

# In The Company of Christ

*Luke*

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**Bible Text:** Luke 8:1-3

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## **Founders Baptist Church**

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Good morning. If you would please turn to the gospel of Luke chapter eight. And this morning in our study of Luke's gospel we have come to chapter eight verses one through three and I want us to read this together.

Luke chapter eight verse one. The Word of God says this.

Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.<sup>1</sup>

Let's ask God's blessing on his Word as we study it together this morning.

*Lord, our hearts are satisfied to give you worship. It is a strength to us, Lord. It is food to us. We are encouraged. We are at the same time examined as we worship in your presence. We know, Lord, that we are being prepared for whatever it is you have for us not only throughout the rest of this day, but if we should live and if Jesus doesn't come back today, then you are preparing us for what we will face tomorrow and into the future. I pray that we would be mindful, Lord, that today truly may be the last day that we worship together on this side of seeing our Savior's face, that it really could be. And, so, Lord, we would have about us today a sense of seriousness and intensity, earnestness and sincerity as we look into the mirror of your Word. We do ask, Lord, as has already been prayed, we ask for an empowerment of this time. We know, Lord, what we are. The preacher knows who he is and the listeners know who they are. We know, Lord, that we are nothing, flesh, blood, a breath, a vapor so that, Lord, without your strength and without the ability that you give, this hour would be in vain. So please work and move and in that way, Lord, demonstrate who you are and point us all to you and to your Son. We pray for anyone in this room who doesn't have spiritual life, who doesn't know the Savior. We ask of their salvation. And for your saints we ask, Lord, that your work would*

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 8:1-3.

*be done in us this day through the proclamation of your perfect Word. We ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we have come this morning to one of these summaries that you find in the gospel of Luke. There are these places along the way where as I have told you earlier in our study of Luke's gospel it is as if he gives us a snapshot a picture and he just says, "Look at it. Pay attention to it."

We have a group of some details, some explanation about some things, but no real commentary to help us understand why it is here, what the meaning of it is. But we know that the Holy Spirit did not put this here for no reason. And we know if we will meditate upon it and think upon it and pay attention to it, there are details here that represent the opportunity for our lives to be changed powerfully. This summary section is like a bridge. It helps us to connect what we are about to learn in verses four and following on in Luke's gospel. It helps us to connect with what has come before.

You will notice the first words of verse one say soon afterwards. Soon after Jesus has met with his forgiven woman in the Pharisee's house we learn the lessons we learn from her humility and her boldness in worshipping her Savior. Soon after this he went on through cities and villages proclaiming and bringing the good news and of the kingdom of God. And if we ask what kind of reception was his message getting, how were people responding to his preaching? Well, that is where we pick up in verse four. In fact, tonight be present, because it is a very practical, important look at what we should expect as we go about our way in this world serving as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. What can we expect as we seek to evangelize the world in terms of the world's response to the preaching of the gospel?

The parable of the soils and it is an important word that we will look at this evening. But in between this, right, in between what we have met with in this forgiven women and in between what we are going to meet with in the parable of the soils, you have this little summary section and our task this morning together is to look at it and ask, "Lord, what do you have for us from these verses? What do you have for us here?"

And we are going to break our look at it down into two main points. We are going to look at the work of our Lord, his earthly ministry, the work and then the workers, the company of people who were traveling along with him. There is a message here about the work and there is a lesson here about the workers.

Let's read the verses together again.

Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone

out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.<sup>2</sup>

Now we begin with the work. This is what Jesus did during the time of his earthly ministry. We have already been looking at this, seeing this, that after these astounding things would happen, whether it be healing someone or casting out demons or even in the case of the widow's son in Nain, raising someone from the dead or meeting with a forgiven women and teaching lessons from that, what Jesus did regularly was he would travel about from these villages and towns and cities and he would preach the gospel of the kingdom. This was his work. And there is a really amazing lesson to be learned from his work. Three things I want to point out.

