

THE KINDS OF PEOPLE THE SON OF MAN SAVES AND USES
LUKE 8:1-3

One of my favorite sections in the Bible is **Deuteronomy 7:7-8** —

“The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

Those two verses remind us that God loves and loves to use ordinary people. Scripture is filled with examples of using the ordinary: when Jesus chose the 12, he chose a group of uneducated and overlooked and even ostracized people (Acts 4:13). One of the reasons the many genealogies of the Bible are hard to read is that the names mean nothing to us — the stories of the great men are filled with ordinary and non-influential people. Read the story of the early church in Rome (Rom. 16); it's ordinary people. Even when God used powerful people like Isaiah and Jeremiah, their ministries were fruitless in their day, or like the Apostle Paul, they suffered greatly to make them depend on the Lord (2 Cor. 11-12).

God uses ordinary and weak and broken people so that they will learn to trust in Him — “Some *boast* in chariots and some in horses, But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God” (Ps. 20:7).

And He uses ordinary and weak and broken people so that when others observe their work they will know that the power and authority for their work is from the Lord — “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves” (2 Cor. 4:7).

In a passage that is easy to overlook only as a transition, Luke points us to the greatness of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, as he observes the message and messengers of Jesus —

GOD USES A SIMPLE MESSAGE AND SIMPLE SERVANTS SO THAT THE SON OF MAN IS EXALTED.

In chapters 8-9, Luke concludes the story of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee. In the introduction to that section, Luke reveals **two primary components** of the ministry of the Son of Man —

1. The **MESSAGE** of Jesus (v. 1)
2. The **MESSENGERS** of Jesus (vv. 2-3)

1. The MESSAGE of Jesus (v. 1)

- After the healing of the centurion's slave and the raising of the widow's son from the dead, Jesus ***began going around Galilee***, both in ***cities*** and smaller ***villages***. Big and small all received His attention.
 - ✓ This is Jesus' second "tour" of Galilee (cf. 4:14ff). For Him to be in Galilee was surprising — "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee is He?" (Jn. 7:41).
 - ✓ It seems that in all locations, He was greeted with large crowds (vv. 4, 19, 40, 45).
 - ✓ There was an initial reception of Jesus, yet the crowds invariably turned against Him (9:41).
- What is important about this time is what ***Jesus was doing — proclaiming and preaching ...***
 - ✓ The word ***proclaiming*** is the word "to herald, preach." And ***preaching*** is "to declare the good news" (evangelism/repentance). While they are different, to preach is to give good news and to give good news is to preach. They are both declarative and authoritative.
 - ✓ Preaching is what He promised His ministry would be at the beginning (4:18).
 - ✓ And preaching is what He would tell the Twelve their ministry would be (9:1; Mk. 3:14).
 - ✓ Jesus' main ministry was not healing but preaching. The healing was an expression of His compassion towards need, but even more it was an authentication of the message He preached: He was the Messiah who had come to set up His Kingdom: would Israel believe in Him?
 - ✓ Miracles were compassionate, made life better for a season, and validated His message; but His preaching produced faith and gave eternal life. So His emphasis was on preaching.
- Jesus' message was also simple — He was preaching and proclaiming ***the Kingdom of God...***
 - ✓ This is a particular theme in Luke, who mentions "kingdom of God" 32x (out of 65x in the NT).
 - ✓ The phrase "kingdom of God" has two primary emphases:
 - It is looking towards a future Kingdom (Millennial) in which Christ will sit on the Davidic throne and rule over Israel and the nations (13:29; 21:31; 22:16). When He was preaching the Kingdom, He was offering the Kingdom to Israel — "will you repent and believe in Me as Messiah/King?"
 - It also can refer to the freedom that individuals can experience through repentance and faith; they will be freed from the kingdom of Satan and placed under the domain and lordship of Christ (5:32; 13:3, 5). And this message of personal salvation was also the message the Twelve were commanded to preach (particularly after Israel rejected the Messiah, 12:31-32; 24:47).
 - ✓ For Jesus to declare His kingship is to declare His victory over all things. Consider what He said in ***Jn. 12:31-32*** (right before the cross) — "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."
 - He means that Satan is vanquished. He still fights today; but his end is sure.
 - He means that what appears as a loss (cross) is the means of our victory.

