Luke

Lesson #8

Deeper Rumblings

(8: 1–56)

We then moved on to a series of healings (the centurion’s servant, raising the widow of Nain’s son, and the pardoning of the sinful woman). Amidst these healings, John the Baptist questions Jesus actions and identity.
In Lesson #8 the seismic rumblings we noticed in Lesson #7 deepen. Still barely discernable on the surface—causing but a quick ripple on the water or the brief vibration of a cup—Jesus’ activities escalate: women join his band of disciples; parable piles on parable; Jesus calms a storm on the Sea of Galilee; he casts out demons; and again, he raises the dead.
After pardoning the sinful woman at Simon the Pharisee’s dinner party . . .

“[Jesus] journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Accompanying him were the Twelve and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.”

(8: 1-3)
It’s remarkable that *women* were traveling with Jesus and the Twelve!

I like to hang out with women! They’re nice to me.

What a cute little dog!
As we learned at the beginning of our study, the world of the Bible is:

1. Patriarchal
2. Monarchial
3. Polytheistic
4. Slave holding

Yet, there was a profound difference between the patriarchal world of the Old Testament, which was fundamentally tribal, and that of the New Testament, which reflected the values and cultural diversity of the Roman Empire.
The World of the New Testament

The Journeys of Paul

- Paul's First Missionary Journey
- Paul's Second Missionary Journey
- Paul's Third Missionary Journey
- Paul's Voyage to Rome

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The Roman Republic began in the 6th century B.C. and continued for half a millennium until Augustus became Emperor in 27 B.C., marking the birth of Imperial Rome.

Although there were violent episodes in Roman history, the Roman Empire on the whole was not a brutal, oppressive dictatorship as often portrayed in the movies; rather, it created unprecedented stability and prosperity in government and civil life for most of its 1,000-year history, while introducing extraordinary advancements in virtually every field of knowledge.
The violence and brutality in the Roman Empire pales in comparison to that of our own world during the past 100 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Deaths (military &amp; civilian)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WW I</td>
<td>34 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWII</td>
<td>50-74 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>5 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1.5 million (58,303 U.S. military)</td>
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</tbody>
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• An additional 50,000,000 people were slaughtered in 53 documented, state-sponsored genocides from 1900 – 2000.
The position of women in the Roman Empire at the time of Jesus varied, depending upon their geographic location and their ethnic and religious culture.

Under Roman law, however, freeborn women were Roman citizens, kept their family name (not their husband’s), could own property independent of their husbands, could own and operate businesses, could inherit property and wealth, wrote their own wills and could travel freely throughout the Empire.
In Scripture, Lydia provides an excellent example of an ambitious, independent woman living in the Roman Empire, c. A.D. 50.

- She is a wealthy business owner, a “dealer in purple cloth, from the city of Thyatira,” in Asia Minor (Acts 16: 14);
- She lives and works in Philippi (Macedonia, or northern Greece of today);
- There is no evidence that she ever married;
- St. Paul founded the church in Philippi with Lydia and her friends;
- Lydia is St. Paul’s personal friend and his host when he travels to Philippi on several occasions. He even stays with her during Passover (Acts 20: 6)!
This was not the case for Hebrew women living in Palestine during the 1st century, however.

Hebrew women living in Palestine at the time of Jesus were among the most oppressed people of their day, due to the Jewish religious and cultural customs. Hebrew women in Palestine . . .

- could attend synagogue, but were isolated from the men;
- could go to the Temple in Jerusalem, but were relegated to the “court of the women”;
- could inherit property, but only if there were no male heirs, and their husbands would control the property;
- could not divorce, although men could for any reason;
- could only survive with difficulty if not part of a patriarchal household (e.g., the plight of the widow of Nain, Luke 7: 7-17; the persistent widow who appears before the corrupt judge, Luke 18: 1-8);
- a Hebrew woman not part of a patriarchal family in Palestine had very few options: begging or prostitution.
It was unheard of in Palestine of Jesus’ day—especially rural Palestine—for women to travel with a group of men who were not part of their family.

