

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 11

Mary of Magdala

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, ² 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, ³ 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.

The last chapter ended with Jesus in a major conflict with the Pharisees and lawyers. In spite of the difficulty, the large crowds still follow Jesus as He travels from place to place with the twelve and other disciples.

Luke identifies three women in this group. For the first time in his writing, Luke introduces the name Mary Magdalene. He is specific about her healing; "...seven demons had gone out of her" when she met Jesus.⁹ We can only speculate when this occurred. Properly, she should be called Mary of Magdala. Magdala was a town on the western shore of the Lake of Tiberias. Mary, with the other women, "ministered to Christ of their substance."¹⁰ They gave out of gratitude for the deliverances that He brought to them. These same women were with Jesus on His last journey to Jerusalem. They would stand near the cross. Mary Magdala remained at the cross until all was over with the body taken down and placed in Joseph's tomb. On the first day of the week, she, with Salome and Mary the mother of James, arrived at the tomb with sweet spices to anoint the body of Jesus. They found the tomb empty, but she saw the angels. She rushed to tell Peter and John and together they immediately returned to the tomb. There she lingered, thoughtfully weeping at the door of the tomb. The risen Lord appeared to her, but at first she did not recognize Him. Drawing her attention, He called her name, and she uttered the joyful, reverent cry, "Rabboni."

The idea that this Mary was "the woman who was a sinner," or that she was unchaste, is altogether groundless.¹¹ Some have taught that the woman caught in the act of adultery was this same Mary of Magdala. John 7:53 through John 8:11 records the event in question.

~~John 7:53 [Everyone went to his home.~~

~~John 8:1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and *began* to teach them. ³The scribes and the Pharisees *brought a woman~~

⁹ Mark 16:9

¹⁰ Luke 8:3

¹¹ Luke 7:37

~~caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court,⁴ they *said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act."⁵ "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"⁶ They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.⁷ But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him *be the first to throw a stone at her.*"⁸ Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.⁹ When they heard it, they *began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.*¹⁰ Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?"¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."}]~~

The [...] brackets indicate that this story is not in the oldest and most reliable texts. It was added sometime after 400 AD. Some attach this passage to Mary of Magdala but there is no proof to confirm that claim.

The last important point in Luke's passage reveals the source of money to operate the Lord's ministry. Private contributions of those who believed in the Lord and followed along with Him paid for the ministry expenses along the journey.

On this particular occasion, a large multitude from the cities begins to gather around Jesus and Jesus once again begins to teach them in a parable.

Parable of the Seeds

Luke 8:4 When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: ⁵ "The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶ "Other *seed* fell on rocky *soil*, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷ "Other *seed* fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. ⁸ "Other *seed* fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." ⁹ His disciples *began* questioning Him as to what this parable meant. ¹⁰ And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is* in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND. ¹¹ "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. ¹² "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. ¹³ "Those on the rocky *soil are* those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no *firm* root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ "The *seed* which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to maturity. 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.

This parable contains a universal application. Every congregation has this problem when and where the Gospel is proclaimed. Four kinds of hearts exist in every congregation. While reading this parable we should say to ourselves, "Is this I?"

The Lord fully explains this parable's meaning. The parable carries great caution and we must exhibit caution when we hear the Word of God. In this case, the parable warns the Apostles not to expect their hearers to respond to all their teachings. It also warns all ministers of the Gospel not to look for great results from their sermons. It warns the hearers to take heed to listen to the preachers. Preaching is the means by which Christ's Church hears the Word of God proclaimed. The congregation needs to hear a good preacher but they also must be good listeners.

Look at the first caution which warns us to be aware of the devil when hearing the Gospel Word. The devil snatches the seed away as soon as it is sown. The seed, representing the Word of God, does not sink into our consciences. It does not make an impression on our minds. The malicious spirit of evil lurks everywhere. It watches for an occasion to destroy a soul, but nowhere perhaps is this evil so active as in the congregation. People wonder where it comes from, yet, they fail to listen to the message, finding the sermons dull and they fail to remember them.

Parable of the Covered Light

Luke 8:16 "Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. ¹⁷ "For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor *anything* secret that will not be known and come to light. ¹⁸ "So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him *more* shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

Verses 16-18 form a practical application for an important lesson. Spiritual knowledge ought to be used diligently. The Lord says that spiritual knowledge is like a lighted candle which becomes useless when put under a bed, but is of great use when placed where it can be helpful to people's needs.

The Gospel was not given to be admired but to be practiced. It was meant to be seen in our lives; therefore, while we have the light let us walk in the light.¹² John said the same thing in his Gospel.

John 12:35 Jesus therefore said to them, "For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.

