

GOD PROVIDES

As Luke's gospel unfolds, we see how God not only provides the good news of the kingdom, but the Savior, and the hearers, and the means to carry out the ministry through His obedient disciples. And Luke 8:1-3 also provides practical lessons for our lives today.

THE GOOD NEWS - Luke writes, "*Soon afterward Jesus went on through cities and villages, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him.*" Jesus not only declares the gospel, He brings the good news to show and tell. He had just forgiven the sins of a woman who anointed His feet with her tears, a great object lesson about sin and forgiveness.

The kingdom of God is a major theme of Luke, notes scholar WA Grudem. It comes with the coming of the Christ, the prophesied one. He proves this in word and deed, as He presents the good news about forgiveness of sins for all people: Jews, Gentiles, men and women.

Luke carefully notes how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament promises, as He reiterated in Luke 4, "*the Spirit of the Lord has anointed Me to proclaim good news*" and "*I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God, for I was sent for this purpose.*" Mark 1:15, "*the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.*" Jesus Christ is the Son of God, sent by the Father in the power of the Spirit to fulfill His plans for His people.

THE HEARERS - God also provided not only Jesus' devoted disciples, the twelve that He chose, but all those who followed Him, and the curious hearers. Verse 4 says a great crowd had come out, with people from town after town, quite the entourage. The twelve were His primary learners who always accompanied Him, taking in His teaching, so that they could tell it to others.

Jesus goes to them and they come to Him, because Jesus is the great light sent into the darkness, prophesied in the Old Testament, and reiterated in Luke 1:79 and 2:32. The disciples' mission was likewise to go and tell this good news of the kingdom. Mark 3:14 says they were appointed to go and preach. Jesus will send them out in Luke 9-10.

THE POWER - God provides the message, the audience, and the means of the kingdom, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Grudem notes this as another theme of Luke's gospel. The Holy Spirit works physical healing of many people of evil spirits and infirmities, as Jesus fulfills the good news, bringing liberty to captives, recovery of sight, and setting free the oppressed.

This included liberty from demonic oppression, as noted in all the gospels. Luke adds, "*and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out.*" No wonder Mary left everything and followed Jesus!

The Spirit's power also includes spiritual healing and regeneration. This is the opening of hearts and minds and wills of people to believe and receive Jesus as the Christ, the promised deliverer. As John declared in Luke 3:16 and Matthew 3:11, "*I baptize with water for repentance, but He who comes after Me will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*" This is the new birth of John 1:12-13 and 3:3-8, as well as empowerment to live out this new eternal spiritual life.

THE MEANS - God provides the message, messenger, hearers, power, and the means. Luke notes that along with Mary came "*Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.*" Mary Magdalene was from the village of Magdala, near Capernaum on the sea of Galilee.

She appears twelve times in the four gospels. RC Sproul notes, "Nowhere is it even suggested that she was involved in prostitution, yet she erroneously has been a prototypical symbol of the fallen woman who was rescued from her corrupt life by Christ. Rather, she had an affliction of demonic possession from which she was redeemed." Mary certainly was not married to Jesus, and Gnostic notions of "secret knowledge" are likewise completely unsupported in the Bible.

Mary was a devoted follower of Christ, and the first to report His resurrection to the disciples (Luke 23:49-24:10). Sproul says, "Luke shows how Jesus treated the women with respect, honor, and dignity, quite unusual for the first-century world." Women were not generally permitted to study the Law or to be discipled by a rabbi, and holy men did not associate with women. Because Jesus did, He was looked down upon by Pharisees, scribes and lawyers. These devoted women were part of God's provision, among Jesus' followers responding to the good news! ☐