

10.05.25

Luke

Chapter 8 - A Groundbreaking Attraction
Merciful Transformations (vs.1-3)

Luke 8:1-3: Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.

Isaiah prophesies of this time in which Christ were to come in this region, in the region of Capernaum and all of the cities that are there on the Sea of Galilee. The way that it reads in Isaiah 8 is that God's people will consult

everybody but Him. And because of that, they'll go into great darkness.

Isaiah 8:19 says this,

“When they say to you, “Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,” should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

(Isaiah 8:20) To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

(Isaiah 8:21) They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward.

(Isaiah 8:22) Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness.”

The next chapter opens up this way,

(Isaiah 9:1) “But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt...”

That's the region of Galilee.

“... but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

(Isaiah 9:2) The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them.”

Great promise, isn't it?

Of course, it's in this particular chapter in which we read in verse 6,

(Isaiah 9:6) “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”

If you look at Isaiah 11, he then goes on and he describes literally what He will be proclaiming as He comes.

It says,

(Isaiah 11:2) “The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

(Isaiah 11:3) And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;

(Isaiah 11:4) But with righteousness He will judge the
poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth...”

The Messiah is what they were looking for, and He comes, and the wonderful healing that takes place.

Luke 8 starts off,

(Luke 8:1) “Soon afterwards, He began going around from
one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching
the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him.”

Proclaiming and teaching. It literally breaks it down into the proclamation that is really descriptive of how He resounded. Sometimes you wonder, "How did Jesus proclaim this message?" Well, he uses the word "*kēryssō*," which makes reference to a herald. So, it's as if Jesus were going about heralding. Now, the word, once again, that is used in the passage is literally defining somebody that is representing someone greater, or the kingdom of God. It would be as if one was heralding what a king was given as orders, and they were not to be taken lightly. This was a declaration that must be taken seriously and must be adhered to. The question is, what is He declaring? So, we know how He's declaring it. What is He declaring? Well, the passage then goes on to say He is proclaiming or preaching, "*euangelizō*," the kingdom of heaven; "*euangelizō*" making reference to the gospel, the good news. You need to take good news seriously, because if you don't take this good news, you're going to be in darkness. You're going to remain there. You're never going to get out. So, the proclamation is, "Come out of the darkness, light is shining, and this is your opportunity.

And you better take it. You better take everything seriously.”

I like the fact that in verse 1, it's almost as if a parenthetical afterthought is placed on “and the disciples were with Him.” And then he goes right to focusing on women. This is not unusual for Luke. Because what Luke will continue to do is emphasize those that you wouldn't normally see and perceive to be unlikely to be the ones that are elevated or lifted up. It will only be Luke that will list this particular fact, and that is that these women that he lists in this text, as well as many others as he goes on and says, are the ones that helped in supporting in some way the ministry, and he at this juncture begins to focus on these. I was telling my wife, you know, I try to stay away from speculating, but Luke makes it really hard. And today, I'm not going to really go over the line, but I'm going to walk right on it. So, there are things that I'm going to say and I'm going to say to you, you can take it or not. But the way that it's orchestrated, and Luke will orchestrate in such a way that he's letting you see it without saying it, and it's a wonderful way to write. And I

believe one of the reasons that he's writing that way is the message is focused, though, it's lifting and elevating those that are poor and oftentimes beggardly, from Mary Magdalene, Elizabeth, and you go all the way through, Hannah; you deal with Simeon and shepherds. It's focusing on those and it's lifting them and elevating them up. However, he's writing to “most excellent Theophilus”. We're going to talk about that too and how it comes into play with this. But that means that he is writing someone of some dignity and has some kind of office. And if you talk with somebody with some kind of intelligence, you don't just come out and tell them something, you let them think about it, and they come to the conclusion. And so, you're going to see how he begins to work and the power of the Spirit of God begins to work, and I trust that we'll be right aligned with the Spirit of God. But you're going to feel us tottering a little bit.