But that’s precisely what Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and many other women did with Jesus, not only in Galilee, but also in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem.
Angelica Kauffman. *Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well* (oil on canvas), 1796.
New Pinakothek, Munich.
That is scandalous!
Jesus’ disciples thought so, too. John 4: 27 says they “were amazed that he was talking with a woman.”

Jesus sure broke the rules!
From what we’ve seen to this point:

- Jesus allows his disciples to pick grain on the Sabbath, and he defends them before the religious authorities;
- Jesus heals on the Sabbath, and he does so deliberately to antagonize the religious authorities; and
- Jesus includes a group of unrelated women among his traveling companions.

Jesus certainly appears to be stunningly “liberal,” not only transgressing the religious laws and customs of his time, but flaunting them!
I need to think about that one!

It seems OK to me.
After introducing this section by noting the women who are among Jesus’ traveling companions, Luke presents seven scenes, drawing directly from Mark . . . but Luke does something very different with those scenes.
Mark precedes his material with Jesus family arriving in Capernaum, the concluding episode of his previous section, and then Mark presents Jesus’ teaching and healing in a quick, 7-movement chiastic sequence across two chapters (4 and 5):

A  **parable** of the sower (4: 1-20)
   B  **parable** of the lamp (4: 21-29)
      C  **parable** of the mustard seed (4: 30-34)
      D  calming the storm at sea (4: 35-41)
   C’  **healing** the Gadarene demoniac (5: 1-20)
   B’  **healing** Jairus’ daughter (5: 21-43)
   A’  **healing** the woman with the hemorrhage (5: 25-34, imbedded).

Mark follows this sequence by Jesus being rejected in his hometown of Nazareth.
Luke introduces his material with his women companions, and then he uses the very same material as Mark, but he adapts that material to his purpose of establishing the universality of Jesus’ message and of Jesus’ authority as the Son of God.

This is really slick!

Watch how he does it.
Here is Mark’s material, with Luke’s omission of the “C” unit:

A  parable of the sower (6: 4-15)
B  parable of the lamp (6: 16-18)
  C  parable of the mustard seed (OMIT)
  D  calming the storm at sea (6: 22-25)
  C’  healing the Gadarene demoniac (6: 26-39)
  B’  healing Jairus’ daughter (6: 40-56)
A’  healing the woman with the hemorrhage (6: 43-48, imbedded).

And then Luke restructures the material:

Jesus’ disciples on the journey (6: 1-3)
  parable of the sower (6: 4-15)
  parable of the lamp (6: 16-18)
Jesus’ genuine family, his disciples (6: 19-21)

Four miracles establishing Jesus’ authority
  calming the storm at sea (6: 22-25)
  healing the Gadarene demoniac (6: 26-39)
  healing Jairus’ daughter (6: 40-56)
  healing the woman with the hemorrhage (6: 43-48).
Notice that Mark preceded his material with Jesus’ family arriving in the previous unit, while Luke moved Jesus family arriving to within his unit, framing his parable of the “sower” and “lamp” with his companions, including the women (6: 1-3), and his genuine family who hear his word and act upon it (6: 19-21).

**Jesus’ disciples on the journey (6: 1-3)**
- parable of the sower (6: 4-15)
- parable of the lamp (6: 16-18)

**Jesus’ genuine family, his disciples (6: 19-21)**

Mark then followed his material by Jesus being rejected at Nazareth, while Luke moved Jesus rejection to immediately after Jesus’ baptism, foreshadowing his rejection at the cross.

This is masterful craftsmanship!

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“Parable of the Sower” (fresco). Sts. Konstantine and Helen Orthodox Church, Cluj, Romania.
Recall from our study of Matthew and Mark that the word “parable” is a compound of two Greek words: παρά (para = “along side,” as in paramedic or paralegal) and βολή (bolé = the verb “to throw”).

“A parable is a succinct, didactic story thrown alongside a common, ordinary truth to illuminate that truth in a striking and memorable fashion. Parables are meant to illuminate, not to hide or obscure.”
Jesus did not invent the parable as a pedagogic device; rather, parables are a type of *mashalim*, a form of comparison used in the Old Testament, such as Nathan’s story of the ewe-lamb in 2 Samuel 12: 1-7 and the story told by the woman of Tekoa in 2 Samuel 14: 1-13. Indeed, Greek rhetoricians used the term to describe a brief fictional narrative used for comparison, much like an extended metaphor.

