

Sermon Notes



Series: EXTRAordinary

Sermon: The Producers

Luke 8: 1-3

Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

Monday: Read Luke 10: 38-42

The danger of this story is its invitation to compare and decide which is better – Mary or Martha. To pit one expression of belief, of discipleship, of service, of vocation, against the other. When we make these kinds of moves and assumptions, we rarely stop to think about what we then assume about Jesus. To favor Mary is to say Jesus discounts service. Which, if you read the Gospel of Luke, makes no sense at all. To favor Martha would be to say service is all that matters. Clearly, both matter if you read the Gospel of Luke carefully. This story cannot be about who is better or what is better, but rather about acknowledging that everyone - even a woman - can be a disciple, can sit at the feet of Jesus and learn. This story is not about which is better, because service and learning are both hallmarks of following Jesus. It's a story about pointing out what is possible – that we can see ourselves as God sees us. The better thing is the invitation to believe that you are who God sees you to be. Can you see yourself as both student and disciple of Jesus?

Prayer: May I choose the better part – to see myself as Jesus sees me – as a disciple. Amen.

Tuesday: Read Luke 7: 36-50

Luke crafts this story with great care, even sharing with us Simon's mutterings to himself. The punch line comes when Jesus asks Simon who he thinks will be more grateful – the one who has been forgiven little or forgiven much. Simon falls right into Jesus' trap, saying that of course, the one who was shown more mercy will be all the more grateful. And that, Jesus says, is why this woman is so grateful, so gracious, and so blessed. She has been forgiven much, and in return, she – an intruder to Simon's dinner party – has shown all the hospitality that Simon neglected. When you know yourself to be forgiven, you don't have time for judgment anymore. When you've been forgiven, all that's left is gratitude. And when you forgive others, all that's left is freedom and possibility. Where do you recognize the need for forgiveness in your life? What have you been forgiven lately that creates in you a deep sense of gratitude? Who do you need to forgive to be free and whole again?

Prayer: Having been forgiven much, may I forgive others in the name of Christ. Amen.

Wednesday: Read John 20: 11-18

"Mary!" Jesus says only her name and she knows who he is. But remember what Jesus said before: "[The shepherd] calls his own sheep by name...they know his voice" All it took was hearing her name for Mary to cry out, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher)." With the use of that particular name, Mary claimed her place as Jesus' rabbinical student. So Jesus gives her instruction to go and tell the good news of his resurrection. His personal word to Mary could not stay private. Mary went and told the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." She was the first resurrection preacher in the Bible. Jesus' words are also for us: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Believers are granted the same relationship with God as Jesus has. John brings us full circle from the prologue's promise that all who receive the Word are given the power to become children of God (John 1:12). So what will you do with your power? Will you go and tell the good news? Do you consider yourself a resurrection preacher like Mary?

Prayer: May I, like Mary, preach the good news of the gospel. Amen.

Thursday: Read Acts 9: 36-43

A stalwart force in the first-century effort to restore the dignity of widows was a woman named Tabitha. She was a renowned philanthropist, known throughout the land for "always doing good and helping the poor." When we first hear of her, she has succumbed to an illness, her body washed and prepared for burial. So critical was Tabitha's ministry to the early church that Peter himself was summoned to her bedside, and when he arrived, he found widows from all across Joppa weeping together in Tabitha's home. Peter turned toward the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Tabitha opened her eyes and sat up. It is one of just two resurrection stories in the book of Acts. The worthy distinction of being the only woman in the New Testament identified as a "disciple" belongs to Tabitha. Who are the women in your life that exemplify discipleship? In what ways has their discipleship given you

hope? Strength? Determination?

Prayer: For the faithful discipleship of women we give you thanks, O God. Amen.

Friday: Read Luke 7: 11-17

Jesus interacted with women during a time when women had few legal and financial rights. A patriarchal system gave the responsibility of women to their fathers, husbands, and male children. Women, who through natural circumstances became older, widowed, and childless, such as the woman in today's text, found their very survival at stake. It is in this scene of despair that we find Jesus entering into this woman's chaos intent on offering hope and life. Jesus' interaction with this one woman in distress brings transformation to her life, her family, her community and her broader society. When we begin to speak life to the situations causing death, pain, and hopelessness for the women in our world, we embody Christ's presence and reveal the nature of God to humanity. What specific ministries can you name that help vulnerable women find hopeful transformation? How are the people involved in those ministries enacting the resurrecting work of Jesus for the women?

Prayer: For ministries that turn chaos into hope, we give you thanks, O God. Amen.

Saturday: Read Luke 13: 10-17

Theologian Matt Skinner says, "Don't mistake the story about a woman with a debilitating spinal condition as 'just another healing story.'" At its core, it's a story about what God intends. It's about the urgency of seeing God's intentions brought to pass without delay." The original intention of the sabbath, according to Deuteronomy, is to provide relief, even if only temporary, from any system that would deny a person a share of rest, peace, wholeness, dignity, and justice. The synagogue official says, "Wait just one more day." Jesus answers, "No. The Sabbath is a pretty good day for setting people free. In fact, the purpose behind the Sabbath - the value God places on wholeness - *necessitates* that I do this now. We can't wait." In Luke 13 Jesus reaffirms what his scriptures told him: God sees no virtue in suffering. Nothing can be gained by consigning a fellow human being to one more day of unnecessary torment. To perpetuate injustice is to defile the holiness of the weekly Sabbath day that God ordained. To deny freedom is to offend the God of the Exodus. It's because of who God is that Jesus can't wait. The anonymous woman's oppression led Jesus to act on the Sabbath. Whose similar circumstances demand urgency today? Who are the people that are only one action away from having their whole lives upended? Who experiences fear on a regular basis? How might we enact the urgency of Jesus in our Sabbath practices?

Prayer: May our worship fulfill God's desire to restore wholeness. Amen.