

The Many Facets of Jesus' Ministry

Introduction

The Text

¹Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him,² and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means. (Luke 8:1–3)

A Diamond in My Hand

- A. I half expected I would just read these three little verses for context, maybe say a quick word about them, and then head straight for v. 4 and the more “significant” matters of the Parable of the Sower and the Seed.
 - 1. But the more I looked into these verses, the more they became almost like a diamond in my hand, displaying for me a few of the many facets that compose the ministry of Christ. I think we learn many significant things about His ministry in these three little verses.
- B. Four facets, in particular, drew my attention. I will sum them up with one word here and we'll expound on these for the remainder of our time: (1) Facet #1: News; (2) Facet #2: Service; (3) Facet #3: Acceptance; and (4) Facet #4: Need.

Facet #1: News

One Central Focus

- A. Jesus' ministry had one central focus: heralding, announcing, preaching, proclaiming, bringing “the good news of the kingdom of God” (v. 1).
 - 1. This is so clear as to be indisputable. Jesus says it Himself back in Luke 4. You recall, He was in Capernaum at this point and He was having great success in ministry there—so much success, in fact, that He could hardly get anytime alone. So in vv. 42-43 we read this: “⁴² And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them,⁴³ but he said to them, ‘I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.’”
- B. Now, our text this morning is really just the ongoing march of this singlehearted mission. For we read there, now in 8:1: “Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.”

1. He's still doing what He was doing back in [Luke 4](#). And He will continue doing it even through to the other side of His death and resurrection. In [Acts 1:3](#), Luke tells us: "He presented himself alive to [His apostles] after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."
- C. There is one central focus, one master theme, in our Savior's ministry and it is this: the gospel, the good news of the kingdom of God. To preach this good news is why He was sent.

The Gospel As News

- A. Now, we must make something of this idea of "news" for a moment. Euaggelion in the Greek, what we typically translate as "gospel", literally means "good news".
1. This means that the gospel, before it is anything else, is first news. It is the announcement, the proclamation, the joyful report that something has happened in Jesus—that the kingdom lost in Adam is being regained in Christ, that the saving reign of God is now upon us and, sinful rebels thought we be, we can be brought back into His kingdom through the Messiah.
- B. Again, the gospel, before it is anything else, is first news. This is perhaps the single most important thing we can say about Christianity. Because this is what sets it apart from all other religions.
1. All other religions are fundamentally a set of instructions—what you must do to be saved, get enlightened, break free from the cycle of reincarnation, or whatever.
 2. But Christianity holds out first, at the most fundamental level, not a set of instructions, but news—not what you must do to be saved but what Christ has done to save you; not ways you can climb back up to God, but the historical fact that God Himself has come down for you!
- C. Muhammed, Buddha, they can instruct you but they cannot save you. They can point the way, but you have to get it done.
1. Jesus, on the other hand, first saves you and then He begins to instruct you. Any instruction the Scriptures give us is set within the context of this good news.

Running Like the Wind

- A. And this makes all the difference in the world for you. In Christianity, before we talk about what you must do, we talk about what He's already done. We take the burden off of you before you even begin. You can't run the race with a boulder on your back. So we remove that boulder in Christ . . . and then you can run like the wind.
1. He's lived the life you should've lived; He's died the death you should've died; and He's now risen from the dead and by His Spirit you can be united to Him—His perfect record counted as yours, His sin-bearing death counted as yours, His resurrection power now within you, energizing you, changing you.

- a. Then, and only then, can we begin to give you instruction on how to live the Christian life. Because now, and only now, it is no longer you who live but He who lives in you.
- B. So you struggle with fear of man? “What are they thinking of me? Am I pleasing them? Do they like me?”
1. You’re never going to get over that if all we give you is instruction: “Stop fearing man.” You say: “I know that. But I don’t have the power to do it.”
 2. So we first give you news. “In Jesus, you have the affection and approval of the Father secured forever. He is pleased with you.” And, then, as these realities start to set roots down in our hearts, we find that we slowly stop getting so worked up about everyone else. We’re free to run!
- C. Christianity is news before it is ever instruction. Jesus is Savior before He is ever Teacher. And you are loved and accepted in Him before you ever lift a finger. And that changes everything!
- D. Proclaiming the gospel as news was Jesus’ mission from beginning to end of His earthly ministry. And He’s given that same mission now to us: “[T]his gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14).