We come to this passage and he mentions specifically some women, and then he wants to list three in particular. He'll mention Mary Magdalene, he'll mention Joanna, and he'll mention Susanna, which translated

would actually be “lily”. So, these three women he's going to emphasize, and then he's going to say at the end of this passage, “And there are many others.” So, what he's doing is he's giving us insight, and the insight is in a setting. Now, the setting is this, that he's literally set the stage with the previous chapter. The previous chapter is really demonstrating those that are coming by faith and clearly those that we wouldn't necessarily think would have great faith, like a Roman centurion. How could he have great faith? And yet, the circumstances that surround his life and this one that he really cares for deeply causes him to literally cast aside his pride and throw all of the control on Christ and say, “You're in charge.” And you go, “Wow, that's amazing.” And then you have a woman who, she's on a burial march getting ready to bury her only son. She's a widow, and God will work a miracle, and this child will come up from the dead. A resurrection will be proclaimed. About the only place that this incident will happen. And then what's interesting is, as we go a little bit further in the chapter which we're looking at, in Luke 8, we'll have another resurrection. So, we'll almost have two resurrections side by side, which I

don't think any other Gospel does that. So, for some reason, the whole concept of resurrection is going to be focused on within the passage, and you begin to see the power of God.

And then, of course, Chapter 7 ends with this woman coming from the streets, and she wipes the feet of Jesus with her tears and with her hair. And you realize that these are people that have been through a lot of pain, a lot of suffering, and they come to Jesus and they realize He's the only One that can help them. So, they adore Him. It is because of this that we begin to see these ladies, these women that are mentioned. That's why they're serving. Something has moved them away from where they were going, and the transformation is so great that Luke wants us to focus, saying, "You want to know what's changing these people? It's the grace and it's the mercy of God." I mean, what we're dealing with are people that have been dealing with hurtful forces. Mary Magdalene is an interesting picture because it actually mentions, and I think there's one other place in Mark 16, that she had been possessed by 7 demons. If you can imagine, 7

demons possessing you. What is that about? And I know that we have our different thoughts in what demons are, but basically what you're dealing with are malevolent spirits. Paul will talk about when he writes to Timothy, he says, "God has not given you the spirit of fear, or of timidity." What he's talking about is that anxiety, fear can soon control you. I mean, we have nut houses that are full of people that happens to. And what it is, is that they've actually been consumed by their fears and anxieties, and now they've either gone to some form of escapism or the fears and anxieties control them to where they can't move. They literally can't move or they actually go into another world of schizophrenia of sorts. So, the point is, another spirit is controlling them. Sometimes a spirit of anger can come in and just control you. You don't know why you're angry, you're just angry all the time, and that begins to control you and wreak havoc with your life. Think of all the people that their lives are just horrible because they've allowed this to take place, or maybe it's avarice and greed that has come into your life, and the pride of life, or the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes have now taken control, and you can't think of

anything else but those things. You know, we see on the TV, we read about people that go out and all of a sudden they just shoot people. Where did that come from? What took hold of them? What kind of possession is in their life? And you realize as you're coming out of Isaiah, that these are people that turned to other sources, and they only found darkness, and it just got darker, and they found themselves falling into the darkness. But now a bright light has come, and He begins to heal, and you have this marvelous picture.

So, the way that it reads, if you look in Luke 8:2,

“And also some women...”

Besides the disciples, and it's like he skips over the twelve, because he wants to talk about these women.

“... who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses...”

