

Winning God's Approval - Part 7

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen explores the qualities of humility and acceptance in Mary, the mother of Jesus, as a model for winning God's approval.

Duration: 52:54

Scripture: Genesis 1:3, John 2:3, John 12:3, 1 Corinthians 4:2

Topics: "Approval"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of serving the Lord sacrificially and unselfishly. He highlights the need for believers to listen to God and do what He tells them to do, rather than just doing what they feel like doing. The speaker shares his personal experience of God constantly telling him to listen. He also discusses the significance of expressing gratitude to God through a life of service and sacrifice, rather than just seeking personal gain or comfort. The sermon references various biblical examples, including Mary's devotion to finding the body of Jesus and her willingness to serve Him.

Transcript

This evening we are going to continue with study number seven in our series of winning God's approval. And from the beginning I have been saying how there is a vast difference between being accepted by God and being approved by Him. And all of us who have been accepted, if you are not sure that you have been accepted, you can be sure tonight before you leave, because it doesn't require anything.

When Jesus died on the cross, He said it is finished, nothing more to be done, except for us to come and receive that forgiveness that God planned for us from all eternity through sending His Son to die on the cross. And if we turn and ask Him to forgive us, He forgives us immediately. It's a foundation that's laid immediately, it doesn't take time.

To be accepted by God is something that happens in a moment. It's like the foundation of a building, it's laid, you don't have to lay it again. But then after that, we spend our life building the superstructure.

Jesus spoke about those who lay a foundation and then don't complete the building. And lots of Christians are in that condition, because they somehow feel that it's enough if I go to heaven. Well, I want to say that a lot of Christians are going to have plenty of regret when they see Jesus face to face and see how much He did for them and how little they sought to express their gratitude to Him for dying on the cross with a life of service and sacrifice.

So, it's essential if you really understand how much the Lord loved you and you want to express your gratitude to Him, to understand how we can win His approval. So, we were looking at a number of people in the Old Testament so far, some of whom lost God's approval like Adam and Eve, and others who won it in the last six studies. And today we want to go into the New Testament and look at, first of all, three Marys in the Gospels whom God approved of.

The first was, we want to look at all three of them. The first is, of course, Mary, the mother of Jesus. And I fear that there are two extremes when it comes to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Some Christians who venerate her and worship her, which of course is wrong, even the angels in heaven do not accept worship. They said, God alone is worthy of worship. Jesus said that, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, in Him only shalt thou serve.

And because some Christians have gone to that extreme, I feel some other Protestant Christians usually have gone to the other extreme of not respecting her at all or seeking to learn anything from her. But she was certainly perhaps the most godly woman in the entire Bible, because there must have been something in her that God saw to choose her to be the mother of Jesus. And she was probably a very young girl, 18, 19 years old.

And God had watched her over a number of years and selected her. And any young girl, if you have a daughter or any young girl growing up, it's a good question to ask oneself. If you were living in Israel at that time, would God have chosen you to be the mother of Jesus? Through thousands of years, many Jewish women had a longing to be the mother of the Messiah.

It was the greatest honor that anybody could have. Because they knew what the book of Genesis had said, that one day the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. They knew that the Messiah would come for a woman and so many women longed to be that mother.

Why was it that God chose Mary? We don't know much about Mary. Mary is such a self-effacing person. It's always a mark of a godly man or woman that they don't seek any prominence.

And you certainly see that in Mary's life. She doesn't seek any prominence at all. And I believe that's one reason why God chose her.

In fact, when the angel comes to her in Luke chapter 1 and says in verse 29, 28 first of all, Hail, favored one, the Lord is with you. She's surprised and she's greatly troubled, it says, and wondered what type of salutation is this for some insignificant person like me. See, she had low thoughts about herself.

And when the angel said, you know, you found favor with God and you're going to conceive, verse 31 of Luke chapter 1, and you're going to bear a son and his name will be Jesus. She didn't say, well, I sort of thought, you know, it would be someone like me whom God would choose. No.

She said, how can it be? It can't be me. You know, I have discovered that that is one of the primary marks of one whom God chooses. They don't feel worthy at all.

Any type of calling to serve him, to be an elder in a church, to preach for him. The mark of a man whom God has really chosen is that he doesn't feel equipped or fit or worthy at all. And that many others may have felt very worthy and that's why God rejected them.

