

Message #32**Luke 8:1-3**

Just recently we were watching an old western and there was a woman in the western who was famous for being in many westerns, and I could not remember her name. So I hit the info button to see who it was and her name was not listed. Now there were men listed and there was even a young boy actor listed, but the woman who was far more famous than the boy was not listed. That isn't right. That woman was more famous than many of the men in the western and her name should have been listed. Well, women are listed in the Bible and they are sure listed by Dr. Luke.

When we travel through this gospel of Luke, women are very important to Luke's research and ministry narrative.

- 1) There is Elizabeth (1:5-7, 13, 24-25, 36, 40-45, 56-61)
- 2) There is Mary (1:26-56)
- 3) There is Anna (2:36-38)
- 4) There is Peter's mother-in-law (4:38-39)
- 5) There is the widow of Nain (7:11-17)
- 6) There is the sinful woman (7:36-50)
- 7) There are the women who support the ministry (**8:1-3**)
- 8) There is the hemorrhaging woman (8:43-48)
- 9) There is Martha and Mary (10:38-42)
- 10) There is the crippled woman (13:10-17)
- 11) There is the parable of the woman with a lost coin (15:8-10)
- 12) There is the parable of the widow and the judge (18:1-8)
- 13) There is the story of the widow's mite (21:1-4)
- 14) There are the women at the crucifixion (23:49, 55-56)
- 15) There are the women at the tomb (24:10-11)
- 16) There is the report of the women at the tomb (24:22-24).

When Christ was actually here in Person on earth, what we learn is that some of the most loyal members of His discipleship team were women. In fact, women were the last to leave the cross (Mark 15:47); they were the first to get to the tomb (John 20:1) and they were the first to proclaim Christ's resurrection (Matt. 28:8).

Faithful women were some of the first faithful believers who financially supported Christ so the work could progress. These women financially gave of their resources so the work of Jesus Christ and the work of the Apostles could go forward. These ladies played a significant role in supporting Jesus Christ so He could take His ministry to different places. These ladies who supported this ministry are very important to God because He remembers them and names them in His Word. They do get credit and they are eternally remembered.

What we see here is this:

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST PROGRESSED AND MOVED FORWARD BECAUSE SOME KEY WOMEN WHO HAD BEEN TOUCHED BY HIS MINISTRY GAVE THEIR MONEY TO SUPPORT HIS MINISTRY.

We owe a great debt to these women. They willingly and continually gave to the ministry of Jesus Christ and the Apostles so that the Word and work of God could move forward.

There are four plain facts brought out in these three verses:

FACT #1 – Jesus Christ was primarily focused on a proclaiming and preaching ministry. **8:1a**

Do not overlook this because most people and most churches do overlook this. **The top priority of Jesus Christ, while here on earth, was to proclaim and preach the truth of God.**

The participles “proclaiming” and “preaching” are both present tense, meaning this was Christ’s continual and habitual focus of His ministry. Christ’s primary focus was on preaching and teaching God’s Word and any minister who is after a Christ-like ministry will have the same focus.

The word “proclaim” (κηρυσσω) is one that refers to verbally preaching and heralding a message in a public and authoritative way (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 246). This word is not just sharing stories or thoughts; it means to proclaim and herald God’s Word.

The word “preach” (ευαγγελιζομενος) means to proclaim or announce good news (*Ibid.*, p. 184). He was specifically preaching and teaching the good news about “the kingdom of the God.” He was preaching that sinners could get into the Kingdom through Him. He was preaching and teaching on that theme.

Jesus Christ, first and foremost, established Himself as a preacher and teacher. As God, He could perform any miracle He wanted to dazzle crowds, but that was not what He did. The thing that stands out about Jesus Christ is that He was a preacher and teacher (Luke 4:15, 16, 21, 31, 44; 5:1, 3, 17; 6:6; 7:1; **8:1**).

Now what is most important to see here is that these women saw the value of His preaching ministry. They saw the value in supporting Christ’s ministry as it went from place to place preaching truth. Now the truth He was proclaiming was truth about “the Kingdom of God.” The primary point He preached was that people did not have the righteousness to get into that Kingdom, which is why He was here. He preached a non-works, non-merit, grace gospel. He could forgive sin and give people the righteousness to get in. He went from place to place preaching this and the women supported Him.