Now, the one seems to be focusing on the forces that come in, that is to say, the spirits that are painful, that are troublesome, that are controlling. “Evil,” *“ponēros,”* is making reference to those forces that are hurtful. They bring hurt into your life and destructive forces. They are

overwhelming forces that begin to almost literally become obsessions in your life. That would be a control, right? And these are the things that cause you such hurt and such pain, and he uses a second word here, is that it now creates sickness or literally translated weakness. In other words, you come to the end of being able to handle it anymore, and it overpowers you, and you can't do anything. You become hopeless and helpless. So, the two really are kind of piggybacking on each other in the sense that they have these evil, hurtful things that have come upon them to such a degree, and maybe it was even just physical pain. It could have been a physical malady in that such, or a malevolent spirit that came. But these things tortured them to such a degree that they came to a point they just said, "I can't deal with this anymore. I give up." And can you imagine seeing a light at that moment? Can you imagine seeing Jesus at that moment? This is where these women were. Now, it's no mistake that he's going to focus on these women at the time that he just ended Chapter 7 with the one woman that came to Jesus. And this woman came, and she was of the streets, and she adores Christ. She doesn't want to be anywhere else. She

loves Him. She wants to be at His feet. She'll do anything for Him. The service to God is not something that should ever be forced or even delegated. I've never thought that we should ever delegate ministry. Ministry should be that which is inspired within you. You should love God and then serve.

The way that Paul puts it in Romans 12 is,

(Romans 12:1) “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice...”

Where does it start off? The mercies of God. He saved you. And the realization of what He saved you from and Him taking you out of that despair and that anxiety and the hurt and the pain that just literally brought you to your knees of helplessness and hopelessness is what inspires you.

In many respects, what the writer is going to do by the power of the Spirit of God is he's going to lead us to understand why certain people receive the Word of God and why certain people don't. In fact, the very next text will deal with the parable of the soils. And the parable of

the soils will talk about, some are hard, but some are very receptive.

And he'll describe the receptive, if you look at the end, in Chapter 8 here, in which the way he describes the receptive soil in verse 15 is,

(Luke 8:15) “But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.”

Why do they continue in it? Because it's real. Because it was a genuine decision. What made it genuine? Well, I would say in order for soil to be good, you've got to do a lot of tilling. You've got to break those rocks. You've got to make sure that it's receptive to the Word of God, and that means that there's going to be hurt and pain and sorrows in your life, but that's going to cause you to be receptive to the Word of God.

James will say in James 1, “Receive the Word of God implanted, which is able to save your (*psychē*) soul.” What he's talking about is that God can transform all of these hurts and all of these pains. You want salvation from these things? Because really, we need to be saved.

As you look at the end of Luke 7, in verse 50, when He turns to the woman who comes to Him, He says, “Your faith has saved you...”

Saved her from what? Well, the emphasis is from the evil that has haunted her, obviously, unto eternal life. I'm not marginalizing that. But the focus is from the evil. I mean, why is she crying? Why is she at His feet? Because her guilt and her regret has overwhelmed her, and now she has found this One that has relieved her from this. And so, she's now saved from the very evil that has oppressed her, that had literally kept her in a realm and a state of hopelessness and despair, and God has rescued her. Is it a surprise to you that he would follow this with the other women that have gone through that?

So, as he actually defines this in verse 2,

(Luke 8:2) “and also some women who had been healed...”

The root word is “*therapeuō*”. It's where we get our word therapy. And what the foundation of the word makes reference to is that it's a sense of somebody coming in that is willing to do the most menial of task to help you.

Usually when you're hurting, it's not anything great or anything big that somebody has to do, but it is oftentimes difficult to help somebody that is hurting, and you might have to do things that might be a little unpleasant to yourself to actually help that person. But what it creates, and the whole picture of therapy is, that you're creating a sense of, "I cherish you," because you're willing to do whatever it takes to help this person. So, when it talks about Jesus healed them, it's not just the fact that He completely healed them, it's the fact that they felt that they were cherished and valued by virtue of His attention that He was giving to them, and then the magnificent power of His healing in addition. It's a wonderful combination when you begin to realize just how desperate these people are. I mean, I'm sure that they had people in their life that just could care less about the fact that they're going through pain, they're going through hurt. If you've ever shared with some people, and then they look off in a space and say, "I'll be right back, I just have to go someplace. Go ahead and keep talking." And it just makes you feel really unimportant. So it's in the process of this that they begin to feel valued once

again, and they can see. Well, you're drawn to people that care about you. This is not some mystical thing that's happening in the sense of strange thing. This is something that is alluring to all of us.