First of all, think about the direction of his ministry. Jesus is not engaging in ministry haphazardly. We look at him traveling on one particular day. He gets up early in the morning. He travels all day long to this little out of the way place called Nain and just as he arrives at that little town coming outside the city is a funeral procession and there he demonstrates his power over death as he raises that widow's son from the dead. The day was planned by the Father so that what Christ did is he simply executed his Father's will. What Christ is doing is not accidental. It is not incidental. It is not just off the cuff. Every day of his life, every day of his ministry it is right on target. It is right on schedule. He simply is walking in his Father's will every day. This is how his ministry is directed. This is what explains the course of it. This is what explains the substance of it. He is walking perfectly according to the will of his Father.

And what is amazing to me is that his Father's will, the will of the Father for his Son was often so ordinary. I mean just the ordinary nature of it is somewhat amazing. Christ is not gathering thousands and thousands in some great stadium. He spends most of his time not in the city of Jerusalem, but now he is in the north. He is in Galilee. He is in these little towns and villages. He is going about meeting people, preaching a message. I mean there are extraordinary things happening. We know that, miracles and all the rest. But most of the time what he is doing seems from our vantage point to be so small, so ordinary and yet this was the Father's will for his Son. Think about who the Son of God is. Think about who Jesus of Nazareth is. This is God come from heaven though an incarnation. You have God in human flesh on the earth. And he spends his entire life in this little land of Israel. And he is walking on the earth making his way throughout these little towns and villages and he is preaching. This is the Son of God on the earth and this is God's will.

We live in the day of big. Everything is big. Even if it is not big, it is proclaimed to be big. Our strategies are big. Our venues are big. Our advertising is big. Millions of iPhone 5 phones were sold before they were ever delivered. It is the day of big. And yet the Father's will for his Son is counter intuitive in almost every way.

We could say it this way. If you look at the life of Jesus it wasn't so much about the broadness of his work. It was about the depth of it as he pours his life for the most part

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

into 12 men, one of whom was a devil, he knew this from the beginning, so 11 who will carry on the work after he dies on a cross for our sins. He is raised into heaven and he will entrust the gospel work to the small band of followers in whom he has invested his life in training.

You see, it wasn't about the broadness of it. It was about the depth of what he was doing. And 2000 years later we still feel the impact of it. We carry on the work as his people even today so that what characterized Christ's work is what should characterize our work. We are not meant to do everything. We are meant to do something and the something that we are to be about is that something that God has ordained. So that as we as his people are led by his Spirit, as we pay attention to his Word, what we are to do is we are to in a discerning way strive to understand, Lord, what do you mean for us to do? What do you mean for me to do? What do you mean for us to do? And then let me give myself to it with all that I am. Let me be fully invested in whatever it is that you mean for me to be about in this world. I am not meant to do everything. I am meant to do something. And so it turns out to be not about the broadness of what we are involved with, but the depth at which we are involved with it and the quality of the work that we are investing in. Are we doing what we are doing with excellence?

John MacArthur said it once and he said it very well. He said if we will take care of the depth of our ministry, God will take care of the breadth of our ministry. He also said that every open door is not a call. And every need is not a call. And he is right. Every time there is an opportunity for you to do something in ministry, that doesn't mean that is what God wants you to be doing. And just because there is a great need and someone is saying, "Hey, will you come and help us. There is this need." That doesn't mean that is what you are to be doing. So that just as Jesus walked according to his Father's will every day, so that is our task to try to discern, Lord, what do you mean for me to be about. And then we wholeheartedly, once we know what that is, we wholeheartedly pursue his will for our lives. And in that way impact happens. It is almost incidental. It is almost accidental. It is almost an overflow of simply walking in his will and then digging down deep and investing ourselves well in what it is that God has called us to do.

So I think about our Lord traveling through out these villages and little towns and this is the Son of God. I think about the direction, the course of his ministry. And then I think about the priority of his ministry. As he is going about in these villages and towns, what is the main thing he is engaged in? What is he most characterized by? Verse one says:

"Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God."<sup>3</sup>

He is preaching. We get our word evangelism from the word that is used here. He is evangelizing. He is a proclaimer of truth. This is our Lord's main work. He is a preacher. Yes, he worked miracles. Yes, there were signs that accompanied his life and ministry, but the main thing that God's Son was on this earth was he was a preacher. And that was God's chosen means. This is the way that God the Father meant to use his Son on the

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 8:1.

earth before he would give his life a ransom for many on the cross. He would be a preacher.

