

1. This morning we are going to finish our series called "Forgotten Gifts".
2. We have been talking about the billions of dollars that have already been spent and loaded onto gift cards, and I would be willing to bet that today added to that number greatly.
3. Gift cards are great when you want someone to be able to pick out something they really like. However, gift cards can be forgotten about.
4. About 3 billion dollars annually in America goes unspent because the person either loses or forgets that they got the gift card in the first place.
5. I want this gift card to go to someone who won't forget it. Someone who has a razor-sharp memory.
6. Do we have any men brave enough to admit that they have ever forgotten their wedding anniversary?
7. We've been talking about the Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well in John chapter 4.
8. **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."
9. In week one we talked about the gift of freedom.
10. Like this woman, whose past was checkered and not so pretty, when we confessed our sins and asked Jesus to be our Lord and savior, he gave us freedom from our past.
11. The woman runs back to the people of her town, and she excitedly proclaims, come see a man who told me everything I ever did.
12. I would say, come see a man who brought up all my past.
13. No one encourages everyone they know to experience a painful trip down memory lane like that unless Jesus did for her exactly what David describes in **Psalm 103:12** as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
14. Jesus must have set her free from every sin and failure, and I want to remind you. If you know him as savior, he has done the very same thing for you.

15. Your present is not defined by your failures of the past. You have been given freedom from your past sins.
16. Receive that gift of freedom.
17. Last week I reminded you of the gift of future.
18. When the woman walked away from her encounter with Jesus, what lay ahead of her was one of the greatest stories of witnessing to others about Jesus that we see in the New Testament.
19. Who would have thought it? Jesus would have thought it. The moment she received Him she received the gift of future.
20. The moment you received Jesus you received the gift of future. However, we were also reminded that two little words have the potential to wreck our future. But and if.
21. God says 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.
22. If we're not careful, it's possible to suck all the faith out of God's promises for our life.
23. On the other extreme is the word if.
24. If I just get a decent 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. We need to be reminded that our future is bright not because of the what if's, our future is bright because the Lord Jesus holds our future in his hands right now.
27. It's not a change of circumstances that gives us future it is the changes we allow the Lord to make in us that gives us future.
28. This morning I want to remind you of one last gift.

**TEXT:** **John 4:7-10** 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."

**TITLE: The Gift of Favor.****INTRO:**

1. In week one I shared with you that when 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. The Jews so despised the Samaritans that they would avoid, if possible, even walking through the territory where the Samaritans lived.
5. The Jews so despised the Samaritans that they would often refer to or talk about Samaritans like they were dogs.
6. Not beloved family pets who sleep in the bed kind of dogs, the kinds of dogs that were left outside in the cold to starve. Dirty, mangy, dogs.
7. Now. We see no evidence that Jesus felt that way about Samaritans in general, or about this woman in particular.
8. But what we can see from their interaction is that this woman had a pre-conceived belief that Jesus would naturally see her as nothing more than a dog.
9. We know that is true because of her reaction when Jesus asked her for a drink.
10. She responded with shock. And there is an extremely good reason for her shock.
11. We have to set aside our 2022 way of thinking when we consider that Jesus wasn't asking her for an un-opened bottle of water from a vending machine.
12. He wasn't asking her to get a clean cup from the kitchen cabinet and give him a drink.

13. He wasn't carrying a cup with him as he traveled, so he wasn't asking her to fill his cup.
14. Because of my experiences in third-world countries, I believe what Jesus was asking her for was this.
15. At the well, there would have been some kind of small container that resembled a dipper. Some of you will be too young to remember when dippers were everywhere.
16. A container would have drawn water from the bottom of the well, and there at the well, probably placed on a hook after every use, was the dipper that every single person who came to that well used to get a drink.
17. So, when Jesus asked her for a drink from the well, what Jesus was saying to her was, I am willing to drink after you, and every single Samaritan who has ever gotten a drink from this well. Which would have been hundreds of people.
18. That was the reason for her shock. It was a gesture that was done intentionally by Jesus.
19. When Jesus took that dipper and placed it up to his lips and took a drink; without uttering a word, he was saying to that Samaritan woman, I don't see a dog. I see a person who deserves to be loved.
20. I don't see a dog. I see a daughter of the king.
21. When Jesus spoke to her and when he took that drink and when he forgave her of her sins, he elevated her, and he gave her a position of favor that she had never experienced in her life.
22. She had probably been called a dog and treated like a dog so many times that it had just become a part of the way she saw herself. But Jesus was saying, that's not who I see.
23. I don't have to tell you. Words are powerful. Proverbs 18:21 tells us that life and death are in the power of the tongue.
24. Here's the problem though. We know words are powerful, but when we were children, we were probably taught a little lie in the form of a saying.
25. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. That my friend is a lie. Words do hurt.
26. Words can wound. Words can cut like a knife.

27. Every single person here has been wounded by words at one time or another. And some here today have been cut more deeply than others.
28. To the point that you may define your identity by what someone said to you or about you.
29. To the point that it's hard to get their voices out of your head.
30. Who are they? They could have been the kid on the playground who called you a name. Or the teenager in high school who made fun of some aspect of your body in front of a group of people.
31. They could be your parents, your siblings, a boyfriend, or girlfriend. In reality, they could be anybody.
32. But I beg you to move with me past that to the truth. And the truth is they don't define you.
33. This past Monday morning for several hours this phrase just washed over me as I thought about this message.
34. **You are not who they say you are, you are who Jesus says you are.** And who you are is favored by God. (repeat)
35. How do I know who you are is favored by God? Because I believe the Christmas story is a story of God's favor toward us.
36. A few weeks ago, someone said to me, I don't think the birth of Jesus is a very big deal. To which I responded. I think the birth of Jesus is a huge deal. It is the revealing of Immanuel. God with us.
37. Have you ever thought about what it cost Jesus, what he had to lay down, for us, to be the God who is with us?
38. Sometime when you have a moment, read the book of Revelation chapter 4. There we find a description of what God's throne room looks like in heaven.
39. The one who sits on the throne shines in brightness, glory, and majesty. A rainbow circles the throne.
40. The throne in the middle is surrounded by 24 other thrones, and the elders sitting on the thrones have crowns of gold.
41. **Revelation 4:8 Day and night they never stop saying: "'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,' who was, and is, and is to come."**
42. Contrast that to the birth and life of Jesus. Jesus submitted to being born a painful birth.

43. Jesus is born around smelly animals, with a manger as a bed.
44. Rather than being praised and glorified 24 hours a day, he submits himself to earthly parents.
45. The king of kings and the Lord of Lord allows others to tell him what to do.
46. Rather than being praised and glorified 24 hours a day, he is misunderstood, made fun of, talked about behind his back, plotted against, mocked, physically abused, treated as a common criminal, and crucified a horrible death, by the very people he helped create.
47. All of this so that we could be elevated and shown favor.
48. He humbled himself, and at the same time he lifted us up in the greatest display of love the world has ever known.
49. I repeat again. **You are not who they say you are, you are who Jesus says you are.** And who you are is favored by God.

## **Conclusion:**

1. This Jesus, who put his lips on the dipper, the very dipper that many so-called less than people had drank from, this same Jesus wrapped himself up in humanity, and came to earth, so that every time we cry out to him, he can truthfully say, I know exactly how you feel. I experienced that pain too.
2. That is favor.
3. My prayer this Christmas is that all of us will not longer get our identity from our past mistakes and our present uncertainties, but instead will receive our identity from the love shown by Jesus.
4. Pray.
5. As we sing this last song and light our candles from the front to the back, sing it as the story of God's love and favor towards you.
6. Silent Night.