

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2015: *The Book of Luke*
Lesson 6 “Women *in the Ministry of Jesus*”

Read for this week’s study

Luke 1:39–55; 2:36–38; 7:11–17, 36–50; Romans 10:17; Luke 8:1–3; 18:1–8.

Memory Text

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. . . . There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26–28, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Women Who Welcomed Jesus’ Advent
- III. Women and Jesus’ Healing Ministry
- IV. Women of Gratitude and Faith
- V. Some Women Who Followed Jesus
- VI. Persistent in Prayer, Sacrificial in Giving
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “Against a backdrop of women being treated so badly, Jesus brought the good news that women are, indeed, daughters of Abraham (see Luke 13:16). How happy the women of those days must have been to hear that, in Jesus, they are children of God and of equal worth with men in the sight of God. The message today for women of all nations remains the same: we are all, men and women, one in Christ Jesus.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Are our attitudes toward women, their role and place in society determined primarily by our culture? And do we then seek justification in our religion for what we want to see and do? Or are our attitudes determined primarily by our religion, regardless of our culture? Why is it that the prevalent culture usually treats women in a suppressive, discriminatory way? Why does religion usually do the same?
3. In contrast with the prevailing attitudes of his own society, Luke in his gospel is not denigrating women, sex, conception or birth. What is the significance for Luke of stories about Elisabeth, Mary & Anna?

4. Mary bursts into a song of celebration. But she also learns that a sword will pierce her soul; she will lose Jesus when He is twelve, and perhaps she will even think He must have gone mad when He was thirty. The God who she is now wildly celebrating will leave her in total despair for three days in Jerusalem and she will feel deceived. How much is this also part of our lives and part of the reality of life, this side of eternity?
5. In the Old Testament we read stories of God's angel coming to tell childless couples that they are going to have a child who will do great things for God (Abraham & Sarah; Manoh & his wife; Zachariah & Elisabeth in Luke 1:5-25). But Luke shows that with Mary & Jesus, God is doing something new, unexpected. How important is it to remain open to what God wants to do for us and through us in our time? How can we make sure that our religion doesn't just approve the status quo? How important is the message that if God is supposed to bless the whole world through the Seed of Abraham & David, He must first topple the powers that kept the whole world in slavery?
6. There are forty-three references to women in Luke's Gospel. Of the twelve widows mentioned in the Bible, Luke has three (2:36-40; 7:11-15; 21:1-4). How does the story of raising the widow of Nain's son (7:11-17) function in Luke's Gospel? In the preceding story the centurion's servant was healed because of the centurion's faith. But in this story, the only person who exhibits faith that a dead son can be raised is Jesus himself. Luke tells the story with deliberate echoes of 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4 to remind people of the times of Elijah & Elisha. After a great sermon in Luke 6, the two stories in Luke 7 show what God's life looks like in action, "on the ground"; with God's healing love going out in new and unexpected generosity. And Luke connects it with *Who* this Jesus is, the question which follows in his narrative.
7. "In Luke 7:36-50, Jesus turned a meal into an event of spiritual magnitude that offered dignity to a sinful woman." (Tuesday's lesson) How does this story function in Luke's Gospel? What about the "Great Reversal" which we first encountered in Mary's song (1:39-56) and will also be seen in Luke 7:11-17; 7:36-50; 10:25-37; 15:11-24; 18:10-14; 15-30, etc.? Who is guilty of poor hospitality and social blunder in this story? Are we delighted by God's generous love and do we appreciate it (as did this woman), or have we had trouble coming to terms with the depths of our own heart's deceitfulness (as Simon the Pharisee)?
8. "As the hostess, Martha 'was distracted with much serving' (*Luke 10:40, NKJV*) and was busy in getting the best for the guests. But Mary 'sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word' (*vs. 39, NKJV*). (...) Fellowship with Jesus is the first essential in discipleship; potluck can come later." (Wednesday's lesson) Is this the intent and function of this story in Luke's Gospel? Is it about 'active' and 'contemplative' styles of Christian spirituality? What does sitting at someone's feet mean (Acts 22:3)? And what is Jesus preparing Mary for?
9. Similarly, in Luke 8:1-3, Luke mentions women who other Gospel writers mention only much later – at the foot of the cross, helping at the burial and being first at the

tomb, as women who have heard the word (introduction to the parable of sower!) and had been healed by it (all, not only Mary). As a result, they have left the well-defined social space of home and family (where they had a clear role and duty) and have chosen to accompany Jesus and His followers, looking after their needs, where they also have a role and a duty as true disciples!

