

1. This morning as we find ourselves smack dab in the middle of the Christmas season. (I don't mean to send you into a panic, but Christmas is two weeks from today.)
2. I want to share a series of 3 messages with you. In this series it is highly likely that I will not tell you anything new. You have probably heard most, if not all of what I am going to say before.
3. However, I want this series to be a reminder to all of us. I want us to be reminded of some of the wonderful gifts that have been given to us as followers and disciples of Jesus Christ.
4. The title of this series is "Forgotten Gifts". Our goal will be to look to some of the gifts that we may have forgotten about, and to receive them all over again.
5. When I think of forgotten gifts, especially during this time of gift giving, I can't help but think of gift cards. This time of year, millions and millions of gift cards will be given.
6. You have that someone in your life that you want to bless, but you don't know exactly what to get them, so you get them a gift card to one of their favorite places so that they can choose whatever they want.
7. It's a really good idea. I have been on the giving end of gift cards, and I have been on the receiving end of gift cards. One of the drawbacks however of gift cards is that it is fairly easy to misplace, or even forget that you got the gift card in the first place.
8. And so, the gift goes un-used. It's there. It has been purchased and it has been given, but it isn't being enjoyed because it has been forgotten about.
9. In fact, it is such a common practice for gift cards to be forgotten about that many retailers love to sell gift cards because they get the money, but never have to give the product.
10. If I have my facts straight, right now in America, 47% of adults, almost half of the adult population, has an unused gift card in their possession.
11. The amount of money that has been sold and is being stored on those cards is about 21 billion dollars.

12. Of those 21 billion dollars on gift cards, about 15% or 3 billion dollars will be forgotten about and never spent.
13. If we divided those 3 billion dollars equally between every man, woman, boy and girl in the city of Batesville, that would be about 285,000 dollars per person.
14. That is a lot of forgotten about gifts. (give away a gift card)
15. So, now, let's shift our thinking to our spiritual lives. If that much money has been forgotten about, money that can be seen and touched and held, how much more easily can we forget about spiritual gifts that have been given to us that we can't see or touch?
16. An example of overlooking or not being able to see a gift clearly is seen in the interaction Jesus had with a Samaritan woman in the book of John chapter 4. Turn there with me if you will.

**TEXT:** **John 4:4-10** Now he had to go through Samaria. **5** So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. **6** Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. **7** When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" **8** (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) **9** The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) **10** Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

The NLT says if you only knew the gift God has for you. What was that gift? Partly that gift was Jesus. He was a gift to the world because John 3:16 tells us God gave him.

The Amplified bible calls the gift the gift of eternal life, which I believe is also true. But what gifts was Jesus willing to give her that affected not only her eternity, but her present?

It is those three gifts that we will talk about these next three weeks. The first gift that I want us to consider is...

**TITLE:** **The Gift of Freedom.**

**INTRO:**

1. Again, I'm probably not telling you anything new, but let me give you a

little bit of the back story.

2. Verse 9 says that Jews did not associate with Samaritans. In reality, that description doesn't even come close to describing the hatred that existed between Jews and Samaritans.
3. Jews were those who could trace their lineage all the way back to the beginning of the nation of Israel. They were pure Jews, meaning both of their parents were full-blooded Jews.
4. Samaritans on the other hand were only partly Jewish. One of their parents would have been a Jew, but the other parent would have been of a different nationality, normally a nationality associated with evil, wickedness, and paganism.
5. The Jews so despised the Samaritans that they would avoid, if possible, even walking through the territory where the Samaritans lived.
6. The Jews so despised the Samaritans that they would often refer to or talk about Samaritans like they were dogs.
7. Not beloved family pets who sleep in the bed kind of dogs, the kinds of dogs that were left outside to starve. Dirty mangy dogs.
8. So, we see very clearly the love that Jesus had for this woman, because not only is he near where she lived, but he is talking to her as he would talk to anyone he cared about.
9. The second part of the back story is that this woman was not considered one of the finest, most upstanding citizens of the town in which she lived.
10. In verses 16-18 we find that she has been married 5 times and that the man she is currently living with is not her husband.
11. Now, we could place all the blame on her for these 5 failed marriages and just assume that she must have been one difficult person to get along with, but I believe it is also highly possible that she had married some real losers.
12. She had been treated poorly to put it nicely. She had been treated as if she was of little value and as though she could be discarded at a moments notice. The story of her life was not pretty.
13. One bible scholar described the woman this way. There is not a kind word in the description of this Samaritan woman. She paints herself, and it is not a beautiful picture. She is apparently of the peasant class, from a little village

nestling on the hill above the plain, come down in the broiling sunshine to Jacob's well. She is of mature age, and has had a not altogether reputable past. She is frivolous, ready to talk with strangers, with a tongue quick to turn grave things into jests;