Any church with a true Christ-like philosophy will place a high priority on preaching and teaching God’s Word. The church that will end up being praised by Jesus Christ will be one that was devoted to carefully and accurately preaching and teaching God’s Word.

It is interesting to observe that Jesus Christ and His Apostles did have real financial needs, but the primary emphasis they had was on preaching and teaching God's Word. There is no record where they ever begged for money. There is no record of Him performing a miracle and then taking an offering. There is no record of Christ having His Apostles dig into the ground and find a pot of gold. What He did do was keep preaching the truth of God.

As Jesus kept His focus on that, God raised up some very faithful women who took it upon themselves to financially support Him and His ministry. A true Christ-like ministry will be one focused on preaching and teaching God's Word. That is the kind of ministry worth supporting.

This point is being lost today. Frankly there are so-called churches that should be shut down and boarded up. They are not focused on careful and accurate preaching and teaching of God's Word. They are focused on programs, concerts, entertainment, coffee, movies, plays, bands and stories. Some of these places are taking in huge offerings. But one day, when they get before Jesus Christ, they will all be broke.

Do not overlook this verse. Jesus Christ's ministry was focused on preaching and teaching God's Word.

FACT #2 – Jesus Christ had the twelve with Him. **8:1b**

If we count Christ and add twelve, we have at least 13 people, which does not even include the women. The amount of money that would be needed to support a group this size would be considerable.

These Apostles had left everything to follow Jesus Christ and they had walked away from very successful careers. Peter, James and John had been successful fishermen (Luke 5:11). Matthew had been a successful tax collector (5:27-28). Providing enough money so 13 people could have food, clothes and shelter was no small commitment. I am certain that these Apostles invested their own money to support the work, but after a while that money would run out.

These twelve were really Christ's family. They lived with Him, travelled with Him and learned from Him. At this point they were His students. They had been listening to Him and learning from Him for a little more than a year, and they were being groomed for future ministry that would last for a duration of about 60 years after Christ went back to heaven.

Christ would never allow His disciples to beg for money (Luke 9:1-3). He would never allow them to do a miracle for money. He would never say go to the people and tell them if they don't give right now the ministry will collapse. He would not tell them to say to the people that it is urgent that you send us your donations or we won't be able to make it. Those who do that are not following the example of Jesus Christ or the Apostles.

There is no question that an entourage this size did have financial needs. How did God meet those needs? He raised up people, specifically faithful women who took it upon themselves to give to the ministry so the ministry could move forward.

Jesus Christ had a “no nonsense” type of ministry. Jesus taught His disciples to have the same mindset. They were strong preachers and teachers of the Word of God. This is the kind of ministry that is worthy of financial support.

FACT #3 – Jesus Christ’s initial financial supporters were women. **8:2-3a**

There were undoubtedly many women who supported the preaching and teaching ministry of Jesus Christ, but three are specifically named here. Luke records their names in the inspired Scriptures and they do get eternal credit.

Now having women follow some religious teacher around Palestine and supporting Him with money was very rare and even suspicious. The culture was such that when Jesus even spoke to a Samaritan woman, it baffled His own disciples (John 4:27). Furthermore, if you were a woman who just took off to follow Jesus Christ and support Him, you would clearly not be home to take care of your husband or family. We know for example that Susanna was married. So for these women there would be somewhat of a stigma to this. But they were convinced that Jesus Christ was in fact the God/Savior/Messiah/King and they followed Him and supported Him and three are named here:

Woman #1 - Mary Magdalene supported the preaching ministry of Jesus Christ. **8:2a**

The first on the list is Mary Magdalene. She was from Magdala, which was a city located on the west side of the sea of Galilee, about three miles north of Tiberias. At one point, Mary had been possessed by seven demons.

The fact that she had been possessed by seven demons means that she was completely demonically possessed. She was a woman totally controlled by Satan until she met Jesus Christ. Her life was dark, depraved, depressing and totally miserable. Since she was totally demon-possessed, she had no power in and of herself to change her situation. She was hopeless and helpless until Jesus set her free.

