

March 14: Luke 8-9

Chapter 8

Vs. 1-21, Luke begins by describing the “women who accompanied Jesus from Galilee and provided for them out of their resources.” This one verse is where we read scripturally about Mary Magdalene’s back story. She was not a prostitute, but rather was named Mary, from the town of Magdala, and had been cured of 7 demons. These are the same women who are present at the resurrection, they follow him to the very end, even while all of the apostles are too scared to leave the upper room.

The word of God is the seed, planted in the human heart. God’s wisdom is never a “secret knowledge” (Gnosticism), but rather through Jesus Christ God’s wisdom and will are revealed. Those whose hearts are actively cultivated through prayer and spiritual practices receive the Word of God and grow and bear fruit. This parable teaches us not to take our faith for granted, but to take it seriously and to steward the gift of faith through our own persistence and loyalty to God. Jesus makes us his own family, not through flesh and blood, but through faith.

Vs. 22-39, The sea of Galilee is notoriously unpredictable. Even for experienced fishermen, it can be dangerous to travel on. After all they’d seen Jesus do, they were still afraid, so they woke Jesus up to abandon ship, but Jesus surprised them all by commanding even the wind and waves. Jesus was not just a miracle healer (during this time, those were a dime a dozen), but Jesus could even raise the dead and now calm the storms!

The Gerasene demoniac was utterly outside of community (living among the tombs with no clothes on, self-destructive), he had been abandoned by his community. A Roman Legion was several thousand troops. This is Gentile territory, for they are herding pigs. The Legion begs Jesus not to be cast into the Pit reserved for God’s enemies, so Jesus casts them into a herd of pigs and the pigs run mad into the lake. Instead of glorifying God, the response to this life-changing miracle is fear and rejection. The people ask Jesus to leave because they are afraid, and likely angry as well as Jesus has just cast their livelihood into the sea. The Gerasene demoniac (a Gentile) was sent out as a witness to the work of Jesus, to tell other Gentiles about what God had done for him.

Vs. 40-56

Jairus’ daughter and the woman with the hemorrhages stories are interlinked on purpose, as they interpret one another. The daughter is as old as the woman’s suffering has endured. The daughter is not quite old enough to menstruate yet, while this woman has been ritually unclean for 12 years as she has not stopped

bleeding. Even though she knew it was against religious law, she believed that Jesus could heal her, and so she risked making him unclean by touching him (or at least the fringe of his prayer shawl) in order to secure her own healing in secret. But this healing did not stay secret, for Jesus recognized immediately that someone had been healed as he felt a discharge of his power. It's interesting, that while many people were touching him, bumping up against him in this crowd, only this woman caused him to feel power discharge from him, as she reached out and touched him in faith. When she came forward, Jesus named her as Daughter and pronounced out loud for all to hear that she was healed, and thus restored to community. Next, Jesus is told that Jairus' daughter is dead (also unclean), but Jesus has already raised the dead (remember the widow of Nain's son?), so he urges them to believe in him. Jesus touched the girl by the hand (rendering himself unclean), and told her to get up. Her spirit returned to her (emphasizing the fact that she really was dead).

Chapter 9

Vs. 1-17, Jesus first sends out the twelve apostles (apostles means "sent ones"). They are sent out without the standard provisions appointed to wandering philosophers of the time (a staff and bag to sustain them). They are totally reliant upon the hospitality of those to whom they are sent. To "shake the dust off of your feet" suggests a freedom from responsibility from the consequences of not welcoming the apostles. Herod's appearance is one of ominous foreshadowing. Jesus reunites with the apostles when they return from their missionary journey. Jesus began teaching the large crowd that had followed him, and at the end of the day, the 12 began to worry about provisions for this large crowd (after trusting the Lord for their own provisions to be provided by the hospitality of strangers on their journey). It was now their turn to provide hospitality for the crowd who were there and hungry for the good news. Jesus said, "YOU give them something to eat." The feeding of the 5000 anticipates the last supper (blessing and breaking the bread and distributing it to all who are present), as well as Elijah's miraculous feeding of 100 men in the wilderness. Jesus feeds those who follow him with abundance. Was this a miracle of multiplication or distribution? Some believe that the miracle was that in sitting in groups of 50 (around as many people as worship on Sunday morning), that it encouraged the people to get to know one another and to share what they had brought with them. The text does not really indicate that, but one way or another all of the people present were fed and there were even leftovers! Christ fills us with abundance!

Vs. 18-36, In Luke's gospel, Peter does not rebuke Jesus for predicting his death. Jesus tells the disciples that he will be a very different kind of Messiah from the one whom they would have been waiting for. Jesus shows his disciples still that

the way he carries out his vocation as God's Messiah is through self-sacrificial love. We find our true identity, our true sense of self, the fullest version of our life through following Jesus and the way of his cross. Sometimes this means placing ourselves in difficult situations or taking unpopular stances on things or even placing our lives and safety on the line for the sake of others (like Harriet Tubman, St. Patrick, Oscar Romero, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer). Eight days later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John (his inner circle of disciples) up the mountain to pray and to reveal to them exactly what it means that he is the messiah (he will die, but he is also God's son who will shine in glory). Moses and Elijah appear before them, representing the law and the prophets. Both Moses and Elijah were assumed into heaven in unusual ways. They are discussing Jesus' "exodus"-his death in Jerusalem, which will be the fulfillment of all of the faithful work of the law and the prophets of old. His disciples misunderstand what's happening and suggest building booths for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, so that they can stay on the mountain together, this suggests that they see Jesus, Moses, and Elijah as of equal status with one another. Next, the cloud appears and the voice from heaven comes (both signs of theophany, God's manifestation in our world), and corrects the disciples by revealing that Jesus is in fact God's son.

Vs. 37-62, They can't stay on the mountain, because there is serious work to be done in the real world at the bottom of the mountain. Jesus is irritated that his disciples were not faithful enough to provide this boy with the healing he needed, but Jesus healed him, and once again this miracle was used as a catalyst for the crowds to glorify God. Jesus shared his second Passion prediction, but no one understood what he meant and they were too scared to ask for clarification. Children in the ancient world were the lowest and most vulnerable members of society.

Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem, but the Samaritans do not acknowledge the Temple in Jerusalem, which is why they do not welcome Jesus. Elijah called down fire from heaven upon those who rejected his message, but Jesus is a different kind of prophet. Our human nature wants to retaliate against those who reject and humiliate us, but Jesus way is that of the suffering Messiah. God alone will judge and repay, our mission is to love even those who reject us. His words to would be followers imply that following Jesus is the most important vocation in life (burying a father would have been considered one of the greatest obligations in life). Jesus and his mission must be his followers' primary loyalty.