

*Traveling With Jesus*

Patrick Morley, the author of the book *The Man in the Mirror*, that we handed out on Father's Day gives this explanation of his life philosophy:

I commit myself to a life of devotion and study of God, then speak, teach, and write about what I am learning. In other words, I will commit my self to a life of devotion, loving God, studying God, knowing God that the loving and knowing of God is my occupation. It's my preoccupation, it's my avocation. That's the centerpiece of my life.

I believe that every man should have a similar philosophy: I will commit myself to a life of devotion and study of God, then be a policeman. Or, then practice law, then be a pastor, then manage an office, then sell computers...

I believe that Pat Morley hit the nail on the head when it comes to identifying the core principle of life. This is why so many of us go through life confused as to life's meaning and purpose. This is why so many Christians still struggle in applying a Biblical belief system to their everyday life.

We see life in terms of our vocation and responsibilities. Patrick Morley was speaking about men but what he said applies to all of us across the board. We can see our lives in terms of our responsibilities no matter our gender or age.

I often find myself thinking of myself as primarily being a pastor, or a husband or a father. I want to be a godly pastor, a godly husband, a godly father. But as Morley so skillfully points out those things aren't my vocation at all. My vocation is to commit myself to a life of devotion and study of God. To be with Him, to know Him, to be like Him, and then a pastor. And then a husband. And then a father.

This morning I'd like us to look at just 3 verses in Luke chapter 8. **Pg 1000**

In these verses were going to meet a group of women who had learned to be preoccupied with Jesus Christ. **Read vs 1**

Luke gives us a very interesting insight into the nature of Jesus' traveling band of disciples. At this point in time, Jesus was moving continually.

The verb translated "went through," is in the imperfect tense in Greek, and carries the idea of continued action in the past. Jesus didn't just travel from Village A to City B and then stop. At this point He was continually on the move. He preached

in both the larger communities, the cities, but also the tiny communities, the villages.

As Jesus went from place to place He did two things: The Greek text has the word *kerusso*, "announce, make known' by a herald" and the word *euangelizo*, "bring or announce good news", from which we get our word "evangelize." The content of this preaching is "the kingdom of God."

Dr. Ralph F. Wilson asks: Can you imagine how exciting it would be to have Jesus come to your village with his band of followers?

The farmers are leaving their fields, the women are ceasing their labors with food and clothing, the children are deserting their play, and they are gathering around to listen to the Master, this famous visiting teacher, whose reputation precedes him. In many of these villages there is no building large enough to hold all the hearers, so Jesus teaches outside in the fields, on a gently sloping hillside so all can see him. They see instant, wondrous healings of cripples they have known all their lives. People who have been confined for years are now restored to their right mind.

And Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of God, not as a far away place, but as present and powerful, as small but growing like a mustard seed or leaven in dough. Jesus speaks of the Reign of God in ways so real that you can feel it. And when you see miracles of deliverance and wholeness, Jesus calls them "the finger of God." It is real and close up and powerful. And you know you will never the same.

I wonder though, if it was an amazing experience to have Jesus come to your town, what must it have been like to travel with Him? You got to hear Jesus' teaching over and over until you knew His words by heart. You saw miracle after miracle under every imaginable circumstance. You got to listen to Jesus explain why he did certain things, and how he saw people, and what his parables meant.

There were some people who did that and as they spent time with the Lord many of them came make loving Him and knowing Him their preoccupation.

In verse 1 we find what we'd expect to find. Traveling with Jesus were His 12 disciples. But they weren't the only ones.

We usually picture Jesus traveling the roads with just twelve men. Thirteen guys

would be a fairly good-sized group of travelers to find provisions and lodging for night after night.

But remember we saw back in chapter 7 that a large crowd followed as Jesus approached the town of Nain. Chapter 14:25: "Large crowds were traveling with Jesus...." There were people traveling with Jesus continually. The Twelve may have been the only Apostles, but the others were disciples, "learners," and they stayed with Jesus, some from these early days in Galilee until after his ascension.

### **Turn to Acts 1 Pg 1051**

This is now 50 days after the resurrection of Christ. He's ascended back into heaven and He's left his followers with instructions to be His witnesses.

### **Read vs 15-23**

Obviously there were crowds who traveled with Jesus and some stayed with him the entire three years of His earthly ministry.

### **Back to Luke 8**

In that crowd were certain women. **Read vs 2 + 3.**

Three women are named: Mary, Joanna, & Susanna

Mary Magdalene is one of this larger group of disciples. We know she was the first to see Jesus after His resurrection. Besides that we don't know much about her except what Luke tells us here.