10. In Luke 18:1-8 the parables about the persistent widow and the tax collector are told. Both parables are about vindication: If even a rotten judge can be persuaded to do the right thing by someone who pesters him day and night, then of course, God, who is Justice personified and who cares passionately about people will vindicate them, and will see that justice is done. The new community God is building, the new "Israel", is patiently waiting, staying close to Jesus, to be vindicated by HIS action and attitudes and not their own vindictive behavior.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Isn't it in Matthew that we have one of the tellings of the story of Mary anointing Jesus' feet at supper? We want to know what God is like, after reading the 39 books. And Simon, who was a leper that Jesus had healed, threw a dinner. Lazarus was invited, and his sisters, Mary and Martha. We really need Luke to get some of the details here. Luke says that this Mary was known as a sinful woman, a wicked woman in the town. During the supper, Mary takes this costly box of ointment and begins to anoint Christ's feet. You wonder how she could be under the table doing this, and once again we need to be reminded of circumstances those days.

If you look at that famous picture of the upper room, by Leonardo da Vinci, they are all sitting on mid-Victorian chairs around the table, and you wonder how Mary could be under there, finding the right feet, which of course doesn't make any sense. I almost never liked the picture of John, always with his head on Jesus' bosom. As a boy I thought he must have been a bit of a sissy. And then I read that he was a "Son of Thunder" and wondered what had happened to him. He was no sissy, not John. The thing is that when you reclined at the table, your feet would be sticking out all around, beautifully available for a servant to come and wash the feet. Well, the person to your right, who coveted the privilege of being next to you, that's where his head would be, where your chest is, you see. That's all. So the Son of Thunder was there with his head next to Jesus. And John was no sissy. But the feet were out there for Mary to find, and she must have overlooked the fact that the ointment would smell as strong as it did. And the house was filled with the fragrance, and she was exposed. And Simon said, "If Jesus were a prophet, He would know what kind of woman this is, and He would not let her touch Him." That is, even though Simon had been healed by Jesus, his picture of God was of such a person that God would not let a sinner touch His feet.

And Jesus, knowing what he was thinking said, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And Simon said, “Well, tell me.” As Jesus told the story of the two debtors, Simon realized that Jesus had read his thoughts. And Simon must have been momentarily terrified, because he didn’t have a good picture of God, did he? He had a God who wouldn’t let a sinful woman touch Him. Now realize the predicament Simon was in. In *Desire of Ages* it says that Simon is the one who led this woman into sin. But more than that, in *Signs of the Times*, Ellen White says that this woman, who was known as a wicked woman in the town, was Simon’s niece. It was her uncle who had led her into this kind of sin. More than that, Ellen White says in *Signs of the Times*, another article, that this woman was Mary, the woman taken in adultery, the same woman. And knowing that she had this reputation and this tendency, the rascals who wanted to trap her; in John 8 it’s going to tell this, knew that she’d be a good candidate, so they chose her. And they caught her in the act, and brought her to Jesus. You remember that story in John 7:53-8:11.

But now look at the scene. Here is Simon, the prosperous business man, presiding over the feast, and he realizes that Jesus knows the whole thing, that he who led his niece here into sin has been thinking in his heart, “If Jesus knew what kind of a girl this is, and do I know what kind of a girl she is, He would not let her touch Him.” Now the Jews would not think well of this kind of thing, that an uncle would lead his niece into sin. And so he must have held his breath, that any minute now, when Jesus finishes that story of the two debtors, He’s going to say, “Now, let me give you the moral of these stories. I have something to say about our host. You see this man who has been presiding so piously over this feast. You know this woman here. You all know her don’t you? She is known as a wicked woman in the town. Now, I love what she has done, and I know why she did it. It’s a very beautiful thing.”

Ellen White says that if Christ had not accepted this, He would have crushed her spirit, because she didn’t have much self-respect. She knew what her reputation was, and because Jesus courteously accepted her impulsive act, it meant a great deal to Mary. You know He’d do that kind of thing. And He could have said, “You know who is responsible for this woman having this reputation? This pious fraud at the head of the table!” This would have ruined Simon for the rest of his life, wouldn’t it? Absolutely ruined. Now; why didn’t Jesus expose him? He surely deserved to be exposed. I thought you were supposed to call sin by its right name, and all those other good things. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Intertestament Period & Matthew*, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

If you should watch a loved one die, and you should cry, “Why God, why?” Would God be offended? Or would the God you know reach down and put an arm around your shoulder and say, “I understand how you feel. You wouldn’t be human if you didn’t feel that way. Someday I’ll make it plain to you. I wish I could right now. But please trust me, and trust me enough to be willing to wait.”