1 Corinthians 1:18 says:

“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”<sup>4</sup>

The world looks at preaching and it seems to be foolishness. But for those who are saved we recognize the foolishness of a message that this been preached to us and the foolish of the method and the means as resulted in our salvation. God’s power has been on display through this foolish message, as the world considers it to be, and this foolish method, as the world considers it to be. This is how God brings sinners to himself. This is how God brings men and women into a relationship with his Son.

1 Corinthians 1:21 says:

“For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.”<sup>5</sup>

God’s foolishness is wiser than the world’s wisdom. God’s power is stronger than the world’s strength and almighty God has chosen to use preaching in this world. This is still the priority of the Church. This is still the priority of our ministry. This is the priority in terms of our public worship setting. But this is also the priority as we leave the worship setting. We are a people who have been called by God. In fact, we have been commissioned by him. We have been commanded by him to take the good news to the world. This is our task, people. It is not just to come and sit and listen and learn and go home and then do it all again. It is that we might learn the gospel well to live lives that glorify God and then take that gospel message to a thirsty, hungry, dying people who need this message in order to be saved. This is our task. This is God’s chosen means of saving the world.

This was the priority of Jesus. This is our priority. And can’t you see how the Church is missing that in our day? How it seems like we all come together into our churches—I am talking now about the church generic, right, across this country? Isn’t it amazing how it seems we come together for almost anything but preaching? Almost everything but the message? And yet this is the priority in his ministry.

So I think about how his ministry was directed. I think about what his ministry was in terms of its priority. Something else as I look at this is I think about the substance of his preaching message. What is he preaching? Well, he is bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. What does that mean, the good news of the kingdom of God? What was Jesus preaching? Well, he was preaching a salvation message. He is bringing the gospel. The gospel that is the message of himself. He is preaching about himself as the Lamb of

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:21.

god who takes away the sin of the world. When you hear kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven realize they are synonymous. It is just a different way of saying the same thing. If we said, "Heaven help us," we mean God help us. These are synonymous ways of expressing the fact that Jesus preached the good news of salvation.

Let me give you a passage that explains that. If you would, keep your Bible marker here and go to the gospel of Matthew, Matthew chapter 19. If you ask what is the preaching of the kingdom of God or the preaching of the kingdom of heaven? Here is your answer. Matthew chapter 19. This is right after Christ's encounter with the rich young ruler, verse 22.

When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."<sup>6</sup>

So they are synonymous, kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God. And what did his disciples understand him to be talking about? Next verse.

"When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?'"<sup>7</sup>

What do they understand Jesus to mean when he is talking about entering the kingdom of God or entering the kingdom of heaven? They understand him to be teaching this is the way someone is saved. This is the message of salvation. You have a kingdom, that is a realm. You have a king, someone who rules over that realm. To enter that kingdom is to become a subject of the king living in that realm. And so this is just a way of picturing God's rule in the spiritual realm over the hearts of those whom he has brought to himself and saved. Christ is preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. He is explaining how sinners are saved.

Look back, if you would at Luke chapter eight. This was his message, the good news of salvation. He is God's Lamb who lays down his life, the perfect spotless Lamb of God who lays down his life willingly, dies on a cross because you and I deserve the wrath of God. We deserve to be damned forever for our sins, both our sinful nature and our sinful choices, because of who we are and because of what we have done. We deserve the judgment of God.

Christ, God himself came from heaven and lived a sinless life as a man on this earth so he was qualified to take our place, die in our stead, to deliver us from the wrath of God that is coming, to deliver us from the judgment that we deserve. And he paid not for a portion

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 19:22-24.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 19:25.

of our sins not that cross, those who will believe in him and trust in him, but he died for all of our sins, past, present and future, all paid for by the blood of the Lamb of God.

