

Sermon Title: "If It Weren't for the Women"

Biblical Passage: Luke 8:1-3

Passage Background and Summary

"Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, 2 as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them[a] out of their resources." – Luke 8:1-3

In the passage for today, we see the mention of the women who traveled with Jesus as disciples in addition to the twelve men. They not only assist in the spreading of the gospel and the message of the Kingdom of God, but they also provide financial support and support Jesus's ministry in other ways as well.

Sermon Points

As we make our way through Lent, we are also entering Women's History Month. As such, we want to pay special attention this year to the women at the cross. We cannot capture the narrative of the Jesus movement without talking about the women at the cross. It was the women who first proclaimed the resurrection. In "If It Wasn't for the Women," Dr. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes argues that in every aspect of African American history, Black women have been a significant force. In the Civil Rights Movement, for example, there were women organizing and mobilizing even before a young Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. arrived in Montgomery.

In the scripture, we see that Jesus is on a mission, and he does not get where he needs to go without the women who are present alongside the twelve. We know Peter will deny him and Judas will betray him, but what about the women? Who will be there for him at the crucifixion? Who will encourage, finance, and support him? What would the world be if not for the women? As we take this pilgrimage to the cross and resurrection, let us make note of these women. In a world that seeks to erase and marginalize you, it can be powerful and radical to declare you are here. You do matter. You do count, just like the women who were with Jesus.

We can specifically focus on Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. Now, Herod comes from a long line of people who have been aligned with the Roman Empire and have persecuted the early Christians. It was Herod who had John the Baptist's head cut off. Yet, Joanna is out there following Jesus and telling people the Roman empire is not the Kingdom of God. She is preaching for a Kingdom which is not of this world. While her husband may be with Herod, she is with Jesus. One can imagine what the women of the day were saying. Chuza had a place in the palace office. They ate well and lived well, but something was missing. Joanna had a thirst

that things could not satisfy. You may be like Joanna today. You have the job and the house and the material things, but you need a purpose. Maybe God has placed you where you are so that you might be a witness to God's power and God's values, bearing witness to the powers of this world so that you can be a witness to God's love and truth and justice and compassion and grace. You are not in the company just so you can say I'm the only woman or Black person in this room. God has placed you in your corner of the world so that you might bear witness to the God of the world. God needs a Joanna. God needs a Job. God needs a Jonathan. God needs somebody who will be a witness in the places that it counts.

You never know how God wants to use you. When Pastor Warnock set out to run for Senate, it was an act of faith. He didn't know what would happen but felt that God was ushering him into that place. Well yesterday, he sat where Senators sit as they were considering a \$1.9 trillion package in the midst of a COVID pandemic to give the children of God whatever a child of God deserves. Food to eat and a place to lay your head. They passed through the Senate \$1.9 trillion in aid. When God speaks to you, you ought to surrender to the powers of the living God. Today is Bloody Sunday and there are those who are trying to push us back, but we will not go back. Who would have thought crossing that bridge would lead us into a new movement? We celebrate John Lewis but also Amelia Boynton Robinson for crossing that bridge because if it wasn't for the women, where would we be? Additionally, we can be thankful that we have someone who didn't just cross the bridge but became the bridge, Jesus. It is Jesus who came to rescue us.

Reflection Questions

1. What do you know about the women disciples?
2. Who are some influential Christian women in Black history that you know of?
3. Have you ever felt marginalized? What did you do to make yourself visible and affirm that you matter?
4. Are your values more aligned with that of Joanna or Chuza?
5. Have you ever felt like Joanna, as though you had everything you wanted and desired in that season, but something was still missing?
6. How can you bear witness to God's power and values in the world?