

Beneficiaries and Benefactors of Practical Mission Work: An Exegetical Study of Luke 8:1-3.

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Abstract

The paper argued that, as a beneficiary of the gospel ministry, every believer in Christ should in response, double also as a benefactor of practical mission work, through generous giving. The motivation for the paper is two folds, first, that effective mission work should be practical, deliberate, intentional and purpose-driven, ensuring that people's needs are met and problems are solved. Second, on the part of the saved, the willingness to contribute especially financial, for the purpose of practical mission work should not be negotiable. The paper attempted exegesis of the focal Bible passage, Luke 8: 1-3, in the context of beneficiaries and benefactors of practical Christian mission work, using the example of the women that are referred in the Bible passage. It examined biblical model of giving as demonstrated in the focal Bible passage, by the women who supported Jesus' ministry, emphasising their transformation through discipleship, healing, and partnership in missions. Utilising diachronic approach to historical critical exegetical method, the paper drew theological and missiological implications that are relevant to mobilising present day believers in Christ for financial support to God's work. Key findings revealed that purpose-driven mission work precedes material generosity, as the women in Luke 8:1-3 became committed followers of Jesus before releasing their resources. Conversely, the women in the focal Bible passage also demonstrated the heart of gratitude to God on account of the benefits they derived from Jesus' ministry. Hence, they saw the

act of supporting Jesus' ministry as an extended grace, knowing well that they cannot give in equal measure of what they have received from the gospel ministry. Additionally, the paper underscored how missions serve as a platform for breaking cultural barriers, as Jesus elevated the roles of women in His ministry, providing a model for modern day Christian practice. It addressed the lethargic attitude of some Christians in the present time towards generous giving and its effects on Christian mission efforts. Practical recommendations included prioritising discipleship as many believers act in ignorance, addressing specific believers' needs, promoting sense of belonging and partnerships among believers, empowering and challenging every believer in Christ to embrace their role as benefactors of practical Christian mission work.

Introduction

The event of Christ among human in the form and nature of man occupies a fascinating aspect in human history. Of all the stories that are credited to human history, no one is of more intense interest than this.¹ That Almighty and self-sufficient God dwelt among men in the nature of a man. He came and dwelt in the world of man, laid down His life and picked it up at will, all for his consuming love toward humanity. The grace to be part of the vehicles for carrying this historic event round the whole world means the greatest privilege that would be accorded to anyone. Sharing the message of the climax of God's salvific plans for humanity that is championed in the work of Christ on the cross, means the highest level of expression of love from man to a fellow man. Every other means of love expression among mankind would certainly depreciate with the change in the changing world. Only the love that is expressed in sharing the story of Christ's salvific work on the cross does appreciate endlessly.

¹J. Rankin, *Great Commission Obedience*, Nashville: B and H Press, 2011, 67.

At this point, a mention of the place of financial implication to mission work accomplishment becomes imperative. Giving is an integral aspect of Christian service and stewardship. Giving in the Kingdom of God is one of the ways of acknowledging the blessings and faithfulness of God in believers' lives. Believers give, not just to receive blessing in return, but as a way of reciprocating the kindness of God in providing for human needs. While Jesus Christ was on earth, He enjoyed provision through the liberal attitudes of some women who were committed to meeting His financial and material needs. Those women defied all odds to give themselves to the services of Jesus and His disciples. The financial necessity to mission work actualisation cannot be overstressed. Mission work, either in the sense of helping believers to remain in faith or reaching out to those that are without, requires fund.

Biblical Perspective of Mission Work

The concept of Christian mission has been a popular subject in the body of Christ, and it has been among the areas of keen research interest to biblical scholars. Biblical scholars have from various times and through diverse approaches, attempted to erect the foundation of biblical description on the nature of Christian missions. This section reviews few of such scholarly positions regarding the subject matter.

