

Title: Every Woman Needs Hope

Text: Luke 8:1-3

Date: May 12, 2019

INTRO. I've discovered this as a pastor over the years – and I've also experienced this as a husband – at best, Mother's Day is bittersweet.

Glorious – nothing more beautiful than having your love, mom.

Painful – nothing worse than not feeling that love, mom.

I want every person here – but especially the ladies – to feel welcome, appreciated, seen, needed, and valued within the body of Christ known as FBC Woodstock.

I would hate to pastor a church that didn't contain Spirit-filled, Christ-honoring, children-loving, gentle, but firm, mothering-women.

I can't imagine my life without: my mother, my two grandmothers...but also Lanie Nash, Cathy Moore, Doris Feagin, and Bettie Caldwell.

Today we most certainly have women here from all walks of life. There's no way I can address each situation. But I love how Amy Young recently described it in Outreach Magazine:

To those who gave birth this year to their first child – we celebrate you.

To those who lost a child this year – we mourn with you.

To those who are in the trenches with little ones every day and wear the badge of food stains – we appreciate you.

To those who experienced loss through miscarriage, failed adoption, or a run-away – we mourn for you.

To those who walk the hard path of infertility, fraught with pokes, prods, tears, and disappointments – we walk with you.

- *Forgive us when we say foolish things. We don't mean to make things harder.*

To those who are foster moms, mentor moms, and spiritual moms – we need you.

To those who have warm and close relationships with your children – we celebrate with you.

To those who have disappointment, heartache, and distance with your children – we sit with you.

To those who lost their mothers this year – we grieve with you.

To those who experienced abuse at the hands of your own mother – we acknowledge your experience.

To those who lived through driving tests, medical tests, and the overall testing of motherhood – we are better for having you in our midst.

To those who have aborted children – we remember them, and you, on this day.

To those who are single and long to be married and mothering your own children – we mourn that life has not turned out the way you longed for it to be.

To those who are stepmoms – we walk with you on these complex paths.

To those who envisioned lavishing love on their grandchildren – yet that dream is not to be – we grieve with you.

To those who will have emptier nests in the upcoming year – we grieve and rejoice with you.

To those who placed children for adoption – we commend you for your selflessness and remember how you hold that child in your heart.

And to those who are pregnant with new life, both expected and surprising – we anticipate with you.

This Mother's Day, we walk with you. Mothering is not for the faint of heart, and we have real warriors in our midst. We remember you.

I want to add – I especially salute:

- Military moms – and moms with children in the service.
- Moms who have children in prison (Carrie's jail ministry) – may God give you grace and peace.

I want to say this sincere word from my heart:

- 1) I want to cultivate an eye, by God's grace, for the things/people that others overlook.
- 2) I want our church to develop eyes for the people the world overlooks:
 - a. For Jesus sees the overlooked people.
 - b. And this is often where Jesus does His greatest work.

God first put this word on my heart, ironically, back when I was doing sermon prep for Easter.

I just couldn't help but keep noticing it. As Jesus was going through his most personal, trying valley on his journey through the cross – the men kept scattering, but the women kept lingering. The Bible clearly records this.

The men – they slept...they cowered away, fearful...Peter denied he even knew him.

But the women:

Matt 27:55 – when Jesus hung on the cross, as the men go unmentioned, Matthew is careful to point out – *Many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and looked after him, were there watching...*

Matt 27:61 – when Joseph of Arimathea actually entombed Jesus body – *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were seated there, facing the tomb.*

Matt 28:1 – *After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb.*

FACT. In this patriarchal society dominated by men – women were often overlooked.

- But Jesus saw them. Jesus knew about them.
- And the Bible writes it down.

The point is this:

Jesus sees the things the world overlooks.

Jesus cares about the things the world undervalues.

Jesus redeems anyone who acknowledges they need him!

Look at this brief account of three short stories contained in Luke's Gospel. It is interesting that Luke was the one to record this. Luke is called the "Universal Gospel" – Luke puts extra attention on the overlooked, the marginalized, the downtrodden. Luke shows us just how much Jesus cares about the poor and the hurting.

Luke 7:11-17 → A Widow's Son is Raised to Life.

- Jesus was traveling. He was busy. On his way to Nain.
- But he saw a funeral procession on the way to a cemetery.
- Jesus saw a mother (7:13).
 - Weeping for her only son...she was a widow.
 - Jesus was moved with compassion for her.

Jesus then stops the funeral procession.

- Tells the mother – don't weep.
- Jesus goes up and touches the coffin.
 - The young man sits up!
- The whole crowd gasps in awe.

As the dead man sits up...what does Jesus do? – Jesus immediately connect the young man with his mother.

Yes, it's a miracle. Yes, it's a story about the power of God.

But it's also a story about Jesus caring about a mother! He sees/sympathizes with a mother!

Luke 7:36-50 → A Sinful Woman's Sins are Forgiven. Jesus is having dinner in the home of a Pharisee. During the meal, as they are all reclining around the table:

- A sinful woman (prostitute) comes and washes Jesus feet...cries...pours expensive perfume on his feet.
 - Weeping...washing feet...anointing Jesus with the perfume.
- The Pharisees: grumble...judgmental...what a waste of money.