1. We know she was from Magdala, which was on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and called Migdal today. It was a prosperous city that by AD 60-70 had a hippodrome (stadium for horse races) and 40,000 inhabitants

2. She was probably from a wealthy family, since she helped support Jesus and his disciples from her personal fortune.

3. She was troubled, and had been healed by Jesus from seven demons which he had cast out of her. Some identify Mary as a prostitute or a loose woman, but the New Testament only says she was demon possessed. We don't know how this demonic activity manifested itself.

4. She was single. We are not told anything about her husband, as we would have been if she were married. She was either unmarried, or, more likely, a widow.

5. She was devoted to Jesus. She traveled with his party throughout Galilee, and was with him in Jerusalem at his crucifixion and resurrection. She was one of those who followed Jesus because her life had been so remarkably changed.

Luke mentions Mary Magdalene along with two others. *Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna.*

This Herod was Herod Antipas and Chuzza was his financial manager. There wasn't a more trusted and important official in Herod's court and here was his wife following Jesus. She was obviously a woman of wealth and position but she was close to our Lord. The next time we read about Joanna is in Luke 24:9.

*Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.*

Joanna believed in the fact of the resurrection before Jesus own disciples did!

The last woman mentioned is Susanna. Susanna is also named with no husband, so she may have been a widow too. These three women, along with many others provided for Jesus and His disciples from their substance.

In light of the typical Jewish attitude toward women at that time, the way Jesus treated women; ministering to their needs, and allowing them to travel as a regular part of his team is unparalleled in ancient history.

I don't doubt that the presence of women traveling in Jesus' group was scandalous. At the same time Jesus clearly denounced all sexual immorality, adultery, and lust. In John 8 He commanded an adulteress to "go and sin no more." So there was nothing but the purest of motives and hearts here.

Luke is the only Gospel writer that tells us about these women traveling with Jesus and I don't think its any coincidence that he places this information where he does. The passage right before this tells about how Jesus and a sinful woman were misjudged by a religious bigot.

Isn't it amazing how radically different all these people were that followed Jesus? A few weeks ago we saw the how opposite His Apostles were. From Matthew who collaborated with the Roman invaders to Simon who was part of a Jewish militia group bent on using force to resist.

Now we have Mary Magdalene with her dark past and Joanna the lady of the king's court. William Barclay has written: It is one of the supreme achievements of Jesus that He can enable the most diverse people to live together without in the least losing their own personalities or qualities.

Here are three women, among others, who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses who provided for Jesus from their substance. They responded back by helping in any way they could. one way they could was financially. If you've ever wondered how Jesus and His disciples lived for those three years of traveling ministry here's your answer.

Humanly speaking these women and their generosity allowed the Son of God to complete His mission. That's fascinating to me.

Jesus had the power to turn stones into bread if He wanted to. At the wedding feast in Caana He turned water into wine. **Turn to Luke 9 Read vs 12-17**

Jesus didn't need anyone to provide for Him through their substance. He's the omnipotent Lord God Almighty. He could have produced 7 course meals every evening. But during His three years of ministry, outside of two occasions when there was no earthly way to feed the multitudes, Jesus never produced any "miracle meals."

Some people say we should expect constant physical miracles in our lives and if we're not seeing them then we don't have real faith. Jesus' miracles were always specifically tied to proving His Messiahship to Israel. They weren't done indiscriminately.

There's some great lessons here. For one, what a demonstration of Jesus' humiliation. He only did the will of the Father and the Father's will was that He humble Himself and take upon the form of a servant.

There's two parallel themes running through the gospels. One is that Jesus is fully God. He raises the dead, heals the sick, and forgives sins. Only God can do those things.

But the other theme was that He is fully man. Jesus had both a divine and a human nature. As God He had all power, but as man He had all the limitations that went along with being human. He got tired, hungry, thirsty, and his body could experience pain and death.

Think about what it meant for the creator to take on the nature of His creation! Talk about humiliation. Why would He do such a thing? He did it for us.

*All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way... There is none righteous, no, not one...* Before God's perfection we're self-centered, self-seeking sinners. We're guilty before God's bar of justice.

That sin has earned us all condemnation. We deserve hell. *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)*

We deserve eternal punishment but *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*. The holy God of the universe must punish sin. He's righteous and just and His laws demands must be met. If we suffered the punishment it would mean hell.

But God in His love for us sent Jesus Christ to be our substitute. He died in our place. He suffered the judgment for us then rose again.

Now whosoever will may come. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Talk about humility! Jesus humbled Himself in His humanity to the point where He depended on others to even supply his bread.

Another lesson growing out of the first is the fact that God wants us to have the opportunity and privilege of having a part in His ministry. It was an example for the apostles and later on for missionaries, that God provides for the needs of His people through people.

From our very first service 22 years ago FCC has been involved in supporting missionaries; in allowing God to use us to accomplish His work through individuals and organizations all over the world. Last year even while we were in the midst of an intense focus on our building project we gave over \$70,000 to missionary endeavors. This year it will be over \$80,000.

