

## **Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts and Outlaws – 2. Simon, Do You See This Woman?**

**Luke 7:36-39, 44-50**

**March 5, 2023**

**Pastor Bethany Nelson**

Throughout the season of Lent, we are spending time in the book of Luke. As a congregation, you're invited to join us by reading a portion of this gospel every day this month. So that, together, through our daily readings, small group studies, and Sunday messages - we will learn more about the Jesus found in the book of Luke. Luke's Gospel places an emphasis on God's concern for the outsiders and those on the margins. It's a Gospel that was written sometime between 30-50 years after Jesus' resurrection, by Luke - who was a traveling companion of Paul's. And he wrote this book, to help followers of Jesus grow and deepen their faith. But he was especially concerned that those who felt cast aside, unimportant, or overlooked saw that they, too, had a special places in the life and story of Jesus.

Over the next few weeks, we'll explore together various themes from Luke's gospel. Last week Pastor Tami reminded us that God chose to use both the very old, and very young, to proclaim the message of Jesus' birth. And today, we'll spend time with the women surrounding Jesus' ministry. It's likely not surprising for you to hear that in the ancient world, women did not have much of a voice or autonomy. They were seen as important only in the ways their lives supported and impacted the lives of men around them. Some first-century rabbis believed that women should not be taught the Torah, and they were not allowed to be rabbis or priests. Women were not considered to be an equal to men. And this attitude is often reflected throughout scripture. In his book on Luke, Pastor Adam Hamilton notes, "There are, by some counts, 1700 unique people mentioned by name in scripture. Of those, only 137 are women. For every one woman mentioned by name, there are eleven men." (Luke (2022). p. 23)

Standing as we do, in 2023, we hold a different understanding — thankfully — of the role and equality of women. And yet, studies and our own life experiences, continue to show that there are inequalities that remain. In 2022, women earned 17% less than a man on average - just 82 cents for every dollar a man makes. For women of color, this wage gap is higher - where one average a Black woman makes just 56 cents for every dollar a white man makes. Around the world, the UN estimates that 388 million women and girls are living in extreme poverty. Within the United States about 3 in 5 of all children living in poverty are headed by single mothers. And women are 35% more likely to live in poverty than men. Again, this number increases again for women of color. They also experience higher maternal death rates, almost 3 times higher for Black women in America than their white counterparts. And just this week, the Washington Post reported on a new federal study that showed that nearly 1 in 3 teenage girls had considered ending their life, 15% have been sexually assaulted, and 6 in 10 experience persistent hopelessness. Our teens are under pressure in a way that is unique from previous generations, and collectively, it is a crisis that all of us who love and care for teens. One teen interviewed said her one wish, was that adults would "listen and believe teens". To view to information, click [HERE](#).

What does all of this mean? It means we still have to work to do. That the message of Jesus, particularly the one found in Luke, is incredibly relevant to our lives and faith today. The words and teachings of Jesus might offer us examples of how we can continue to welcome and love those who are on the margins, who feel unheard or unseen, or are overlooked. And it tells me, that doing so, is not just about my personal piety and faith - but that there are real lives on the line. Beloved children of God, like you and me, who need desperately to not only hear the hope

Jesus offers, but to experience concretely the kingdom of God. And in particular experiencing a world where girls are safe, women are paid and cared for equally, and children are freed from poverty.

As you've learned, Luke emphasizes Jesus' care for those who are outsiders and outcast. His commitment to those on the margins is the foundation of his entire ministry. In Luke 4, Jesus begins his ministry, by returning to his hometown and synagogue. He offers his first message, unrolling the scroll of Isaiah and proclaiming:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.  
God has sent me to preach good news to the poor,  
to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.  
Then Jesus said, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."*

This is the central and guiding passage for the ministry of Jesus - to preach good news, to proclaim release to the prisoners, to liberate the oppressed. Again and again, throughout Luke's gospel, we see Jesus returning to these guiding principals in the ways that he teaches, heals, and the people he surrounds himself with. While Jesus would have spoken Aramaic as his primary language, the New Testament was written in Greek. There are a couple things about ancient Greek that distinguishes itself from English - but one of the ways is their use of marking time - whether something happened in past, present, or future tense.

