

The Gospel According to Luke
February 3, 2019
Reading: Luke 8:1-3

Sermon #31
Luke 8:1-3

Not Man's - But God's Ways

Unearthly Ministry

God's plan for redemption often defies human logic. Today success is measured by how large a campus, how many people and how big a budget a church or a mission agency or a para-church ministry has. I have seen this both here and while living overseas. After returning from Papua New Guinea and going on staff at our sending church I saw a change develop from teaching the Word of God as the primary goal to a desire to become the largest church in our area and with this new goal came compromise. It was at this juncture that I made a stand for the Word of God solely and I left my position. My focus has been on depth of ministry and staying true to God's Word and I have let God take care of the size of ministry and who he sends me to share the gospel of Christ with. Apostle James wrote, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." (James 1:2-5) If one faces trials because of their own goals and behavior, well then, they suffer by their own doing. However, if one suffers for being obedient to God and his Word, then, God will provide the wisdom and faith and strength to endure and continue. Coming out of a cult built upon false doctrine and half-truths prepared me to seek eternal truth. I studied the Book of Mormon, the Quran, the rewritten bible of Charles Russell and the Jehovah Witnesses, and a number of others. I have found eternal truth only in

the inspired Word of God, the Bible. When one seeks their own ambition, the natural path is to begin to make exceptions, compromises and changes to God's Word. This desire for God's Word alone as eternal truth is why I preach week after week for I know it is the Word of God that has the power to transform lives. I believe this is the model Jesus gave us.

The whole plan that the Father unfolded in the life of Jesus is counter to man's plans for success. It just goes against the grain of normal human thought and ambition. As the prophet Isaiah wrote concerning mankind's relationship with God, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9) This brings us to the short passage this morning at the beginning of Luke chapter 8 and how it illustrates that God's way of ministry is important and is counter to the ways of men.

Think about it for a moment, if you were god and you were going to send Jesus down to the earth with a plan to redeem the world by spreading the gospel to the corners of the earth would that plan be similar to the best human wisdom? Would you, as god, pull together the best brains and build a strategy? Would your strategy be built upon resources and manpower? However, you and I are not God and God's plan was to send Jesus to a small nation, a backwater country called Israel. God sent his Son to this small place to live in obscurity in a small village in the backwater area of a tiny backwater nation for 30 years and then do ministry for just 3 years among people living in apostasy and his ministry was confined to an area of about 60 miles in diameter. A ministry focused not on the elite – the wealthy, the influential and politically powerful but on those considered poor and outcast and downtrodden. A ministry that did not network through people who could put you in the circle of the movers and shakers but

rather among humble men and women. From man's perspective this does not seem like a plan that will succeed and yet, history shows that Jesus is the most influential person who ever lived.

Jesus taught for 3 brief years and in that time enraged the country's leadership to the point they murdered him and that seems the wrong way to fulfill God's plan for the world and yet, he laid the foundation that has rocked this world with eternal truth ever since. Jesus was successful because he worked within the limitations and the specific purpose God ordained. Luke recorded the life and stories of Jesus' ministry in order that every generation could understand who Jesus is and what he did and how he did ministry. We just finished the story of the community event and dinner at the Pharisees' house with the lowly woman transformed and used by Jesus to teach the pious Simon and those in attendance a lesson. The gospel account by Luke is filled with stories of healing the ill, raising the dead, casting out demons and teaching and preaching. But every so often Luke bridges these stories with a summary, as if, to give his readers a chance to take a breath. We see such a summary transition in chapter 4, verses 14 and 15, "[Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.](#) ¹⁵ [And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.](#)" Jesus is traveling and teaching throughout Galilee and all who heard him glorified him. This summary bridged the reader from the story of the temptation of Jesus to the first phase of His Galilean ministry which featured and was centered around the city of Capernaum which seemed to be His home base of operation. Now here in chapter 8 we have another summary passage in the first 3 verses. It reminds us that Jesus' life had a rhythm of ministry. Yes, there were miracles and signs and wonders but there was the routine of ministry – prayer, teaching and investing in people's lives.