Now obviously God could produce the money our missionaries need without our help. He could make “miracle bank deposits” just like He could have made “miracle meals” during Jesus’ time on earth.

But if God had made “miracle meals” Mary, Joanna, & Susanna would have missed out on the blessing of being a part of what God was doing. It’s the same for us. We could still pray, and we should. That’s crucial. But have you ever noticed how much more you tend to pray for someone that you’ve had a tangible part in helping?

I’ll guarantee you, everyone who put something in the care package that Ann just collected for the Hansons has a personal sense of tie-in with the Hanson family. That’s God’s plan; that we become enmeshed in the lives of others who are carrying His message.

Now remember, supporting the gospel ministry involves the exciting, but it also involves the mundane. I am sure there wasn’t anything very exciting about going to markets everyday to buy grain, or vegetables, or sometimes meat, but these were the things they made the meals out of. I don’t know a whole lot of ladies who look at grocery shopping as the highlight of their day.

Mission agencies desperately need support personnel all over the world. It takes computer specialists, office staff, mechanics, electricians, pilots; all kinds of people from all walks of life. But sometimes its tough for people in supporting roles to raise support.

It’s much more glamorous to say your going into a front-line ministry like church planting than to say you’re raising support so you can be a network administrator in an office. And you can understand why a congregation would be more challenged by one than the other and yet, both are necessary.

It’s like the military. the troops can’t be out in the front lines unless they have supplies, equipment, communications, and all the support they need to stay in the battle.

We’re not told what else these women did. Maybe they helped minister to women right alongside of the apostles. We don’t know. But what we do know is they didn’t consider providing for others as mundane. They saw how they fit into the plan of God.

### **Turn over to Luke 16 Read vs 10-11**

In the context of Luke 16 it's clear that money is what Jesus is referring to when He talks about "what is least." He's saying if you're faithful with the resources God's blessed you with then you'll be faithful with the true riches of spiritual things.

These women were faithful to follow Jesus in Galilee, and to meet the needs of the group. But they didn't stop there.

### **Look with me at Mark 15 Pg 988 Read verses 37-41**

Their faithfulness in the little thing of money led them to faithfulness in the greater things at a later time. They carried out the mundane, routine things with joy. that's the true measure of character. Sticking with Jesus all the way to the cross was just what you'd expect from these ladies.

For an interesting contrast, think about Judas. He was the group's treasurer. **Look at John 12 Pg 1040 Read vs 3-6**

Judas wasn't faithful in the little thing of money. In the end he was willing to betray Jesus for a handful of silver coins.

Faithfulness in the matter of money is critical, for it leads to faithfulness in greater things as well. Investing in the gospel ministry determined where the hearts of these women were: *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"* (Matthew 6:21).

The more I have read through this passage, the more I'm convinced that meeting the physical needs of the group that accompanied Jesus was a secondary matter for these women. It was an outgrowth of being with Christ.

In other words, I'm convinced that these women didn't follow Jesus to "have a ministry." They didn't just say, "Oh there's work to be done so let's do it!"

I believe they followed Christ to be with Him. Their occupation, their preoccupation, their avocation, the centerpiece of their lives became Jesus Christ and knowing Him.



Then their service grew out of an intimate knowledge of Jesus and His character.

You really get to know Jesus and you start to think and act like He does. The closer you get to Him the less you have to stop and ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?" and the more it becomes your natural response.

I have to tell you when I read about these women I can't help but be impressed. I stand in awe of their devotion.

You and I don't have a physical Jesus to follow and learn from. But we have something even better. We have the completed canon of Scripture. The Word of God in its entirety. The Word that's been breathed out by God and filled with His life.

We can get to know Jesus Christ by tracing out the prophecies of His coming through the Old Testament. We can see Him as He appears as the *Melchizedek*, the "Angel of Jehovah." We can understand His character as we read about His coming kingdom.

We can read of His life and His words from four different perspectives in the four gospels. We can know the power of the risen Christ and His church in Acts. We learn the "mysteries of Christ" in the epistles. We can get to know Jesus as the ruling king in the Book of Revelation.

What is your occupation this morning? What's your vocation? Is it truck driver, office manager, warehouse worker, doctor, lawyer... Or is it to know the person of Christ?

Have you committed yourself to a life of devotion and study of God?

We begin at the beginning. That's seeing ourselves in the biblical spotlight. That's seeing ourselves as sinners in need of God's grace. When we trust Him as our Savior the Bible says we were born again. We're in God's family. We're assured of a home in heaven.

But we also have the privilege of growing in our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Is He your passion today? As you're traveling down life's road are you truly traveling with Jesus?