“... who had been healed of...”

The malevolent, hurtful, painful, controlling forces in their life that have taken over and have brought them to a state of helplessness.

Now, it then identifies the one that we're very familiar with, and that is Mary, who is called Magdalene.

Magdalene is actually from the word “Magdala,” which is a city in Galilee. So, it's in the realm of Naphtali, where you're reading. So, it's right up there on the coast. It's on the west side, it's on the coast. And to the north is Capernaum, where Jesus lived, and just about two miles down is Magdala. And you go about another two or three miles down, and you run into another city called Tiberius. I don't want to confuse you with the towns, but that's basically it, the ones we're going to talk about anyway. So, what you have is that this woman, for some reason, is identified with the city that she lives in. Now, what we

know about Magdala, not a whole lot, but what we know, is it was at one time the capital of that particular region. And so, in the Sea of Galilee, it was the capital, and there are writings that say that they would haul tax money in great wagons. So, they were collecting a lot of tax money in this particular region. And so, it was extremely kind of a wealthy place. Herod Antipas was now king over this particular region. I think it was Caesar Augustus that kind of helped put him in that position. And now, the Caesar was Tiberius. And so, his thought was, "Well, I want to get along well with the Caesar that's there, so I'm going to build him a city." So, he builds him a city and calls it Tiberius. That makes sense, doesn't it? I want to do Tiberius a favor. I'll build him a city and call it by his name. And so, he builds this great city on the coast called Tiberius, which is just south of Magdala. Well, Magdala was the capital, now he wants to turn Tiberius into the capital. And so, he does. Unfortunately, he has a hard time getting people to populate it. He makes one minor mistake. He builds a city on a graveyard. And because he builds a city on a graveyard, nobody wants to move there. And so, he has to begin to bribe people to move there. He

builds these extravagant houses and he tells people, "You can have the house if you move in." And even at that, he's having a hard time getting people to move in. But the city was finally finished around AD 20. And so, at this time, the city now has become in the capital of the region. Still, Magdala is a very important city, but that's what's beginning to happen. You're having all these political things happening. There's kind of unrest, and there are people that have been involved in the whole money-changing thing and have been involved in the politics of it, that there's been a lot of pain, there's been a lot of hurt that's going on in this process. And so, Jesus is hopping right in the middle of all these things that are happening. Everybody's in turmoil, so to speak, in this particular region. From Capernaum, you can actually see Magdala. You can actually look down and see Magdala. There it is, where Mary Magdalene was. So, obviously He had gone in this particular city. That she would be called Mary Magdalene, as people were calling her, "Oh, you're Mary of Magdala," is saying that she identified herself with that city, which is telling us that, as we see in the passage,

(Luke 8:2) “... Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons...”

I've oftentimes told you that the root word for demons is distributors of fortune. We don't know exactly what Mary's crime was. Here I am walking the line, right? We don't know exactly what Mary's crime was, but we have to understand that you have one that has been controlled by distributors of fortune and power, and money has come in. Now, whether she compromised her purity, nothing ever says that. But somewhere along the line, I think, money's become very important. She lives in a city in which that was true and the fact that she would be identified with that city is telling. And so, because of this, hurt has come in; the hurt and the pain of being selfish, hateful. I mean, I know it's hard for us to think of Mary Magdalene, who was the first one to see the resurrected Christ, will be mentioned 12 to 13 times in Scripture, Mary Magdalene. It's hard for us to think of a hateful, anxious, disturbed woman. But she was. And Christ came into her life and He saved her. It's a great picture, isn't it?