Rheenen pontificates that, God initiated mission from the beginning of creation and mission became significant since the time of Adam and Eve. God initiated and participated in mission activities that led to creation of the universe, and establishment of His relationship with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Immediately after they had yielded to Satan's temptation in the Garden of Eden, mission activities to reconcile God with the created man continued. God searched, called and requested for man's whereabouts. Some scholars have argued that this is out-rightly against the omnipotent attribute of God. That He was probably ignorant of man's whereabouts. The question raised by God testified to His nature and attribute throughout

all generations. He continued seeking, to initiate reconciliation between Himself and the fallen creation.² He did not want man to be destroyed but to be saved. For mission activities, God raised many prophets and priests in the Old Testament, for reconciliation and to retrace the fallen man's steps back to God.

Mission Work in the Old Testament

This section takes a cursory look at what and how the understanding of mission work was projected in human history, before the first coming of Christ. It explores the roles of partnership with God played by Israelites' founding fathers and the whole nation of Israel, as mission figures in the Old Testament.

Wayne Oates submits that, starting from the day of man's fall, God had been searching and calling man, where are you? (Genesis, 3:9). The call was on repentance, unification of divided self, change of direction and act of surrender.³ As God called Adam and Eve, He called everybody to be involved in relating with Him and carried on His assignment for His people. He wanted, especially, Christians to be involved in calling unbelievers to repentance and reconciliation. In the opinion of Rheenen, God initiated reconciliation between Himself and His fallen man.⁴ He did not want man to be lost forever. Therefore, He initiated resolution to take man back to his initial position. It can be said that the whole Bible stood as a message of God, calling man to retrace his steps to Him because He wanted the initial relationship to be re-established. On the other hand, one can say that the Old Testament meant a missionary message to every man.

²G. V. Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, 14.

³W. E. Oates, *The Psychology of Religion*, Texas: Word Books, 1973, 92.

⁴G. Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*, 14.

Palmer enthuses that, the magnitude of the rebellion of man resulted to God's punishment on every mankind.⁵ God, therefore, promised to destroy satan and sin through the seed of the woman (Genesis, 3:15), because satan deceived the creature of God. This was a good news of salvation called *proto-evangelism*, and in the view of Judisch Douglas, it meant, the first gospel.⁶ It was the starting point of the mission of God for man immediately after the fall of man. God engaged different people at different times for the success of mission work. Man's rebellion brought God's judgment in the form of a massive flood. Only Noah, his family, and selected animals (male and female) were left (Genesis, 7:23), to begin life again on earth. The destruction by the flood was done to make the earth become as it was at the beginning. After the flood came a similar command as in the beginning, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, was pronounced again (Genesis, 9:1). This was said for the fulfilment of His word with the first man. God then established another mission work with Noah (Gen 9:8-17) for the sustenance and upholding of the *proto-evangelism*. Jacob opines that, God's choosing and loving of Israel was by grace.⁷ The book of Nehemiah tells one that God chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham (Nehemiah, 9:7). In Genesis, God said to Abraham, I have known you (Genesis 18:19). The election of Israel was a continuation of the election of Abraham, since Israel were Abraham's descendants.

Mission Work in the New Testament

This section of the review looks into the dynamism of Christian mission. It reviews Jesus' mission efforts and the synergy he initiated to ensure that kingdom business of making disciples

⁵T. P. Palmer, *A Theology of Old Testament*, Jos: African Christian Textbooks, 2014, 56.

⁶J. M. Douglas, *The Proto-evangelism and the Seminary, Eleventh Annual Symposium on Exegetical Theology*, Fort Wayne: Concordia Seminary Press, 1996, 4.

⁷E. Jacob, *Theology of Old Testament*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1959, 207.

of all nations continues without his bodily involvement, after His eventual demise.

Fuller is of the opinion that, Christian mission was in the first instance, an effort to lead others to Christ. Mission engagement included the sender, along with the sender's purpose and authority in sending.⁸ There must be some on errand with the purpose of spreading the good news with authority that the sender has in Jesus Christ. Someone must surrender himself to the authority of Jesus Christ to be useful for the work of mission. Kaiseron postulates that mission involved commissioning or authorisation that led to movement towards mission work with obedience as an agent for applying blessing of salvation to humanity.⁹ He further argues that mission included task as in the New Testament, which focused primarily on the proclamation of words and deeds of God to save humanity. The mission concept had universal scope that involved how the kingdom of God advanced, how the church fulfilled her mission, and how were those successful mission's results accomplished?¹⁰ Fuller reasons that, as people came out of the kingdom of darkness to light, the kingdom of God expanded.¹¹ He further states that believers came together to engage in witnessing to those who did not know Christ. Their coming together was to have potential in effective evangelism because there was no amount of work a man can do than a group of people. In group, there was encouragement for sacrificial penetration of major human barrier to achieve communities of responsible converts, where there was none before.¹²

⁸L. K. Fuller, *The Missionary and His Work*, Jos: Evangelical Institute Press, 1996, 11.