Facet #2: Service

Word and Deed

- A. Just briefly here, Jesus does more than just talk about the kingdom. He manifests it, He puts it on display, He walks it out. All of His words are authenticated by His works. Everywhere He goes with the news of the kingdom He brings the manifestation of the kingdom with it.
1. Matthew speaks of this in general terms: “And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people” (Matt 4:23).
 2. Our text puts some particulars on this. Luke gives us the names of specific women who “had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities” (v. 2). Jesus brought the kingdom to them in word and in deed, in good news and loving service.
- B. And this, brothers and sisters, is really God’s master plan for growing the church. And we see this here. For it is after hearing the news and experiencing the service, that these women start to follow the King!
- C. And as Jesus was, so ought we to be now who are in Him.
1. We don’t say to the cold and hungry—“Be warm and filled; Jesus loves you!”—as we walk on by. No! We actually invite them into our home. We put the blanket that we usually use on cold nights in our bed around their unbathed shoulders. We give the leftover soup that we were hoping to enjoy for our dinner tonight to fill your growling belly.

- a. We don't just talk about the kingdom of God . . . we show it to you! That is the God-ordained means for growing the church and advancing the kingdom. We share with you news and we offer our service, in Jesus' name!

Facet #3: Acceptance

Disturbing Details

- A. Reading our text through a modern lens, we might not make much of the details Luke gives us. But in the ancient world, the world in which Jesus and His disciples walked, the little bit we are shown here would've been stunning, perhaps even disturbing.

- B. I am referring here to Jesus' acceptance of these women into the circle of His disciples. We read at the end of v. 1 that: “^{1b} the twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ^{3a} and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others . . .” (vv. 1b-3a).
 - 1. Such acceptance and inclusion on the part of Christ would've run a fingernail down the chalkboard of rabbinic opinion and tradition in His day.

- C. Let me just read you a string of commentary on this to quickly make the point:
 - 1. “[F]or these women to travel with the group would have been viewed as scandalous. Adult coeducation was unheard of, and that these women are learning Jesus' teaching as closely as his male disciples would surely bother some [of those outside]” (Keener, IVPNTBC).
 - 2. “The rabbis refused to teach women and generally assigned them a very inferior place” (TNTC).
 - 3. “Rabbinic sayings are not complimentary with respect to rabbis speaking to women. Thus, ‘Talk not much with womankind. . . . He that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the Law and at last will inherit Gehenna” (m. Abot. 1.5). Likewise, . . . ‘A man should not discourse with a woman on the street, even with his own wife, and certainly not with another woman, because of human gossip’ (Str-B 2:438)” (PNTC).
 - 4. “According to the rabbinic [literature], . . . a Jewish man prayed three benedictions each day, including one in which he thanked God that he was not made a woman (t. Ber. 7.18)” (DJG).

- D. All of this serves, perhaps, as background to that little scene in John's gospel where Jesus is talking with the Samaritan woman alone in the heat of the day, and then we read: “Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman . . .” (John 4:27a).
 - 1. “You don't do that. You don't do that Jesus. Everybody knows that!”

All in God's Image Are on God's Heart

- A. But Jesus isn't concerned with what "everybody knows"—with the opinions of man. He's concerned with the opinions of His Father. And, according to His Father, women have been just as significantly created in the image of God as have men: "God created man in his own image . . . ; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27).
- B. Jesus is not interested in reinforcing the stereotypes, superficialities, and corruptions that often fester within patriarchal societies. His mission is to redeem and renew a people after the image of the God who created them (cf. Col 3:10; Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18).
 - 1. And this means that His target audience includes all who have been created in that image in the first place: namely, everyone.
 - a. Male and female, certainly, as the most basic division within humanity. But we could continue: rich and poor, young and old, educated and uneducated, healthy and sick, model citizen and criminal, prude and prostitute, religious and secular, socially savvy and socially awkward, Republican and Democrat . . . and, now we should just say it: white and black.
 - i. All in God's image, therefore, all on God's heart!
- C. Don't you see, Jesus is redeeming and renewing a people, reconciling them both to God and to one another.
 - 1. The twelve had to wrestle with this: "What are these women doing here?" And soon it will be: "What are these Gentiles doing here?" And, in the end, there will be gathered around the throne of God, in His kingdom, people from every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev 5:9).

