

The Story of Hope #14

Violation of Expectations

John 1:35 - 4:45

Story of Hope Section 24-25

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Life is full of the unexpected. Sometimes positive and sometimes negative. If you think back just this week you can probably identify some of both. Our story in this section will be no exception.

Jesus has been baptized, overcome the temptation of Lucifer in the wilderness and has been proclaimed the Son of God and the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. What a beginning to this rescue story! But, as readers and hearers of this Story of Hope, there's one thing we know for sure, this Rescuer is not following anyone's expectations except His Father's. There is a rescue plan unfolding, so what will the next pages reveal about this plan and this Rescuer?

First, Jesus begins to gather a group of 12 men (disciples) who will be his closest friends and followers during his rescue mission. These men drop everything to follow Jesus knowing that he is more than just a man. That fact is quickly reinforced as Jesus begins to perform miracles showing that somehow he has authority over the physical world AND spiritual world. These miracles obviously gain Jesus quite a following and they validate the claims that Jesus is making about God and himself. The Jewish religious authorities have been waiting for this rescuer as well, but they expect him to come alongside and validate and support what they have been doing. They believe they are the righteous ones, and they expect to be recognized and appreciated as such. However, when Jesus does first interact with them at the temple (John 2:13-22) it does not go as these leaders had planned. Jesus upends their tables and drives the merchants out of the temple, scolding the leaders. This begins the conflict between Jesus and these Pharisees, Sadducees and teachers of the Law. They had a very clear expectation for what this rescuer was going to do, and Jesus was not doing ANY of those things. We will see this conflict continue to escalate as Jesus ministers to people and teaches about God and himself. Though not all of the religious leaders had a growing animosity toward Jesus. There were some at least that were willing to hear what Jesus had to say, after all he was doing incredible miracles, indicating some supernatural authority. Our story today focuses on two completely opposite people having one on one conversations with Jesus and uncovering some powerful truths about God's rescuer and rescue plan. We will see the themes of **God, Man, Sin, Death, Christ, Cross, Faith, Life**.

First we see Nicodemus, a Pharisee, coming to Jesus in the cover of night to test and see who Jesus actually is. (John 3:1-21) The fact that Nicodemus comes at night reveals that Nicodemus has a desire to not be seen in this conversation with Jesus. There would be plenty of opportunities to come and publicly challenge and question Jesus, but Nicodemus doesn't want people to know he is there. Probably out of fear of the other leaders as well as being undecided about who Jesus actually is. He refers to Jesus as "Rabbi" or teacher, showing that he has a high level of respect for Jesus that seems to have come mostly from Jesus' ability to perform miracles and teach with authority. At first glance Jesus' response to Nicodemus' is cryptic and odd. But as their conversation continues we see that Jesus knew exactly what Nicodemus needed to hear and talk about. Nicodemus was under the impression that he had life pretty figured out, and that since he was one of God's chosen people he was right with God. Jesus quickly reveals that that is not the case, and never had been the case. God was always asking for belief and faith, in the Jews first, but then in the rest of the world. And Jesus, the lamb of God, reveals to Nicodemus that he is the one whom all must believe in to be saved from

spiritual death. Jesus revealed that he must be lifted up, like the serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:6-9) and that those who believe in him will have eternal life. We will see later in the story that Nicodemus seems to have responded to Jesus invitation in faith.

Shortly after the conversation with Nicodemus, we see Jesus engaged in another unexpected conversation. This time with a Samaritan woman in the heat of the day. This woman could not be more different than Nicodemus. He was an upright, religious elite, son of Israel, God's chosen people; She was a 5 times married, adulterous, outcast Samaritan woman, and Jews had no love for Samaritans. A Jewish religious leader was expected to avoid this woman like the plague! Yet Jesus goes out of his way to head into Samaria, knowing this meeting is part of God's rescue plan. While resting at a well, this Samaritan woman comes and he asks her to get him a drink. Just like with Nicodemus, their conversation quickly moves into spiritual territory as Jesus knows exactly what she is truly "thirsting" for. The life giving water that only he can provide. As their conversation continues Jesus reveals that he supernaturally knows about her 5 previous husbands, and that she is currently living with a man who isn't her husband. This miracle helps her to recognize Jesus is more than simply a regular man, and she asks him if he is the "Messiah", the rescuer they have been waiting for. And here, sitting at a well with an "unclean" woman, Jesus declares for the first time that he is indeed the Messiah.

So what is God revealing through these two polar opposites being attracted to this one rescuer?

Jesus meets us where we are, to move us to freedom. Whether we are the most put together, righteous looking, well respected person. Or the most broken, rebellious, immoral outcast, Jesus comes to us with love and truth, right where we are. He doesn't require that we clean ourselves up, or fix our prideful perspectives before he comes to us. He desires to enter right into our mess regardless of what it is, to bring us the life changing truth that can set us free. But we see that he isn't content to leave Nicodemus or the Samaritan where they are, but brings them truths that speak to their heart needs, with a desire to move them toward freedom. Neither of them have it figured out, but Jesus doesn't wait until they do, because he knows that unless they "are born again" or "drink of the living water" that they won't ever be truly free. We need to realize that no matter how "clean" or "dirty" we feel, Jesus wants to speak to us and bring his life changing love and truth into our lives to rescue us. First to rescue us from death to life, and then to continue rescuing us from the sin in our lives, by the power of his Word.

Belief in Jesus is THE way to be rescued. Time and time again we have seen God provide a single way to be rescued. One door into the ark, the blood on the doorway, one path through the red sea, one bronze serpent. Each and every time there was one way to be rescued, and one required response, belief. Belief that God would be true to His word and Promises, and rescue those who believe. Each and every time God proved faithful to that promise. Jesus prophecies that he will be lifted up, so that those who would believe in him would have everlasting life. He is the one who can give living water, that can quench the deep needs of the soul. He is the one way, and the way he will rescue is not what anybody expects, but it is exactly what everybody needs.