14. So as Jesus stands there talking to this woman, this is the ugly scene that it takes place in. And yet, in the middle of all this mess, Jesus says something to her that begins in her a radical transformation.
15. John 4:10 "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and he would have given you living water."
16. What is the gift? For sure Jesus himself was a part of the gift. For sure this promise of living water, eternal life, was a part of the gift.
17. But right in that moment I believe there is another immediate gift that Jesus is about to give to her.
18. Jesus is, in just a few moments, is going to free her from her past. He is going to free her from all of her sins and poor decisions and failed relationships.
19. He is also going to free her from the hurts and the scars that up till that moment are affecting how she lives in the present. How do I know that Jesus is about to give her that kind of freedom?
20. Because of what she says and how she says it to the people of her town.
21. John 4:28-29 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"
22. Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Allow me to re-phrase that.
23. Come see a man who brought up all of my past.
24. Normally, standing before Jesus having him bring up all of my past would not be an experience that I would be excited about. And yet that is exactly how this woman relates this story to the people of the town. She is excited.
25. Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.
26. Knowing her past. Knowing just a portion of the sordid details about the kind of life she had been living, I am convinced that there is only one reason why she could describe all of that being brought before her with excitement and that is because of how Jesus related to her and to

her past.

27. How did Jesus relate to her and her past? I beg you not to miss this because I believe the Lord wants to do the same for all of us today.
28. Jesus did not bring up her past with a scowl on his face. He did not take out a piece of paper and begin to list her sins and her failures one after the other and then take all of that ugliness and hang it around her neck like a weight that would drown her and take her down.
29. Not in the least.
30. Jesus did not expose all of her sins and failures of the past and in the process of doing so bring them up in such a way as to rip the scabs off of the mental and emotional sores and wounds she had received in her life.
31. He did not bring up her past and use it as a weapon to hurt and harm her further. No way.
32. The only thing that makes sense is that he told her everything she had ever done and then he offered her the gift of freedom. He told her everything she had ever done and then he offered himself as the solution, as the medicine, as the cleansing and the healing and the wholeness that she so desperately longed for.
33. He told her everything she had ever done and then he forgave her, and he set her absolutely free.
34. To me that is the only thing that would explain why she would run to the people in the town and urge them to come out and experience the same thing she had experienced, because the way Jesus related to her, and her past was to give her freedom from it.
35. These are the words of a free woman not a bound woman.
36. May I remind you today that the same freedom that this woman received and the same freedom the people of this town received is the same gift of freedom that the Lord Jesus Christ offers to you and me right here, right now. Freedom from our past.
37. Now. I can't speak for everyone; I can only speak for myself. But what I know about my spiritual walk is that I have an enemy that is all too eager to dredge up and dig up and drag into my memories all of the sins and the failures of my past.
38. The enemy of my soul loves to try and get me to replay my sins and

my failures and my shortcomings in my mind just as vividly as a high-definition movie playing on a television screen.

39. The other day I was going along and all of the sudden I remembered a foolish thing I had done in my past. As I remembered what I had done I physically became embarrassed right then. As if the event had just occurred.
40. And then I realized that what I was remembering was from 30 years ago. The enemy has a really good memory. He never forgets.
41. Can we just for a moment be transparent in the room, because there is someone here who thinks that what I have just described happens only to them.
42. If you've ever been reminded of and felt guilty for a sin from your past that you have already asked and received forgiveness for, would you please lift up your hand and then look around the room?
43. To be clear, we are not talking about the enemy dredging up sins that we have not asked forgiveness for. It is the Holy Spirit that brings to our attention sins that we have not confessed and sought forgiveness for.
44. We're talking about sins and failures and foolish mistakes that we have asked the Lord to forgive us of.
45. The enemy of our soul wants us to be continually bound to failures and sins from our past, to the point that it still affects our present.
46. But I have come to remind you today of a wonderful gift that the lord Jesus has for you and that is the gift of freedom.
47. The same freedom that this Samaritan woman received is the same gift of freedom that the Lord is standing right in front of you right now offering to you with all of the love that he can muster.
48. I want to leave you today with two words that I hope you will latch onto that describe the kind of freedom the Lord gives us.
49. Forgotten and fear-free.
50. Forgotten and fear-free. (repeat)

