



**Luke 8:1-3**  
**The Women Who Serve Jesus**

NKJ Luke 8:1 Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve *were* with Him,

2 and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities -- Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,

3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

I have to admit that my initial tendency when I came to chapter 8 of the gospel of Luke was to treat these three verses as a sort of preamble to the parable of the sower – or more properly the parable of the soils, and thus to simply do some quick exposition of them and then pass on to the really important material of verse 4 onwards.

But as I was studying verses 1-3, it began to dawn on me that these verses are important in and of themselves, and if we are to put them in the right context they actually function more as an important post-script to the story of the woman who washed Christ's feet that we considered last week than the do the parable that we will be contemplating next week.

It also occurred to me that the Holy Spirit had a definite reason for giving us this information, and to pass lightly over any thing that God has chosen to record for all eternity is very unwise. Apart from all of that I think it behooves us to look into these verses because in these verses we see a wonderful example of some of the godly women of the bible front and center before us – and if we Christians constantly pass by those examples, I think that you begin to encourage this perception the only way women can serve Christ is by acting *as men did*, **and that brothers and sisters is profoundly wrong.**

All believers, both Men and Women are both called to serve their savior, and while there are often similarities in the ways we serve him – there are just as many differences. Here for instance we see the women of Christ's inner circle, who were just as close to the Lord as the Apostles, who lived and traveled with him, who had the awesome privilege of sitting at His feet and hearing his teaching – including all those fuller explanations that he reserved for his closer companions, and yet they do not do the things the disciples did.

This does not mean that they were one wit less faithful. In fact, I think it is worthy of our note that it was the women of Christ's company who were constantly arguing who was the greatest, who gave him answer like "Not So Lord," who were secretly stealing from the bag. The women were not the ones who betrayed him for silver, neither did they desert him even when all the Apostles were high-tailing it or swearing at the tops of their lungs they didn't know him.

We do not read that during those awful hours on Golgotha, as Jesus was paying the ultimate price for our Sins and the wrath of the Father was being poured out on the Son, that he was surrounded by the

Apostles. Rather John tells us, that the only other followers of Christ who wept for him there were women.

Later after Christ's final victory over death and sin and the devil on the Cross, on the third day when he rose again. Who did he appear first to? Was it Peter? John? Thomas the Doubter? NO! The first one Jesus appeared to was the woman whom we read Jesus had delivered from bondage to demons, it was Mary Magdalene! What an awesome thing that the first person to see the risen Lord was a woman who was herself a living testimony to the delivering power of Jesus. Who better to appreciate what the resurrection really meant than this woman!

Now, while it is wonderful to contemplate that nowhere in any of gospels do we read of any individual women who treated Christ with scorn or contempt, I do not want any of you to jump to the false conclusion that women are just inherently more godly, more Christian, more "spiritual" than men. That may fly on Oprah, but you know only too well from names like Saphira, and Herodias, and Jezebel, that Judas had plenty of peers amongst the fair sex.

What it does tell us is that Christian women can and should serve Jesus just as faithfully as any man. And in a few moments we will consider some of the many ways to go about doing that.

We read in verse one of this passage that, from the time he left the Carpenter's shop to begin his earthly ministry, Jesus was always about his Father's business. He was constantly going from town to town preach the Good News of the Gospel, and indeed He told His disciples that it was for that purpose that He had been sent. As he did so he was accompanied by the Apostles and by these women whom he had delivered either from demon possession or illness. They served Him who had served them so well, delivering them from terrible afflictions in this life, and most importantly from damnation and their bondage to sin.

They served Him, it says here, out of their "substance." That is their possessions, their goods, their wealth, their property. But they did not only serve him from their goods, we read in Luke 23 that it was they who prepared the spices and oils for our Lord's body in the grave, and what a mournful duty that must have been – too much for a Peter, and yet Mary does not hesitate to perform even this saddest of services. These women did not hesitate to serve the Lord with the labor of their hands as well.

There is a lesson there for you, beware of thinking that once you have given a little money here or there, provided some cash for a missionary overseas perhaps, that you have fulfilled your requirement to serve the Lord. *Giving money is only the beginning.* Nominalism (that is an empty profession of faith) in every age, especially amongst the rich, has often been accompanied by monetary contributions. Whether it is to be seen by others, as was the case amongst the Pharisees, or perhaps as a balm to soothe a nagging conscience that is desperately trying to tell them they are yet unsaved, many a false professor has given from his surplus. Let that never be the case with you though. You may not have a penny to your name, but you can still spend your life in service to the Lord.

Is there a friend who is sick, and could use a gift of food? Is there an elderly and lonely Christian desperate for fellowship? A young mother whose husband is deployed who could benefit from your help or your counsel? ***Don't you know one person who hasn't heard the gospel? Spend a little of your street credit with them and tell them about Christ.*** Yes, it may be embarrassing, but trust me, there may come a day when you hear of their passing and wish with all your heart that you'd endured a little embarrassment for the sake of their eternal soul.