Who did he die for? He died not for everybody. He died for all those who will place their faith and trust in him. He died for those who were chosen for salvation before the world was ever made. So he entered the world for a people. He lived for a people. He died for a people. He was raised for a people. And how do you know whether or not you are one of those people? Will you repent of your sins and submit your life to the king? Will you turn from life lived your way, salvation's pursuit on your terms, will you turn from your way of thinking about God, your way of thinking about self, your way of thinking about life, your way of thinking about eternity, will you receive God's message about his Son and about the human race and about what our need is and about how men are saved, will you believe God by trusting in his Son, not just as a Savior but as King, Lord, master, ruler over your life? And when you trust in Christ you enter the kingdom and now you belong to the realm of salvation and Jesus rules over your life. He is seated on the throne of your heart. He has taken the possession of you and he lives in you forever and ever in the person of the Holy Spirit.

This is salvation and this is what Christ was preaching. So in this little transition summary we are reminded of the direction of Christ's ministry. It seems so small. It seems so insignificant, but it is not insignificant. As he travels through these villages and cities we think about what the priority of his ministry was. He is preaching. He is preaching the Word of God. And what is the substance of his message? He is preaching salvation in himself. He is declaring the good news of the kingdom of God. This is what he is about. And here we are, again, I say, 2000 years later and look at the results of something that didn't seem very broad at the time. It just was a deep investment in 11 ordinary men and look at what the Lord has done. And it is a great reminder to us that if we will take care of the depth of our ministry, God will take care of what? The breadth of our ministry. We leave that to the Lord.

Now the second thing I want you to notice with me, not only the work, but notice the workers. Notice the workers.

And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.<sup>8</sup>

The Holy Spirit wants us to take note of the company of people who were travelling with Jesus. This is why their names are preserved for us. This is why this little section exists. The Spirit of God wants us to pay attention to them. And there are some things I want to point out about this company of workers.

First, I want you to note in your mind the smallness of the company. And I don't mean

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 8:1-3.

small in size at this point. I mean small in influence. I want you to think about the fact that these were not highly influential people who were chosen by Christ to travel with him in the case of the disciples, the 12. But even when you think about those who were publicly associating themselves with Christ, these were not highly influential people. But we have already talked about, we have already learned about the 12. These were common people, common men. Most of them Galilean fishermen. Again, think about the plan of God. You are sending your Son into the world and he is going to choose—and he did this after much prayer, an entire night in prayer—he is going to choose 11 men who are going to serve as the foundation for his Church. He is God in human flesh. He can choose anyone whom he wants. He can go out into that society and choose the brightest, the most powerful, the most wealthy, the best educated. He can choose anyone whom he wants. He has authority over all flesh to give eternal life to whomever he wishes so he could choose anyone whom he wants and he chooses Galilean fishermen. Is that how you would have done it? It is not how I would have done it. But that is what he did.

And this wasn't lost on society, this choice that Jesus made. Their insignificance, their lack of influence, it wasn't lost on society. Acts chapter two verse six, day of Pentecost:

And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"<sup>9</sup>

And we have already talked about the low opinion of the people who lived up in the north, Galilee. They were thought to be compromisers in terms of the culture around them. They weren't really as Jewish as they needed to be.

"Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?"<sup>10</sup>

Listen to Acts chapter four verse 13.

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus."<sup>11</sup>

Uneducated, common men.

You know, one of the real problems in the church of our time is that we so long to be respected in the eyes of the world. We want to be thought of as somebodies, right? People who are wise, people who are mighty, people who are noble. It is like the unpopular kid at school who works really tough to fit into the popular crowd. That is what the church of our time reminds me of sometimes. Please notice how wise we are,

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<sup>9</sup> Acts 2:6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 2:7-8.

<sup>11</sup> Acts 4:13.



how mighty we are, how noble we are. And we forget that that Lord turned the world upside down with men whom the world looked at and said, “These are uneducated men, common, but they have been with Jesus.”

