for the truth that we see in it.

And Lord, we would ask that you would search our hearts, convict us of our own sin. But Father, that you would wrap us in your own loving care, and that you would apply the gospel to our wounds.

[37 : 08] For we know that sin often leaves scars. Father, remind us that you are a God who loves. You are a God who is gracious. You are a God who is merciful.

Father, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you for that great sacrificial love. And we pray that we might leave here knowing that truth, that he became our substitute.

He died in our stead. And we get the reward of Jesus' life. Father, we thank you for your day today. We thank you that we've been able to worship you.

And Lord, we ask that we would continue as the day goes forth to have you on our hearts and minds. Lord, hopefully our worship today has been pleasing to your ear.

Father, we thank you for Jesus. And it's in his name that we ask these things. Amen. Well, can we close this evening's worship by singing in Psalm 25, which you can find on page 29.

[38 : 23] Psalm 25, humiliating shame will face.

Psalm 25, to verse Mark 6. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. I trust in you continually. To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

To the only God, our Savior, be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus Christ, our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore.

Amen. Thank you.