Although Jesus did not invent the parable, he was a master at using it. Jesus’ parables are clever and memorable, often delighting his audience with surprise ending.
“Parable of the Sower” (fresco). Sts. Konstantine and Helen Orthodox Church, Cluj, Romania.
Northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, near Capernaum.

Photography by Ana Maria Vargas

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The Parable of the Sower

1. Some seed **fell on the path**, and the birds came and ate it” (4: 3).

   The person who hears the word and **doesn’t understand it**; the evil one comes and takes it away.

2. Some **fell on rocky ground**, where it had little soil . . . and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots (4: 5-6).

   The person who hears the word, accepts it at once with joy, but **has no root** and it lasts only a short time.

3. Some seed **fell among thorns**, and the thorns grew up and choked it (4: 7).

   The person who hears the word, but **worldly concerns** choke it off.

4. But some seed **fell on rich soil** and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold (4: 8).

   The person who hears the word, **understands it** and produces fruit.
But **why** does Jesus teach in parables?

I think I know!
“Knowledge of the **mysteries** of the kingdom of God has been granted to you; but to the rest, they are made known through parables so that ‘they may look but not see, and hear but not understand’ . . .

A “mystery” [the Greek word is μυστήριον, “mustérion”] is meant to be **revealed**; in contrast to a “secret,” which is meant to be **concealed**.

Then Jesus continues saying:

“. . . so that ‘they may look but not see, and hear but not understand.’

Jesus is alluding to Isaiah 6: 8-10, spoken by God to Isaiah in a tone of scathing sarcasm, as Jesus does here, himself!

**Clearly, Jesus’ parables are meant to reveal in a striking and dramatic way, not to conceal, hide or obscure!**
The Parable of the Lamp

The “Parable of the Lamp” further illuminates why Jesus teaches in parables: Just as a lamp is meant to be put on a lamp stand to be seen, so is a parable spoken to bring to light a “mystery.”
Sea of Galilee (Google Earth)

Daily afternoon & evening breeze from the Mediterranean
Sirocco winds originate in the Sahara Desert when a warm, tropical air mass is pulled northward by low-pressure cells toward the southern coast of Europe. Siroccos peak in March and November, with wind speeds up to 100 kph (55 mph). Although not in its direct path, the Sea of Galilee sometimes catches the western edge of a Sirocco.
“Christ Exorcising the Gadarene Demonic,”
medieval illuminated manuscript.
Healing of the Gadarene Demoniac
Archaeological remains of Gadara at the high point of the city, near the western theater.
Luke draws directly from Mark to portray brilliantly Jesus raising Jairus’ 12-year old daughter from the dead as a “frame” for healing a woman who had a hemorrhage for 12 years.

A  Jairus pleads with Jesus to heal his daughter.

B  Jesus heals the woman with the 12-year hemorrhage.

A’ Jesus raises Jairus’ 12-year old daughter from the dead.

As Jairus’ 12-year old daughter was literally dead, so is the woman with the 12-year old hemorrhage dead as a woman.
To summarize, Luke explores what it means to be a follower of Jesus, one who hears his word and does it.

Luke introduces his opening scene with Jesus traveling about Galilee with his companions, including several women. He follows that with the parables of the “sower” and the “lamp,” both of which illustrate responses to Jesus’ teaching: the first, seed taking root and being understood; and the second, that understanding expressing itself in action. Luke then frames the sequence by Jesus defining his genuine family as those who hear his word and do it. Importantly, Jesus does not limit his “family,” but he includes outsiders, even women: Jesus message is universal.

Finally, Luke presents four miracles that establish his authority for teaching.
Questions for discussion and thought

1. How do you think people reacted to Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and the other women traveling with Jesus?
2. Why does Jesus teach in parables, rather than simply saying what he means?
3. Who is Jesus *genuine* family?
4. What does Luke hope to accomplish by his series of four miracles—calming the storm, healing a man in gentile territory, healing the woman with a hemorrhage and raising Jairus’s daughter?
5. Why is the story of the woman with the hemorrhage imbedded within the story of raising Jairus’s daughter?
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