Will we remember that? Will we pay attention that? Will we care more about how we are walking with our Lord than how the world perceives us? The smallness of the company. Also notice the variety in this company of followers. There is variety all over the place. There was a variety in terms of personality. We know that. You got Peter who was fiery and you have got other in the group who were more measured in their responses to things. There was variety in terms of personality. That variety still exists in the followers of Christ. You know, if you are going to choose the local church based upon everybody being just like you, you are going to be disappointed because in the Church of Jesus Christ everybody is not just like you. There is great variety in terms of personality. There is great variety in terms of background, in terms of our past, who we were before the Lord saves us. In this company of 11 disciples, remember you have got a tax gatherer in Matthew and you have got zealot in Simon, you know, who is Mr. anti Roman government guy. So you have got Matthew who is working for the Romans in terms of gathering taxes. These guys would have killed each other before conversion, but here they are serving the Lord together.

So there is a variety of personality. There is a variety in terms of their past, their background. There is also variety in terms of gender. It is important that the Spirit of God here is pointing out to us the fact that there were women who were traveling with the Lord Jesus. We are going to meet with these women later on. Mary Magdalene... and, by the way, Magdalene means she was from the town of Magdala. It is just a way of identifying her. Here is a woman we are going to meet with later on in Luke 23 and in Luke 24. She is present when Christ is crucified. She is sitting across the way from where they put his body in a tomb. She is there when they find out that he has been raised from the dead. In fact, John 20 tells us Mary Magdalene was the first eyewitness of the resurrected Christ. He appeared to her first.

So you have got Mary. You have got this woman named Joanna who happens to be the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager. We are going to meet with Joanna again in Luke 23 as well.

One of the things that Luke is alerting us to, remember this is a bridge that also takes us forward. He is alerting us to the faithfulness of these female followers of Christ. They remained with him to the end. They remained with him to his crucifixion. They remained with him in terms of the resurrection even though their initial report of the resurrection is not believed, Luke chapter 24. These are faithful, godly women whose lives have been transformed by Christ. Having been forgiven much they now love much and they are faithful to him. Susanna we don't meet with anywhere else and so perhaps Luke knew her well or she was well known to the early church. But you have not only men who are following Christ and serving him well, you have women who are following Christ and serving him well.

I was thinking about it this morning when Kelly stood and introduced our school staff. And, folks, you do know this, but I want to keep reminding you. Our school is a ministry of this church to be prayed for, to be loved, to be supported in every way because it is a ministry of this church. And I couldn't help but take note of the fact how many women were standing and how many women are pouring their lives through the ministry of the school into the next generation, Lord willing, of Christ followers. Women are powerfully used in the kingdom of God, powerfully used in the life of the Church.

But men and women are to be used according to God's design, functionary roles. We are not the same in terms of what our function is to be. Each, male and female, are bearers of the image of God. He created them male and female. Each valuable to God equally, spiritually gifted by the Lord after salvation to be used of the glory of his name and yet the Bible teaches a complimentary way of men and women serving the Lord together so there are unique roles for women in the home, in the church and in society. And the Lord, ladies, can powerfully use you.

But don't buy the satanic lies of this culture that promise to exalt you when, in fact, they demean you. Don't take your cue about what it means to be a woman, what it means to be a godly woman, especially, don't take your cue from the culture. Go to the Word of God. What does the Bible teach about men and women?

And so the Lord honors these women. The Holy Spirit honors these women by giving us their names, telling us, and we will see in just a moment of their faithfulness. We see this in this little summary as well.

Also there is a variety not only in terms of personality and in terms of their paths and in terms of gender. There is also a mixed company in terms of their place in society, because you have Mary Magdalene and we are told about her. She was possessed before the Lord saved her and delivered her. She was possessed by seven demons. Now if you can imagine the power over a life where someone is demon possessed and then you multiply that by seven, there can be little doubt that this woman was living a very dark existence before the Lord delivered her and set her free.

On the other end of the spectrum you have got Joanna who is the wife of Chuza who is the household manager or a governor—the word could be used either way—the gospel is already having influence in high places, already reading into Herod Antipas' household and having an influence over the realm in which he lives and exists.

