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Week 15: Rescue Life, Last week

James & Betty Robison

Joakim Lundqvist

Studio discussion:

JAMES: Welcome to *Life Today*. I want to tell you something. I've been listening to a man named Joakim Lundqvist. He said I actually pronounced that right. Both words -- he's from Sweden. I want to tell you something. I don't know that I've ever heard a preacher that I've been more impressed with because of the Jesus that I hear and see every time he speaks. Also, the wisdom that comes from above.

You know, we talk about founders doing some good things, and one of the things I'm saying to all leaders right now, and thank God we've got some leaders right now who seem to believe that there might be wisdom available. Well, our founders understood that they needed the wisdom of nature's God, and that's what we need. Every one of us needs to be seeking the wisdom that only comes from nature's God and the direction that only comes from divine providence. That's what we're praying for.

Well, this guy is seeing it. He's from Sweden. He's seeing miracles there. They were in need of miracles now. There are miracles needed here. He's seeing them. I think he's helping inspire them. So, Joakim, I want to tell you, buddy, I'm glad to have you right here at the Life Today studio.

JOAKIM: Thank you so much for having me.

BETTY: Good to have you.

JOAKIM: Thank you.

JAMES: Well, have you enjoyed your journey in the United States, especially at this time?

JOAKIM: Oh, we love it here. You guys are like world champions of social interaction. Every time we come, we've never met more friendly people. That's quite a contrast to Scandinavia. People are great in many ways, but very also reserved and introverted in a sense. So it's like a social relief for us just to come here and enjoy the friendship and the warmth, of especially the South. We absolutely love it.

JAMES: Well, Texas, they are basically a friendly people, a welcoming people. Have you seen that in the state of Texas?

JOAKIM: Oh, yes!

JAMES: But have you seen it in other places all over America?

JOAKIM: Not necessarily, no. I think you break the record of friendliness. I flew in from London last weekend, and the contrast of London Heathrow Airport, where everything is very proper and very organized, and people stand in line and don't say a word to each other. Then I land, arrive at the blessed airport of DFW, and the volume, and the chat, and the friendliness just overwhelms you. I feel very, very welcome here.

JAMES: Well, I think I'm seeing some very definite changes in the United States of America that were desperately needed. Would you agree, as a person, a foreigner that's been welcomed over here, but from Sweden? You've seen plenty there and you've seen plenty all over Europe, all over the Middle East, but do you see some pleasant things happening right now and some things that you would have to call supernatural?

JOAKIM: Oh, yes, for sure. It's a special situation in Sweden and Scandinavia. Sweden is the second most secularized nation in the world, and the number one most individualistic, which is not a good combination at all. But there are some benefits that come with that as well. Because man will try to shut God out but God will never allow himself to be shut out of anywhere. So,

what we see now is a young generation whose hearts are opening up for the gospel. We see people more receptive and more embracing of the gospel than I've seen in years and years. Actually, the two categories that we see accept Christ the most right now in Sweden are young people and Muslim immigrants who come from the Middle East. They come out of their Islamic environment, and most of them will not be radicalized, they get secularized. But they still have this God-shaped hole on the inside. So, when we share the gospel of Jesus with them, we've seen so many times that within three days after hearing the gospel, Jesus himself appears in a dream or a vision, and they see him and they come to faith. So, we have so many people called Muhammad now in our church, and Ahmed. We didn't see this coming, but we just reached out to that community and gave them the love of Jesus and the radical gospel of Jesus. I was amazed by how open those hearts were. So, we had to start a new Bible school that is a special Bible school for former Muslims. We have graduated 450 students in the past few years. And still, 70% of those who come to faith in our church are former Muslims who open up their hearts to Christ. So, it's just a whole new ballgame completely.

BETTY: Tell us your story.

JOAKIM: My own story? Well, oh, it's a special one! I was born and raised in the countryside. My father was a priest; not only my father but both my grandfathers and all my four uncles were priests in the Lutheran church. Now, the Lutheran church is the state church of Sweden. But it's sad to say that nowadays it's more like a cultural institution than a real church. So many priests in the church don't believe in God. They're there only to uphold traditions of the past, basically.

So, I never really saw anything in that church that attracted me as a young teenager. So, I rebelled against God when I was 14 and tried to run away from him and away from my Christian upbringing. But then when I was 16, I had a friend of mine, and he was a grandchild of God as well. You know, raised in a Christian home but then rebelled. But he was kind of getting a bit interested in God. Like can I find God somehow? So, he heard about this youth conference that was like a three-hour drive from us. He came up to me and lied to me in Jesus' name. He said, "There's a party going on! A huge New Year's party, and it's going to be

amazing. There's going to be booze, there's going to be girls." He just flat-out lied to get me there because he didn't want to go himself.

