

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, Wash.
October 16, 2011**

“Different Gifts, Same Grace” – Week 3

Luke 8:1-3

Lessons from the Ladies in Luke

- 1. How they served the Savior**
- 2. What they teach us to do**

**Hymns: 184 – 525 – Distribution: 499, 359 –
Closing: 318**

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

Luke 8:1-3 –

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Every so often, a Scripture verse provides us with what we might call a “window shade.”

What is a window shade? It’s a passage that has a comment or reference that tells us something interesting about a side issue or detail in the Bible that we would otherwise not know about. As you know, Scripture often doesn’t explain every detail of a situation; yet sometimes a window shade suddenly snaps up and gives us a quick peek into a story that we don’t necessarily need to have.

For example, people have often wondered exactly how Noah managed to get all those animals on the ark. How would that have been possible with all the species and the large earth? And how would Noah have the time to find a male and a female of each one? Then we have a window shade in Genesis 7: “*Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of creatures that move along the ground, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark.*” Moses tells us that God moved the animals to come to Noah and to enter the ark. That’s how the process happened!

We have a window shade passage in front of us today. We are in the third week of our current service series called “***Different Gifts, Same Grace.***” This series has been focusing on how God has given us different gifts and talents to use for his service in the world and in the church. Our window shade today comes in Luke 8, as we hear some interesting details about the women who followed Jesus during his ministry. We don’t hear much about them normally, but today let’s take a look at some interesting details as we consider “**Lessons from the Ladies in Luke.**” We will learn:

- 1. How they served the Savior**
- 2. What they teach us to do**

We read in Luke 8, “*After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.*” We hear the names of some ladies who served our Savior, and Luke tells us

that there were “many others” in the followers too. What was their background?

- We hear that some of these women had been cured of illnesses by Christ.
- We hear especially about Mary Magdalene. She had been cured of demon possession. She had had seven devils living in her! Demon possession was an especially distressing and sad situation. We hear about the effects of demon possession on a man Jesus cured later in this same chapter, Luke 8: *“For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs... Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.”* Yet Jesus had had the power to cure him! And he also had had mercy on Mary Magdalene, possessed by seven devils.
- We also hear about Joanna. She was the wife of the manager of King Herod’s household – Talk about a window shade! Her husband had a high position in the government of Galilee. Joanna would have been a woman of means and high standing. This gives us a peek into some of the details about Herod’s palace that are in the Gospels:
 - Details about the death of John the Baptist, who was imprisoned by Herod and then beheaded by him when his stepdaughter asked for John’s head on a platter.

- Details into how Herod was “perplexed” after John the Baptist’s death and thought that Jesus was John, come back to life to give him trouble.

- Details into the trial of Jesus before Herod the night before he was crucified, when Herod and his entourage mocked Christ in a purple robe.

We also wonder what Joanna gave up to follow Jesus. She surely could have had a life of ease and comfort in the house of the king with her husband Cuza!

- Susanna – This is the only mention of her in the Bible

What was their motive in following Christ? Many, if not all of them, had been cured by Jesus of diseases and demons. Not only that, but his message of God’s law and God’s salvation had touched their hearts. They had a love for Christ due to his message and his miracles. They were devoted, beloved followers of the Son of God, loyal to his cause. And now they wanted his healing touch and penetrating message to touch others.

What was happening at this time in Jesus’ ministry? We read, *“Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him.”* Jesus was going full bore with his preaching and healing ministry. In Luke’s words, he was “proclaiming,” - that is, preaching - the message of God to sinful mankind in his day. Luke also literally uses the word “evangelizing,” meaning that the “good news” was what Jesus was sharing with his people. Luke also mentions his topic, the “kingdom of God.” Jesus was speaking to

them about the most important things, spiritual things. For cities and villages that were obsessed with the trivial, daily things that cloud the important, Jesus had the message of salvation.

Not only was that important work going on, but we also hear that the twelve disciples were with Jesus. He was training and instructing them. These apostles were going to be the next preachers and public ministers concerning the kingdom of God when Christ was gone. He needed to teach them. **What an important time in world history; this was as Jesus ministered!**

Therefore, how important was the service that these women could perform during Jesus' ministry and the disciples' training time. And what exactly did they do?

First, we could ask the question: **How were the day-to-day needs of Jesus' ministry and the disciples' training supported and funded?** This is an interesting question, because ministry costs money. There's no way around it. If we just count the disciples and Jesus (whom we normally only think of in this group), there were thirteen men who needed to eat three times a day, have a place to rest and sleep, and had other regular, daily needs. How were these met? How were they funded?

We don't hear that this group's normal way of receiving support for this ministry was through Jesus' miracles. Why didn't Jesus' just miraculously supply food, drink, and supplies for everybody? One reason is that he was in a state of humiliation. In his personal life, he had come to live as one of us. He even lived an extremely lowly life, the life of a servant, at times, such as where he was born, his life of not having a permanent home, and more.

Another reason he did not provide miraculously for the group was that it gave believers a chance to play a part in God's ministry. This was a way for his followers to show their faith. It was also a lesson for later, when he would be gone. It was a lesson in how the daily and yearly support and funding would happen in the Church until the end of time. This may sound like a ministry of financial uncertainty, but we never hear of his work stopping because of need or lack.