- Because of the victory of Christ on the cross, the world is “no more Satan’s and...Christ’s people are now to be far from the impression that they are only captives in an enemy’s territory and unable warrantly to occupy a place in the world...The world is judicially awarded to Christ as its owner and Lord.” [Smeaton]
- ✓ When Christ came, He did not come to overthrow political powers, transform social agendas, balance economic disparity, educate the illiterate, or feed all the hungry. He came to preach the gospel. He preached the gospel because only the gospel will change hearts to that people will be eternally acceptable to God and so that they will be transformed and become useful now.
- ✓ It seems illogical to do something so simple (and even archaic) as preaching to transform lives.
 - The message itself is simple (not simplistic) — grace, man, God, Christ, faith, hope. Substitution.
 - The method is also very simple — preach, declare, compel. “Will you repent and believe (3:3)?”
 - And through a simple message and method, people are changed (Acts 4:13).
 - The world regards this as folly. It’s the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor. 1:18ff).
 - Is it notable to you that of all the things Jesus might have done and sent His disciples to do, He simply preached? And the world was (and is being) transformed.
 - Martin Luther explained the Reformation this way:

I have opposed the indulgences and all the papists, but never by force. I simply taught, preached, wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And then, while I slept...the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing. The Word did it all... For it is almighty and takes captive the hearts, and if the hearts are captured the evil work will fall of itself.

- ✓ Let us be encouraged: when we lose people who have been influential and used in great ways in our lives and the church, we will lament (grief is appropriate). So today we might be lamenting John MacArthur, or Charlie Kirk, or Voddie Baucham, or a host of others whom we have lost to death.
 - But let us not lament as if we have lost the power of their lives. Let us not forget that we have not lost the singular power for the changed lives of others — we have the gospel.
 - (Let us also remember that we have not lost them; God in sovereign wisdom took them home.)
 - And the gospel message transcends gospel messengers. It is eternal and infinite in power.
 - We have “lost” all the great men — Peter, John, Paul, Augustine, Luther, Carey, Bonhoeffer... and will lose all the great men to death. But when we have the gospel, we are not alone.
 - And, we may have lost a man, but we have not lost the Son of Man. He is still enthroned.
- ✓ One of our fundamental tasks as a believer and a church is to protect and proclaim that gospel:
 - We are “the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).
 - We “guard...the treasure which has been entrusted to [us]” (2 Tim. 1:14)
 - We entrust the things we have heard and been taught to others who will also teach (2 Tim. 2:2)
 - When we defend and preach the gospel, we are fulfilling our responsibility and we are emulating the ministry of Jesus.

2. The **MESSENGERS** of Jesus (vv. 2-3)

- While Jesus was preaching, He was also training and equipping, **starting with the Twelve**.
 - ✓ This is the first use of the term “Twelve” to denote the closest followers of Christ, though it will begin appearing more in the book (e.g., 9:1, 12, 17; 18:31; 22:3, 47).
 - ✓ These were the apostles, chosen by Christ in 6:13-16. While the Twelve were chosen earlier (weeks?), until now they have largely been part of the larger contingent of followers of Christ. Now begin to take a more noticeable role. Individuals among the Twelve also begin taking a more prominent role.
 - ✓ Remember two things about the Twelve:
 - *They were remarkably unremarkable*. They were fishermen, a tax-collector (hated), a political zealot, unskilled, and mostly unknown and forgettable. They were not influential. “They slowed Jesus down; they tempted Him to disobey His Father; they were more trouble than most people thought that they were worth. Everyone except Jesus, that is.” [Bill Hull]
 - *They were chosen by Christ to be with Him and to preach (Mk 3:14)*. They were to learn His life and His message. And that is exactly what they did (as evidenced in Acts 4:13). Though they were unremarkable, they would ultimately be used in remarkable ways (cf. Acts 2:41, 47).
- Along with the Twelve **were also some women**...
 - ✓ That’s a remarkable statement. While some women were prominent in the OT (Sarah, Deborah, Ruth, Esther, and the Prov. 31 wife), the position of a woman in biblical times was hard.
 - ✓ Women experienced inequalities in marital and family expectations, they were restricted socially, not considered full members of the congregation, discouraged from studying the Law. Their position left them vulnerable and looked at dis-favorably.
 - ✓ Yet women have a prominent role in Luke’s gospel: Elizabeth, Mary, Anna, Peter’s mother-in-law, the widow of Nain, the sinful woman, the hemorrhaging woman, Martha and Mary, the crippled woman, the parable of the woman with lost coin, the parable of widow and judge, the widow and her mite, and most of all the women at the crucifixion and tomb, and their reports.
 - ✓ While the culture dismissed them, Jesus accepted them and their ministry to Him. They were not beneath Him and not beneath His care. And they served a prominent role in His ministry —

They were enabled to stay with Jesus and not to give up because of the inner power of the Holy Spirit. And how wonderfully they stayed with Jesus to the end. It was not a woman who sold our Lord for thirty silver coins. It was not a woman who fled from the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane. It was not a woman who denied him three times in the high priest’s house. But they were women who wailed and lamented when Jesus was led out to be crucified. They were women who stood by the cross to the end. And they were women who first visited the grave where the Lord had been laid. Great indeed is the power of the grace of God. [Ryle, *Luke*, 101-2.]