My preaching professor in seminary, Rev David Lose, reminded me that in this passage, when Jesus says, "today this scripture has been fulfilled" — that Jesus is using a particular tense in the Greek language that indicates this is an ongoing fulfillment. Jesus didn't fulfill scripture once in the past, nor once in the present, but day in and day out - Jesus continues to fulfill, again and again, this word of God. Today. For you. Pastor Lose says, "By all appearances, on that day it probably would not have seemed to anyone in attendance that the things Isaiah had proclaimed had come about.... And as it turns out, the tense of Jesus' declaration that "the Scripture has been fulfilled" [is an] ongoing, even repetitive, and definitely re-occurring perfect tense. So Jesus is kind of saying, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled and continues to be fulfilled and will keep being fulfilled and therefore will keep needing to be fulfilled in your presence." To view these comments, click [HERE](#).

By all outward appearances, the promises are not particularly or obviously fulfilled in our world right now either. At least, if we only understand "fulfilled" as a static event. But, here, Jesus is proclaiming to us that he will continue to fulfill these promises again and again. Jesus will be repetitive in taking the side of the vulnerable, in seeking a world of justice and peace, and... beloveds, Jesus will keep invite you you and I to do the same. In fact, the first three baptism and membership vows of the United Methodist Church, reflect these words from Jesus in Luke 4, as we promise to:

- Renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of the world, and repent of our sin;
- Accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression;
- Confess Jesus Christ as Savior, putting our whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as their Lord;

Can you hear the echo of Jesus words and commitment woven throughout them?

Now, let's see how Jesus puts this guiding passage into action. Our reading today is from Luke 7. Jesus is eating at the home of a Pharisee. A Pharisee, you might remember, is one type of Jewish leader. Just as we have various denominations within the Christian church (Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian) - so too, are there variations in Judaism. Now, the Pharisees make a regular appearance in the Gospels, and are known to be a people who highly valued traditions and held tight to Jewish law and experiences. And they often butted heads with Jesus, because they felt like he was playing "fast and loose" with their laws and practices. And Jesus, would remind them again and again, that sometimes they get so focused on their laws and traditions, that they forget to see the people right in front of them. While the Pharisees would separate themselves from sinners, Jesus would befriend them. Jesus almost always put people before any rules. But they also were curious about Jesus, and several times invited Jesus for a meal and conversation. And some of them, after the resurrection, will count themselves among Jesus followers. Alright, so Jesus is eating with some Pharisees, and then a woman from the city approaches them. Luke calls her a "sinner" — which, knowing that all of us are sinners, we can assume means that this is a woman with a reputation. She's not "an average sinner"... but there is something in her life, or past, that has set her apart from others. We don't really know what that is - and in the ancient world, it could be any number of things. She could be struggling with mental illness or addiction. Maybe she has no family to care for her, and lives on the streets and relies on the charity of others. Perhaps she is a widow, or a thief, a sex worker, or simply someone who has experienced a great deal of trauma. Whatever it is, we are left to wonder, and watch as she is drawn into Jesus. She must have met or seen him before, to have sought him out now... Pastor Adam Hamilton wondered, "I imagine her hearing him speaking to a crowd earlier in the day. I picture his gaze meeting hers in that crowd. He could see the guilt and shame she carried with her. And I imagine him telling a story, perhaps, the story of the prodigal son, that proclaimed God's mercy and love for sinful people." And now, she enters the home of a Pharisee. Someone who would have felt very strongly that she did not belong. Can you imagine how much courage this woman must have had, to enter into a space where she was not welcomed, just to see Jesus? She finds, in the room, a vase filled with oil. And with tears in her eyes, she began to weep. And then she anointed Jesus with the oil, and her tears - washing, kissing, blessing his feet. I can almost feel the hope and longing in her heart to belong, be forgiven, to be loved and freed. Can't you? Simon, the Pharisee, is shocked and says "If Jesus were a prophet he would know what 'kind of woman this was'" (V.39). And we get the impression that Simon can't believe that Jesus would allow that woman into his home and to anoint his feet.

I want to mention now, that it also would have been an expected act of hospitality for the host to wash the feet of guests who arrived. Or to offer a bit of oil to freshen up from a long day. Or a small kiss on the cheek and hug as greeting. But Simon, offered none of these to Jesus that day. Instead, the one offered hospitality and belonging to Jesus, was the same person who has been pushed out and cast aside, who longed to belong herself. Jesus turns and asks Simon, "do you see this woman?" (v.44). And I think what he's asking is — can you really see her. Do you see only her reputation or sin? Or can you see the woman she is, her brokenness, her longings for healing, her courage, and love. Jesus looked upon this woman and saw a beloved child of God. Now, I'll admit... I have been this Pharisee sometimes. I have let my preconceived notions or implicit bias get in the way and cause me to judge others. I have questioned someone's sincerity or worthiness, and have forgotten to see them as Jesus sees: beloved children. Forgiven and freed. Thank God for a God of second (and third and fourth) chances, who forgives me and calls me to see again. Because Jesus saw this woman fully, for who she was. And he loved her. And Jesus sees you for fully, too. All of your brokenness and sin. All of your worries, and trauma, and pain. Jesus sees them all. And he loves you, too. Jesus says to

you, just as he said to this woman: "You are forgiven, your faith has saved you. Go in peace."  
(v. 48, 50)