A Nation Ripping at the Seams

- A. So when we turn on the news, or we scroll our Facebook feeds, and we see a nation all but ripping at the seams, over matters of race, of skin color, we, the followers of Christ, dare not add to the rip and tear.
 - 1. We come, rather, with our God to heal and mend. Because Jesus accepts into His company any who would come, we go and do the same.
- B. Speaking into the present moment, Tim Keller writes: "[T]his is a time to present the Bible's strong and clear teachings about the sin of racism and of the idolatry of blood and country In Acts 17:26, in the midst of an evangelistic lecture to secular, pagan philosophers, Paul makes the case that God created all the races "from one man." Paul's Greek listeners saw other races as barbarian, but against such views of racial superiority Paul makes the case that all races have the same Creator and are of one stock. Since all are made in God's image, every human life is of infinite and equal value (Gen. 9:5–6). When Jonah puts the national interests of Israel ahead of the spiritual good of the racially "other" pagan city of Nineveh, he is roundly condemned by God (Jonah 4:1–11). One main effect of the gospel is to shatter the racial barriers that separate people (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14–

18), so it is an egregious sin to do anything to support those barriers. When Peter sought to do so, Paul reprimanded him for losing his grasp on the gospel (Gal. 2:14).”

- C. Matt Chandler would put it a bit stronger: "White supremacy and the alt-right is incompatible with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is evil and from the pit of hell. . . . You simply cannot call Jesus King and believe that nonsense. In fact, a friend of mine said that ‘Heaven will be a white supremacist’s hell.’”
- D. All the accusations we hurl at one another, all the enmity, all the strife, all the bullets whizzing in the air between us, or the cars accelerating upon us—don't you see? The Son of God, in love for each one of us, throws himself into the crossfire and, on the cross, He lets us rage on Him instead for a little while.
 - 1. All so that, when the dust settles on the third day, and He is risen, we find that our true enemies have been overcome—namely, Satan, sin, and death.
 - a. In His body, by His blood, the dividing wall of hostility that stood for ages between humanity and God and between one human being and another has been broken down. And whether you are man or woman, Jew or gentile, white, black, red, brown, yellow, or whatever hue in between . . . there is a place for you here around the cross.

Facet #4: Need

Jesus’ Ministry of Need

- A. There is an aspect of serving and ministering to others that, perhaps ironically, involves allowing them to serve and minister to you.
 - 1. This is what I would call a ministry of need—where you, though perhaps the “leader”, humble yourself to the point of genuinely needing the other person—their prayers, their input, their encouragement, or, in the case of Jesus here, their provision.
- B. Look at the last part of v. 3 where Luke records that these women, some of whom it would seem were very well off: “provided for them [Jesus and His band of disciples] out of their means.”
 - 1. Jesus, in an act of humility and solidarity with us, allows Himself to need us, to be provided for by us. He casts Himself upon human hospitality as it were.
- C. To be sure, Jesus, in the deepest sense, doesn’t need us. He is fully God after all.
 - 1. Do you remember how He provided for Peter’s taxes? Or how He fed the five thousand? He could’ve provided for His own welfare—His own money, food, shelter. But He doesn’t. He allows Himself to need us. Why?
- D. Well, I think it’s because as fully Man, as perfect Man, He is showing us the way towards redeemed, fully-functioning human relationships—relationships where it’s not just a one-way street: “I’m the

minister. I give to you.” Relationships that are instead marked by mutual need, co-traveling, and friendship.

1. I don’t just put forward all of my strengths. I let you in on my struggles, my weaknesses, my deficiencies, my needs. I’m not above you. I’m with you. And I’m glad you’re with me.
- E. As a minister He was not opposed to being ministered to. In fact, ironically, He seems to have seen it as an important part of His ministry. And that is the critical point.

Paul and Us

- A. Paul follows Jesus’ model here. That’s why we read in [Rom 15:30-32](#), for example: “³⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,³² so that by God’s will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.”
1. At first glance this sounds kind of selfish of Paul. “I need your prayer and I need your refreshment.” And we think: “Paul, you’re supposed to be the apostle. You’re supposed to be praying for me. You’re supposed to refresh me.”
 - a. But don’t you see? Paul gets it. Paul engages in the ministry of need. Because He knows that as they pray for him and minister to him, not only will he be helped, but their relationship will grow deeper in intimacy and love.
- B. There’s something off with the minister who won’t let himself be ministered to.
1. So let me ask you: how are you doing with the ministry of need? Are you letting people in? If not, why not?
 - a. Often behind this we find a sense of pride or a fear of being rejected. We are happy to be the ones giving, ministering, and praying, but when someone tries to do the same for us we feel strangely uncomfortable.
- C. But what we need to see is that, when we refuse to need one another in this way, we actually hollow out our relationships and, in some ways, ironically, we hinder our ministries.
1. Let people know you, touch you, minister to you. You will find it serves not only you, but them.