Reading at Luke chapter 8, verse 1, "[Soon afterward](#) (*soon after the dinner*

at the Pharisee's house and the encounter with the transformed woman) **he** Jesus went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means." There are no miracles or stories or events listed here but the general rhythm to his ministry. It is unlike much of Christian efforts of our day – no large outreach, no TV cameras and radio broadcasts, no multimedia advertising or Facebook or with all the money and human effort spent to make a large impact. Just travels through cities and villages proclaiming the good news to those who would hear. This summary is the transition to the final phase of Jesus' Galilean ministry and there is no mention of the city of Capernaum as in the earlier summary transition. Jesus limited his ministry to conform to the plan set forth by God the Father. He stayed in Galilee but no longer was his ministry centered around Capernaum. This final phase of his Galilee ministry carries all the way through Luke chapter 9, verse 50. Then in verse 51 Jesus heads for Jerusalem and it is in this ministry phase where many things come into focus and conflict grows until it ultimately leads to his murder.

This summary takes us to the final phase of the Galilean ministry filled with wonderful stories, but here in these 3 verses we see God's plan for Jesus' ministry. Let me expand on what I mean.

Sovereign Ministry

First, I believe God controlled Jesus' ministry by his sovereign will. Even though it does not say it here, it is made clear in other parts of the New Testament. In John's gospel account Jesus is clear in chapter 4, "My food is to do the will of

him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” (John 4:34) In the next chapter Jesus says, “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.” (John 5:30) Jesus’ ministry was always under God’s sovereign control. Should this not be the goal of our lives also? Should our goal not be to submit to God’s sovereign control as he lays out truth in his Word and in our hearts through the Holy Spirit? If God says go – we go and if he says stay - we stay. Jesus is the model – he never set out to minister to give people what they wanted - but he gave them what God knew they needed. He did not choose where to go but traveled under the will of the Father. As I studied this week, I thought about Jesus’ frequent trips to the Mount of Olives when he was in Judea and when he would separate himself from the crowds and seek a quiet place – these were times of prayer and seeking the will of the Father. This is also a model we should follow – separating ourselves from the world to spend time in prayer seeking the will of God our Father.

Jesus was not only led to do the will of the Father and the tasks given by the Father but he also ministered in God’s timing. In John chapters 7 and 8 we read of those who plotted against Jesus and wanted to arrest him, but they failed. We read they could not touch Jesus because his hour had not yet come. Jesus did God’s will in God’s timing and only to the people God sent him to. This is why when Jesus was sending out the 12, he instructed them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 10:5-6) Jesus did not limit his ministry to just the Jewish leadership – remember what he said a couple of chapters earlier in Luke 5:32, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” His ministry was not focused on the Pharisees or the Scribes or the Sadducees for they did not recognize their sin. Jesus’ ministry was straight forward; God’s will, God’s timing and to the people God sent him to. Jesus had limits imposed by God not man.

Our tendency is to go as big as we can, as far as we can, as often as we can and to as many people as we can. Maybe we should reconsider and focus on fewer with greater depth and with the goal that those we disciple will do the same. This is the type of concentrating power that produces change – generational change and geometric growth.

Geographical Ministry

Second, God placed limits on Jesus' ministry geographically. In verse 1, we read, "he went on through cities and villages." Jesus was in the north, in Galilee which was an obscure area and certainly not considered the intellectual center – that would have been Jerusalem. Even Nathanael voiced the common attitude towards the village of Nazareth located in Galilee, he said to Philip, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip replies to Nathanael, "Come and see." (John 1:46) Everywhere Jesus went was his pulpit; village, city, synagogue or hillside. Because Jesus taught God's truth the crowds began to grow, people sought him out and followed him. In Luke chapter 8, verse 4, we read "when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him." People hungered for the truth. The truth of God's kingdom had not been preached for 400 hundred years and Jesus ended this silence with preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. The crowds grew – later in chapter 8 we read in verse 19, "Then his Jesus' mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd." Verses 40 and 45 speak of great multitudes. Here Jesus is spending his time not traveling to the influential cities but in the small province of Galilee and even though it was limited geographically he did the will of God and people repented and were saved. This is a good reminder for us – work where God wants you, not necessarily where you want to be. Approximately 80% of the missionaries are in the temperate climates of the world, they go to the nicer areas and in cities with amenities – few go to the deserts or cold climates, most are in big cities and few go

to the small villages as Jesus did. Go where God sends you and stay where he uses you and complete God's calling.