Now, once again, I'm going to walk the line here. And, you know, look, you want to debate me, that's fine. We'll do it later. But in the chapter proceeding, there was a woman that came in to see Jesus, right? I can imagine Mary having boldness to do that. I think this is a powerful businesswoman. I mean, what we understand according to the text is she's helping out of her own means. This is not a poor woman. So, she comes in and though she's coming into a house that is actually part of probably the Sanhedrin or some great Pharisee, she's willing to forego that, and she's going to beeline right to Jesus, because she's a woman that goes after what she wants. If she cares about something deeply, she's going to get it.

So, she goes in, and the way that this woman is identified, and I want you to go back in Luke 7:37,

“And there was a woman in the city...”

What's that telling you? That the woman is identified with the city. What better way to identify the woman with the city to give her the name of the city? Mary Magdalene. So, that was the woman. I'm walking the line, it doesn't say it specifically. Luke's not trying to give you the

specifics of it. He's trying to help you see that these people are hurting and where they've been, and what is motivating them to the degree of wanting to literally chuck everything that they've ever known. Because what you're dealing with are women that were involved in positions, they had possessions, and they had power, and they're willing to forego those things to follow Christ. It's a very interesting picture, and you'd have to say, "What was it that would...?" And Luke is saying they had been so tortured by the path that they had chosen that they would surrender this. So, he gives that picture at the beginning. And of course, Mary's going to be the first one he proclaims.

The second name that he gives is Joanna. That's kind of a female John. Johanna, John, Joanna basically means the same thing, and that is "God's gracious gift," and the fact that she would be called that. The way that it describes her, and I think this is a very important point if you look with me,

(Luke 8:3) "And Joanna the wife of Chuza..."

And it says who he was. He was Herod's steward. In other words, he was Herod's guy that looked after all of Herod's possessions. And so, this was a highly political office; it was a high standard office, and so he had a lot of power. And you wouldn't think, "What would he be doing?" And we know, just to remind you, this is Herod Antipas. So, this is the guy that kills John, to kind of equate that, and this will be the guy that's at Christ's crucifixion. But the woman that's married to the guy that's working for him is with Jesus. Now, Joanna is mentioned in the passage, and here again, I could go into a lot of specifics about this, but I do want to emphasize the fact that the Herods were directly connected with the Sadducees, and the Sadducees were the ones that filled the office of the high priesthood. And they were actually given the office more by the Roman government and paid for it rather than they were taking the office because they were righteous men. So, you have all these political things happening in religion, so to speak, and you have this dissonance that's going on.

So, it says,

“And Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others...”

Now, I want to say this about Joanna and go ahead and walk on the line with me, but I think it's important that we basically see Luke is the only one that will mention her. And she'll be mentioned here, and she'll be mentioned in Chapter 24 of Luke, the only Gospel that mentions Joanna.

Now, Joanna is going to be mentioned in Luke 24, and there is this Greek structure of a sentence. A very unique structure that's used in Luke 24. I'm not going to go through the specifics of that. But it's called a chiastic structure, and the chiastic structure actually gets its name from one of the Greek letters, chi. Chi looks like an X, and because it looks like an X, the focus is on where the two lines meet. And so, a chiastic structure is focusing on the middle. Joanna is always placed in the middle. And what the writer is doing is he's saying, “I want you to especially pay attention to Joanna.” We know about Mary Magdalene. Susanna is going to be mentioned, and it seems as if the emphasis is going to be about her beauty.

But I want you to pay close attention to Joanna. Now, the question is, why do we pay close attention to Joanna? Well, there's a connection to Herod, right?

When you see the very beginning of this letter, if you go all the way back with me to Luke 1, there's a reason why everything's written, right? Luke writes this, that from the very beginning, there are witnesses of these things, the word was handed down.

And then he states this in verse 3,

(Luke 1:3) “It seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus.”