⁹W.C.J. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 2000, 47.

¹⁰W.C.J. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, 47.

¹¹L. K. Fuller, *The Missionary and His Work*, 9.

¹²L. K. Fuller, *The Missionary and His Work*, 9

Adna and Kvalbein postulate that, mission work means a conscious, deliberate, extensive effort to convert non-fellow-religionists to one's religion.¹³ Don reasoned that, approaches to totally get –man- back- to -God from the time of the fall in the Garden of Eden to the period immediately before Jesus Christ, did not work as God wanted it. Therefore, the coming of Jesus Christ was necessary at the time He came. As He came, the whole nature of God's approach to drawing men to Himself, changed with the advent of Jesus.¹⁴ Jesus took up the job with full force from age twelve and continued to the end of his life. Bultmann is of the opinion that, the theology of the New Testament was centred on Christ's mission.¹⁵ The twenty-seven books of the New Testament were all mission - inclined to fulfill the purpose of His coming to the world.

Don agrees that mission of Christ was disclosed in the Great Commission. The classic and comprehensive commission was found in Matt 28:18-20.¹⁶ The commands in the passage were *to go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things as commanded by Jesus Christ* (Matt 28:19-20). Williams reasons that, when one reads Matthew (10:23 and 24:14), the Great Commission places Christian mission in an eschatological perspective.¹⁷ Christian mission was not only meant for the present time but till eternity and with perseverance. Therefore, Jesus sent out his witnesses to continue his mission. In all of this, God's sovereignty in mission remained guaranteed. The spreading of the gospel, led to the foundation of settled Christians.

¹³J. Adna and H. Kvalbein, (eds) *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, 313.

¹⁴F. Don, *Themes of Theology that Impact Missions: The New Testament and Missions*, Lynchburg: Liberty University Press, 2009, 2.

¹⁵R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* Vol. 2, New York: Charles Scribner, 1951, 13.

¹⁶F. Don, *Themes of Theology that Impact Missions: The New Testament and Missions*, 5.

¹⁷L. J. Williams, and J. Williams, *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*. 4th edition, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001, 266.

In summary, the persuasion of current writer aligns with most of the reviewed authors who postulate that concept of mission is first introduced in the Old Testament where God calls Abraham to be a blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:1–3). It progressed to Israelites' election, where they were chosen to serve as light to the nations, embodying God's justice and righteousness (Isaiah 49:6). Mission theme continues in the New Testament, culminating in Jesus' ministry and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20). Jesus' ministry provides the clearest example of practical Christian mission. His mission statement presents Him as the one sent to preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the oppressed, and bring sight to the blind (Luke 4:18–19).

Approaches to Christian Mission Work

This section of the review surveys methods or inventions to Christian mission. It looks at what and how the early missionaries in Nigeria did it. Borrowing certain leafs from what had been in a measure to improve what is being.

Adam views Christian mission as an organised effort to carry on evangelism or other charity activities, such as educational or hospital work, in the name of the Christian faith. To him, it involves sending individuals and groups across boundaries, most commonly geographical boundaries.¹⁸ Sometimes individuals are sent and are called missionaries, and historically, they may have been based in mission stations. When groups are sent, they are often called mission teams as they undertake mission trips. There are a few different kinds of mission trips: short-term, long-term, relational and those that simply help people in need. Some people choose to dedicate their whole lives to mission. Edward James notes that:

¹⁸D. Adam, *Understanding the Concept of Evangelism: The Nigerian Perspective*, Jos: Jang Publishing, 2006, 16.

