

CALLED TO SUPPORT

DEVOTIONAL READING: Romans 4:13-25

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 15:40; 16:1-9; Luke 8:1-3; John 20:10-18

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40; John 20:10-18

I. Women in Jesus' Ministry Luke 8:1-3

1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,

2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

1a. Luke summarizes Jesus' strategy for the near future: He continued to tour Galilee, visiting *every city and village*. Jesus' *preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God* took three forms. First, He taught on this by use of parables (example: Luke 8:4-15). Second, He demonstrated the nearness of the kingdom through power over demonic forces (8:26-39). Third, He performed miraculous healings, even raising the dead (examples: 8:43-48).

1b. *The twelve* refers to those disciples whom Jesus also called apostles.

2a. *Certain women* also followed Jesus from village to village. They played important roles in His ministry, though often in the background.

Physical health is restored when *infirmities* are overcome; spiritual health is restored when *evil spirits* are driven out.

2b. The name *Mary* is a form of the name of Moses' sister, Miriam; she was a prophetess and musician-leader of women during the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 15:20). Mary's nickname, *Magdalene*, comes from her home, the village of Magdala.

Mary Magdalene is mentioned at least twice in each Gospel, making her one of the most frequently mentioned women in the New Testament. Hers is the most dramatic story among these women, for Jesus drove *seven devils* from her. No details exist in the Gospels about this exorcism, but Mary's story seems to have been known among Jesus' followers.

3a. *Joanna* likely had resources to contribute to the costs of sustaining the traveling group. Her husband, *Chuza*, served the Galilean governor Herod Antipas. Chuza's position as *steward* was a trusted one, and likely came with an excellent salary.

3b. *Susanna* is otherwise unknown in the New Testament.

3c. At least some of the *many others* were undoubtedly motivated to be near Jesus because of being healed by Him. They followed Jesus out of selfless gratitude and provided money, time,

and other support for His ministry. Such women were the unsung heroes of the group, just as many noble women in churches are today.

Mark 15:40

40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome.

40a. Our text skips ahead to the crucifixion, where several *women* refused to abandon Jesus (compare and contrast Mark 14:27, 50-52, 66-71; John 19:26, 38-39). While some women watched from *afar off*, others stood much closer—close enough to hear Jesus speak from the cross (John 19:25-26). The listing in John 19:25 differs from what follows here, suggesting that none of the Gospel writers intended to give an exhaustive listing of the women present.

40b. *Mary Magdalene* is perhaps the leader of this group, being named first. The second Mary is further identified by the naming of her sons. *James the less* is likely the son of Alphaeus mentioned in the list of apostles (Mark 3:18). The third woman, *Salome*, is probably “the mother of Zebedee’s children” (Matthew 27:56).

The time for following Jesus was not over for these loyal women. They remained with Him in those dreadful hours, watching and waiting for an opportunity to minister to the Savior once more. That opportunity came a few hours later when they observed where Jesus’ body was laid and resolved to remedy His hasty burial with customary spices.

II. Mary, Jesus’ Witness

John 20:10-18

10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

10-11. We meet Mary Magdalene for the third time, this occasion being resurrection morning. Arriving at the tomb, she had found it opened (John 20:1). She ran to tell Peter and John, who then ran to the tomb to see for themselves (20:2-9).

The reaction of *the disciples* can be

compared and contrasted with that of *Mary Magdalene*. Whereas the men went *home* to think about what the empty tomb could mean, Mary stayed.

The sepulchre was a cave-like room carved into the limestone hillside. Although Mary already knew it was empty, she probably hoped to notice something missed earlier, some hint of what had happened.

12. Jesus' *body* had been laid on a carved ledge inside the tomb. But instead of holding that body, it had become witness to the presence of *two angels*. Their sitting *at the head and the feet* emphasized the absence of the expected occupant.

13. Despite their unexpected presence, Mary did not seem to recognize the two angels as supernatural beings. Their question was not a rebuke but an act of kindness, inquiring as to the nature of her pain. Though addressing her as *Woman* may seem abrupt or rude to modern ears, the term here should be taken as a respectful address.

Regardless of who these two were or why they were there, Mary blurted out the cause of the great burden on her heart. The mystery of Jesus' absence could be solved if someone would just tell her *where they have laid him*, presumably in another tomb for reasons unknown to Mary. She did not consider that Jesus may not be dead.

14. Apparently not expecting an answer from the white-clad visitors, Mary *turned* from the tomb and saw another person in the garden. We are told this is *Jesus* before Mary knew, much like we knew the other two were actually angels. How could she have failed to recognize this person she loved so much? Perhaps her tears obscured her vision. The changes in His appearance plus the utter impossibility of His being alive probably

contributed mightily to her lack of recognition.

15. *Jesus* repeated the angels' question, thus pushing to the heart of Mary's suffering. He already knew she was weeping because of His death and was seeking His body.

Mary, still not recognizing Jesus, repeated her response. She assumed this man was *the gardener* and therefore someone who would know what had happened. The tomb where Jesus' body had been placed, that of Joseph of Arimathea (19:38-42), was apparently located within a well-maintained garden.

16. *Jesus* did not explain. In one of the most dramatic moments found in the Gospel accounts, He simply spoke her name. And she knew His voice. She had heard Jesus say her name many times before.

Mary addressed Jesus with the title of respect she had used many times. *Rabboni* is a variation on the title *rabbi*, which means "my teacher."

17. Jesus' command *Touch me not* has a dimension beyond merely rejecting a hug. Apparently, Mary's desire was to somehow detain Jesus, to cause Him to stay with her and the other disciples. However, Jesus would ascend to His *Father*. Instead of clinging to Him, Mary was to go back to the men who had been there earlier and update them on what had actually happened at the tomb.

18. *Mary Magdalene* did not prepare an elaborate presentation for *the disciples*. Her testimony was basic and beautiful.

Sometimes the most effective witnessing is in telling of our experience with Jesus and the changes He brings to our lives. Mary had plenty to say that day—explaining how a heartbroken, sobbing woman became a joyous, confident eyewitness for the disciples.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

CALLED TO SUPPORT

Into the Lesson

Pull out all your customer loyalty cards. What is your loyalty to these vendors based upon?

The depth of our devotion to certain stores or products can vary greatly. However, our devotion to God should be constant. In today's text, we'll learn from a person whose devotion was just that.

Into the Word

Motivation—Read Luke 8:1-2 and write an explanation as to why Mary Magdalene was so loyal to Jesus.

Support —Read Luke 8:3 and Mark 15:37-47. List specific ways that Mary tangibly supported Jesus during His ministry and even at His crucifixion.

Resurrection—Read John 20:10-18. List ways that Mary demonstrated her loyalty after the resurrection of Jesus.

Into Life

The following list includes ways that Mary expressed her devotion to Jesus. What are some ways for showing your own loyalty to Jesus in the same way?

Financial Support

Hospitality

Emotional Support

Defending the helpless

Grief support

Communication support

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Jesus knows where and how to find those who seek Him.