

## Scripture Reading:

Luke 1:41 “And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." 46 And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. 49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. 50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. 54 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever."

Luke 4:38 “Now [Jesus] arose from the synagogue and entered Simon’s house. But Simon’s wife’s mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. 39 So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them.”

# Women Serving Jesus

As our nation celebrates Mother's Day, we come to an interesting passage in our journey through the Gospel of Luke regarding the mother of Peter's wife.

- Want to encourage the women of our congregation this morning!

At first I considered surveying how the Bible handles women...

However, that would require a BIG series of sermons!

Next I thought a brief survey of women in the New Testament ...

Again, not in one morning!

- So, we will quickly look at just the women who Luke uses in his Gospel to teach us about how to love and serve Jesus!

We read Mary's song as our Scripture reading which expresses the joy experienced by both she and Elizabeth in serving God in such miraculous ways. They are both presented as righteous women who were willing to serve.

Between our aversions to the Maryology found in the Catholic Church and the trend of focusing on "how the Lord saved me from a wretched rebellious life" testimonies found in most protestant churches we have neglected the beautiful story that the Holy Spirit tells us here.

- Joy we should have in our lives, especially the lives of our mothers!

Then we come to Anna: Luke 2:36-38 "36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

- What a beautiful picture of a willing servant!

Next we see the mother of Peter's wife in the account we read this morning: Luke uses this as part of his focus on the authority of Jesus as we see him REBUKE the fever, but this morning we want to take special note of this mother's response: "And immediately she arose and served them."

This is both a demonstration of the power of Christ's healing touch – NO convalescence period needed! – And the heart of a willing servant

This woman, whose name we are not even given, was not intoxicated by the power of Jesus as we saw in the crowds last week, nor was she running out to “tell her tale.” She saw a need and rose to serve her Lord

- ✓ Was He hungry?
- ✓ Did he need rest?
- ✓ A change of clothes?

We are not told, but these would be examples of the type of service she would have provided.

She did not go out and preach a sermon, she did not write a book or go on the talk-show circuit: She rose and served Jesus:

- Just like we should each day wherever God has placed us:
- As I mentioned last week, this is the purpose of that “normal time” in the church calendar.
- The Lordship of Christ lived out in our everyday lives:

I will come to the men on Father's Day, but this morning I want the mother of Peter's wife to be a special encouragement to our mothers, and future mothers!

Those who wake up each morning with LOTS of ways to serve Jesus!

- ✓ With those dirty diapers
- ✓ With those raging appetites
- ✓ Followed by those dirty dishes!
- ✓ With those hungry minds
- ✓ ... and fallen natures!

And in her spare time, providing for her household and being a helpmeet for her husband.

In our responsive reading this morning we saw Proverbs 31 end with her husband and children rising up to call her blessed:

- ✓ Some warn that we should not read this because it will cause our women to feel guilty thinking they cannot live up to such a high standard
- ✓ This misses the point: They are blessing her NOT because she is perfect or better than all the other mom's, but rather because of the blessed position she is in to serve!

The feminists would insist that women must reject the Christian faith and the Bible if they are to be truly free: But you see, it is here IN the Bible that women find their true freedom and fulfillment...

### **Glorifying God & enjoying Him forever!**

Women are NOT presented as weak or of a lower class: Just the opposite!

When you compare the relationship of Jesus to the women mentioned just Luke's Gospel, they do SO much better than the men! It was Zacharias that was struck dumb for unbelief and not Mary or Elizabeth as just one example.

And Jesus is shown to have extraordinary compassion for these women: In Luke chapter seven we meet the widow of Nain who is about to bury her only son and in verse 14 we read: "When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." 14 Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." 15 So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother."

In this same chapter we have the sinful woman who cries at the feet of Jesus, washing His feet with her tears & hair and anointing Him with oil which Jesus uses as a strong object lesson for the proud Pharisee who hosted the dinner.

- ✓ Then in chapter eight we come to three verses we often pass right by:

" 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."

- ✓ It turns out that Peter's mother-in-law was an example of what would be seen throughout the ministry of Jesus from these women.

The twelve disciples are mentioned here, but just a few chapters later Jesus is sending out the seventy! This was no small group and it appears they were full-time for almost three years!