They were tested and they failed. But here was one who recognized that she wasn't anybody. The Bible says, if anyone, Galatians chapter 6, if anyone thinks he's a somebody when he's a nobody, he's deceiving himself.

Towards the end of Paul's life, he once said to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 3, He said, I planted Apollos' water, but God gave the increase. What is the one? The one who plants is nothing. And the one who waters is nothing.

But God is everything who gives the increase. Paul had that attitude, not just when he began, but towards right to the end of his life. That's why God used him so much.

And that's why God cannot use so many people. And you find that Mary was like that. I mean, right to the end.

And even on the day of Pentecost, she was just not seeking any honor that I am the mother of Jesus, your Savior. No, no. She's just there along with the other.

There were about 120 men, 20 men and women praying. And she was just lost in that crowd of one of the disciples. And you never hear of her again.

Such a self-effacing woman. That's the type of person God chooses even today to serve him. Not one who is seeking to show off and show other people how much God has used them or how important they are.

The other thing I want you to notice here is that the angel came to Mary. You know, she was going to receive. Jesus was going to come into her.

And I find there's a lot of similarity here. Something we can learn because Christ has come into us also in her physically, in us spiritually. And it's important for us to learn certain things here.

You know, she, the Lord, the angel came to her and said, you have found favor with God. Verse 30. I believe that that is something which every child of God needs to recognize.

Have you heard God saying to you, if you have received Christ into your life, that you have found favor with God? That's very important to know that. You know, to know that before the worlds were created, God knew you by name. And chose you to be his just as much as God chose Mary way back in eternity to be the mother of Jesus.

To me, that's been a tremendous encouragement to know that God had chosen me before the worlds were created. To be his child in the midst of a world which is so insecure. That's the thing that gives us boldness and confidence to come before God.

You are highly favored. You know, so many Christians live with a low self-esteem. They feel they are so insignificant and so unimportant.

And that's why they can't have faith and boldness when they come before God. God chose you. If you have surrendered your life to Christ, you may have given your life to Christ now.

But God knew about that, the Bible says, way back in eternity. And he chose you to be his. You are highly favored.

That's something which is very, very important. And when she heard this message, of course she couldn't understand how it could take place. And she said, how can this be? I'm a virgin.

And the angel said, the Holy Spirit will come upon you. And then Christ will be born. That applies to us too.

You know, for Christ, the life of Christ to come forth through us, it's as impossible. I wonder whether you realize this. It's as impossible for the life of Christ to come forth from us as it was for Mary to produce Jesus in her womb on her own.

That we can understand is impossible. But sometimes we think with a little more effort and a little more grit and determination, we're going to produce the life of Jesus. No.

We need to understand something right at the beginning of our Christian life. It is as impossible for me to bring forth the life of Christ in my nature as it was for Mary to have Jesus born in her womb. The Holy Spirit had to come upon her.

And the Holy Spirit has to come and fill us. And that's what God has promised. And if I can open myself just like Mary, what did she do when she heard this message? That the Holy Spirit will come upon you.

She said, okay. Behold the bond slave of the Lord. Verse 38.

Let it be done to me according to your word. And that's something we can learn. Lord, let it be done to me according to your word.

Fill me also with your Holy Spirit that Christ can come forth from me. And there's a lovely word here that the angel spoke to Mary in verse 37. Nothing will be impossible with God.

There is nothing that is impossible. When we look at our own nature, it can look as if it's impossible. That's exactly how Mary felt.

How can I, a virgin, I don't even know a man, how can I have a child? You say, impossible. And we can look at our own, you know, corrupt human nature and say it's impossible for the life of Christ to come forth from us. And God's word is, nothing is impossible with God.

And when Mary heard that, she said, that's fine. I accept it. That's what made the difference.

And the Bible says that, in verse 45, that because she believed, there would be a fulfillment of that word that God spoke to her. And I want to share something further here concerning Mary. You see, when she heard this, she didn't immediately go and talk about it.

When God does something for us, and God's given us some honor, you see Mary's humility there in not boasting about it. And the angel had told her that her relative, Elizabeth, probably her cousin, had also conceived. She was an old lady, Elizabeth, and in her old age, she had conceived a child.

And the angel said that to Mary to encourage her. To say, see what God has done for her. And God can do that for you.