“Most honorable.” What he's talking about is that this is a guy that has a position. Now, “Theophilus” is a title sometimes, but it can also be a name. And the name just basically literally means “friend of God”. So, “Theophilus, friend of God,” is what he writes.

And then he talks about it in verse 5, “And I just want to set it in the setting of the days of Herod,” and then he

goes into Zacharias, who is priest, right? Zacharias is priest. So, the question is, why would he go into the... I mean, read the Gospel of Mark. Does he start off with a priest? No, he starts off with John the Baptist. Read the Gospel of John, and how does he start off? "The Word was with God, the Word was..." No, it doesn't start off with that. Start off with Matthew; it starts with Christ and the lineage of David. Why would he start off with a priest? That's an interesting question. Now, what we know is that there was a high priest called Annas, and then he gave his priesthood over to Caiaphas. Caiaphas is basically a priest from 18 to 36 A.D. So, during the time of the crucifixion, Caiaphas was high priest. But after Caiaphas, about a year after, another guy was high priest. You know what his name was? Theophilus. Don't you think that's interesting? And let me tell you something else that's interesting. Theophilus' ossuary in his grave is even in Jerusalem today. First century Theophilus, who was priest. You know who's buried with him? His granddaughter, Joanna. Now, the reason I go here is that it seems as if Luke is beckoning this Theophilus, who's high priest, and once again, let me just kind of back up. The high priest was of

the Sadducean order, right? Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection. He's going to mention two resurrections right aligned with the women. And then he's going to mention Joanna. He's going to stick her smack dab in the middle. And you know what I think? I think she was raised. We don't know how many women or how many people Christ raised from the dead, but we know of at least two, and we have these women in the middle. What we know is this, that Joanna had suffered a lot of pain, a lot of suffering, otherwise she wouldn't have been here. She's listed as one of the ones in which spirits or sickness or helplessness and hopelessness had plagued her, and now she's free from it. Could you imagine appealing to a high priest and saying, "You know, your daughter found peace here? And you know, we've done everything kosher from day one." He starts with the priesthood with Zacharias. Have you ever asked yourself, "Why does Luke record the circumcision of Jesus on the 8th day?" To follow the law. Why does it show Jesus getting a bar mitzvah at age 12? Only the Gospel of Luke shows that, to demonstrate the priestly order. He begins to appeal to all these things, and you begin to realize what God is doing

through these things is revealing that He's saving through His word and demonstrating this message where it hits everybody. Everybody has had somebody in their family that has gone through pain, has gone through hurt, has gone through something. And this Gospel begins to knock on the door of those pains and hurts. And it says, "And the only One that can take care of these things is Jesus." He's the only One. And He keeps bringing us back to this wonderful fact. We're running out of time, and we've done a little walking along the line. But isn't it wonderful to realize that God has orchestrated all these things to show us that He is able to save to the utmost?

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for Your lovingkindness to us, for Your salvation, that You can save in the midst of Herod's family and Caesar's household, as Philippians will tell us, that You can actually call in the realm of a high priest that has denied the resurrection; that You can open our eyes to see things

that we never thought we would see, especially in those moments in which we feel so destitute and hopeless and helpless. It's so overwhelming to us that we can't go any other place. We have money and we have power and we have possession and prestige, but we can't go anyplace. Father, You have so changed our hearts and our lives that we'll forego all this stuff just to follow You.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, what I'm encouraging you about is I want you to see that this is what motivates you to serve Jesus. It's by the mercies of God that we present our bodies a living sacrifice. And if you have not come to understand His merciful kindness and gracious acts upon you, you have missed the one and only motivation that there is for service. He saved us, not on the basis of any deeds which we have done. We were broken and in despair. We had no hope. And He saved us. Come to Christ today, the One who heals miraculously; the One who cares for you intimately and cherishes who you are. Though you've been cast away and outcast by the world, you haven't by Him.