- ✓ How many arrangements were made?
- ✓ How many meals prepared?
- ✓ How many sandals repaired?

I think you get the picture!

Now we know that Jesus owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He could cast out demons, stop wind & rain and He fed thousands by simply blessing small portions of bread and fish!

- ✓ BUT the King of the Universe chose to use these women for this service:

And this should remind us of how we serve Him in our lives: that “normal time” in the church calendar.

- Mention breakfast discussion of why we eat!
- Or Childrearing: Talk about how God could create adults and pass over having children.

As Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2: “8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.” [**But we are NOT taken straight to heaven**] 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

- ✓ What were the “good works” that these women were created to do?
- ✓ Mary Magdalene who saw God's grace remove seven demons from her life?
- ✓ Joanna, who may have been called to repentance by John the Baptist in Herod's prison!
- ✓ Or Susanna who we know only here and all the others?
- ✓ They served the Lord in very practical ways with their time and treasure!

## They are examples to us!

Every morning when that alarm goes off, every dirty diaper, every dirty dish, even those accidents on the floor that was just mopped should be seen as an opportunity to serve the Lord Jesus:

- Simply because that is what needs to be done...
- Just like these woman needed to care for Jesus and His followers.

Later in this same chapter our Lord's earthly mother & brothers come looking for Him. Again, we see some amazing insight into what Jesus thinks about His faithful servants: Luke 8:21b ““My mother and My brothers are these who hear the Word of God and do it.” Or as Jesus told His disciples as He instituted the Lord's Supper, “If you love me, keep my commandments”

In chapter 8 we also see the woman who long suffered an issue of blood come in simple faith touching Jesus to be healed.

In chapter ten Luke uses two sisters to teach us that it is not JUST about serving Jesus, but rather serving Him because we love Him and know who He is: He comes to Martha and Mary and Martha is busy serving and wants Jesus to order Mary to help:

Jesus gently rebukes her with these words: ““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.”

- ✓ We must always be servants who are ready to serve, BUT only because we have spent the needed time at the Master's feet!

In chapter 18 we come to the story of the persistent widow, where the Lord uses a faithful woman to teach us about persistence and justice.

And again in chapter 21 Jesus observes the widow giving all she has by casting her two pennies into the vast temple treasury. It brings this response from our Lord: ““Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; 4 for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.”

And as Jesus comes to Jerusalem to save His people from their sins, we again see women playing a critical part: As Jesus walked to the cross, Luke tells us, “27 And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. 28 But Jesus, turning to them, said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”

While Jesus hung on the cross dying, Luke again tells us, “48 And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. 49 But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.”

And finally, as we studied in part during the Easter season, it is women who are at the center of the first Easter morning, with Jesus appearing FIRST to Mary Magdalene.

Beginning at Luke 23:55, we read, “And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.”

- We continue to see faithful women – Faithful to God’s Sabbath Commandment and still willing to serve Jesus even in His death!
- Whenever we think we have enough tough circumstances in our lives to be discouraged, ready to give up, we should reflect on these women!
- They were certainly downcast by all that had happened, BUT they continued to serve the Lord as they thought best!

24:1 “Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. 3 Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. 5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, 7 saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’” 8 And they remembered His words. 9 Then they returned from the tomb and

told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. 11 And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.”

- This might be the only place where I need to gently admonish our married ladies to be gentle and patient with their husbands: We come around, but often slowly!

So as the world looks down on the Bible & God’s Church and celebrates an empty holiday without them, I hope that this brief survey of the women in Luke’s Gospel will be a real encouragement to all of you.

We serve a great God who not only could rebuke a fever and restore the mother of Peter’s wife to health and service, but a God who can bring back to life we who were DEAD in our trespasses and sins and make us fit for His service.

We don’t know her name, we don’t even know exactly what she did to serve Jesus, but this mother stands as our example as we are commissioned today to serve our risen and reigning Savior, especially when it is time to pick up those socks, wash another cup and change yet another diaper...

- ✓ Remember this week, you are changing them to the Glory of God...

Maybe this reminder will also encourage our husbands to be ready to lend a hand more often... And at least they and your children should remember to rise up and called you blessed!

Communion meditation:

### *Jesus as our example of service...*

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. 2 And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s *son*, to betray Him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, 4 rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. 5 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded.