

#5 - The Forgotten: The Women

06/28/2009 - Jim Johnson – Luke 8

Women never had it better than they had in the first days of creation. One man/one woman – no self centeredness, thus no conflict. There seemed to be a comfortable equality between men and women. The fall changed everything for both men and women, and the status and regard for women was a serious casualty. God rescued women in some respects by giving them the Law of Moses. But men do not always fear God, and Israel was often influenced by her pagan neighbors. In the first century era, the women of the middle-east were mostly abused and forgotten. She was seldom regarded or treated as an equal to a man. In Rome, a girl was married at age 12 and her sole purpose was to give birth to children, especially sons. A Roman man could determine whether he wanted to keep each child or not. If a child was rejected, it was typically a female child. Women were not even permitted to have their own name, but would be forced to take their father's name and feminize it slightly. From the Fall of Adam and Eve, even until the present, Women tend to be forgotten.

The Lord, however, remembers the Forgotten. The Gospel of Luke includes many stories of Jesus reaching out to women. Stories that even the other biographers of Christ overlooked. One episode is found in Luke 8:1-3.

A. The women _____ Christ. - Luke 8:1-3

There was a significant group of women who traveled with Christ and the disciples. They were there because they believed in Christ—who He was & what He was doing and because they had been healed of diseases or set free from evil spirits. They also fulfilled a strategic administrative role in His ministry.

1. _____ **did they serve Him?** They used their money to buy food & provision for the ministry team and most likely helped to prepare it as well.
2. _____ **were these women?** They included Mary Magdalene. Though she is sometimes thought to have been a former prostitute, there is no evidence to that in the Scripture or even tradition. Luke tells us that Mary once had seven demons residing in her, and Jesus evidently, at some point, had cast them out of her. (7:2) She was so incredibly grateful for what Christ had done for her, that she reciprocated by becoming a follower & supporter of Christ. Also included was Joanna the wife of Chuzza, Herod's steward, and Susanna and a number of other women.
3. _____ **does this mean for women?** All of this was remarkable for women in the first century. Much of the dignity that had been lost in the garden was restored to these women.

First: Jesus _____ out to them in their need. He healed some of diseases. He liberated others from demons, just as He had done for men.

Second: He encouraged them to take their places as His _____. There was no such thing as coed education back then, but Jesus included them among His students.

Third: He _____ from them. Jesus could have produced food by taking fishes and loaves and multiplying them. He chose instead to receive their gifts and services.

Fourth: He _____ with them. This was scandalous back then but Jesus was more concerned about women than about appearances.

Fifth: He _____ them. There were hundreds of disciples that traveled with Jesus. We know the names of only the 12 and then the names of these 3 women. They were significant partners – worthy of mention.

Society denigrates women. Jesus _____ them.

He remembered the forgotten. He boldly lifted them from obscurity, dishonor and abuse.

B. The women were there at the _____. - Luke 23:48-49

Somewhere in the vicinity of the cross stood those same women. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and others, including the mother of Jesus. They were as near to the cross as the Roman guards would permit them to be. They had to be there. Jesus had lifted them from obscurity and meaninglessness. Jesus validated them as human beings. Strangely— they stood there alone except for John, the only other disciple of Jesus to see Him through to the end.

C. The women followed Him to the _____. - Luke 23:55

Mary and the women followed Jesus' lifeless body as it was carried to the borrowed tomb. (15:46-47)

D. The women cared for Him in His _____. - Luke 23:55-56

Once they knew for sure which tomb it was they decided they needed to go back for some supplies. They would return after the Sabbath to prepare Christ's body for burial.

E. The women were the first to learn of His _____. - Luke 24:1-10

The Sabbath had passed and the women followed through with their plan to prepare the body of Jesus for death. (1-3) God sent angelic messengers to be there when they arrived. They told them the good news. And those women became the very first human beings to hear the news that Christ Jesus had been raised from the dead. (4-7) The women ran to tell the male disciples back in town. Which means that these ladies became the first evangelists - heralds of the good news of the resurrection. (8-12)

Mary returned to the tomb. There she met a man she mistook for the gardener. It was Jesus. Mark 16:9 tells us that Mary was the first person ever to look upon the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Close behind her were the other women. (Matt 28:9) They were also permitted to look upon Jesus.

REFLECTION

Those women were first in line to witness the singular most significant event in all of history - first in line to meet the most amazing celebrity of all time – the victorious risen Lord Jesus Christ. Why was such an honor afforded these women? Why not His handpicked disciples? Who knows? BUT at the very least we can say that Society may denigrate women – but Jesus elevates them.

APPLICATION

Ladies – no doubt there have been times that society has made you regret the fact that you are a woman. That is unfortunate. But never forget that our God loves you. He rejoices in the fact that you are a woman. He wants to heal your diseases and remove your demons because you are you. He welcomes you to take your place as fully enfranchised, legitimate disciple. He is not an egotistical male, who is too proud to receive your gifts and your service. He may even have special privileges reserved for you, that we men will never get to enjoy. Ladies - trust Him! Give yourself to Him without reservation. He will not disappoint you.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. Can you think of other instances in the Scripture where Christ elevated women?
2. How does His view of women differ from our cultural view of women?
3. If you are married to a woman – how well are you treating her?
4. If you are a woman – how does this message impact the way you feel about being a woman?