

1. We are going to continue this morning with our series called "Forgotten Gifts".
2. I shared last week that I probably won't be telling you anything new during this series. There is a high likelihood that you have heard it all before. But sometimes we just need to be reminded of what we already know.
3. That's because it's easy in the busyness of life to forget things.
4. I shared last week that almost half of the adults in America have a gift card in their possession that they have not spent yet.
5. The amount of unspent money on those cards is 21 billion dollars.
6. Of that 21 billion dollars, 3 billion dollars will be forgotten about and never spent.
7. That's enough for every man, woman, boy and girl in Batesville to receive \$285,000. That's a lot of money to be forgotten about.
8. (Give away gift card to the couple married the longest.)
9. So, if it's that easy to forget about money, a thing we can hold in our hands, how much easier is it to forget some of the gifts we have been given in Christ Jesus?
10. We're using as our text the story of the Samaritan woman who meets Jesus at the well near her home.
11. Follow along with me as I read this passage again from John chapter 4.
12. **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."
13. Jesus himself is a part of the gift he is referring to.
14. Eternal life is a part of the gift he is referring to.
15. But last week we highlighted another gift, and that is the gift of freedom. Specifically, the gift of freedom from our painful past.
16. If we look down a few verses, we see a part of the impact that her encounter with Jesus had on her life.

17. 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?"

18. Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Come see a man who brought up all of my past. That past included the fact she had been married 5 times and the man she is currently living with is not her husband.
19. Normally we wouldn't think a person would be excited about Jesus dredging up everything from their past, and yet this woman is excitedly urging all of her neighbors to come meet Jesus for themselves, and to allow Him to do in them and for them what Jesus has done for her.
20. That means Jesus might bring up all of their pasts as well.
21. In my mind the only thing that explains this excitement about Jesus bringing up her past is that...
22. 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.
23. 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.
24. He did not bring up her past and use it as a weapon to hurt and harm her further. No way.
25. 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.
26. He told her everything she had ever done and then he forgave her, and he set her absolutely free.
27. And that my friend is the exact gift that the Lord Jesus has offered and has given those of us who have asked for forgiveness and know Him as savior.
28. In Psalm 103 David describes some of the truths of that gift.

- He forgives our sins and heals our diseases.
 - He doesn't accuse or harbor anger forever.
 - He does not treat us as our sins deserve.
 - His love for us is higher than the heavens above the earth.
 - He has removed our sins from us and thrown them miraculously away as far as the east is from the west.
29. Jesus in his love offers us freedom from every painful thing in our past that negatively affects our present.
30. I pray you have been walking in that freedom this week.
31. This morning let's look at another gift the Lord gives us as disciples of Jesus.

TEXT: **John 4:39-42** Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers. 42 They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

TITLE: **The Gift of Future.**

INTRO:

1. Look with me at the future this woman had after her encounter with Jesus.
2. She arrives at that well weighted down by sins and failures of the past. She arrives at that well willing to debate with Jesus the very truths that could set her free.
3. She arrives at that well confused about what God's love is really like, and she leaves that well and becomes one of the great witnesses of the New Testament.
4. Her witness literally reached the ears of every person in that town. Not all of them believed, but the word says that many of them believed in Jesus.
5. Who, knowing this woman beforehand, would have thought her future would look like that?

6. Probably no human. Probably not even her. But I can assure you that Jesus knew what her future was going to be like because he was the one who was going to give her that future.
7. Part of the gift we receive when we accept Jesus as our Lord, our savior, and our king is that he gives us a future in Him.
8. A future that is infinitely more wonderful than our past.
9. You see, the Lord's desire is not simply to free us from something, in the process he also frees us for something. A future in him.
10. Years ago, I preached a series of messages titled "Forward Facing Faith".
11. God has not designed our walk and journey with him to be spent looking over our shoulder, he has designed our walk with Him to be spent looking forward at the path he is illuminating in front of us.
12. Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.
13. The Apostle Paul in the New Testament book to the Philippian believers summed it up this way.
14. Philippians 3:13-14 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
15. Paul goes on to say in the next verse that all of us who are mature in the Lord should take such a view of things.
16. Meaning, being forward facing and future facing was not just the way he lived, it is the way all of us should live.
17. But to be clear, living that way is not some human thing that we do for ourselves. It is a supernatural gift that comes to us from the Lord.
18. For sure we have to cooperate with, receive, and utilize the gift, but the gift of future is a miracle from the Lord.
19. We know it can't be a human thing because when Paul says I forget what is behind, we know the very first that that happens when someone tells us to forget something is that we immediately remember it.
20. Isn't that the truth? If I tell you to forget your address, the very thing that is going to happen is that your address will instantly pass through your mind.