So you have people who have influence and means to some degree, at least their husbands do. And you have this woman who was living this demon possessed life but they both have the same story. Christ is their King. He is their Savior. He has delivered them. They have received the gospel of the kingdom of God and now they follow him.

So we know that the smallest of the company. We note the variety that is in the company. Notice also the glory of this company. It is a glorious company of people. It is glorious. I have already made mention of it, but I want to drive the point home that here you have

Mary Magdalene who was delivered from demons. She is not alone, by the way. Do you notice how the text reads?

“... and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities.”<sup>12</sup>

More than one has been healed. More than one has been delivered. Mary is just one who has been named. She has been delivered from demons. I don't know what her past life was like. She was not a prostitute, by the way. There is no biblical evidence for that. She is not to be identified with the woman in chapter seven. But she was demon possessed and now she walks with Christ openly. And get this. He is not ashamed of her. She does not represent an embarrassment to him. She is not a drag on his ministry. In fact, she, along with these others and everyone else who will ever be transformed by Christ, she serves as a trophy of the grace of God. Her past, because she has been transformed now speaks of his power.

Christian, I want to ask you. How do you think about your past? Do you think sometimes that where you have been is an embarrassment when it comes to where we are all going? Do you think of your life, your past life as an embarrassment when it comes to the ministry of the gospel or the preaching of the kingdom of God, to the life of the Church? I say to you that your past, if you have truly been converted, if you have truly been transformed, if you are now a new creation in Christ Jesus, if your life has been changed, if you have repented of your past and now you walk with Christ, your past, far from being an embarrassment to the gospel is a testimony of the gospel. Look at who I was, but now look at who Christ has made me. Look at where I was, but now look at where I am going and look at how I am living.

And I say to you that this... Listen. This is the glory of the Church. The glory of the Church is its transformed life. It is that we are not the people we once were. It is that Christ has made us a new people.

And just as the church sadly seems at times to strive for acceptance in the world, so it seems to me that many times the church of our time misunderstands her glory.

This is interesting. You let some famous actor or actress say that they are a Christiana and we are immediately ready to parade them all over the place. Let some famous athlete say that he is a Christian and now we plaster his face everywhere. His name is everywhere. We parade him everywhere. There even some churches that they will bring celebrities through on Sundays just to attract a crowd. And the glory that we are promoting in that way is not a glory that is represented in a transformed life. It is a glory of celebrity that has been established outside of Jesus. And so we think the way we are going to relate to the world is to say we have people you think are glorious who also say they believe that we believe. We want you to look at their earthly glory and associate it with Jesus.

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<sup>12</sup> Luke 8:2.

Some of these people have been transformed, praise the Lord. Some of them haven't. We just like their glorious worldly reputation. But the glory of the Church is not celebrity found outside of Christ. The glory of the Church is the glory of a life that is brand new because of Jesus Christ. I am not who I was. Christ has made me his own. I do not live as I once did. He has totally transformed my life. That is the glory of the Church. It is the glory of Christ. It is the glory of the power of the gospel. That is the glory of the Church.

The apostle Paul understood this when he writes 1 Timothy 1:16. Listen. He says:

“But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost [sinner], Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.”<sup>13</sup>

Paul says, “You know what my life represents? This. If he could save someone like me, he can save you. If he was patient with someone like me, the chief sinner, someone who persecuted the Church, someone who had a hand in putting Christians to death. If he would save me, he can save you.”

Notice also the commitment of this company of people. What do they do? They give what they have. Verse three.

“...and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.”<sup>14</sup>

These people who were following Christ, what are they doing? They are supplying for the needs of Christ and his men, the apostles. They are supplying for them out of their finances. This was not unusual. This is the way that many rabbis are supported and this is still God's plan to support those who preach the gospel. I won't read it, but you can read 1 Corinthians nine. You will see that there.

By the way, the Pharisees would also, the religious leaders of the Jews would allow women to support their ministries, but they did it often in a way that was immoral. Luke 20:46 says:

“Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses.”<sup>15</sup>

They would go to these widows who had means and they would devour their means. But there was a legitimate way that all of us who have been transformed by Christ, who have been saved by Christ are meant to be committed to him, not just by our presence and not just by our receptivity to the message, but out of our means we are to advance the message of the preaching of the kingdom of God. We are to advance the work of the

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Timothy 1:16.

