

Outcasts Part 5

The Favored Sisters of Jesus

Luke 8:1-3

Memory Verses: John 8:10-11

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

In our culture today we have a lot of division, which in effect means we have a lot of outcasts. If you follow one political party you may feel cast off by the others. If you have a particular ethnic background then you may feel cast off by the others. If you have a particular hobby you may feel cast off by those who think your hobby is weird or uninteresting. If you claim a specific sexual identity, gender identity, religion, or world view you can easily feel cast off by the others.

In Jesus' day there was a huge portion of the population that was effectively set aside as second class; women. I know in our day and time that seems silly. Women can work any job a man can, women can make the same money men make, women have all the same freedoms that men have. We've come along way from the days of women suffrage. But in the first century women were a little more than slaves. They were outcasts.

But not by Jesus. Jesus loved them, cared for them, interceded for them, made them part of his disciples, and promoted them in the public square. For Jesus, there were no second class citizens. There were simply those who would follow him and those who would not. And many women followed Jesus. Look with me in [Luke 8:1-3](#). Here at the beginning of Jesus ministry he includes these women; Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna along with his disciples. And then again at the end of his ministry we see who is present at the crucifixion. Look at [Mark 15:40-41](#). Again we see, Mary Magdalene, Mary his mother, and Salome who many believe to be the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John. The point is this, women weren't just present in Jesus ministry, women were a substantial part of Jesus' ministry. And, in choosing women alongside of his disciples Jesus was breaking all of the social rules. He was showing us that in Him all outcasts find a home.

This is obviously a hard topic for me to touch on as I am a man. But, I do know this, having lived with a woman all of my life, sometimes being a woman can seem like a disadvantage. Being a single mom is hard. Being a woman in the church can be confusing at times. I want you to know I sympathize, and so does Jesus. That is why, this morning we are going to look at three specific women; favored sisters if you will, that Jesus brought alongside him to change the world. It is interesting that when God created woman from man he created her to be a helper .

As we look at these three women we will see how they were used to be helpers to Jesus and the Apostles. And, what's clear is that by examining these women we will come to recognize the undeniable fact that... **A woman favored by God, following Jesus and faithful to the Spirit's leading cannot be stopped by any force in this world.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first story I want us to look at is about how... **In Christ, A Pregnant Teenager Became The Mother of The Apostles**. Of course we are talking about Mary the Mother of Jesus. Her story begins in [Luke 1:26-38](#). We know this story well, but the key phrase here is in [verse 30](#) where the angel tells Mary that she has been favored by God. How is it a favor of God to be given a child when you are most likely a teenager, and not married? Even in today's times, being a teenage mother is still considered as painting a little outside the lines. It happens, but its not necessarily supposed to happen. But, it was way worse in Jesus' times. Mary could have been divorced, abandoned, reviled, and even stoned to death. Not really a favor. But look what she says in [verse 38](#). She makes is known that she will take on this task with faith in God as her strength. She says, "let it be according to your word." Thankfully none of those awful things happened to Mary. Joseph still marries her, she isn't considered a whore by society, and therefore she isn't stoned to death. And then nine months later she gives birth to the Messiah.

Let's skip ahead in the story. Jesus grows strong and mature under the tutelage of his mother and when he is 12 years old they take a trip to Jerusalem. Jesus gets lost and his parents are worried about him. Finally they find him and Jesus tells them that he's been in the temple with his Father, God. In [Luke 2:51](#) we see something interesting. Jesus, God in the flesh, submits to his mother and returns with her to Nazareth. On the surface this may not seem like a big deal but it shows us that Jesus loved and respected Mary. Even though she wasn't really his mother in the way we have mothers, he treated her as such and even submitted himself to her.

Skipping ahead 18 years we see another picture of Jesus with his mother Mary; this time at a wedding. At this wedding they run out of wine, which in their custom was a really big deal, and we see this exchange in [John 2:3-5](#). Though Jesus even expresses his desire to not begin his ministry of miracles yet, he still submits to his mother's wishes showing once again his desire to honor her. Jesus not only thinks highly of Mary but he shows her a respect that not many men would have in his day. He puts her needs ahead of his own.

Skipping ahead again, one of the last encounters we see of Jesus and Mary before his resurrection is on the cross. Let's look there in [John 19:26-27](#). Here Jesus, with compassion for Mary, tells the disciple John to take care of her and to look after her as if she were his own mother. **So I**

want you to get the full picture. Mary, a teenage girl, who was favored by God, raised the Messiah, had influence in his ministry, traveled with the 12, and was seen as a mother by the disciples. In the end she literally became a mother to John the apostle along with her natural sons James and Jude who also wrote the Epistles bearing their names. No wonder she is seen as such a great and influential person in the Bible. She's a legend. The children she raised and cared for was the Messiah and half the authors of the New Testament. She had a huge influence on the Apostles, and **It can be easily argued that no one human had more influence in the life of Jesus than Mary. A woman favored by God, following Jesus and faithful to the Spirit's leading cannot be stopped by any force in this world.**