The Gospel of Luke mentions more women than any other Gospel. And women speak more often in Luke than in others as well. Women are a crucial part of Jesus ministry — not only be central to the stories Jesus tells us, but also being followers and disciples of Jesus. (Now, they would not have been called disciples at that time, as it was a title reserved only for men in reference to the Rabbi they followed. But today, we know and see these women as a full part of the ministry of Jesus.) In the Gospel of Luke, we hear about many women. Jesus heals the daughter of a local leader, and a woman who has been hemorrhaging for over a decade. Luke tells us that women financially supported the ministry of Jesus, and were traveling with him, too. It is the women who gather at the foot of the cross, and they are the first also to witness the resurrection. Not only this, but after witnesses Jesus resurrection, it is the women: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the Mother of James, along with others - who proclaim the good news. Arguably then, much to my delight, the very first words preached about the good news of Jesus' resurrection came from women. (Luke is also pretty honest about this, reminding us of their status at that time, by telling us the men didn't believe them. And it wasn't until Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself, that they would). When the world around them continued to say that their voice and presence did not matter. Jesus showed, in his words and actions, that they did. The women mattered, their voices had value, their presence was critical, their faith was praised. And even as the early church (and the modern church) continued to wrestle with the "proper" place for women in ministry... Jesus never faulted or questioned. Instead, his actions continue to uplift and empower the women around him.

As we're learning — Jesus did not look at a persons age, or gender, or status in society determine their worthiness. Jesus looked at their heart, and saw their belovedness, created in God's image. And Jesus called them — just as he calls us — to follow with gladness. Remember our woman again from today's scripture. She was unnamed. Yet, hers is a message that is pivotal in understanding the mission of Jesus, and hearing the message of forgiveness for us, too. And it reminds me, dear ones, that although it is important to hear and know names.... That not all of us will have our names recorded in the history books. And yet, your life and story matters. The way you follow Jesus matters. This woman, remembered more for her reputation than her name, has a story of courageous faith that was not only carried on through oral traditions and past down for decades... but now, is marked forever in our Holy Book. Hers is a story that guides our own faithful living. And while I wish we knew her name, I am glad we know her story.

March 8 is marked as International Women's Day. A global day that imagines and celebrates a world that is diverse and equitable. As I think, today, about the continued disparages and hardships that women encounter around the world today... I wonder how Jesus is inviting and asking us, "Simon, do you see this woman?" Jesus understood that the kingdom of God is one where all people are celebrated and loved, without barriers. Our world is not yet there, and still — I have hope. That as people of God, marked by the cross of Christ, we can see those around us as the beloved ones of God. Just as we can see ourselves, marked and redeemed, too. And what a world we might know, if we begin to see one another with the same eyes of Christ. Thank you, dear ones, for your faithfulness and heart to love, to serve, and to deepen the welcome of God here at Messiah and around the world.

This month, we are collecting food and funds for local food shelves. This is one small, but impactful way, we can support women and families close to home - ensuring they have access

to meals every day. Throughout the year, we regularly support our two covenant partners: Imara and Bloom, with our prayers and resources. Both of these worthy organizations seek to support women and children as well, envisioning a world where childcare, education, nutrition, and - so importantly - safety and love, are not a 'privilege' for some, but accessible for all people. In these ways, and many others, you join your voices and actions with those of Jesus, ensuring that "today, scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Thanks be to God for that, and for you. Let us pray:

Loving God, open our eyes and ears to your word made flesh, and fulfilled in our hearing and living. Comfort and challenge us by your promises, inviting us in - again and again - to proclaiming your love and good news with the world. In the name of your Son, Jesus, our Savior, Brother and Lord we pray: Amen.

### **Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of March 5, 2023**

#### **Weekly Prayer**

Loving God, open my eyes and my ears to what you would have me read and hear today. Through your Holy Word, convict me, challenge me, and comfort me. Open my mind to new insights and fresh perspectives. Open my heart to the moving of your Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, your son, Amen.