21. So, this being freed from and forgetting of our past, and looking toward the future the Lord gives us, is only something that can be done with the Lord's help.
22. But as we said last week as it relates to our being freed from our past, we have an enemy that continually will attempt to throw our past in our face.
23. In the same way, the enemy will do everything in his power to keep us from striving for and hoping for the gift of the future that the Lord has given us.
24. And I believe there are a couple of ways that he does that. He does that by sidetracking our thinking with buts and ifs.
25. I am not saying that everyone falls victim to these two traps, but I am saying that everyone is susceptible to falling victim to these traps.
26. So, because of that this message applies to all of us.
27. I want to show you two examples from the Old Testament of how the word but and the word if derails our future.

But.

1. In the book of Genesis, God makes not only a promise with a man named Abraham, but he makes a covenant with him. Here is the covenant.
2. Genesis 12:2-3 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
3. Notice that the promises the Lord makes are future facing. God says I will do this, and I will do that. You don't have the promise just yet, but I am asking you to believe that I will do these things for you.
4. That church is the very essence of faith. Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.
5. Faith is so vital to our walk with the Lord that a few verses down Paul says this. Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God,
6. True faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has to be forward facing and future facing. That's the only way faith works.
7. It should come as no surprise then, that the enemy of our soul wants to wreck our faith so that we aren't able to enjoy all of the gifts God has

for us.

8. So, one of the ways the enemy tries to wreck our faith is to get us hung up on the word but.
9. Fast forward several years in the life of Abraham, and God appears to him again, and again God confirms his covenant and promises.
10. But this time Abraham responds differently. Genesis 15:1-3 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."
11. God is trying to get Abraham to look toward the future, and all Abraham can do is focus on the past.
12. But God. (with a whiney voice) but you haven't given me a son.
13. But God since you haven't given me a son what I have is going to be given to my servant.
14. But God, nothing has worked out for me so far, so why should I believe you for the future.
15. To be clear. I am not throwing Abraham under the bus here because remember, all of us are susceptible to doing the same thing.
16. We are all susceptible to forgetting the fact that what has or hasn't happened in the past has no bearing on what God can and will do for our future.
17. Fast forward several more years, when Abraham is 100 and Sarah his wife is 90, and guess what? God gives them a son in their old age.
18. What God was trying to get Abraham to see, and also us to see, is that the only way what has or hasn't happened in the past can affect the future is if we allow what has or hasn't happened to us in the past to rob us of the faith that is necessary to receive God's future.
19. If we're not careful, God will try and speak to us and encourage us about what he wants to do in our future and where he wants to lead us, and all the while is trying to talk, we are sucking the faith right out of the air by saying, but God. But God.
20. I want to bless you. But God. So and so hurt me. So and so mistreated me. But God. Remember how this didn't work out in the past even though I trusted you.

21. Satan will do everything in his power to get us to focus so much on the but God's of our life that we miss out on God's future.
22. If you are here and that is occurring in your life, for sure you have to cooperate. But what really needs to happen is we need to cry out to the Lord and ask him to change our way of thinking, so our thinking lines up with His thinking.
23. And I am here to tell you that the Lord is waiting on the edge of his seat to bless us with that gift. The gift of future.
24. The other tactic the enemy uses to try and wreck our future is the word if.

If.