Mission work, also known as missionary work, refers to the act of Christian individuals or groups engaging in outreach activities to share their faith and provide assistance to communities in need. Missionaries dedicate themselves to serving others, often in unfamiliar or challenging environments, with the goal of promoting spiritual growth, offering humanitarian aid and fostering social change.¹⁹

Turaki is of the opinion that Christian missionary service is driven by a combination of convictions. The first, and primary motivator comes from Jesus' own command which is known as the Great Commission.²⁰ Jesus issued this proclamation to the church before ascending into heaven: all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. *Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:18–20). This command to create disciples from all nations inspires Christians to share the gospel and create opportunities for new converts to learn and grow.²¹ Not all missionaries focus on the same part of this process. Some focus on sharing their faith and others might focus more on long-term ministry and helping local churches excel in the discipleship process.

Pentecost asserts that, alongside the *Great Commission*, some missionaries find themselves compelled by other factors, too. These include a desire to serve people and meet their needs, and a commitment to making a positive difference in the world. On top of that, many see Christian missions as integral to their own personal journey of self-discovery and growth.²² As it is

¹⁹L. James, *The Theology of New Testament*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 85.

²⁰Y. Turaki, *Theory and Practice of Christian Mission in Africa: A Century of SNC/ ECWA History and Legacy in Nigeria 1893 – 1993* Vol 1, Nairobi: IBS Press, 1999, 65.

²¹Y. Turaki, *Theory and Practice of Christian Mission in Africa*, 65.

²²E. C. Pentecost, *Issues in Missiology: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982, 60.

with any sort of ministry, it can be challenging to make definitive statements about what missionaries do. They often end up doing all sorts of things, especially when they end up serving long term. But as one thinks about what missionaries do, there are some roles one can identify. These include sharing the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus, making disciples of all nations, providing humanitarian aid, promoting justice and advocacy, educating and training, medical and healthcare services.

Challenges Facing Christian Mission Work

This section takes a swipe at some of the challenges that confronted early missionaries in Nigeria. While the reading or approach informs a look into what had been, notwithstanding, it is arguable that, the same challenges are confronting present day mission work.

O'Brien opines that challenge of language and translation stand tall among ensuing issues of effective mission work. As a matter of need, to facilitate quick evangelism, church planting, and discipleship, every missionary was required to learn the local language of the natives where each was to serve as a missionary.²³ For the missionary to achieve that, the person was expected to devote, at least, two hours every day to learn the local language of the people. Fleck opines that, it was part of the orientation for every newly recruited missionary to make sure to learn the local language of the people in every district or region they entered and also to convert such languages into written scripts.²⁴ To Fleck, this was meant to make it easier to translate the Scriptures into those languages. This is not an easy task, for instance in a country like Nigeria where there were about three hundred different languages altogether.²⁵

²³P. T. O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: Exegetical and Theological Analysis*, Cumbrian: Paternoster Press, 2000, 45.

²⁴I. Fleck, *Bringing Christianity to Nigeria: The Origin and Work of Protestant Missions*, Bukuru: ACTS, 2013, 49.

²⁵I. Fleck, *Bringing Christianity to Nigeria: The Origin and Work of Protestant Missions*, 49.

Cheesman agrees that the major task every field missionary was expected to accomplish was to make sure the Scriptures were translated into the local languages of the people.²⁶

Tsoho considers language learning to be a serious concern because without understanding the local languages of the people, it would be difficult to communicate the Scriptures with the natives.²⁷ Since missionaries felt that they could not accomplish learning the language and translating it into the written script on their own, they partnered with other mission agencies to help facilitate the printing of the Scriptures. These mission agencies were the Christian Missionary Society (CMS), the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in Nigeria. They helped in translating the Scriptures into local languages.²⁸ Through their efforts, literature such as *Annuals in Vernacular* was printed. The name of the committee was called the Standing Literature Committee.²⁹ Crampton submits that Christian Missions contributed a lot towards the printing of Christian literature that had a positive impact on the improvement of literacy in Northern Nigeria.³⁰

Authorship, Date and Purpose of Writing the Gospel of Luke

The authorship of the Gospel of Luke is traditionally credited to Luke, the beloved physician (Col. 4:14), a close associate of Apostle Paul. According to tradition, Luke was a Gentile writing to a Gentile audience.³¹ It is generally agreed that the author Luke is to be identified with the writer of Acts of the Apostles. The preface of Luke (1:1-4) is addressed to Theophilus, and Acts 1:1 appears to be a kind of secondary preface which is addressed

²⁶G. Cheesman, *Mission Today: An Introduction to Mission Studies*, Belfast: Qua Iboe Press, 1997, 65.