*Note: We are reading the entire gospel of Luke in the GPS. Some days readings are longer than usual. We hope you'll have an extra cup of coffee, or use your lunch break, and read Luke's entire story of Jesus.*

#### **Monday, March 6**

##### **Scripture: Luke 7:36-8:3**

One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him. After he entered the Pharisee's home, he took his place at the table. Meanwhile, a woman from the city, a sinner, discovered that Jesus was dining in the Pharisee's house. She brought perfumed oil in a vase made of alabaster. Standing behind him at his feet and crying, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured the oil on them. When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw what was happening, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. He would know that she is a sinner. Jesus replied, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher, speak," he said. "A certain lender had two debtors. One owed enough money to pay five hundred people for a day's work. The other owed enough money for fifty. When they couldn't pay, the lender forgave the debts of them both. Which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the largest debt canceled." Jesus said, "You have judged correctly." Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your home, you didn't give me water for my feet, but she wet my feet with tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't greet me with a kiss, but she hasn't stopped kissing my feet since I came in. You didn't anoint my head with oil, but she has poured perfumed oil on my feet. This is why I tell you that her many sins have been forgiven; so she has shown great love. The one who is forgiven little loves little." Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The other table guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this person that even forgives sins?" Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Soon afterward, Jesus traveled through the cities and villages, preaching and proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom. The Twelve were with him, along with some women who had

been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses. Among them were Mary Magdalene (from whom seven demons had been thrown out), Joanna (the wife of Herod's servant Chuza), Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

### **Observation**

More than any other Gospel, Luke highlights the stories of women. Today, we read about one unnamed woman who anointed Jesus with perfume, and we closed with the reminder that among the people who traveled with Jesus were women, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and many others. Here are two things I notice: (1) representation is important, and (2) even those whose names are not recorded in scripture or history books make an impact on the people around them.

When I was a young girl, hearing a call to ministry, I had never met a woman who was a pastor. Instead, I relied on the women around me – in life and in scripture – to help me see myself in that way. The women who surround Jesus in Luke's gospel gave me *real* examples of women who taught, proclaimed, and followed Christ closely.

I've always felt a strong affinity towards Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene – seeing both as examples of faithful leaders and women. But the stories of people without names are important, too. The woman who anointed Jesus today, reminds us that *all people* have access to Christ. Your gender, your socio-economic status, your reputation – Jesus sees none of these as limitations to your discipleship and acts of faith.

### **Application**

Jesus asked Simon, *Do you see this woman?* What he meant was, do you *really* see her? Or do you see only her faults, her sins, her reputation? Simon is challenged to see her generosity, her humility, her spirit, and courage. Jesus *sees* you; there is never question about that. If that seems hard to believe today, that Jesus loves *all* of you, spend time reflecting and talking with Christ about that. Then consider who might Jesus be challenging you to *really see*? Spend time learning, reflecting, and challenging yourself to see beyond the faults or reputations of another, and consider the ways that Jesus names them beloved, too.

### **Prayer**

*Read or listen to these words from the song, All the Poor and Powerless, as a prayer today:*

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D\\_vRBPRFuUU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_vRBPRFuUU)**

*All the poor and powerless, And all the lost and lonely  
And all the thieves will come confess  
And know that You are holy.  
And all will sing out, Hallelujah. And we will cry out, Hallelujah  
And all the hearts who are content, And all who feel unworthy  
And all who hurt with nothing left, Will know that You are holy  
And all will sing out, Hallelujah. And we will cry out, Hallelujah  
Shout it! Go on and scream it from the mountains  
Go on and tell it to the masses. That He is God*

Almighty God, you call all of us: poor and powerless, lost and lonely, into your arms and call us home. Make me to trust that you call me beloved. Help me to see others in the same way: shouting, sharing, and bringing your healing, mercy, and belonging to all the world. Amen.

**Tuesday, March 7**

**Scripture: Luke 8:4-21**

When a great crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from one city after another, he spoke to them in a parable: "A farmer went out to scatter his seed. As he was scattering it, some fell on the path where it was crushed, and the birds in the sky came and ate it. Other seed fell on rock. As it grew, it dried up because it had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorns grew with the plants and choked them. Still other seed landed on good soil. When it grew, it produced one hundred times more grain than was scattered." As he said this, he called out, "Everyone who has ears should pay attention." His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, "You have been given the mysteries of God's kingdom, but these mysteries come to everyone else in parables so that *when they see, they can't see, and when they hear, they can't understand*. "The parable means this: The seed is God's word. The seed on the path are those who hear, but then the devil comes and steals the word from their hearts so that they won't believe and be saved. The seed on the rock are those who receive the word joyfully when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while but fall away when they are tempted. As for the seed that fell among thorny plants, these are the ones who, as they go about their lives, are choked by the concerns, riches, and pleasures of life, and their fruit never matures. The seed that fell on good soil are those who hear the word and commit themselves to it with a good and upright heart. Through their resolve, they bear fruit.