1. Allow me to tell you about another man in the book of Genesis beginning in chapter 37 named Joseph.
2. Joseph is the second youngest of 12 brothers.
3. He is his father's favorite, and everyone knows he is his father's favorite because his father has made him a colorful, ornamented coat that he wears all the time.
4. I believe it is safe to say Joseph may have had a pride problem and he may have rubbed his favor in the faces of his brothers.
5. Joseph has a dream about the future, and in the dream, everyone is bowing down to him.
6. The brothers get jealous and sell Joseph as a slave to some people going to Egypt.
7. They sell Joseph to a man named Potiphar, Joseph, though still a slave, prospers in the house and is given favor again for several years.
8. Potiphar's wife falsely accuses Joseph of attempted rape, and as a result Joseph was thrown into prison, again for several years.
9. Years later, while still in prison, Joseph interprets a dream the king has, and Joseph foretells what will happen in the next 14 years.
10. Because of God's favor, Joseph is promoted to the second in command of the entire kingdom. He is given honor and wealth.
11. He is given a wife and starts a life with her, and eventually after a few years he begins to have children.

12. And it is in the naming of his children that we get a glimpse into the powerful healing the Lord is doing in Joseph's heart.
13. Genesis 41:50-52 Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. 51 Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." 52 The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."
14. So, for the first time in about 15 years, Joseph is beginning to feel hopeful about the future. For the first time in a long time, he starts believing that life can be good in the future.
15. But I want us to look closely at the source of this hope for the future. Joseph says in the naming of his first son Manasseh, it is because God has made me forget all my trouble.
16. The source of this future hope is none other than God himself.
17. Please don't miss this. It wasn't interpreting the dream and being freed from prison that made him hopeful for the future.
18. It wasn't being promoted to the 2nd highest position in the land and all the prestige and wealth and power that came as a result, that gave him hope for the future.
19. It wasn't getting married that gave him hope for the future.
20. And it wasn't even having children that gave him hope for the future. The names of the boys are only a representation of what God is doing in the life of Joseph.
21. Joseph gives the Lord and the Lord alone all the credit for the hope for the future that he now possesses. That hope for the future was a gift from the Lord.
22. Let's apply this to our lives. If the enemy can't get us to get hung up on all the but God's in our life, another tactic is to get us hung up on the ifs in our life.
23. If we are not careful, we can look to the future, but we look at the future like this.
24. If I just get a good job. If I just make enough money. If I just meet the right person to marry. If I just have kids or grandkids. If I just get to live in my dream home and drive my dream car. If, if, if.
25. If those things will happen, then I know my future will be bright.
26. Here is the problem with that lifestyle. Every if that doesn't work out

in our favor wrecks the dream and it wrecks our future. And I have to tell you. Even if you achieve all the ifs in your life, the fulfillment of those things will be short lived.

27. A life of future is not one that is built on all the ifs, a life of future is built upon the God of all the universe that holds the future in his hands right this very second.
28. To us the future is out there, and the future is unknown. But to God, the future is in his hands, and he knows the plans and the hopes and the dreams he has for us in the future right now.
29. And because of that, if we put our trust in him then our future doesn't hang on what ifs, it hangs on his goodness and his desire to bless us.
30. One of the gifts of the future, that the Lord wants to give is when we trust him, is to help us remove the ifs from our thinking, and instead start living the future in him right now.

Conclusion:

1. It is not the transformation of our surroundings that determines our future, it is the transformation we allow the Lord to make inside us that determines our future.
2. That woman at the well had a future as a witness for Jesus, not because the lord changed her surroundings. In fact, all of her surroundings were still the same.
3. She had still been married 5 times. The man she was living with still wasn't her husband.
4. She still lived in the same house in the same town. She still had the same amount of money as she had before and the same position in life.
5. The woman at the well had a future as a witness for Jesus because of what Jesus changed in her. And it was that transformation that gave her the gift of future.
6. I want to declare to you that your future is now. God offers you the gift of future right now.
7. His gift is not affected by what has or has not happened in the past; and his gift of future is not affected by the ifs ahead, he is your savior and your king right this minute and he has given you his very self. And

that gives you a future. Receive him as that gift.

8. Prayer for freedom from the buts and the ifs, and the receiving of the future.
9. Call everyone forward for prayer.
10. Holy Spirit, transform my thinking so I will no longer be controlled by the buts of the past.
11. Holy Spirit, transforming my thinking so I will no longer be controlled by the ifs of the future.
12. Holy Spirit, transform my thinking so I can enjoy the abundant life you have for me right now.