Theologically Pure Ministry

Thirdly, there was limitations placed on Jesus by God theologically. Reading from verse 1 again, Jesus “went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.” Jesus had one message – God's – he proclaimed “the good news of the kingdom of God”. Matthew recorded that from the beginning of Jesus' ministry he preached the kingdom of God. Reading from Matthew chapter 4, “From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ” (Matthew 4:17) Jesus' preaching breaks the 400 years of silence – speaking the name of God and calling people to repentance. Sinners were saved and delivered from the kingdom of darkness and the prince of this world and were brought into the kingdom of God. People were and continue to be delivered from Satan and brought to spiritual life in Christ for he is the Messiah and he has come.

Jesus teaches that there needs to be a response to the invitation to come to the kingdom of God. In Mark chapter Jesus says, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15) One must repent and believe unto salvation. When one repents and believes they are able to love God; love God as the one and only true God and are able to forsake all other gods and live by God's commands instead of the worlds. Later in Luke chapter 9 Jesus tells those who say they want to follow him but make excuses to delay making a commitment. Jesus says to them, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62) My beloved, if you say you belong to Christ – you can never go back to the world for such double mindedness is in truth unbelief. To believe in God and have salvation through

Christ requires one to worship nothing or no one else, but God. Embrace the truth of the Bible and live it and never look back.

The scope of Jesus' ministry was and is sovereignly designed by God. Jesus' ministry had geographical limits as ordained by God. His ministry was of singular theology as given by God and Jesus' message was the kingdom of God and repentance. There is a fourth element of Jesus' ministry that was God's plan and not of man's design.

Focused Ministry

Fourth, Jesus ministry had a strategic design given by God the Father. One finds this strategy at the end of verse 1, [“And the twelve were with him.”](#) Jesus concentrated on the area God placed him in, he focused on the time he was allotted, the message he was called to preach and the small band of men God had given him. Jesus spent time in prayer with his Father to know who the Father had called to be his disciples. Jesus invested himself in these 12 ordinary men – they were not Pharisees or Scribes or Sadducees or business, political and military leaders – these 12 were the opposite of all these – they were ordinary. Praise God he can use the ordinary, because you cannot get much more ordinary than me.

Jesus took ordinary men and invested 3 years of his life into training them, growing them spiritually, but they were often a mess. These 12 disappointed him, they doubted him, they deserted him and they even denied him. Yet, though all this, Jesus changed them and God empowered them and this small band of men changed the world. The strategy is the same today – if you pour your life into a small group of people and disciple and teach them what it means to live exclusively worshipping the one true God, they in turn will impact the lives of others. As Paul instructed his spiritual son Timothy, [“My child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the](#)

presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:1-2) Here is strategy – 4 generations – Christ changed Paul and Paul taught Timothy and Timothy is to teach Christ as Paul learned from Christ and taught him. Timothy is to teach **faithful men** and these faithful men are to teach the true gospel of Christ to **others also**. The true gospel of the kingdom of God has come down to us from generation upon generation by those who faithfully teach the gospel of Christ according to the Bible alone. The Bible needs no improvement, no adjustments and no redefining to meet the needs of a modern society. One of the things that speaks to the truth of the Bible is that its message works in all generations and in all cultures, throughout time without change.

Equitable Ministry

Fifth, in our passage this morning we also observe Jesus was radical in confronting a culture that had moved away from God and developed wrong traditions and thoughts and this continues to this very day. Jesus’ ministry was socially correct by the standards of God and incorrect by man’s standards. Look with me at verses 2 and 3 of our study passage, with Jesus were “**also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,** ³ **and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Susanna, and many others.**” At this time there were laws that forbid women to be taught, especially in public, even by their husbands. Rabbis would not teach women. This was not just a Jewish concept; Socrates, Aristotle and other Greek philosophers did not believe woman should be taught. This created a low status for women and they had few rights. No human strategy developed at this time would have allowed for women to be included. Today, human strategy would include women but in roles that are not consistent with God’s plan for redemption.