[particularly apply this to the women of the congregation – that women often *more* opportunity to witness than men]

Now, before I get down to applications, let me give one warning, and this is also of particular importance to women. Service is of critical importance, the Evangelical church would be an infinitely better place if we all had a servants heart towards one another, and as you can see from these verses the service that these women rendered to Christ was part of the means that allowed the gospel to be spread through Galilee and Judea, and service is still a necessary part of the spreading of the gospel. But **never, ever** allow service to become an excuse for not attending on the means of grace. Serving should never be something that keeps you away from the preaching and teaching of the word, or from prayer, or the sacraments.

Turn if you would to Luke 10:38

**38 Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house.**

**39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.**

**40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."**

**41 And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.**

**42 "But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."**

For Christ to be preaching and for Martha to be in the kitchen cutting up vegetables, was a tragedy. She and Mary should have both been at the feet of Christ. Now what does that mean for you? Well it can mean that every surface in your house doesn't need to sparkle in order to host a bible study. **It can mean that if your only choice is between giving the kids a bath or doing family worship with them before you put them to bed, you choose to scrub their S-O-U-L-S instead of their S-O-L-E-S.** *Dirt you will always have with you. Opportunities to spiritually feed God's little lambs are not so common.* Its for that reason that I ask that you not sign up *twice in a row* for snacks or the nursery.

Now there are countless applications here, let me give you but three:

- 1) *The first concerns Charity.* You read these verses and you see a beautiful example of the giving of charity – but you see an even better example of receiving it. Now if Christ was willing to gratefully receive the assistance of these women, should we be so prideful as to scorn it? Often times those who will not accept the charity of others in times of their greatest need, who indeed refuse to see their need at all, are also those who will not accept the salvation freely offered by Christ, but instead insist on working for what they have no capacity to obtain! Incidentally, try telling Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord cast seven demons, that we are saved by our own free will, rather than by the will and the power of a Gracious God alone.

Another important note related to this theme of charity – Sheep provide for the shepherd. But are they somehow being ripped-off? Would anyone say that these women who provided for, and traveled with, and sat at the feet of the Savior didn't get a bargain? Sheep are protected, and fed, and watched over, and warned, by their shepherds. In a very real sense, often literally, the shepherd's life is spent on the sheep. Sheep do well to make sure that their shepherd doesn't have to split his attention between the flock and some other occupation in order to survive.

Hopefully this will be as thought provoking to you as it was when it occurred to me. Can you imagine how awful it would have been if Jesus had only been able to perform his earthly ministry on the Sabbath because he had to spend the other six days of the week in the Carpenters shop??? Do you realize how well these women [indicate the bible] **SERVED YOU?**

I can extend that; I am served to this day, by the women of the congregations of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and Jonathan Edwards, and Thomas Watson, and indirectly so are you. O, Brothers and Sisters, remember how important your acts of charity really are! More important to the kingdom than you will ever know this side of glory.

2) The Devil who has long tried to pervert God's creation order has always been about the business of persuading Men that they must act like women, and women that the only way they can be happy is if they take on the roles and actions of men. In families this often leads to men abdicating their spiritual responsibilities entirely, and leaving their wives to take over the duty of spiritually leading the family. As bad as it is in the family the Devil is doing equally evil work in the church: "Paul you must now be Mary Magdalene, Magdalene change places with Paul."

As I said before though, we have fostered this belief by not lifting up and explaining the godly and faithful examples of the Joanna's the Susanna's, the Priscilla's and I fear we have actually fostered the idea that somehow Peter was of more worth or more faithful than Mary Magdalene. Which means if a women *really wants to serve the Lord she can only do it via an **ordained** ministry which the Bible says is the calling of men. Not at all!* Peter had a different God ordained *role*, but Mary's service was not one wit less worthy.

As one commentator put it: "There is a place for everyone who is willing to be used by the great Master-builder who leaves no stone out of the wall if it is fit to be built into it. There is something for the twelve to do, and there is something for the holy women to do, and we cannot do without either of them, and in that last great day when the rewards are distributed, there will be as much for Joanna as for John, and as much for Mary Magdalene as for Simon Peter. Did they not each, according to their utility, serve the Lord Jesus Christ?"

I feel that the church needs to be lifting up the example of women like these, let me give you just one – **Mary Winslow. {Recommend *Life in Jesus, and Heaven Opened*}**

3) Finally, Look at the example of the women we have seen last week and this week, each one of them was a monument – an *ebenezer* – of his power and mercy. They had been healed of demon possessions and sickness. Some we know where great sinners, and please do not fall into the common assumption that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute, the demon possessed typically manifested strange behavior that would have made this impossible, it is more likely for instance that the wife of any steward of a famously evil tyrant like Herod was probably an even greater sinner than Mary prior to conversion. But regardless of their situation or their station all of them had stood afflicted, all of them had also stood condemned, and yet Jesus the great Physician of the Soul, healed them all.

Look at them, eternal memorials, and realize that no matter how great your sins, you should never despair of being pardoned – there is no sin so great that the blood of Jesus cannot heal it. And if through faith in Christ alone, you have felt his healing pardoning grace, how much more eagerly

should you too be looking for ways like these women - to serve Him. *Those who have been forgiven much, Love much.*