"No one lights a lamp and then covers it with a bowl or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand so that those who enter can see the light. Nothing is hidden that won't be exposed. Nor is anything concealed that won't be made known and brought to the light. Therefore, listen carefully. Those who have will receive more, but as for those who don't have, even what they seem to have will be taken away from them."

Jesus' mother and brothers came to him but were unable to reach him because of the crowd. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who listen to God's word and do it."

**Observation**

Today's Lenten reading tells of 3 things about following God. First, in the parable of the soil – Jesus reminds us that God's word is received in many ways, and not all of them take *root*. We are to be a people who are rooted in God's words. And, I think, we remember the importance of second chances. Chances for ourselves, when a seed did not root. Chances for others, to hear anew the word of God.

Secondly, Jesus tells us to shine our lights brightly. To not let our faith or hope be hidden, but to let the love of God brighten our homes, our hearts, and world. And thirdly, Jesus reminds us, that all who follow God are family. We might not all agree on everything. We might have different preferences for music or devotions, or ways that we live out our faith. But as children of God, we are all named, redeemed, and belong.

**Application**

Which of these stood out to you today? Was there a particular message about following God that you needed to hear?

## Prayer

If my family had “family song,” *My Lighthouse* by Rend Collective would be it. Every day one of our boys requests to sing it, and it has become a good reminder and prayer of God’s continued presence among us. I invite you to listen and pray to these lyrics today.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=reAIJKv7ptU>

*In my wrestling and in my doubts  
In my failures You won't walk out  
Your great love will lead me through  
You are the peace in my troubled sea.  
My Lighthouse, my lighthouse  
Shining in the darkness, I will follow You  
My Lighthouse, my lighthouse  
I will trust the promise,  
You will carry me safe to shore*

God of the light, the shadows, the darkness. You are holy and mighty. Help me to trust in your presence no matter the circumstance. May your love take root in me and may your light shine thru me. Guide me today and carry me safe to shore. Amen.

**Wednesday, March 8**

### **Scripture: Luke 8:22-56**

One day Jesus and his disciples boarded a boat. He said to them, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the lake.” So they set sail. While they were sailing, he fell asleep. Gale-force winds swept down on the lake. The boat was filling up with water and they were in danger. So they went and woke Jesus, shouting, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!” But he got up and gave orders to the wind and the violent waves. The storm died down and it was calm. He said to his disciples, “Where is your faith?” Filled with awe and wonder, they said to each other, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him!”

Jesus and his disciples sailed to the Gerasenes’ land, which is across the lake from Galilee. As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a certain man met him. The man was from the city and was possessed by demons. For a long time, he had lived among the tombs, naked and homeless. When he saw Jesus, he shrieked and fell down before him. Then he shouted, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” He said this because Jesus had already commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had taken possession of him, so he would be bound with leg irons and chains and placed under guard. But he would break his restraints, and the demon would force him into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “Legion,” he replied, because many demons had entered him. They pleaded with him not to order them to go back into the abyss. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs. Jesus gave them permission, and the demons left the man and entered the pigs. The herd rushed down the cliff into the lake and drowned. When those who tended the pigs saw what happened, they ran away and told the story in the city and in the countryside. People came to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone. He was sitting at Jesus’ feet, fully dressed and completely sane. They were filled with awe. Those people who had actually seen what had happened told them how the demon-possessed man had been delivered. Then everyone gathered from the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave their area because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and returned across the lake. The man from whom the demons had gone begged to come along

with Jesus as one of his disciples. Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and tell the story of what God has done for you." So he went throughout the city proclaiming what Jesus had done for him.

When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they had been waiting for him. A man named Jairus, who was a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet. He pleaded with Jesus to come to his house because his only daughter, a twelve-year-old, was dying. As Jesus moved forward, he faced smothering crowds. A woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had spent her entire livelihood on doctors, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the hem of his clothes, and at once her bleeding stopped. "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When everyone denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are surrounding you and pressing in on you!" But Jesus said, "Someone touched me. I know that power has gone out from me." When the woman saw that she couldn't escape notice, she came trembling and fell before Jesus. In front of everyone, she explained why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed. "Daughter, your faith has healed you," Jesus said. "Go in peace." While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue leader's house, saying to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. Don't bother the teacher any longer." When Jesus heard this, he responded, "Don't be afraid; just keep trusting, and she will be healed." When he came to the house, he didn't allow anyone to enter with him except Peter, John, and James, and the child's father and mother. They were all crying and mourning for her, but Jesus said, "Don't cry. She isn't dead. She's only sleeping." They laughed at him because they knew she was dead. Taking her hand, Jesus called out, "Child, get up." Her life returned and she got up at once. He directed them to give her something to eat. Her parents were beside themselves with joy, but he ordered them to tell no one what had happened.