But, you see, we have to know God well before those emergencies arise, so that we can trust Him and pray to Him like this. That’s why Paul said we need the Holy Spirit of truth to be able to trust and pray like this. In Romans 8:26, that familiar verse: “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought.” (RSV)

And so, the Holy Spirit brings the truth to us—the truth about God. He helps us to see that truth and to be convinced about it, and the truth about ourselves and learn how to tell the truth to our gracious Heavenly Father. And then God can do good things for us. Paul even said we should pray without ceasing. You note that last familiar verse, 1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Never stop praying.” (Norlie)

Or as Goodspeed translates it: “Never give up praying.” But if we should spend all our time on our knees, we would never get anything else done. So how can one pray without ceasing and still be effective in this life? But prayer, you see, in its very essence is thinking toward God. It means that God is at the very center of our thoughts. Eventually it becomes a habit that God should be at the very center of all our plans, always.

When we see Him face-to-face, as we know we shall, will that be the end of prayer? Does that mean that prayer is yet another of the emergency measures God has used to keep open the channels of communication between Himself and His children until the time comes when there will be no need to talk together anymore?

What do we mean when we sing, “Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer?” “Farewell, farewell, I will never talk to you, God, again.” No, if prayer is conversation with a friend, when we meet God, the hour of prayer will have barely just begun. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15, “Talking to God as a Friend” recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>*

“Rejoice in your hope” “be patient in tribulation;” Two words for patience in the Bible. One is quiet, patient waiting. Another one is a more active endurance, like Revelation 14:12: “Here is a call for the patience of the saints”, it’s not fold your hands and wait patiently for the Lord. The Greek word means putting your shoulder under and staying under and pushing as it were. Endurance is a better word. Here is a call for the endurance of the saints. And so here, “Endure in tribulation. Be constant in prayer.”

He says these things in other places, doesn't he? How about being constant in prayer? In Thessalonians, he says "pray without ceasing". And we could stop on any one of these and consider the meaning profitably. How would one pray without ceasing and get anything else done? Incidentally, in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 it's interesting to look at "pray without ceasing" and the words right next to it. Because right in front of it he's said "rejoice always" and that's in our passage here, too, isn't it? Rejoice in your hope, be constant in prayer, it's just like his message to the Thessalonians. . . . Have you ever prayed a whole week without ceasing, without getting fired from your job? How can one pray without ceasing? And this brings up our whole understanding of prayer, and our conception of God, the intelligent, infinite, gracious person that He is, wishing for us nothing but the best. What would it mean, what would He want, how would He want us to communicate with Him while getting other things done that would be very important? What is the prayer that is really acceptable and pleasing to God—the worship of mind and heart, the worship of an intelligent, rational, spiritual person?

Don't you think Ellen White's explanation sounds even better, that prayer is conversation with God, whom we know to be a friend, a friendly, gracious God? Now how does one conduct this conversation? Can it not be conducted in imagination while one is working? I heard a sermon once back at Chicago by someone who doesn't believe many of the things we do, but he defined prayer as thinking toward God. Wouldn't that fit very well? And one can think toward God at any time, in any place. In fact, the more enlightened and tested one's faith becomes, as Dr. Roberts suggested, the more we come to know God, the more habitually He becomes the center of our whole frame of reference. And we look forward to the day when one would never think to consider a decision, an important matter, without reflecting on this whole scene within which we live, all the meanings and purposes of life, and God at its center. And then eventually we find there's hardly a decision we make that isn't of importance. And so it becomes almost habitual to measure all the decisions of life in terms of the things we know to be most important and most true.

I like to define prayer for myself as thinking toward God, and one can do that without ceasing. I think that's what it means to be constant in prayer, that one thinks toward God at all times, there's no break in this. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 12, recorded January, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/23MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/24MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Christ came to this earth with a message of mercy and forgiveness. He laid the foundation for a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God. The Saviour has a boundless love for every human being. In each one He sees capacity for improvement. With divine energy and hope He greets those for whom He has given His life. In His strength they can live a life rich in good works, filled with the power of the Spirit. {7T 225.4}

Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. The scribes and Pharisees desired to make a local and a national benefit of the gifts of heaven and to exclude the rest of God's family in the world. But Christ came to break down every wall of partition. He came to show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth. {MH 25.3}

The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. No question of policy influenced His movements. He made no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. That which appealed to His heart was a soul thirsting for the waters of life. {MH 25.4}