## **Forgotten.**

1. The enemy may have a perfect memory when it comes to the sins and failures of your past, you may have a perfect memory when it comes to the sins and failures of your past, others may have a perfect memory

when it comes to the sins and failures of your past but the loving father that you serve has a terrible memory of the past sins that you have brought before him and asked forgiveness of.

2. This is a lengthy passage, but I am going to read it all because it is a beautiful reminder of the gift of freedom from past sins.

**3. Psalm 103:1-12 Of David.** Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. **2** Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits— **3** who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, **4** who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, **5** who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. **6** The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. **7** He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: **8** The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. **9** He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; **10** he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. **11** For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; **12** as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

4. David says in verse 2 forget not all his benefits. What are those benefits?

- He forgives our sins and heals our diseases.
- Redeems our life and crowns us with love and compassion.
- He satisfies your desires with good things and renews you like the eagle.
- He is working righteousness and justice for you.
- He doesn't accuse or harbor anger forever.
- He does not treat us as our sins deserve.
- His love for us is greater than we can measure.
- He has removed our sins from us and thrown them miraculously away.

5. Our confessed sins are all but forgotten. So, if God isn't dragging them up then we shouldn't drag them up and we shouldn't sit idly by and let the enemy drag them up.

6. We have been given freedom.

7. And the second word I want you to remember.

**Fear-free.**

1. **1 John 4:15-19** If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. **16** And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. **17** This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. **18** There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. **19** We love because he first loved us.
2. The freedom that the Lord gifts to us is a freedom from fear.
3. If we acknowledge that Jesus is the son of God. If we have confessed our sins and repented of them, then God lives in us, and we live in God.
4. And we live in the love of the Lord. A perfect love from the Lord.
5. And what does that perfect love do for us? It gives us confidence on the day of judgment.
6. It frees us from the fear of judgment. Because fear has to do with punishment. But the perfect love that we received from the Lord when we repented of those past sins drives fear away from us.
7. So, we no longer have to be afraid.
8. That means that the life you live right now is not a life of punishment,
9. If you have confessed those past sins and proclaimed Jesus as Lord in your life, then you have received the perfect love that only the Lord can give.
10. And God, in his perfect love drives those sins from us as far as the east is from the west.
11. So, if they have been driven away, they no longer exist. And if they no longer exist, then we don't have to fear punishment because there is nothing there to punish.
12. That means the fear we feel from past sins is a lie of the enemy. That fear is not from the Lord. Because his perfect love frees us from that fear.

#### Conclusion:

1. I don't know about you but that just makes me want to praise the Lord and shout hallelujah. **The Gift of Freedom.**
2. So here is the gift I want to give you today and remind you of. It is the gift of freedom.



3. Through Jesus Christ, the son of God. Born of a virgin. Laid in a manger. Grown up to experience every temptation we have ever faced. Sacrificed on the cross, shedding his blood for the cleansing of our sins. We have been given freedom from every condemnation of our past.
4. Through Jesus Christ there is therefore now NO condemnation. That means we are now free.
5. But sometimes we need to be reminded of that freedom. And all of the time we have to exercise that freedom.
6. We have to use that truth from the word of God as a weapon to fight off the enemy.
7. So, today we are going to exercise our freedom together as a church family.
8. Pray.
9. I want to ask everyone who will to join me in a time of repentance. Of confessing sins before the Lord.
10. And then, if you are here today, and there is something from your past that is negatively affecting your present, then we are going to agree together that you will experience the gift of freedom in your life today.
11. If there is something in your past that is negatively affecting your present, will you come and stand across the front.
12. Invite people to gather around them and pray.