### **Observation**

In the middle of a storm, the disciples are filled with fear. Understandably, they are worried that they will not survive. And even though they are experienced fishermen, and comfortable on the water, they can't see a way out. I'm sure I would be terrified by a much smaller storm! Then, Jesus orders the wind and the waves, and the storm around them calms. "Filled with awe and wonder, they said to each other, who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him!" (v25).

In the following verses, Jesus heals a man possessed by demons (which is how the first century misidentified many things which we now know as mental illnesses, such as depression or anxiety or PTSD, among others) and then he healed two women.

### **Application**

Are there storms in your life? Are there things that feel impossible to see a way out? Perhaps it is feelings of anxiousness or circling worries that keep you awake. Maybe a relationship that is hurting. Or financial troubles, that seem impossible to right. There are many storms in our lives. But I wonder: where is God for you in the middle of them? Is Christ at work in the people, professionals, or community around you? As you reflect on storms you have endured, where did you notice Jesus at work, bringing a way thru?

### **Prayer**

By now, you've picked up on the theme for prayers this week. So here is your song today, WayMaker.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29lxnsqOkmQ>

*You are here, Moving in our midst  
I worship you, I worship you  
You are here, Working in this place  
I worship you, I worship you  
Way maker, Miracle worker  
Promise keeper, Light in the darkness  
My God, That is who you are*

God, our way maker, be the light in my darkness, the calm in my storms, the guiding force in my life today. Heal my heart and heal our world. Awaken my senses to notice you at work in my life. And give me courage to be a way maker for someone else today. Amen.

**Thursday, March 9**

**Scripture: Luke 9:1-27**

Jesus called the Twelve together and he gave them power and authority over all demons and to heal sicknesses. He sent them out to proclaim God's kingdom and to heal the sick. He told them, "Take nothing for the journey—no walking stick, no bag, no bread, no money, not even an extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, remain there until you leave that place. Wherever they don't welcome you, as you leave that city, shake the dust off your feet as a witness against them." They departed and went through the villages proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

Herod the ruler heard about everything that was happening. He was confused because some people were saying that John had been raised from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the ancient prophets had come back to life. Herod said, "I beheaded John, so now who am I hearing about?" Herod wanted to see him.

When the apostles returned, they described for Jesus what they had done. Taking them with him, Jesus withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. When the crowds figured it out, they followed him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about God's kingdom, and healed those who were sick. When the day was almost over, the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so that they can go to the nearby villages and countryside and find lodging and food, because we are in a deserted place." He replied, "You give them something to eat." But they said, "We have no more than five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all these people." (They said this because about five thousand men were present.) Jesus said to his disciples, "Seat them in groups of about fifty." They did so, and everyone was seated. He took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed them, and broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. Everyone ate until they were full, and the disciples filled twelve baskets with the leftovers.

Once when Jesus was praying by himself, the disciples joined him, and he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They answered, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others that one of the ancient prophets has come back to life." He asked them, "And what about you? Who do you say that I am?"

Peter answered, "The Christ sent from God." Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell this to anyone. He said, "The Human One must suffer many things and be rejected—by the elders, chief priests, and the legal experts—and be killed and be raised on the third day." Jesus said to everyone, "All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me. All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me will save them. What advantage do people have if they gain the whole world for themselves yet perish or lose their lives? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Human One will be ashamed of that person when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. I assure you that some standing here won't die before they see God's kingdom."

## Observation

Two things are happening in these verses today. First, we see that Jesus' ministry is expanding. The twelve have been sent out. His ministry is gaining a reputation and following. Jesus is feeding more than 5000 people with just a couple pieces of bread and fish. And, at the same time, trouble is beginning to brew. Herod is hearing about Jesus, too. And he is not going to follow. Instead, he feels threatened and afraid.

## Application

Jesus knew that his ministry carried risks. You don't call the outsiders, outcasts, and outlaws to be your close companions and followers without making (what civil rights activist and representative John Lewis called) *good trouble*. Jesus was bringing about change to religious, political, and social circles. He knew that making wide God's welcome would be seen as a threat to those in power. And yet, Jesus continued to heal, to preach, and make known God's vision for our world. Jesus said to everyone, "All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow me" (v23).

Our world is still in need of God's transformation and grace. Many continue to live in fear, in the margins, and hungry for *good trouble*. Who are the people and places that Jesus is calling you to love and to serve? What does it mean for you, to take up your cross and follow?