The second story I want us to look at is about how... **In Christ, A Demon Possessed Prostitute Became The Apostle to The Apostles.** The second woman we are going to look at is also known as Mary Magdalene. **The problem with Mary Magdalene is that we don't know exactly which stories in the Bible apply to her and which ones apply to someone else, so as you will see, it is possible that she is a composite of multiple women. Due to this confusion the Catholic Church has chosen to attribute multiple stories to Mary giving her a greater arc and journey in the Bible. I personally agree with this, and so, although I prefer to see her as the person in all of these stories, it is still highly likely they don't all belong to her. That is why when I talk about her here, there needs to be a measure of grace, because we just don't know the truth.**

With that said, the first possible encounter with Mary would be in **John 8:1-11**. If this is Mary Magdalene then the charge to her concerning adultery lends credence to the long held rumor that she was a prostitute as well. If that was true then this was probably her last infraction in a long line of transgressions. With that said, notice here how Jesus treats her. He doesn't condemn her as the rest had. Instead he actually has her life spared and then encourages her to go and sin no more. Since Jesus doesn't outright forgive her here, it leaves the door open for another encounter.

That next encounter could very possibly be in **Luke 7:36-50**. Here we see a woman, known as a sinner, most likely a prostitute, who seeks out Jesus to worship him. She is so eager to worship him that she crashes a party at a Pharisees house where she knows she will be reviled. If this is the same woman as the one found in adultery, this Pharisee was probably one of the men who had a stone in his hand ready to kill her. She must really want to worship Jesus. Why? Cause he saved her. And now, he officially tells her that her sins are forgiven. She loves much because she has been forgiven of much. If this truly is Mary Magdalene it would be at this point that those demons left her and she

would begin following Jesus along with the disciples. I love that picture. A woman filled with demons and sinfulness is changed in an instant by the overwhelming love of Christ. **In Christ our demons must flee, our past is put out to pasture and we are forever forgiven.**

Moving along, it is possible that the next encounter would be in **Luke 10:38-42**. Here we meet Martha and her sister Mary. Often known as Martha and Mary of Bethany, this Mary could very well be the same person who was found in adultery, and the same woman who anointed Jesus. You will see why later. It is also very possible that she is Mary Magdalene. She doesn't have a husband and it is curious that she is so enamored with Jesus. It makes sense that this isn't their first encounter. It also makes sense that she chooses to sit at his feet and worship him because of what he has previously done for her. Is it because she is one of his favored sisters, a disciple of his, who was born in Magdela but now lives with her sister in Bethany. Possibly.

Which leads to the next encounter in **John 12:1-8, Matthew 26:6-14, Mark 14:3-9** where we see Mary once again anointing Jesus, but this time for his coming burial. To know this she no doubt would have not only have had to know Jesus' teachings but be in the inner circle to hear what he only told a few. He was going to die. In my opinion, all of the pieces seem to fit. But we must leave open the possibility that these women are different people.

So what do we know of Mary Magdalene for sure? We know that she was as close to Jesus as his disciples and that she supported the ministry financially. Most of all, we know that she was the very first one to see Jesus resurrected from the dead. This special encounter was reserved for her and her alone and as soon as she saw him alive she went and told the other disciples, lending her the nickname the Apostle to the Apostles. She was the first one to proclaim the risen Christ. If these stories are all about one woman, what an amazing story of redemption. If all of these stories are about different women, what a testimony to the love of these women for Jesus and his power to transform them. The biggest takeaway is this; **With Jesus outcasts become overcomers. A woman favored by God, following Jesus and faithful to the Spirit's leading cannot be stopped by any force in this world.**

The last story I want us to look at is about how... **In Christ, An Adulterous Woman Became The First Apostle.** The last woman we will look at today, we don't even know her name though we know her story. We know her simply as the woman at the well. Let's look at in **John 4:1-30, 39-45**. Jesus tells her her sins, shows her her savior, and heals her soul. Jesus is famous for saving her; she is famous for her response. She runs into the town and relentlessly evangelizes to everyone she encounters. Because of her bold testimony many in that town came to know Christ. It is

for this reason that many in church history claim her to be the very first apostle. She was the first one to lead a multitude of others to Christ through her testimony. From adulterous to apostle in one day. It just goes to show that **those who have been changed by Christ seek to see others changed by Him too. A woman favored by God, following Jesus and faithful to the Spirit's leading cannot be stopped by any force in this world.**

Application

That's a lot of scripture today without a lot of commentary but when it comes to celebrating the women of the Gospels who Jesus traveled with and impacted it's best to leave it God's Word. The point is simple, these women were not second class. They are first class no doubt about it. And, that is indicative of all women I know who love Jesus. You want to find a tough as nails woman, find a woman who loves Jesus with her whole heart. You want to find a woman who can overcome the hardest of obstacles, find a woman who follows Jesus in Word and deed. They are truly unstoppable. **A woman favored by God, following Jesus and faithful to the Spirit's leading cannot be stopped by any force in this world.**

Conclusion

Being that I am not a woman and don't have much to offer other than what has been said, I thought it might be good to get the perspective of a woman that we don't get to hear from very often. So I'm going to invite my Bride to come up here and share her heart with you as well.

Interview with Lisa Sloane [What are the biggest differences you can see between Christian men and women? What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a Christian woman? What has been your experience as a female leader in ministry for over twenty years? What would be your advice to women who are weary about getting involved? Where can they get involved?](#)