¹² John 12:35

Think of others too! Millions in this world have no spiritual light. They live without God and without the Lord. Paul agrees in his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephes. 2:12 *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

What can be done for those without spiritual light? True Godly love strives to share the light with everyone. No candle which God lights is ever meant to burn alone.

Visiting Family

Luke 8:19 And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You." ²¹ But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

Verse 19 picks up just as Jesus finishes His famous "seed" parable and His charge to "letting your light shine."¹³ The point of His discourse directs the hearer to grow in the truth of the Word of God and let it shine for all to see. Here, Jesus' earthly mother and half brothers arrive outside wishing to speak with Him. Who are these with Mary and how many family members did Jesus have on earth? Jesus grew in a normal family with parents and siblings. Mark records the brothers' names.

Mark 6:3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.

Mark also mentions Jesus' sisters, but their names are not revealed. John reports an interesting fact about His brothers.

John 7:5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

After the resurrection of the Lord, His family members finally change their minds about Him and join the disciples in times of prayer (Acts 1:14).

Acts 1:14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

The risen Lord appeared to one of them, James, who became the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

Acts 12:17 But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." Then he left and went to another place.

1 Corinthians 15:6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most

¹³ Matthew 5:16

of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ⁷ then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;

In spite of these verses, some writers in the early centuries raise questions about the brothers in order to protect their developing doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity. An early writing called the Gospel of James, a false gospel, tells the life story of Mary. It claims that Jesus' brothers were the sons of Joseph by an earlier marriage. This view became the position of the Greek Orthodox Church. Later a famous scholar, Jerome, argued that Jesus' brothers were really his cousins claiming their mother was Mary of Cleophas, the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus. This view became the position of the Roman Catholic Church. Outside the Catholic and Greek Churches, most scholars prefer the traditional view of the Gospels whereby Jesus was born of the virgin Mary and then Mary and Joseph had four sons and several daughters.

Stormy Winds

Luke 8:22 Now on one of *those* days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they launched out. ²³ But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they *began* to be swamped and to be in danger. ²⁴ They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. ²⁵ And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?"

Those who put out to sea in a calm climate, even at Christ's bidding, must be prepared for a storm, and for the possibility of great peril in that storm. There is no place to go when a soul senses the fear of wrath but to Christ. We must call out to Him and call Him Master. We must say, Lord, "I need You, please help." Without question, when dangers pass we should give Christ the glory for our deliverance.

Legion

Luke 8:26 Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs. ²⁸ Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me." ²⁹ For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and *yet* he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert. ³⁰ And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. ³¹ They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss. ³² Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and *the demons* implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission. ³³ And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. ³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in

the city and *out* in the country. ³⁵ *The people* went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. ³⁶ Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. ³⁷ And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned. ³⁸ But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

The region of the Gerasenes (also called Gadara) represented a Gentile region southeast of the Sea of Galilee, home of the Decapolis, or the Ten Cities. These Greek cities belonged to no country and were self-governing. Although Jews would not raise pigs because the Jewish religion labeled them unclean, the Gentiles did.

These demons recognize Jesus and His authority immediately. They know who Jesus is and what His great power can do to them. Demons, Satan's messengers, are powerful and destructive. Still active today, they attempt to distort and destroy people's relationships with God. Demons and demon-possession are real. Believers must recognize the power of Satan and his demons, but we should not let curiosity lead us to get involved with demonic forces.

Deuteronomy 18:10 "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, ¹¹ or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. ¹² "For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you.

Demons are powerless against those who trust in Jesus. If we resist the devil, he will leave us alone (James 4:7).

James 4:7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

The demons beg Jesus to spare them from the abyss. This request is also mentioned in Rev. 9:1 and Rev. 20:1-3 as the place of confinement for Satan and his messengers. Of course, the demons know all about the abyss of confinement and they do not want to go there.

The demon's name is Legion. A legion is the largest unit in the Roman army, having between 3,000 and 6,000 soldiers. The man is possessed not by one, but many demons.

Why does Jesus not destroy these demons—or send them to the Abyss? Is it because time for such work has not yet come? He has healed many people of the destructive effects of demon-possession, but He does not yet destroy demons. The same question could be asked today. Why does Jesus not stop all the evil in the world? The evil one's time for that has not

yet come. But it will come! The book of Revelation portrays the future victory of Jesus over Satan, his demons and all evil.

The demons destroy the pigs, an act which also hurts the finances of those tending the pigs, but can pigs and money compare with human life? A man has been freed from the devil's power but the people think only about their livestock. People have always tended to value financial gain above needy people.