And what she did, there's something interesting here. That when she heard this message, it says here, she immediately got up, in verse 39, and went to fellowship with Elizabeth. She sought fellowship with someone who had experienced a miracle from God.

When God wants to do something for us, you know, to produce the life of Jesus in us is a miracle. And if we seek for fellowship with people who say, oh, those things can never take place, we're not going to get faith. And there's something we see here, that when Mary was going to experience this miracle in her life, she sought fellowship with someone else who had experienced a miracle, and that was Elizabeth.

And that's something which is an encouragement to us to pursue as well in our life. Many Christians do not experience all that God has for them because they're seeking fellowship with the wrong people. They're seeking fellowship with people who say, oh, that can't happen to you.

Nothing, God's promised you something now, but it won't take place. We live in a world just surrounded, we're surrounded by people of unbelief. The world is full of these poisonous fumes of unbelief, and we've got to escape that and seek for fellowship with people who believe that God can do a miracle.

Nothing is impossible with God. So that's what we see here. And then further, the other thing I want to mention here is that when the angel said this, Mary was immediately aware of all the shame and ridicule and misunderstanding that would come upon her as a young girl when people discovered she was pregnant.

Who in the world would believe if she told people that, well, the Holy Spirit came upon me, you know. It wasn't any man. Nobody would believe it.

Nobody. Even Joseph found it difficult to believe until an angel spoke to him. And when Mary thought about all that, it must have flashed through her mind at that moment.

So when she said, behold, the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word. She thought of these things and she was willing to accept it. She was willing to accept the misunderstanding from people who would not believe, who did not know what the angel had spoken to her.

And that's the type of thing that every true Christian faces as well. The experience of Mary is so similar, I find, to a person who receives Christ into his life. He faces the possibility of being misunderstood, ridiculed by those who don't believe that such a thing is possible.

To become a child of God and to have Christ himself, the living, risen Christ, living within us. And so Mary was willing to accept that ridicule. And later on we read how, you know, when the baby was born, as you know very well in Luke chapter 2, there was no room in the inn.

And I think I can see something, though it's not written there, of Mary's character. It's so awkward for a woman to deliver, you know, without any privacy, in a cattle shed. I wonder if in the history of the human race there was ever a woman who had to deliver in the midst of cows and donkeys.

I mean, I've seen slums in India which are where the poorest of people live. And not even those poor women would deliver in the midst of a cattle shed. Why did Jesus choose that? Jesus came to save sinners.

He came to save the lowest of the low people on earth. And in order to save them, he had to go underneath all of them. He came lower than every human being.

And that's why when God planned the birth of Jesus from eternity. Remember, see, you and I were born without our choice. But in the case of Jesus, he himself planned his birth on earth.

And would it have been difficult for him to arrange for a room to be available in Bethlehem? If he was planning it from all eternity. I mean, how long does it take to book a hotel room if you're traveling somewhere? And if you've got all eternity for it. And imagine that God who could do that planned that every room should be booked.

That there would be no room available. No relative's home available. The only place where his son would be born would be a cattle shed.

That was planned. Because he came to save sinners. He came to save the lowest of the low.

And that's why he had to be born there. And, of course, it must have been so awkward for Mary. And I can imagine Mary, I mean, you women understand it better than we men.

How difficult and awkward it would be to deliver with all the pain you go through. And no privacy and the cows and donkeys and all dirt and everything around. And I don't believe Mary complained.

I don't believe Mary started yelling at Joseph and said, Why didn't we start a little earlier? I mean, you had so many relatives in Bethlehem. You could have fixed up a room for me or something like that. Can you imagine Jesus being born into that type of atmosphere of complaint and things like that? I don't believe she had any complaint like that.

And I believe that was one reason why God chose Mary. He found a young girl who would be willing to accept any limitations, any inconvenience and submit to whatever. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

If that's what you permit, Lord. That was her attitude throughout her life. Not just when she said that to the angel.

Lord, if you've arranged a cattle shed for me to deliver with no privacy, behold the handmaid of the Lord. Whatever you say, I'll accept it. This is the mark of a godly woman.

It's not preaching and prophesying and doing miracles. It's the willing acceptance of whatever God sends into our life without complaining. The Bible says, Do all things without murmuring and complaining.

Because we believe that God is in control. There must have been some faith in Mary to believe. Surely, God in heaven must have planned this birth long, long ago.