After she had been healed by the Lord, she committed her life to Jesus Christ and followed Him. She watched the crucifixion; she saw where Jesus was laid; she participated in the anointing of His body and she was the first woman to see the resurrected Christ (Mark 16:9), which shows her commitment. She obviously was using her money to support His preaching ministry. That is the point here.

There are two observations to make here:

(Observation #1) - Jesus Christ can set you free from anything.

There is total cleansing and delivering power found in Jesus Christ. No matter how evil you may have been, no matter what sins you have committed, Jesus Christ can and will forgive you and deliver you, if you will come to Him as Mary did. If Christ can transform and use a woman who had been completely demon-possessed, He can do that with anyone.

(Observation #2) - Those who are committed to Satan may have a great deal of money.

Mary Magdalene obviously did have some money. This is Satan's world and those who are allied with Satan often do have some wealth. In fact, Dr. Luke recorded another episode from the life of Paul in which a demon-possessed woman made lots of money (Acts 16:16).

The beauty of Mary is that once she came to faith in Jesus Christ, she used her money for the Word and work of God. So Satan lost.

Woman #2 - Joanna supported the preaching ministry of Jesus Christ. **8:3a**

Joanna was the wife of Chuza, who was some leading official or "administrative official" who worked for Herod Antipas. It may be that Chuza supported his wife traveling with Christ. Since he worked for Herod, she could be his personal spy and report to him what Jesus was doing.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ had reached into some big names and high places. Joanna was totally committed to Jesus Christ and she too was one of the first to go to the tomb when Christ arose (Luke 24:10). She used a great amount of her money to support the ministry. There is no record that Chuza was behind this support, so this was of her own doing.

Woman #3 - Susanna supported the preaching ministry of Jesus Christ. **8:3b**

Nothing much is known about her. She is only mentioned here. We don't know if she was single or married. But God specifically wanted her named in His Word for her faithful support of His Son and His Apostles.

These three women became the initial financial backers of Jesus Christ and His ministry. They were wealthy and they used their wealth for the glory of God.

Ministry takes money and those who see the value of a ministry that proclaims truth do lay up treasures in heaven. What is fascinating about this is that Jesus was performing all kinds of miracles, but He did not perform miracles to produce money. He got money through normal giving of people who loved Him and His Word.

To be sure, Judas was part of the twelve and he did not deserve to be supported. Sometimes there are people in the organization who do not deserve to be supported. They are traitors and their lives are a shame. But we must leave that to God.

We want to make four observations:

(Observation #1) - The women's support was willing support.

Christ never begged or asked these women for a dime. They willingly gave and are remembered for all eternity because of it.

(Observation #2) - The women's support was devoted support.

These women gave because they personally were devoted to Christ and His ministry. They believed in Him and loved His preaching, teaching ministry. They were not afraid to support Him in a political and religious world that hated Him.

(Observation #3) - The women's support was needed support.

Jesus Christ and His Apostles had real financial and physical needs and these women met those needs so the ministry could keep going.

(Observation #4) - The women's support is eternally honored support.

These women are eternally remembered and named and honored because of this. Their behind scenes ministry of financial giving is eternally remembered and honored by God.

FACT #4 – Jesus Christ classifies these supporters as ministers. **8:3b**

Notice we read “many others” were also contributing. That word “others” means others of a different kind. It may mean that some men were also supporting Jesus Christ or it could mean different kinds of women other than these were supporting Him. God noticed every one of them.

That word “contributing” is a form of a Greek word from which we get our English word “deacon.” Both the word “contribute” and “deacon” come from the same root word. In other words, when one gives to a preaching and teaching ministry, God views it as very sacred and He classifies it as a true ministry.

The tense of the verb “contributing” indicates they continually gave. They continually gave out of their own money. They were not giving someone else's money; they were giving their own money.

The Apostle Paul would later write that those who financially support a preaching and teaching ministry do lay up for themselves great rewards in heaven (Philippians 4:15, 17).

PARTING THOUGHTS:

- 1) Money is never to be the motivation for ministry.**
- 2) Money is needed for ministry.**
- 3) Money is to be given by God's people. III John 7, Luke 8:2-3**
- 4) Giving money is a sacred ministry that does layup eternal rewards.**
- 5) Ministry that is worthy of financial support is a strong preaching and teaching ministry.**