So, I went with him thinking about this being a great party; planning to get high and everything. I entered this room and what I saw was like a hundred young people with their arms lifted. I heard worship music for the first time in my life, and I felt the presence of God. My first gut instinct was to punch my friend in the face. But before I even had the chance to do that, I was overwhelmed by God's presence. And a guy in his mid-20s got up there and shared for the first time from the Bible in a way that I could understand and receive. Right at the end of his speech, maybe 20 minutes later, he said, "If anyone wants to receive Jesus, wants to get a new life, you can come to the front." I was already at the front crying my heart out at 16 years old, encountering the presence of Jesus, giving my heart to the Lord.

And I know and respect that for many people it's a process but for me, it was a one-night revolution. It was God grabbing me by the ankles and shaking me violently but lovingly until all that's left was a young heart in love with Jesus. I remember coming back home after that experience, and my father was down at the train station meeting me up. He expected me, I guess, to come home hungover and red-eyed. Instead, I come out from the station and say, "Dad, praise the name of Jesus forever!" I still remember his face going, what just happened? He got me in the car, drove back to the vicarage, sat me down at the kitchen table, and said, "Joakim, what has happened to you?" And I got to share with him about Jesus, and about the Holy Spirit, and the presence of God. He started crying and said, "Can you pray for me?" And I prayed for my father, I prayed for my mother, and God brought us back together as a family. One year later we started a church together.

JAMES: That's great. Thank you, Jesus.

JOAKIM: Yes. Thank you, Jesus.

JAMES: How did you end up over here? And tell us what you want us to hear in light of what you're watching, seeing, and what you're sensing in the Holy Spirit that you would want us to hear and know.

JOAKIM: Well, three years ago, after having pastored my church for 26 years in Sweden, and seeing God do amazing things, God put it on the heart of my family to make a second home here in the U.S. and just be available for whatever I can do and help out with. I hear a lot of U.S. friends of mine, pastors, and leaders being worried about the U.S. going down a secularistic direction; what has been happening in Europe for a few decades, might happen in this nation too. And I don't know. Maybe I'm sent here to be a voice of encouragement that even in an environment of secularism, the church has in itself the capacity to flourish in any circumstance. The gospel of Jesus will never, ever be stopped. We've seen that in so many ways.

The Word of Life movement is now about 950 churches. Our churches are in nations like Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, all through the Middle East, Central Asia, and China. I mean, in every nation in the world where there's a problem, there's going to be Word of Life churches there. We just pray that we didn't cause the problems. But it's just a beautiful thing to see that the DNA of the Church of Jesus is really that there's this power that the book is also about. That whenever there's darkness, the light will always pierce that darkness, and the gospel of Jesus will always shine brighter than ever.

JAMES: It will expose the way, and it will also reveal and expose the darkness, and what's in the darkness will be exposed. Light does nothing but good.

JOAKIM: Right! And the darkness doesn't like that at all. It doesn't want to be exposed. Basically, my reason for writing this book is simply to encourage believers that, you know, Matthew 5:14 Jesus says, "You are the light of the world." And just to put faith in that fact. Because traveling the world, I see a lot of people, especially young people who doubt their ability to shine the light because they don't feel they have the right personality or the right gifts.

Or I'm not the pastory kind of guy. or preachery kind of guy. And then they say, oh, being used by the Lord is not for me.

But I feel my life mission is to look into any eye and tell them that God has placed his light inside of them. If Jesus lives inside of you, there's a fire, there's a passion, there's a light that can light up your world. Whatever personality you have, whatever giftings you might have or not have, God can, and God will use you if you put faith in it.

BETTY: People are looking for hope. They're looking for that light. We need to -- we're God's children. He makes us lights. We need to shine as bright as we can while we're here with Him.

JOAKIM: That is so true! Can I tell you a story in regards to that? For context, in Sweden, among the many negative things that are happening in our society is that we have a terrible abortion rate. And especially, if a woman becomes pregnant in Sweden, she will do a certain test called K.U.B. And that is to diagnose if the baby she's expecting has Down syndrome, and if it turns out it does, 95% of those kids are aborted, which is such a horrible message also to send to the Downs' community. Basically, saying, you shouldn't even be here. You're not worthy to be alive. So, our church wants to be counterculture to that culture of death. So, as of now, we're running 11 Christian schools, and two of them are specifically for kids with special needs; kids with Down's syndrome, just to celebrate them and celebrate their presence here in the world.

