

## **GOD'S PROVISION**

We've seen how God provided the message, hearers, power, and the means for Christ Jesus to proclaim the good news of the kingdom in Luke 8:1-3. Specifically, Luke mentions three women by name, Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza (Herod's household manager), Susanna, *"and many others, who provided for them out of their means."*

Mary had been delivered from demons. Joanna's husband had a position of considerable power and authority, and presumably wealth. She is mentioned again in Luke 24, with Mary reporting Jesus' body absent from the tomb. Some scholars suggest Joanna was the wife of the nobleman whose son was healed in John 4:43-54. Susanna is mentioned only in Luke 8.

**MINISTRY MONEY** - Are you surprised that Scripture reports these women providing for Jesus and the disciples out of their means? It takes money to do ministry, obviously. But unlike today's "prosperity preachers," Jesus never sought after worldly wealth, nor does He promise it to His followers. He taught that God would provide their needs, not their wishes. And John 13:28 notes the disciples kept a moneybag, which was used to help the poor.

"Another theme of Luke is the danger of riches," relates WA Grudem, "which chokes the gospel from bearing fruit. The woes pronounced by Jesus on the haughty rich stand in sharp contrast to the blessings of the humble poor" as in Luke 5 and 9. Jesus said, *"foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head."*

**POOR JESUS** - Christ was an itinerant preacher, owning only the clothes on His back. Yet God says all the silver and gold are His (Haggai 2:8). "God owns the cattle on a thousand hills," notes JC Ryle, "and that mighty Savior who could multiply a few loaves and fishes into food for thousands, could have called forth food for His own sustenance." Why did He not do so?

"First, to show us that He was a man like ourselves in all things, except sin. And to show how He lived the life of faith in His Father's providence, like us. And by allowing His followers to minister to Him, He proves their love and tests their regard for Himself," says Ryle. "True love will count it a pleasure to give anything to the object loved. False love will often talk and profess much, but do and give nothing at all."

**GOD PROVIDES** - The followers of Jesus did whatever it took to support ministry. As the income of the twelve dried up, those with ongoing means, like the women Luke mentions, would help to provide food and shelter for the disciples. In Luke 12 and Matthew 6, Jesus told them God knows all about your needs, *"therefore do not be anxious, but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

*"God has granted us all things that pertain to life and godliness"* (2Peter 1), giving all that we need to believe in Him and live for Him by the power of the Holy Spirit. *"What do you have that you did not receive? Why do you boast as though you did not receive it?"* (1Corinthians 4).

Your purpose in life is not to be a good steward of riches so that you get the best stuff, toys or clothes or cars or home or vacations. It's not about your comfort and convenience and collections, or your presumptions of position, power, or pleasure. It's about God's plans.

**GOD'S PURPOSE** - Because of all God has given us, we are to *"excel in the grace of giving"* (2 Corinthians 8:9) because of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though He was rich became poor so that by His poverty you might become rich. The corollary is 2 Corinthians 9:8, *"God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work."* God's grace always overflows to others.

The context of these two passages talks about poor believers setting aside funds the first day of every week from what God provided, to give cheerfully to the Lord's work. Because *"those who sow sparingly will reap sparingly, and He who supplies seed to the sower will increase your harvest of righteousness, so that your giving overflows with many thanksgivings to God."*

Ryle observes that "while we live we are under trial. Our lives are continually showing Whose we are and whom we serve, whether we love Christ or whether we love the world." Christ Jesus shows us that God provides all we need, including eyes to see the needs of those around us, and hearts to respond with God's provision. How do you trust and obey and share? ☐