

MULLINS LENTEN CHURCHWIDE LENTEN STUDY  
SUNDAYS @ 9:45 A.M.

MARCH 17, 2024

SESSION 5: THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

**Biblical Foundation:**

Luke 8:1-3

Luke 23:27-31



**The Women Who Supported Jesus**

Read Luke 8:1-3:

- What does Luke tell us about these women, and why?
- These women were patrons, “people with resources providing support for teachers and healers.” How did women patrons continue to play important roles in the early church (see Acts 9:36-41; 16:13-15). Do you think women’s patronage of Jesus and his early followers is as well known as it should be? Why or why not?
- Do you think that patrons or donors should have input into how the recipients of their patronage act?

- “Luke may be encouraging women who read the Gospel,” writes AJ, “to act as these women did, and so to contribute financially to the upkeep of the community without seeking leadership roles.” What formal leadership roles can and do women occupy in your faith tradition? Does your congregation welcome and seek out women to fill these roles? Why or why not? Who are women in your congregation who are leaders despite not holding official roles and titles?

### **The Women Who Witness in Mark**

Read Mark 15:40-41:

- Who are the women watching Jesus die? What does Mark tell us about them and their relationships to Jesus?
- Why might these women be “looking on from a distance” (verse 40)? “The women’s placement, and the lack of explanation for it,” suggests AJ, “serves to interrogate our own behaviors at such moments.” At what moments in your life can you recall looking on suffering from a distance, and why? At which of those moments could or should you have placed yourself differently? When did you last draw close to someone who was suffering, and for what reason?
- What do these women intend to do in 16:1-3? Why does AJ think the incident narrated in 14:3-9 poses a “problem” to their plan? Do you think the earlier story reflects poorly on the women now? Why or why not?
- Do you agree with AJ that the women’s worries in 16:3 make them appear “inept”? Why or why not?
- If, as AJ and most scholars agree, Mark originally ended at 16:8, what conclusions do you draw about these women’s faith and faithfulness, and why?
- How do these “three named women” mirror their “three male counterparts, equally named and equally having failed”—Peter, James, and John (read 14:33-41, 72)? How do the announcement of Jesus’s resurrection and the existence of Mark’s Gospel itself both witness to the fact that neither the men’s nor the women’s failures meant the end of Jesus’s story?

### **The Women Who Witness in Matthew**

Read Matthew 27:55-56:

- Who are the women watching Jesus die? What does Matthew tell us about them and their relationships to Jesus.
- Read Matthew 20:20-23 (and compare Mark 10:35-40; see also session 1). Why do you think Matthew records “Mrs. Zebedee,” as AJ calls her, making this request on her sons’ behalf? What might we infer or imagine about her from this request? How does her request ironically anticipate the scene at the Crucifixion (27:38)?

- Why do the two Marys go to Jesus’s tomb in 28:1 How does their response to the news of Jesus’s resurrection in 28:8 differ from their counterparts’ reaction in Mark 16} How meaningful do you find these differences, and why?

## The Women Who Witness in Luke

Read Luke 23:27-31:

- Jesus calls the women along the Via Dolorosa (the route along which Jesus carried his cross) “daughters of Jerusalem,” a phrase AJ points out is found elsewhere in Scripture only in the Song of Songs (Song of Solomon). “The language may be erotic,” she writes, “but in antiquity, erotic language could be used to express deep theological yearnings.” Do you find it appropriate, weird, or inappropriate to use erotic language when speaking of theology? How is the romantic, erotic love between human beings expressed in the Song of Songs like and unlike love between human beings and God?
- “Jesus loves the city” of Jerusalem, states AJ. How do his sayings in Luke 13:31-35 reflect this love?
- While beating one’s breast was a conventional gesture of mourning in Jesus’s society, AJ thinks these women could be lamenting not only an innocent man’s death but also the miscarriage of justice and, behind it, the power of Rome.” How do or how could you and your congregation publicly lament and protest miscarried justice today? How do or how could you add to your lamenting and protest other actions to effect change?
- “Jesus tells these women that their lamentation is mis-placed” because Luke, in telling Jesus’s story, interprets Rome’s destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE, at the end of the First Jewish Revolt (66-70), as “a direct result of the people’s failure to recognize Jesus as their lord” (read also 19:41-44). How is Luke’s explanation a blaming of victims and, in AJ’s words, “a disservice to history”? Can you think of a time when the recognition of Jesus as Lord led to peace rather than war between nations?
- AJ suggests Jesus’s words to the women can provoke us to consider “what we can tolerate, and what we find so intolerable that we rise up in rebellion.” What have you and your congregation found—or what do you think you would find—“so intolerable” you would “rebel” in some way against authority, regardless of the consequences? How do we know when, if ever, such rebellion is not only permissible but faithful?
- Who watches Jesus die in Luke 23:48-49? What does Luke tell us about these people and their relationships to Jesus?
- How is Luke’s account of the women’s trip to Jesus’s tomb
- (24:1-12) like and unlike Mark’s and Matthew’s? What do you make of these similarities and differences?
- Luke’s delay in naming some of the women who went to the tomb until after they report to “the eleven” male disciples who disbelieve them (24:9-11) suggests to AJ “that for Luke, these women are not apostles.” How, if ever, have you seen or experienced

churches minimizing or denying women's importance as leaders and contributors? What did you do (or are you doing) about it?

## **The Women Who Witness in John**

Read John 19-256 27:

- Who are the women watching Jesus die? What does John tell us about them and their relationships to Jesus?
- AJ notes only John's Gospel explicitly locates Jesus's mother at his cross. "To refer to Mary as the mother of Jesus," writes AJ, "insists on his fully human embeddedness, in biology and in relationship." Why does John insist on Jesus's humanity (see also 1:14)? How might Jesus's consistent address of his mother as "Woman" (see also 24) reinforce this insistence?
- In calling his mother "Woman," says AJ, Jesus "retains her identity apart from being a mother." To what extent do you think our society views women who are mothers as only or primarily as mothers? What does or might your church do to challenge such a view, without denying or devaluing mothers' importance?
- AJ notes other women whom Jesus, in John, addresses as "Woman." Read about these women in 4:21; 8:10; 20:15 (and these verses' surrounding context). What connections can you make between these women and the woman who witnesses her son's death?
- Do you think that maternal love is different from paternal love? If so, how so?

## **In Closing**

AJ writes in *Witness at the Cross*: "The women at the cross have been ignored or reduced to models of simple piety... When Jesus states, Woman! he is not restricting his conversation partner to a gender role; he is making sure she is noticed."

Think about women who have been important to their faith as:

- women who were patrons (literally or figuratively) of the congregation, or of the participant personally;
- women in formal or informal leadership roles;
- women who provided maternal or sisterly love and loyalty, regardless of biology;
- women who spoke truth to them in unexpected ways;
- women who lamented and protested injustice, or rebelled against authority or the status quo in a faithful way;
- women who in some other way bore witness to God or Jesus.



## How to Set Up Amplify Media:

Go to: <https://my.amplifymedia.com/amplify>

1. Click the face icon.
2. Click access code.
3. Enter Mullins congregational Access Code: RXKSNZ to login.
4. Set up your account.

You can get the Amplify app for your phone or tablet as well.