A few years ago, one of these kids, an 11-year-old boy was down in our city center with his teacher doing what we call "city training." This is basically where we teach these kids how to cross the street, how to make a purchase in a store, and how to get about in a normal city environment. Now, all of a sudden, this 11-year-old boy just stops in the square that forms the center of our city, and he starts to sing at the top of his voice. The teachers had never heard him sing this song before. And he's holding this solo performance on the big open square. The teacher says, "Yeah! Sure! Sing your heart out. It's fine." Minutes later, a woman comes up to the teacher, tears running down her face, pointing to the boy asking, "Why is that boy singing that song?" The teacher said, "I have no idea." Turns out this woman has been suffering from

months and months of severe depression. She's given up all reasons to stay alive and go on living. That very morning, she prayed her very first prayer to God. She said, "God, if you're out there and if there is a reason for me to go on living, give me a sign of your existence. Give me a sign of your love for me. Have someone sing that special song today that my mother used to sing to me when I was a child." Minutes later, she crosses that square, and when she passes the 11-year-old boy with Down syndrome. He hears the voice of the spirit and he starts to sing that exact song. That woman gives her life to Jesus right there on the square.

JAMES: Isn't that great!

JOAKIM: Then when the teacher brought the kid to me and she told the story, and she said, "Sing the song to pastor." The boy said, "What song?" He couldn't sing the song. He couldn't sing it before or after. But that blessed moment when that song needed to be sung, that saved her life. And I love that. I do believe that that's what we need to realize. First Corinthians says that God chose the weak things of this world. That's what this book is all about, basically.

JAMES: You're full of light and you're full of the life of God. Do you sense a special anointing that you're experiencing here in America as you address various challenges and situations?

JOAKIM: Yes. I consider the U.S. a storage house. There's so much beauty here. There's so much faith in the word of God here. There's so much anointing of the Holy Spirit here. I am forever grateful because when I became a Christian when I was 16, there wasn't a single spirit-filled book in Swedish. Everything I read was books from the U.S. So, thank you! I do believe still to this day, there is so much teaching, there is so much spiritual strength, there's so much prayer, and there's so much authority that can come out from this nation to bless other nations and bless the church in other nations.

So, I do believe that's part of the plan while we're here, also.

JAMES: Don't you think we've been left here with purpose to make a kingdom impact on planet Earth?

JOAKIM: We are.

JAMES: You have to enter the battle. And Jesus says you can be overcomers. You can be more than conquerors. His will can be done on earth as it is in heaven. We're to pray for that. So, don't you think it would be important for the church not to be looking for an escape but looking for a place to make a kingdom impact on God's earth? And walk over the enemy like dust.

I believe the church, if the people will come together and look like Jesus, then they will see in the body of Christ the reality of the living Jesus. If the children of the perfect Father would just be the family of that Father, the whole world would see the beauty and the magnificence of a Father and a family like that. To me, that's the most exciting thought I've ever had.

JOAKIM: Oh, that's beautiful!

JAMES: That's a whole lot more exciting. I would be going into eternity, which is going to be great, but we won't have those aspects. We won't be able to fulfill that command to overcome the enemy to be more than a conqueror. We've got to do it now.

JOAKIM: Yes! And isn't it amazing that when Jesus speaks about the end times in Matthew 23, and Matthew 24, he speaks about all these things that will happen that are dark and bad? But then he says, "Lift up your eyes. That's going to be your best time. It's going to give you the best opportunities, the greatest open doors."

JAMES: Goodness and mercy following you all the days!

JOAKIM: All the days of your life!

JAMES: If people want to get a hold of you and hear some of your sermons, what is your website?

JOAKIM: PastorJoakim.com. Obviously, the book is on Amazon as well, and you can find it in your Christian bookstore.

JAMES: Well, I will tell you right now if you will help us put God's arms around the forsaken and the abused children that are being taken captive and made sex slaves, and we have been setting them free by the thousands because of people like you helping us all over the world, and have likely built some of the largest rescue homes on the planet. They're effective because they're overseen by people who are sent by God, filled by the Holy Spirit of God, and they are totally committed. We were led by God to ask all our viewers to enable them to do the mission work, and enable them to have the facilities and resources.

Right now, we have an opportunity to refurbish a new place that can become a home immediately for 50 girls, where there are no more rental properties or anything available. And then, the \$128 to rescue one. How about you rescue 10 with a \$1,280 gift? Would you right now join us in rescuing truly the perishing, setting them free with the love of God? And if you'd like to have *Shine Your Light*, we will send you this incredibly inspiring book. Please listen, watch, and respond to the Father. Thank you.

Transition roll-in:

>> Human trafficking, what it means is modern-day slavery where vulnerable people are exploited in two categories. One is labor trafficking, forced labor, and the other is sex trafficking.

>> Traffickers who traditionally would sell guns or drugs are now turning to selling children. Because a gun you can sell once, a drug you can sell once, but a child you can sell over and over again.