Why is this true at this time? Verse 3 said: *"These women were helping to support them (Jesus and the Twelve) out of their own means."* In Mark 15 we have another window shade into their support: *"The centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God!' Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs."*

How exactly did these women serve? Undoubtedly, they took care of daily needs of Jesus and the group by their service. This would include what we would probably consider to be the mundane details of living. We can only imagine how valuable they may have been to the feeding and care of this traveling group as they served and lent their talents. Even though they were not being trained or called to be apostles and pastors in the early Church, they served where they could, and what valuable service this was!

Luke also tells us that they support this traveling group from their own possessions. They gave their money to fund Jesus' earthly ministry.

Their love and support would even outlast the disciples' support for a time. We read before in Mark 15 how they were present at Jesus' crucifixion when all the disciples except for John had fled. In Luke 23 we read, *"The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb."* These women in their devotion stayed to the very end as Jesus' body was taken down from the cross by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, and they took the initiative to prepare to give his body a proper burial on the morning which turned out to be the first Easter day.

There's more. In Acts 1, after the ascension of Christ, we hear about the disciples, *"They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."* They were still there with the group as the disciples awaited Pentecost Day, as Christ had promised!

What a remarkable service these women performed for Christ in his state of humiliation and for these men who had "left everything," as the Gospels tell us, to follow him! Their tangible and financial support was of great service to God. The benefits would be that Jesus could preach and counsel full time. And his disciples could learn. All this in great part because this first Ladies Aid, this GRACE Circle, served the Lord.

2 — How would you have liked to have been a part of their group? How would you have felt to serve in those ways? Would

you feel honored to help our Lord Jesus and his ministry? I think it's an obvious answer.

As we now flash forward to look at the Church and its ministry today, we ask the same question. After all, how can these women teach us through this window shade?

However, the first thing we need to consider is your background. Are you fit to serve the Lord? Or are you sick and demon possessed? When Jesus went to a banquet that Matthew threw for him at his tax collector's home after Jesus called him, the religious leaders of his day criticized him because there were "sinners" there. Why would Jesus presume to eat with these people? Jesus told them, *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* Jesus has to tell the religious leaders that they are hypocrites and that the people he ministers to are sick.

Are you sick? You have a terminal disease. It's called sin, and your sinful nature proves it. You are not naturally fit to serve.

Are you demon possessed? 1 John 3 says, *"He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning."* You were owned and possessed by the devil when you were born, as the image of God had been ruined in mankind and in your own parents. And what a sad, distressing situation this possession by Satan was! In the past, you have been motivated by his agenda. You have done his tawdry deeds. You know best what these have been in your life.

So what motive would you have to follow the Son of God? He tells us he has come to call sinners (the sick) to repentance. 1 John 3 continues, *"The reason the Son of*

God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." When Jesus said "It is finished!" on the cross, your sin was paid for and your slavery to the devil was broken. When the Holy Spirit worked faith in your heart, you were born again to live a new life, a life that can serve our loving Lord Jesus. He has given you spiritual health and salvation!

We can also ask: What is happening in the kingdom of God that can be supported? Just as in Jesus' time, there is "proclaiming" and "evangelizing." It is happening each NT Sabbath Day here. It is happening during the week in Bible class and counseling. It is happening in our grade school and high school. Are you an apostle, a called worker that Christ is training and sending? Then work with all your might! But are you not one of these? If not, how can you support? What can you learn from the women in our reading?

To answer that, we have to first ask: **How are the day-to-day needs of Jesus' ministry today supported and funded?** After all, ministry costs money. There's no way around it. Could Jesus provide for his Church in a miraculous way as a common rule? Could he bankroll his Church's work by electronic deposit from heaven? He could. But as in his own day, he doesn't use this as a normal means of support. He uses the support that his followers give. In today's lingo, he uses a yearly budget and the service and offerings that God's people bring. It allows his people to play a part in this most important work. And it gives them a chance to have some faith and to show their faith.

It's interesting that our "conversion" in this area can be difficult. Martin Luther once wrote that a man needs three conversions: One of his heart, one of his mind, and one of his pocketbook." And

unlike these women, many people today have had a tough time with having faith enough to support the Lord's ministry generously with their possessions. What will change and improve this? Only a look at your sickness and possession by the devil and how far God has brought you and what he has blessed you with in the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

It's worth noting that support must happen for things that we might call mundane. Do common bills need to be paid? Does floor wax need to be bought? And window cleaner? Or a vacuum? Or paying for mileage? Pretty exciting stuff, right? Not exactly the glamorous that we'd like to focus on. But they are day-to-day needs with a congregation's ministry.

God will even bless you with seeing the benefits of your service and support. You'll see a Youth Confirmation Class up front, Adult baptisms taking place, visitors in our worship services, or simply the day-to-day work of our congregation.

Finally, it would be neat to see and know more about this in Luke 8, wouldn't it be? But this is only a window shade verse that gives us a glimpse of a side detail of it all, and no more. Yet what a meaningful look this has been as we see how Jesus' ministry was supported and how this serves to teach us today.

May we be moved by their godly example. We have been healed so that we can help others learned that they're healed as the kingdom of God is proclaimed. May God move to you to play a part and support his work through our congregation out of thankfulness for his salvation! Amen.