

Women Following Jesus

Thomas Robinson, *Women Freed by Jesus I*, June 11, 2017

Luke 8:1-3 Women among Jesus' traveling disciples

¹ During the following days, Jesus traveled through cities and villages, proclaiming and announcing the good news of the kingdom of God, and along with him the twelve, ² and also certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, along with many others, who provided for them out of their means.

Luke 23:54 - 24:12 Women at the Cross and Resurrection

^{23:54} It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. ⁵⁵ The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

^{24:1} But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the one who is alive among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but has been raised. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."

⁸ And they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, ¹¹ but these words seemed to them as nonsense, and they did not believe them.

¹² But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened

Luke 7:12 (12-16) Jesus encounters a widow mourning a dead son

¹² As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her.

Luke 7:36-38 (36-50) At a Pharisee's dinner, a woman anoints Jesus

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him ³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

Luke 8:42-44 (42-48) A bleeding woman touches Jesus

⁴² As ... the people pressed around Jesus, ⁴³ there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on healers, she could not be healed by anyone. ⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased.

John 4:7 (1-29) A Samaritan woman meets Jesus at a well

⁷ A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

John 8:3-4 (1-11) A woman caught in adultery is brought to Jesus

³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery...."

Matthew 20:20-21 Salome, the mother of James and John

²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. ²¹ And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”

Mark 15:40-41 (cf. Matthew 27:56) Women at the cross

⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. ⁴¹ When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

Luke 10:41-42 (38-42) Jesus guides Martha & Mary toward discipleship

⁴¹ The Lord answered, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. ⁴² One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part. It won't be taken away from her.”

Luke 1:38 (26-56) Mary responds to Gabriel announcing Jesus' birth

³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

Jesus and the Experiences of Women

Discussions of women's roles in the church, limited through much of church history, often focuses only on passages in the NT letters. But Jesus' actions and teaching are basic. The Gospels show many of Jesus' interactions with women in various situations. Through these stories, Jesus' pattern of relationship becomes distinct and clear.

Jesus lives within a particular time and culture. He always acts within that frame of meaning, but recognizes its prejudices and barriers and goes out of his way to break them.

Jesus treats every woman (and man) he meets with respect and without condescension. (No derogatory jokes.) He assumes each is valuable, intelligent, loved by God, worthy of time, care, and conversation. He treats all equally and individually – seeing each person's identity and journey, and helping them to take the next step in relation to God.

Jesus, unlike any other Jewish teacher of that period, welcomed women disciples.

Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and the Company of Women Disciples

Luke 8:1-3 (/s) is remarkable within the narrative focused on Jesus' teaching and training the Twelve. In the traveling band were a substantial group of women who, like the men, left everything – homes, former lives, even husbands – to follow Jesus on the way.

Most notable was Mary from Magdala, who also played a major role at Jesus' resurrection. (She is not the sinful woman of Lk 7 or sister of Martha, as often depicted in art.) Jesus had transformed her life – “seven demons” – and given her new life. She followed. Like Joanna, wife of Chuza, or Salome, wife of Zebedee, mother of James and John.

Jesus and Societal Prejudices and Structures that limited Women

Excluded women: The embarrassing sinful woman (Lk 7), the unclean bleeding woman (Lk 8), the Samaritan, ethnic and moral exclusion (Jn 4). Jesus gives welcome, voice, mission.

Vulnerable women: the widow of Nain (Lk 7), woman trapped in adultery (Jn 8).

Women's work: Jesus welcomes Martha's hospitality, but affirms even more Mary turning from all the work of serving to listen to Jesus' teaching as a disciple (Lk 10).

Untrustworthy women: Society did not trust women to testify in court. But Jesus made women the first witnesses to his resurrection. The apostles treated their word as nonsense. Mary Magdalene had experienced her own new life. Peter was about to learn.