²⁷D. M. Tsoho, *Tullar Missionary to Kamuku Land*, Minna: Mustap Printer 2006, 13.

²⁸D. M. Tsoho, *Tullar Missionary to Kamuku Land*, 13.

²⁹D. M. Tsoho, *Tullar Missionary to Kamuku Land*, 13.

³⁰E. P. T. Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*, Bukuru: Africa Christian Textbooks, 2013, 49.

³¹M. C. Parsons, *Luke*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015, 5.

to the same recipient. Both the internal and external evidences can be applied to assert Luke as the author of the Gospel. Internal evidences support the fact that Luke was not an eye witness to the events recorded in his Gospel. He is the only one of the Gospel writers who did not know Jesus physically.

Bock argues several possibilities as to when the Gospel of Luke was written but notes that certain possibilities set the outside limit for a possible date. He observes that the latest event in Acts took place in AD 62 thus establishing the earliest possible date for the completion of the two-volume work.³² Also, some scholars suggested that it might have been written after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, because Luke made reference to it (Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24).³³ This agrees with the assertion that it is later than Mark (AD 65-70), and it would take some time for the document to be available for Luke to copy. Since Luke makes no further remark on the prediction of Jerusalem's fall but only clarifies that in the Temple's collapse the city is not spared, a date between AD 70 and AD 85 would be suitable which the current writer chooses to agree with.³⁴ Different places have been proposed by modern scholars. Luke, being a coworker of Paul, all the places proposed have a connection with Paul. The place one chooses depends on the date chosen for the work.³⁵ Possible places include Caesarea (60s), Rome (60s-80s), Antioch (any date), Greece (any date), or Corinth.³⁶ The Gospel was originally meant for many communities regardless of the place of writing.

The Gospel of Luke is one of the books of the Bible that states the purpose of the writer. The prologue of the Gospel (1:1-4),

³²D. L. Bock, *Luke in Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994, 5.

³³O. Olagunju, *A Concise Introduction to the New Testament*, Ogbomoso: Ogunniyi Publishers, 2012, 89.

³⁴C. H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, 102.

³⁵D. L. Bock, *Luke in Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 18.

³⁶P. T. Gandenz, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018, 18.

informs that the intention of Luke was to present a historically accurate account about Jesus Christ. It is observed that Luke is selective in what he records, and this presupposes that he targeted his Christian readers to have proper understanding and the certainty of their faith (cf. 1:4).³⁷ The subject of his writing is those things which have been fulfilled among us (1:1). Luke makes efforts to project a comprehensive and accurate account to the life and ministry of Jesus in order to strengthen the faith of the Gentile believers.

Exegetical Analysis of Luke 8:1-3

Luke 8:1: Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ καθεξῆς καὶ αὐτὸς διώδευεν κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην κηρύσσων καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ οἱ δώδεκα σὺν αὐτῷ. 2: καὶ γυναῖκες τινες αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμένα ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν, Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνὴ ἀφ' ἧς δαιμόνια ἐπέα ἐξεληλύθει, 3: καὶ Ἰωάννα γυνὴ Χουζᾶ ἐπιτρόπου Ἡρώδου, καὶ Σουσάννα, καὶ ἄλλαι πολλαὶ αἵτινες διηκόνουν αὐτῷ ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς.