He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the healing remedy to every soul. In whatever company He found Himself He presented a lesson appropriate to the time and the circumstances. Every neglect or insult shown by men to their fellow men only made Him more conscious of their need of His divine-human sympathy. He sought to inspire with hope the roughest and most unpromising, setting before them the assurance that they might become blameless and harmless, attaining such a character as would make them manifest as the children of God. {MH 25.5}

Often He met those who had drifted under Satan's control, and who had no power to break from his snare. To such a one, discouraged, sick, tempted, fallen, Jesus would speak words of tenderest pity, words that were needed and could be understood. Others He met who were fighting a hand-to-hand battle with the adversary of souls. These He encouraged to persevere, assuring them that they would win; for angels of God were on their side and would give them the victory. {MH 26.1}

At the table of the publicans He sat as an honored guest, by His sympathy and social kindness showing that He recognized the dignity of humanity; and men longed to become worthy of His confidence. Upon their thirsty hearts His words fell with blessed, life-giving power. New impulses were awakened, and to these outcasts of society there opened the possibility of a new life. {MH 26.2}

Though He was a Jew, Jesus mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of His nation. In face of their prejudices He accepted the hospitality of this despised people. He slept with them under their roofs, ate with them at their tables,—partaking of the food prepared and served by their hands,—taught in their streets, and treated them with the utmost kindness and courtesy. And while He drew their hearts to Him by the tie of human sympathy, His divine grace brought to them the salvation which the Jews rejected. {MH 26.3}

The same interest and tenderness and long-suffering that He has manifested toward us, we are to manifest toward others. “As I have loved you,” He says, “that ye also love one another.” John 13:34. If Christ dwells in us, we shall reveal His unselfish love toward all with whom we have to do. As we see men and women in need of sympathy and help, we shall not ask, “Are they worthy?” but “How can I benefit them?” {MH 162.2}

The lost coin, in the Saviour’s parable, though lying in the dirt and rubbish, was a piece of silver still. Its owner sought it because it was of value. So every soul, however degraded by sin, is in God’s sight accounted precious. As the coin bore the image and superscription of the reigning power, so man at his creation bore the image and superscription of God. Though now marred and dim through the influence of sin, the traces of this inscription remain upon every soul. God desires to recover that soul and to retrace upon it His own image in righteousness and holiness. {MH 163.1}

If but one soul would have accepted the gospel of His grace, Christ would, to save that one, have chosen His life of toil and humiliation and His death of shame. {MH 135.1}

God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided “an help meet for him”—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it.” Ephesians 5:29. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one.” {PP 46.2}

He who stood beside the sorrowing mother at the gate of Nain, watches with every mourning one beside the bier. He is touched with sympathy for our grief. His heart, that loved and pitied, is a heart of unchangeable tenderness. His word, that called the dead to life, is no less efficacious now than when spoken to the young man of Nain. He says, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.” Matthew 28:18. That power is not diminished by the lapse of years, nor exhausted by the ceaseless activity of His overflowing grace. To all who believe on Him He is still a living Saviour. {DA 319.1}

When to human eyes her case appeared hopeless, Christ saw in Mary capabilities for good. He saw the better traits of her character. The plan of redemption has invested humanity with great possibilities, and in Mary these possibilities were to be realized. Through His grace she became a partaker of the divine nature. The one who had fallen, and whose mind had been a habitation of demons, was brought very near to the Saviour in fellowship and ministry. It was Mary who sat at His feet and learned of Him. It was Mary who poured upon His head the precious anointing oil, and bathed His feet with her tears. Mary stood beside the cross, and followed Him to the sepulcher. Mary was first at the tomb after His resurrection. It was Mary who first proclaimed a risen Saviour. {DA 568.2}

The widow's prayer, "Avenge me"—"do me justice" (R.V.)—"of mine adversary," represents the prayer of God's children. Satan is their great adversary. He is the "accuser of our brethren," who accuses them before God day and night. (Revelation 12:10.) He is continually working to misrepresent and accuse, to deceive and destroy the people of God. And it is for deliverance from the power of Satan and his agents that in this parable Christ teaches His disciples to pray. {COL 166.2}

God is love. The love of the Father and the Son is an attribute of every believer. The Word of God is the channel through which divine love is communicated to man. God's truth is the medium by which the intellect is reached. The Holy Spirit is given to the human agent who works in cooperation with divine agencies. It transforms mind and character, enabling man to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Perfect love can be enjoyed only through the belief of the truth and the reception of the Holy Spirit. . . . {UL 104.2}