- ✓ These women who were with Jesus had received grace from Him — **they had been healed**.

- Luke highlights three particular women who had been healed and were traveling with Jesus:
 - ✓ **Mary, called Magdalene** (v. 2) — she was from the town of Magdala about three miles north of Tiberias around the Sea of Galilee (on the most western point of the Sea).
 - She had been possessed by **seven demons** and Jesus had healed her of that affliction. (Again, a reminder that demon possession in the gospels is always an affliction like illness and is healed.)
 - That there were seven demons suggests the completeness of her possession; she was under the total domination and control of the demons. Her affliction was severe.
 - And Luke clearly says, the demons have **gone out**. She *was* controlled, but not now! She's free. It is no wonder that she is so devoted to Him, particularly at the cross — standing by the cross (Jn. 19:25), locating the tomb (Mt. 28:1), watching the tomb (Mt. 27:61), coming early to the tomb with spices (John 20:1), being first to see the risen Lord (Jn. 20:11), and reporting the resurrection to the disciples (Luke 24:10; John 20:18).
 - She has suffered greatly, Christ has delivered her (as an outcast), and she follows Him closely.
 - ✓ **Joanna, the wife of Chuza** (v. 3). Her husband has a formal role in Herod Antipas' household as a steward — perhaps a manager of Herod's property or a political appointee.
 - Since Joanna has left Chuza to follow Jesus through Galilee she is probably widowed.
 - While Chuza was politically prominent, he wasn't following, but his wife was; she would not have had the same political influence in Herod's household as her husband.
 - We don't know from what she was healed, but she also is prominent at the cross (23:55ff).
 - ✓ **Susanna**. We know nothing else about her, but she evidently was known to the readers.
 - ✓ Together, while Joanna had been married to someone influential, they were not influential personally and they would have been largely unknown and ostracized (demons and Romans).
- **Many others** also were with them. (The three named women were examples of the other followers.)
 - ✓ What is significant about these women is what they did: they **contributed to their support** — they helped underwrite the costs of travel for Jesus and the Twelve. They were affluent and generous.
 - ✓ There is much irony in that statement: the One who created all things, created the women, owns all things, had no personal possessions in the incarnation and was dependent on the care of others.
 - ✓ The One who could feed 5000 men from five loaves and two fish did not use His omnipotence in a self-serving way. But He allowed these women (and others) to serve Him as an expression of love.
- **The ministry of the Twelve and the women is a testament to how God uses people.**
 - ✓ He typically does not use the great and powerful. He uses the lowly, the humble, the weak, the poor, the outcast — those without discernable benefits — so that it is clear who gets the glory.
 - ✓ He could spontaneously reveal Himself and convert all the animistic worshippers in Indonesia to Himself. But instead He uses people like William and Natalyn to give their lives to go there. Little people from a little place, sent by a little church, with a great and glorious gospel.

“The history of the church, from God’s perspective, is a history of the Holy Spirit using little people. It consists of a mustard seed here and there, some yeast hidden in dough, or a seed in the ground. Not many wise or influential people are included. Rather, it has been built on the lowly, the little people. Most of these have lived and died unnoticed, probably feeling in their own hearts that they had never really accomplished much for God with their lives. This history we have lost, but not forever. We will no doubt hear it told us as we stand together before God’s throne.” [Jim Petersen, *Church Without Walls*.]

- This should be a great encouragement to us. When we lose the great leaders, we can fret: who will pick up the mantle of John MacArthur, Charlie Kirk, Voddie Baucham, John Piper (when he’s gone). On a much smaller scale, who will replace Keith, Tanner, Greg, Don, David, Lee, Terry, home group leader...?
 - ✓ This is a reminder to us that God isn’t dependent on the mighty and influential. He uses the simple, the weak, the broken, the ordinary — and then He graces them with the power of the Spirit to serve.
 - ✓ It has been said, “God must delight in using ordinary people with ordinary gifts because he made so many of us!” And that means that He has in place who He needs to accomplish His purposes when those few influential and powerful leaders are taken by Him to glory.
 - ✓ “God changes history when the little people in the little places do what they should.” (Weber)
 - ✓ Mighty men have fallen. They will always fall (until Christ returns). And He will care for us as He always has, through more ordinary men who love Christ and are devoted to Him.
 - ✓ No matter who dies, the King is not gone. The King is alive. The King is on His throne, and His church will survive — and thrive. He promised.
 - ✓ The world is broken. Satan is still attacking. But his attacks are the last darts from a vanquished foe.
 - ✓ The Son of Man’s message is still true and powerful.
 - ✓ And the Son of Man’s messengers are still ordinary and empowered.
 - ✓ The Son of Man’s church and people will be well.

BENEDICTION: Jude 24-25