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3 Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Beneficiaries of Jesus' Ministry..... Luke 8:1-3a

The passage under consideration introduces a phase in Jesus' ministry where he is constantly on the move (8:1-9:50). It opens with the characteristic Lucan transitional phrase, Καὶ ἐγένετο,

³⁷R. H. Stein, Luke in *The New American Commentary*, Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1992, 23.

and it came to pass, a stylistic feature in Luke-Acts that conveys a narrative shift. I. Howard Marshall notes that this phrase has special significance in Luke's Gospel, often marking a new development in the narrative.³⁸ The phrase signifies a significant alteration in Jesus' way of life, he ceases to make Capernaum his base and instead embarks on an itinerant ministry.³⁹ The phrase καθεξῆς, *afterward or in order*, suggests a purposeful transition rather than a mere chronological sequence. Jesus was carrying out his mission to proclaim the gospel universally (Luke 4:43). The verb διώδευεν, an imperfect active indicative of διώδεύω, *to travel through*, underscores the continuous and expansive nature of his missionary activity rather than a journey with a fixed endpoint.⁴⁰ His travels consistently drew crowds (cf. 7:11, 24; 8:4, 18, 40, 45), reinforcing the widespread appeal of his message. The itinerancy reflects Jesus' unwearied diligence in doing good, even in the face of disbelief.⁴¹

The primary actions in verse 1, κηρύσσων καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος, *preaching and bringing good news*, define Jesus' purpose. These present active participles indicate that his preaching and proclamation of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, *kingdom of God*, occurred simultaneously with his travel. This kingdom represents both God's salvific activity in the present and the eschatological reality to be fully realised in the future.⁴² Although it appears as if Luke focuses more on the message of the kingdom rather than its immediate realisation.⁴³ It can be further argued that Jesus' ministry dismantles barriers, particularly the legalistic divisions

³⁸H. I. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on Greek-Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Grand Rapids: WB. Eerdmans, 1978, 315.

³⁹D. Spence and J. S. Excel, *The Pulpit Commentary: Mark and Luke*, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011, 200.

⁴⁰L. Morris, *Luke in Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999, 164.

⁴¹J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Luke*, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997, 243.

⁴²H. I. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on Greek-Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 195

⁴³E.C. Ellis, *Eschatology in Luke, Biblical Series 30*, Philadelphia: Fortress Publishing, 1972, 1965.

between the righteous and sinners, emphasising the inclusivity of God's kingdom.⁴⁴

Two groups accompanied Jesus on his missionary journey: οἱ δώδεκα (the Twelve) and γυναῖκες τινες (certain women). The Twelve, introduced in Luke 6:12-16, are identified here as companions and witnesses rather than active participants in preaching.⁴⁵ Their role was primarily one of apprenticeship, preparing for future missionary work (Luke 10:2-3). The phrase σὺν αὐτῷ, *with him*, conveys their close association with Jesus, emphasising their role as learners. Verse 2 introduces the second group: καὶ γυναῖκες τινες, *and certain women*, highlighting their significant roles in Jesus' ministry. Unlike certain of the contemporary rabbis who excluded women from theological instruction, Jesus welcomed them into his circle. Luke, more than any other Gospel writer, underscores the prominence of women. Jesus' teaching elevated women's status, making them συγκληρονόμοι, *co-heirs*, in God's kingdom and challenging their traditional subordination.⁴⁶ Luke devotes substantial attention to these women, emphasizing their transformation through Jesus' ministry. The phrase αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι, *who had been healed*, affirms that they had personally experienced his healing power.⁴⁷ The perfect passive participle τεθεραπευμέναι implies that their healing was a completed past event with enduring effects. Although it was highly unusual for women to travel with a rabbi,⁴⁸ yet, their gratitude for Jesus' ministry overrode cultural constraints.

These women had been delivered from πνευμάτων πονηρῶν, *evil spirits*, and ἀσθενειῶν, *infirmities*, Luke frequently associates afflictions with spiritual oppression, particularly in reference to women (cf. 4:38; 13:11; Acts 16:16). The δαιμονισμός, *demonic*

⁴⁴H. Hendrickx, *The Third Gospel for the third World, Vol. 2B*, Collegetown: The Liturgical Press, 1998, 110.

⁴⁵J. B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1977, 316.

⁴⁶D. Spence and J. S. Excel, *The Pulpit Commentary: Mark and Luke*, 200.

⁴⁷D. L. Bock, Luke in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 713.