## Prayer

Today, we pray and sing together: No Longer Slaves

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otmBLQJ7IUQ>

*You unravel me with a melody, You surround me with a song  
Of deliverance from my enemies, Till all my fears are gone  
I'm no longer a slave to fear I am a child of God  
From my mother's womb You have chosen me  
Love has called my name I've been born again  
Into Your family Your blood flows through my veins  
I am surrounded by the arms of a Father I am surrounded by songs of deliverance  
We've been liberated from our bondage We're the sons and the daughters Let us sing our  
freedom  
You split the sea so I could walk right through it  
My fears are drowned in perfect love  
You rescued me so I could stand and say I am child of God*

Holy Christ, you lived among us, so that we would know your great love. You gave your life for me, so that I could experience fully new and abundant life, set free and liberated. Give me courage to live boldly as your child. Give me courage to live boldly *for* your children around the world today. Especially those who continue to live in fear, under oppression, or on the margins. May we know your perfect love and vision for our world. Help me to take up a cross and follow you today. Amen.

## Friday, March 10

### Scripture: Luke 9:28-62

About eight days after Jesus said these things, he took Peter, John, and James, and went up on a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed and his clothes

flashed white like lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, were talking with him. They were clothed with heavenly splendor and spoke about Jesus' departure, which he would achieve in Jerusalem. Peter and those with him were almost overcome by sleep, but they managed to stay awake and saw his glory as well as the two men with him. As the two men were about to leave Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it's good that we're here. We should construct three shrines: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—but he didn't know what he was saying. Peter was still speaking when a cloud overshadowed them. As they entered the cloud, they were overcome with awe. Then a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen to him!" Even as the voice spoke, Jesus was found alone. They were speechless and at the time told no one what they had seen.

The next day, when Jesus, Peter, John, and James had come down from the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus. A man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to take a look at my son, my only child. Look, a spirit seizes him and, without any warning, he screams. It shakes him and causes him to foam at the mouth. It tortures him and rarely leaves him alone. I begged your disciples to throw it out, but they couldn't." Jesus answered, "You faithless and crooked generation, how long will I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." While he was coming, the demon threw him down and shook him violently. Jesus spoke harshly to the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father. Everyone was overwhelmed by God's greatness.

While everyone was marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, "Take these words to heart: the Human One is about to be delivered into human hands." They didn't understand this statement. Its meaning was hidden from them so they couldn't grasp it. And they were afraid to ask him about it.

An argument arose among the disciples about which of them was the greatest. Aware of their deepest thoughts, Jesus took a little child and had the child stand beside him. Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me. Whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever is least among you all is the greatest." John replied, "Master, we saw someone throwing demons out in your name, and we tried to stop him because he isn't in our group of followers." But Jesus replied, "Don't stop him, because whoever isn't against you is for you."

As the time approached when Jesus was to be taken up into heaven, he determined to go to Jerusalem. He sent messengers on ahead of him. Along the way, they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival, but the Samaritan villagers refused to welcome him because he was determined to go to Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to consume them?" But Jesus turned and spoke sternly to them, and they went on to another village.

As Jesus and his disciples traveled along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Human One has no place to lay his head." Then Jesus said to someone else, "Follow me." He replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. But you go and spread the news of God's kingdom." Someone else said to Jesus, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say good-bye to those in my house." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God's kingdom."

### **Observation**

Let me say this at the outset: The first 8 verses today, telling the story of the Transfiguration? One of my favorite stories in scripture. In many traditions, this passage is read the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. It's read on this day to give us a clear reminder of *who* Jesus is and *where* we are headed through Lent. At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus. At Easter, his resurrection. And in the time between, Jesus not only grows up, has his *entire* ministry, but also we come to see Jesus as *fully God* among us. The moment of Transfiguration is this moment.

We're looking at Jesus, fully human and fully divine. So that, as we make our way through these 40 days, we carry with us the assurance that God in Christ, is *with* us and *for* us.

"This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen to him!" (vs 35). God's voice echoes thru the clouds, just as it did at the baptism of Jesus (Luke 3:21-22). Reminding us, again, that this is Emmanuel: God with us. Christ is the one who heals, who forgives, who lives.

### **Application**

Have you had a moment of transfiguration? A time where you saw Jesus among you, and felt confident and assured in the promises of Jesus for you? When was that? When was a time that Jesus changed your life?