Throughout history, most wars have been fought to protect economic interests. Both at home and abroad, much injustice and oppression are the direct result of some individual or company's urge to get rich. People are continually being sacrificed to the god of money. Do we think more highly of pigs than of people? Think carefully about how decisions affect other human beings and be willing to choose a simpler life-style if it will keep other people from being harmed.

Often Jesus asked those He healed to be quiet about the healing. He urges this man to return to his family and tell them what God has done for him. Why? First, Jesus knows the man would be an effective witness to those who know his previous condition and can attest to the miraculous healing. Second, Jesus wants to expand his ministry by introducing his message into this Gentile area. Third, Jesus knows that the Gentiles, who are not expecting a Messiah, will not divert His ministry by trying to crown Him King.

When God touches your life, don't be afraid to share the wonderful events with your family and friends.

Daughter of Jairus

Luke 8:40 And as Jesus returned, the people welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him. ⁴¹ And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus' feet, and *began* to implore Him to come to his house; ⁴² for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him.

The synagogue was the local center of worship. The synagogue ruler was responsible for administration, building maintenance, and worship supervision. It would have been quite unusual for a respected synagogue ruler to fall at the feet of an itinerant preacher and beg Him to heal his daughter. Jesus honors this man's humble faith as we will see at the end of this chapter.

Woman Touched Jesus

Luke 8:43 And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, ⁴⁴ came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. ⁴⁵ And Jesus said, "Who is the one who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You." ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me." ⁴⁷ When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she

had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed. ⁴⁸ And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Many people surround Jesus as He makes His way toward Jairus's house. Although it is virtually impossible to get through the multitude, one woman fights her way desperately through the crowd in order to touch Jesus. As soon as she does so, she is healed. What a difference there is between the curious crowds surrounding Jesus and the few who reach out and touch Him! Today, many people are vaguely familiar with Jesus, but nothing in their lives change or become better by such a passing acquaintance. Only faith releases God's healing power. Are we just curious about God or do we reach out to Him to put over faith in Him, knowing that His mercy will bring healing to our body, soul, and spirit? Jesus knows who has touched Him; He wants the woman to step forward and identify herself to the crowd. Jesus wants to teach her that His cloak does not contain magical properties, but that her faith in Him has healed her. He may have wanted to teach the crowds a lesson. According to Jewish law, a man who touched a menstruating woman became ceremonially unclean.

Leviticus 15:19 'When a woman has a discharge, *if* her discharge in her body is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. ²⁰ ~'Everything also on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean. ²¹ ~'Anyone who touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. ²² ~'Whoever touches any thing on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. ²³ ~'Whether it be on the bed or on the thing on which she is sitting, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening. ²⁴ ~'If a man actually lies with her so that her menstrual impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean. ²⁵ 'Now if a woman has a discharge of her blood many days, not at the period of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond that period, all the days of her impure discharge she shall continue as though in her menstrual impurity; she is unclean. ²⁶ ~'Any bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her like her bed at menstruation; and every thing on which she sits shall be unclean, like her uncleanness at that time. ²⁷ ~'Likewise, whoever touches them shall be unclean and shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. ²⁸ ~'When she becomes clean from her discharge, she shall count off for herself seven days; and afterward she will be clean.

Whether her bleeding was normal or, as in this woman's case, the result of illness, people protected themselves from such defilement, Jewish men carefully avoided touching, speaking to, or even looking at women. By contrast, Jesus proclaims to hundreds of people that this unclean woman has touched Him and He has healed her. In Jesus' mind, this suffering woman is not to be overlooked. As God's creation, she deserves attention and respect.

Child, Arise

Luke 8:49 While He was still speaking, someone *came from *the house of* the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore." ⁵⁰ But

when Jesus heard *this*, He answered him, "Do not be afraid *any longer*; only believe, and she will be made well." ⁵¹ When He came to the house, He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl's father and mother. ⁵² Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, "Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep." ⁵³ And they *began* laughing at Him, knowing that she had died. ⁵⁴ He, however, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Child, arise!" ⁵⁵ And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and He gave orders for *something* to be given her to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were amazed; but He instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

We should not complain about the size of a crowd. We should not hurry along as we live our lives and go about doing good. Many poor souls who hide in a crowd are often healed, helped and saved, and nobody notices. This woman comes trembling, yet her faith saves her. Observe Christ's comfortable words to Jairus, "**Do not be afraid *any longer*; only believe, and she shall be made well.**" In perfect faith no fear exists; the more we fear, the less we believe. Christ, seeing the whole child, commands that she be given food. Just as new born babes need food, so too, those newly raised from sin desire spiritual food that they may grow.