⁴⁸D. L. Bock, Luke in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 713.

possession, in the Gospels is not limited to mental disorders but encompasses broader afflictions affecting one's entire well-being.⁴⁹ Moreover, those with unclean spirits were often ostracised, further highlighting the social impact of their healing. A particular focus is given to Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνή, *Mary, called Magdalene*, from whom ἑπτὰ δαιμόνια ἐξεληλύθει, *seven demons had gone out*. The pluperfect ἐξεληλύθει signifies that her deliverance was a past event with lasting consequences.⁵⁰ The number ἑπτὰ, *seven*, is symbolically significant, often representing completeness or severity.⁵¹ Mary's prominence in the resurrection narratives explains why she is singled out.⁵²

The passage also mentions Ἰωάννα γυνὴ Χουζᾶ, *Joanna, the wife of Chuza*, a woman of high social standing. The name Ἰωάννα means Yahweh has been gracious, fitting her role as a benefactor of Jesus' ministry.⁵³ Chuza, described as ἐπιτρόπου Ἡρώδου, *steward of Herod*, likely held a significant administrative position in Herod Antipas' court.⁵⁴ Luke mentions Joanna's connection to Herod's household for multiple reasons, the most important being her financial contributions.⁵⁵ The third named woman is Σουσάννα (Susanna), about whom little is known. Her mention alongside Mary Magdalene and

⁴⁹G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, 129.

⁵⁰R. Summers, *Essentials of New Testament Greek*, Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995, 115.

⁵¹E. Otto, *Seven in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Vol. 14*, Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2004, 351.

⁵²H. I. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on Greek-Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 316.

⁵³W. A. Elwell, *Symbolic Use of Numbers in Baker's Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 2*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1988, 1561.

⁵⁴H. Balz and G. Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 2*, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1981, 44.

⁵⁵R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002, 119.

Joanna suggests she was a notable figure, yet Luke provides no further details.⁵⁶

The phrase καὶ ἕτεροι πολλοί (and many others) affirms that Jesus was accompanied by a significant group of female disciples. The feminine form of πολλοί confirms that these were all women. There should be caution against overlooking this larger group, as Luke's emphasis on women's financial and personal support is unparalleled in the Gospels.⁵⁷ It is of note that in male-oriented literature like the New Testament, women are typically mentioned only when they are exceptional or problematic.⁵⁸ Here, their exceptional nature is clear: they defied societal norms to support and accompany Jesus. Their participation in Jesus' mission prefigures the inclusive nature of the kingdom of God, where οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ, *there is neither male nor female*, in Christ (Galatians 3:28).

Benefactors of Jesus' Ministry..... verse 3b

The final section of this peri-cope highlights the financial and material support that women provided for Jesus' mission. Their role as benefactors is underscored in the phrase: αἴτινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς, *who were ministering to them out of their own means*. The main verb διηκόνουν, an imperfect active indicative, third-person plural of διακονέω, is crucial in understanding their role. Its noun form, διακονία, is a broad term in Greek, whose meaning depends largely on context. Luke is aware of the various nuances of this word and employs it differently in Acts 6:1-6, where διακονία refers both to serving tables (v. 2) and serving the word (v. 4).⁵⁹

In Luke 8:1-3, another dimension of διακονία emerges; ministering through financial support. The term διακονία

⁵⁶C. Meyers, *Women in Scripture*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000, 103.

⁵⁷R. A. Tucker and W. Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987, 28.

⁵⁸H. R. Finger, *of Widows and Meals*, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2007, 258.

⁵⁹H. R. Finger, *of Widows and Meals*, 258.

appears thirty-seven times in the New Testament, with frequent occurrences in Luke-Acts (seven times in Luke, two in Acts), as well as in Matthew (five times) and Mark (four times). Sometimes, it retains its original sense of waiting on tables (Luke 17:8; John 12:2). For example, after Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law, she immediately began to wait, διακονέω, on him (Luke 4:39). Her ability to resume service signified her restored health. However, Jesus' concept of διακονία extends beyond this, encompassing acts such as providing food, shelter, clothing, and visiting the sick and prisoners (Matt 25:44; Luke 22:26; Mark 15:41). Thus, the term is not restricted by gender, occupation, or social status but embodies the broader concept of Christian service, characterised by selfless love and true discipleship.⁶⁰