<sup>14</sup> Luke 8:3.

<sup>15</sup> Luke 20:46-47.

gospel. And these people evidenced their faith in Christ by the commitment of their worldly possessions to the ministry of Jesus and the apostles.

Now, finally, last thought, think about the impact of this company of people. because they are joined by others of the same kind, these simple people, this ragtag group of people. And yet you are not very far into the book of Acts when you hear someone say, they have turned the world upside down. It is not worldly influence. It is not worldly power. It is not worldly wisdom. It explains the impact of the Church, the impact of the gospel. It is the wisdom of God. It is the presence of God. It is the power of God that he could take a nondescript group of people and use them, uneducated, common, no great power, no great connection in society, use this nondescript group of people to literally transform the world with the message of God's Son.

Well, the work hasn't changed, has it? You go to the book of Acts and Luke takes the beginning of the book of Acts, he presents just as a continuation of the things that Jesus began to do. The Church is just continuing what Jesus began to do in terms of preaching the good news of Jesus. We just carry on that work of preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. The work has not changed. The company has not changed. Not in its influence. There are a few among us who maybe could say you are noble. A few among us who maybe could say truthfully that you have influence, you have wealth, but not many of us. Most of us that is not us. The company hasn't changed in terms of its variety. We are still different personalities, different background, different past, different cultures. And this company has not changed in terms of its true glory. Our glory is not any kind of worldly celebrity. It is that our lives have been transformed by the Son of God. It is his glory. We point the world to him.

But I will give you two things that might have changed, that must not change. What of our commitment? Has that changed? These followers were committed to Christ even to the point eventually most of them of losing their lives. It wasn't just their presence. It wasn't just their listening. It was the commitment even of their means to see the gospel go forward.

And I ask you this morning. Can it be said of you right now that you are a whole hearted all in totally committed follower of Jesus Christ? Does your commitment look like theirs? And then the second thing that might have changed is the impact. Because you see, folks, listen. If the commitment is not there, the impact will not be there. Look at our nation right now. Look at the condition we are in. Anybody here agree? We are in a spiritually poor condition as a nation. Morally poor condition as a nation. Now think about how many churches are gathering in this country this morning. Think about how many professing Christians exist in this nation on this day. Where is the impact of the Church? And I am not talking about political impact. The world is not going to be changed by politics. The world is going to be changed one soul at a time through the preaching of the gospel. Where is the gospel impact of the Church of Jesus Christ in this nation in this world? Where is it? In terms of the American condition of the Church, where is it? And I say its lack of impact is probably explained in this way:

“So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”<sup>16</sup>

We are here. We can't say we are cold. But we are not hot. We are just here. And then we wonder why there is so little impact. So I exhort you as I exhort me, let's be whole hearted all in, completely committed followers of the King, the Lord Jesus. And the Church would say amen.

Let's pray together.

*Lord, we thank you for the privilege to declare the beauty and the glory of your Son. We thank you for this snapshot you give us that helps us to understand his work, that helps us to understand those early followers and helps us, Lord, to examine ourselves against such a standard. And where we recognize this morning that we fall short, wherever we recognize, Lord, a lukewarmness instead of a passion for our Savior and for the work of the gospel, I pray that your Church would repent, that we would receive the truth that we have heard today and that we would turn in the direction of embracing and living it and, Lord, I pray that you would use us to turn our own area of the world upside down. I pray that this church would have great impact beginning right here in our community, not some artificial impact that we have envisioned or worked up, but, Lord, just the impact of digging deep, investing deeply, being faithful to the gospel and in that way being faithful to your Son. Let us, Lord, not worry about the breadth of our work, but worry about, concern ourselves with the depth of it and then, Lord, we ask you to work powerfully and to impact not only the moment but the future with our efforts and we ask you for this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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<sup>16</sup> Revelation 3:16.