Let me tell you mine. It's a story you're sure to hear in a sermon someday too. Like many teens, I experienced a time where I felt lost and depressed, uncertain of... anything and everything. I was probably difficult to live with! But my parents were kind and compassionate as I made my way. Then, once Sunday in church, as the organist began to play, my Mom leaned over and whispered in my ear, "Listen, Bethany, these words are for you." Her words echoed in my mind like the words of God echoed through the heavens. And the congregation, now a choir of angels, began to sing. *God sent his son, they called him Jesus. He came to love, heal and forgive. He bled and died, to buy my pardon, an empty grave is there to prove, my savior lives! Because He Lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone! Because I know, He holds the future, and life is worth the living, just because He lives."*

And just like that, God transfigured before me, softening my heart. It wasn't a miraculous shift, where I no longer felt worried or depressed. But it was a crack of light in piercing the darkness. And I knew that somehow, it would be okay.

### **Prayer**

Listen, Beloved, these words are for you:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4M-zwE33zHA>

God sent His son, They called Him Jesus  
He came to love, Heal and forgive  
He bled and died, To buy my pardon  
An empty grave, Is there to prove  
My savior lives  
And because He lives, I can face tomorrow  
Because He lives, All fear is gone  
Because I know, He holds the future  
And life is worth the living, Just because He lives

Jesus, you are the Chosen one of God, who has come to love, heal and forgive me. Soften my heart, to more fully understand your great love for me, and for all your beloveds around the world. Give me courage, give me hope. Amen.

**Saturday, March 11**

**Scripture: Luke 10:1-24**

After these things, the Lord commissioned seventy-two others and sent them on ahead in pairs to every city and place he was about to go. He said to them, "The harvest is bigger than you can

imagine, but there are few workers. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest. Go! Be warned, though, that I'm sending you out as lambs among wolves. Carry no wallet, no bag, and no sandals. Don't even greet anyone along the way. Whenever you enter a house, first say, 'May peace be on this house.' If anyone there shares God's peace, then your peace will rest on that person. If not, your blessing will return to you. Remain in this house, eating and drinking whatever they set before you, for workers deserve their pay. Don't move from house to house. Whenever you enter a city and its people welcome you, eat what they set before you. Heal the sick who are there, and say to them, 'God's kingdom has come upon you.' Whenever you enter a city and the people don't welcome you, go out into the streets and say, 'As a complaint against you, we brush off the dust of your city that has collected on our feet. But know this: God's kingdom has come to you.' I assure you that Sodom will be better off on Judgment Day than that city.

"How terrible it will be for you, Chorazin. How terrible it will be for you, Bethsaida. If the miracles done among you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have changed their hearts and lives long ago. They would have sat around in funeral clothes and ashes. But Tyre and Sidon will be better off at the judgment than you. And you, Capernaum, will you be honored by being raised up to heaven? No, you will be cast down to the place of the dead. Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. Whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

The seventy-two returned joyously, saying, "Lord, even the demons submit themselves to us in your name." Jesus replied, "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Look, I have given you authority to crush snakes and scorpions underfoot. I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, don't rejoice because the spirits submit to you. Rejoice instead that your names are written in heaven." At that very moment, Jesus overflowed with joy from the Holy Spirit and said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you've hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and shown them to babies. Indeed, Father, this brings you happiness. My Father has handed all things over to me. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wants to reveal him." Turning to the disciples, he said privately, "Happy are the eyes that see what you see. I assure you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see and hear what you hear, but they didn't."

### **Observation**

It might be easy to skim over the reading today, as it doesn't seem to tell a "big" story. But here is what I see: Jesus commissions 72 people to go ahead and prepare the way for Jesus. When he sends them, he gives them instructions for *how* to meet and greet folks. In summary: *Enter a home with a blessing (may peace be on this house). If they receive you: remain here, and be their guests. Heal the sick and minister to the town.*

*But, if they don't welcome you: dust the city off your sandals and go on.* The rest of the passage tells about cities who reject Jesus, and the about the return of 72 from their work. When they return, Jesus is "overflowed with joy" (v21) and encourages the disciples.

### **Application**

The instructions Jesus offers the 72 are relatively simple: Bless and be present to the people you meet. Don't be pushy or overstay if you're not welcome. But when you are welcomed, stay and *be* there. Can you practice this today? Bless those you meet and be fully present with them. Don't worry about what is coming next, or the right thing to say or do: just be with them. Eat and drink, talk and laugh. Be blessed.

**Prayer**

As we close the week, I offer you a blessing, rather than song to pray: The Blessing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZ55mDL7dA0>

*The Lord bless you  
And keep you  
Make His face shine upon you  
And be gracious to you  
The Lord turn His  
Face toward you  
And give you peace  
Amen.*