In Luke 8:3, διακονέω clearly refers to financial and material support, as indicated by the phrase ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων, *out of their possessions*. This phrase defines the nature of their service; it was economic rather than domestic. Like Simon's mother-in-law (Luke 4:39), these women had been healed and responded by serving. However, their διακονία was different: it went beyond table service to sustained financial contributions. It is considered that Luke 8:1-3 is not a healing narrative but a summary passage. Therefore, unlike Simon's mother-in-law, these women are not mentioned to demonstrate the immediacy of their healing but rather their ongoing role as Jesus' patrons.⁶¹ Traveling missionaries required financial support, and in this case, Jesus and the Twelve depended on these women's contributions because they had abandoned their means of livelihood to follow him (Luke 5:11). Furthermore, Jesus' family was unlikely to be supporting him, as they had previously rejected him (Luke 4:16-30). Thus, in the context of Luke 8:1-3,

⁶⁰K. E. Carley, *Private Women, Public Meals*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, 85.

⁶¹K. Penner, *The Work of Wealthy Women: Female Discipleship in Luke 8:1-3*, an Unpublished M. A. Dissertation submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Waterloo and Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, 2011, 96.

the women's διακονία primarily involved financial sponsorship of Jesus' itinerant ministry.

A closer analysis of the prepositional phrase ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς reveals the depth of their financial support. The word ὑπαρχόντων, a present active participle, neuter genitive plural of ὑπάρχω, meaning *to exist or to possess*, functions as a noun. It is frequently used in Luke's Gospel to refer to wealth or material goods. In Luke 8:3, it denotes personal financial resources, just as in Acts 2:45, where the early believers sold their property and possessions, ὑπαρχόντων, to support one another.⁶² In addition, αὐταῖς, the final word in the sentence, possessive pronoun, feminine dative plural, meaning *to them*. This possessive pronoun clarifies that the resources belonged to the women themselves, rather than being derived from their relatives. The phrase ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς can therefore be literally translated as, *from the possessions belonging to them*. This construction suggests that these women were financially independent and had their own means of wealth, allowing them to provide for Jesus and his disciples.

Luke 8:3 presents a striking depiction of women in the role of benefactors; a position usually reserved for wealthy men in antiquity. Their financial and material support for Jesus' ministry demonstrates their commitment to his mission and reflects the broader inclusivity of the kingdom of God. These women were not merely passive followers; they were active participants, investing their personal resources to sustain Jesus' work. Their διακονία challenges traditional notions of discipleship, showing that service, to Jesus, extends beyond preaching to include material and financial support as an essential component of Christian ministry.

⁶²*Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago: University Press, 1979, 838.

Inferences from Exegesis of Luke 8:1-3

First, Christian ministry must be targeted to meeting the specific needs of the people. The women that voluntarily accompanied Jesus in his missionary journey were said to have been healed by Jesus. Their dire needs have been met. Though, the particular passage where the healing occurred was not recorded in the Gospels, the soundness of their mind made them fit to follow Jesus through the journey. Thus they were emotionally fit to carry out their ministry of providing financial supports for Jesus' missionary activities.

Second, discipleship should be the hallmark of Christian ministry. It is noteworthy that the women in the text were first committed disciples of Jesus before they released their resources to support his ministry. Ministry should first focus on the heart of people and not on their purse.

Conclusion

When people have the joys of the gospel, when they feel the consolations of religion themselves, they will somehow or other find means to contribute to the welfare of others. They will be willing to labour with reference to it, or they will find something which they can sacrifice or spare. Conversely, beneficiaries of the gospel ministry are also expected to be pertinent benefactors of practical mission works. The women, having being healed of their diseases became followers of Jesus. In some cases, Jesus would tell those that he had healed to go back put other things in proper place (Mk. 5:19, 42; 7:29-30; Lk. 5:14, 25; 7:9-10, 50; 17:14). Also, he would not hide from his followers what it would cost them in order to follow him (Luke 9:23-27, 58-60). Yet, these women defied all odds to meet Jesus requirements to follow him; and not only that, they made available their resources to Jesus in appreciation to what he had done for them. Effective Christian mission work thrives in an atmosphere of partnership. The women partnered with Jesus by using their resources to take care of His mission

needs. Mission works will make tremendous progress when partnership is encouraged and embraced through generous contribution.

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