Jesus comes on the scene in the 1st century and he not only has 12 male disciples with him but women as well. These women are being taught and cared for. This is politically, socially and religiously inappropriate. Jesus had delivered these women from physical and spiritual illness and they responded by repenting and becoming followers of the Messiah. These women had a consistent role in Jesus' traveling ministry. Mary Magdalene is introduced here and is still with Jesus at the cross and was one of the first to see Jesus when he had risen. When there is a list of women given in the Bible Mary Magdalene is always first. Joanna is not to be discounted for she remains and is at the cross of Christ with Mary. These women were faithful. Joanna stands out because she is also the wife of Chuza, King Herod's steward. I can imagine her repenting and following Jesus was not pleasing to her husband who served a vicious, power hungry self-serving king. It could possibly have created problems for Chuza with his boss who might have told him to get control of his wife. The last to be mentioned is Suzanna and we know nothing of her – she is not mentioned again in scripture, but she is given a place of honor among those who had turned from the world to follow Jesus.

Jesus and the Word of God teach that women are spiritually equal as children of God. Scripture also teaches that in God's strategy and plan for redeeming the world with the gospel of Christ men and women have different roles. We need to embrace who God has made us and enjoy the differences as men and women. Again, our society cannot embrace who we are in Christ and has usurped and redefined our roles and this has resulted in confusion and emotional trauma.

Sacrificially Supported Ministry

The **sixth** and final point addressed here is Jesus' ministry also had a material aspect. God placed limits on Jesus' ministry and sovereignly controlled

Jesus' travels, his theology, who he was to reach out to, there was no limits on his ministry socially – he included people from all levels of society and, men and women. God also placed limits on the material needs for carrying out ministry.

There were the 12 disciples, the women and verse 3 continues, “[many others, who provided for them out of their means.](#)” Remember there were large crowds seeking Jesus and following him from place to place. Jesus had left his ability as a carpenter to provide for his needs. The 12 disciples had walked away from their jobs and businesses. The women were not working. So, what we see is that people who had heard Jesus teach the kingdom of God was at hand and repented and were saved and transformed. Part of that transformation included providing for the needs of those who did ministry. This is the model of ministry – those who believe and whose lives have been transformed are called to support those who preach the gospel and care for them spiritually. Jesus' troupe had a purse for the management of money. We know from the scriptures that Judas handled the moneybag for the ministry. In John it is recorded, that Judas was upset when the expensive anointment was used to honor Jesus and Judas was upset, “[not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.](#)” (John 12:6) The disciples did not know Judas was a thief and were confused at the Last Supper when Judas dipped his bread and Satan entered into him. They thought he left to take the moneybag to buy supplies for their feast or to go and provide for the poor. However, on the positive side this shows that money was given to provide for the needs of those doing ministry and from what was given to them and they also gave and provided for the poor. All both received and gave. Paul wrote to the believers in Galatia concerning their need to support the those who minister, “[Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.](#)” (Galatians 6:6) This is why we collect a tithe to support the ministry of Christ at Canyon

Bible Church and some money goes to the minister and some to ministry outreach and some to the poor. The model found in scripture is to continue until Jesus returns and history comes to an end. How faithfully do we give to the ministry of Christ that is to continue? The believers supporting Jesus' ministry did not owe him for their salvation and neither do you. As sinners our debt has been paid in full. Then, why sacrificially give to those who minister? God gave by sacrificially giving his Son and Jesus, sacrificed his life for us and we are to follow their model and sacrifice so others may come to know Christ.

In conclusion, these 3 verses teach that Jesus' ministry was sovereignly controlled by God the Father – Jesus did God's will and only God's will. He went where God sent him. He preached the only true message of God's kingdom. To reach the world he invested his time and energy in a few. Jesus shared the gospel with all who listened – men and women. His ministry was dependent upon the sacrificial giving of those who believed. This is the model of ministry – given by God and it defies human logic. This is the model of ministry of Christ, of the disciples and for all who minister until Christ's return. We serve and sacrifice out of gratitude for the One who gave everything that we could be reconciled back to God the Father and live here on earth and in heaven as his children.

Let me close in prayer.