>> Just tied the hand, both hands like that. That customer will be having sex with that child.

>> Our restoration home is overflowing. This is a problem. And guess what? It is a great problem to have. This is something where God is answering our prayers to rescue victims of trafficking. Now we're saying, Lord, will you answer our prayers with another home?

TAMMY: Here's the incredible news today! That our mission partners have found property. All we need to do is help raise some funds today, right now, to help renovate this home that will provide for up to about 50 girls. Which to me is incredibly exciting! So, if the Father is speaking to you right now to come alongside us and partner with us in continuing to restore this incredible space that the Lord has given us as the family of God to help restore one life at a time then come on! Come along with us. Let's do it together.

Studio appeal:

JAMES: Just look at those children, Betty, being loved. When I see the joy that was there over a building where they rented every space they could for the last year, there's nothing left. And then all of a sudden, this building became available, which was a miracle. All we have to do is renovate it; just bring it up to speed to take 50 girls to start with. I can't help but believe they'll find ways to even take it beyond that unless they've got some kind of law they can't move past. But it's going to be a whole new way of life for 50. We need \$1,250,000. Now, you say that's a lot! Well, how about a thousand people right now write a check for \$1,000? That's a million of it. And then another 250. Why don't you join them and write a check for \$1,000? You see, we can get it. People are listening right now who can give \$10,000 or even more than that.

But you're giving these girls a chance at life who have been subjected to total slavery and abuse. Horrible! Indescribable! We have been doing everything we can to rescue. When I say "we" I mean me and Betty, and our team, even the missionaries, you're the ones who make it all happen. You're the ones that send them there, keep them there, and they're not empty-handed, and you help get the facilities.

Father, please help everyone watching to get their bank card and use it like a check and make a great gift. They write a check and make a great gift. Please, God, give us this prayer and give us

hundreds of people who will give the \$128 necessary just for the cost of rescuing one. Please God, in Jesus' name.

There's a level at which you can help. \$128, that's the money it takes to +save one to begin the restoration process. Reach them, rescue them, and then restore them. Would you please make that gift? If you can give toward the building, what a miracle that would be. Give the largest gift you can. I don't care if it is \$100, and that's the best you can do, Jesus complimented a woman higher than anybody else who gave two mites. Just basically looked like nothing but it was big to God. So, whatever you can do to help us give life to these precious children who have been trafficked; give them this beautiful place to be able to grow and be restored, and then go out to set others free because they will.

This is the last week that we're able to raise the money that we're talking about and to take care of the girls for the next months. Thank you so much for doing this. Go and get your bank card. Use it like a check. Get a check. Make it to *LIFE*. Please do it right now. We have some gifts to send you that I know will bless you. You're going to be giving the greatest gift. You're giving the great gift of life because of God's love flowing through you and the mission workers. Thank you.

Rescue Life – Last week Cause Spot:

ANNOUNCER: Innocent children longing to be loved and cared for are being abducted and sold into the evil industry of human trafficking. Through Mission: Rescue Life, your gift today of only \$128 will help reach, rescue, or restore a child and change their destiny forever. Gifts of \$64 or \$32 will be combined with support from others to help rescue one more child from the shame and pain of sexual slavery. Currently, one of our Rescue Centers in Southeast Asia is at maximum capacity. With the need never greater, we need to secure and renovate a new Rescue home that will offer refuge and restoration for up to 50 trafficking survivors. Please consider an additional gift as we urgently need \$1.25 million above our normal budget to secure and renovate this place of hope. With a gift of any amount, we'll send you Sleep on This by Dr. David Jeremiah.

This nightly devotional will help you let go of your anxieties and rest in peace as you reflect on inspiring promises from God's word.

With a gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive the elegant mug set, "A Beautiful Morning." Both generously sized mugs are inscribed with encouraging scriptures to begin your new day. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 which will help save 10 children. And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Lion of Judah."

This is the last week. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

DR. JEREMIAH: Hello, this is David Jeremiah, and I'm excited to share a new resource with you. It's called *Sleep on This*. An evening devotion I wrote to help you reflect on God's word just before you rest for the night. Each brief reading will help you deepen your relationship with God and prepare your heart and mind for peaceful sleep. I hope you'll request a copy of *Sleep on This* today. Be assured that you will be helping advance the Kingdom of God. God bless you.

Studio good-bye:

JAMES: I don't want you to just get this book, I want us all to be a light. Let his light shine through us.

Now remember this, please. This is the last week of this particular emphasis and outreach. We need some big help today, last week. Thank you again, Joakim. Thank you for being such a blessing.

JOAKIM: Thank you so much for having me.

JAMES: Everywhere you go, we see Jesus. Thank you for helping us share Jesus. Thank you for helping us share *Life Today* every day all over the world.