Jesus then tells a quick story to all gathered at the table:

- A creditor had two debtors.
- One owed 500 denarii, one owed 50 → the creditor canceled both debts
- Which was more grateful!
- The one who owed the most!

Sad lesson: the Pharisees do not know the magnitude of their sins!

Sweet lesson: the woman knows her sin...and in her deep brokenness over the sin...she receives grace, forgiveness, renewal.

FACT: the greater the sin, the more beautiful the repentance and grace!

- No one is too far gone!

May our love and affection for Jesus be the overflow of our personal recognition that we are nothing without Him!

Q: What's this story about?

A: It's about a sinful woman with a terrible reputation...being ignored/mocked by the religious crowd...but yet Jesus sees her, knows her heart, and forgives her!

Luke 8:1-3 → Women from a Variety of Backgrounds Follow Jesus. As Jesus traveled proclaiming the good news of God's Kingdom, numerous women followed him.

Mary Magdalene: a woman who met Jesus, followed Jesus, and finished well.

- She originally had 7 demons (completely engulfed in darkness/evil).
- Imagine the pain, embarrassment, and the shame.
- Imagine how MM's mother...family...how they dealt with her wild oats.

Yet when Mary Magdalene met the Lord – her life was forever changed!

- She stayed with Jesus at the cross.
- She lingered at the tomb.
- She was one of the first to arrive at the tomb on Resurrection Sunday.

Joanna followed Christ. Joanna was a leader in Herod's palace. Without much support at home/work, she follows Jesus.

- Jesus' ministry was not just to the poor.
- Jesus' ministry had support from:
 - Men and women...rich and poor...ethnically and socially diverse.

Joanna somehow met Christ, and followed Him.

- She received new friends.
- She received a new fellowship circle.
- She belonged in a different place now (from palace...to a new palace).

Susanna followed Christ. This is all we know about her and many others:

- She followed the Lord.
- She supported Christ out of her own means/pocket.

Something about Christ captured Susanna. (capture, convert, follow)
Susanna followed the Lord!

FACT: if you're going to be known...might as well be known for this: I followed Christ!

So fundamentally, what do these passages in Luke 7-8 teach us?

1. The women who followed Jesus have a past.
 - a. Own it.
 - b. Let it be a part of your testimony.
 - c. FACT: everyone has a regretful past...but only Christians have a covered past!
2. The women's past is no match for God's grace.
 - a. Loneliness.
 - b. Prostitute.
 - c. Demon-possession.
 - d. Leader in the king's palace.

FACT: none of us are righteous enough on our own.

FACT: none of us so sinful we can't be reached.

3. The women believed Christ was worth following – they met him, and they were all in.
 - a. A Christian who isn't "all in" is foreign to the New Testament.
 - b. Pattern of the women: they gave Christ their time and their money.

Application: I was recently in conversation with my friend Daniel George (a Christian from India). Daniel was a seminary classmate of mine.

- He moved to Cartersville for a year and served as my intern (the only intern I ever had).
- Lived locally with us and the Thompson family for a year.
- I went to India to perform his wedding in the Fall of 2015.

Daniel's family does not have much. They truly live by faith and prayer in a culture that is less than 1% Christian.

Daniel's parents are Wilson and Sheela George. They've been Christians for years, and they've raised four children who are all sold out, devout followers of Christ.

I vividly recall this:

- My kids are young.
- Sheela George has raised four amazing kids.
- I asked Sheela to share with me parenting advice on how to raise godly children in a culture that is counter-Christian (non-Christian). How did she do it? This is what she told me:
 1. Tell them about the one, true God as early as possible in their life.
 - a. The world will introduce them to so many other "gods"
 - b. 330 million gods/goddesses in India
 2. They must see your faith lived out. No hypocrisy. Children are smart enough to see through your double standard.
 3. Share your faith experiences. Talk openly about provision, miracles, and healing, answered prayers in your family; and give God the credit.
 - a. It will build your kids faith.
 - b. It will teach your kids to trust God in good and bad times.
 4. Be faithful to your church. Immerse yourself in life with people in your church.
 5. Know your children's circle of friends. Who are they with?
 6. Be a close-knit family.
 - a. Listen to their stories and details from their school day.
 - b. Give them confidence/freedom to share with you.
 - c. Avoid keeping secrets, be transparent.
 7. Mutual trust. Show them you trust/believe in them. They will reciprocate.
 8. Be intentional/purposeful. Do your kids understand your vision for life? Do you have a mission as a family?
 9. Ask God to help you practice biblical values in the day-in, day-out grind of life.

CONCL: I looked this up in the Oxford Dictionary.

Mother = *a woman who has borne a child.*

- Wow. That's it?
- No way.

What about all the love, prayers, forgiveness, teaching, compassion, life-lessons, values, friendship?

Jesus = *the founder of the Christian religion.*

- Wow. That's it?
- No way.

What about all the miracles? Water to wine...feeding 5,000...meals with sinners...loving the children...casting out demons...healing the lame, blind, sick.

- Who saved me when I was 7?
- Who called me to preach at 14?
- Who's been with me ever since?
- Who taught my mother to love my dad, and to love me?

Jesus gives hope to anyone who calls on Him!