She must have had nine months to think about that. This is not a sudden decision of God. God has planned all this.

And I'm sure He has planned some place. She never knew it would be a cattle shed. But she knew that God had planned something.

And when it happened to be a cattle shed, all that meditation that she had about God's plan encouraged her to believe. This is God's plan. It's not the ideal circumstance for me.

But this is God's plan. Blessed is the man and woman who can look at their circumstances and look at the surroundings that God has provided for them and say, Lord, if this is your plan for me, I'm not going to compare myself with anybody else. This is what you have planned for me, and I accept it.

That's the type of person God's looking for even today. There were certain qualities there in Mary which God chose, which made God choose her. And notice also, you know, later on when Jesus left His home at the age of 30, the first incident that we see in His ministry was in the marriage at Cana where you find Mary, the mother of Jesus again, coming to Him and saying, they have no wine, John's Gospel, chapter 2 and verse 3. And His reply is, what am I to do with you, woman? See, that gives the lie to all the people who say, if you want to get Jesus to do something for you, ask Mary to tell him.

Well, she told Him and He said, what have I got to do with you? Remember that. You don't have to go to Mary. You can go to Jesus directly.

So, here she goes to Jesus and says, you know, all those 30 years, it must have been such a shock to her to hear those words because the Bible says that for 30 years He submitted to her at home. But now He was baptized. He was moving out into His ministry as the Son of God and He needed this mother of His to recognize that this was a new relationship coming up now.

Woman. He doesn't even say mother. Woman.

Lest anybody think that she's the mother of God. No, she isn't. Woman.

What have I to do with you? John's Gospel, chapter 2, verse 4. My time has not yet come. All these 30 years I listened to you because that was my father's will to be an example to others who are at home. But now I come into another phase of my ministry and you've got to recognize the old relationship is gone.

Gone permanently. And the wonderful thing about Mary was she was not offended. It's beautiful to see that.

To accept that, okay? If this is how it has to be from now on, I accept it. Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be as you have done.

At another time, we read that Jesus was in the midst of a crowd preaching and somebody came. You read that in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 12, towards the end of that chapter. Some folks came up to Jesus and said, Your mother's outside.

You know, the mother of the great preacher. There, the mother of the great miracle worker is there. She's waiting to meet you.

And Jesus says loudly, Who is my mother? These who hear the word of God and do it. He makes that break with her so clear to everybody. And she's not offended.

She remains the same humble woman she was when the angel met her throughout her life. As I study the life of Mary, I don't have time to go into all the details. It's this humility that stands out so strikingly.

Never getting offended. Not complaining. Accepting whatever, whether it's a cow shed or whether being called a woman or being cut off when Jesus went into his ministry.

Her attitude was always, behold, a handmaid of the Lord. I'm not surprised that God chose such a woman to be the mother of Jesus. And remember this.

She didn't have many things we have. She didn't have a Bible at home like we have. She didn't have the Holy Spirit dwelling within like we have.

And yet, she could rise to such heights. That shows us what tremendous heights we can come to if we accept the same humble position before God. And God's Spirit fills us.

Christ can come forth from our life. The day of Pentecost, we read in Acts chapter 2 that she was just one among the crowd. She was probably around 53 or something around that time.

And young Peter, 33-year-old young man, was the leader of the apostles. And nowhere do you find her trying to take some prominence as the mother of Jesus. And there's a tremendous example there in Mary for every young sister and older sister.

One whom God can use mightily because God gives his grace even today to the humble. A second Mary we read of is in Luke's Gospel chapter 10. In Luke's Gospel chapter 10, we read of the house where Jesus would frequently visit.

The house of Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary. Jesus was a frequent visitor there as far as we know. It says here in Luke's chapter 10 in verse 38 about his coming to this village.

And Martha welcoming him into her home. And she had a sister called Mary. This was another Mary who also won God's approval.

And who was publicly praised by Jesus. It says here that she listened to the Lord's word. Luke chapter 10 verse 39.

She sat at Jesus' feet and listened to his word. And Martha was also doing something very good. She was working in the kitchen, distracted, making food for Jesus and all those twelve hungry men with him.

And it must have been quite a lot of work there in the kitchen. Working hard. Notice something we can learn here.

Not for herself, for Jesus and his disciples. Working hard, making food, apparently denying herself the luxury and comfort of just sitting with the others and listening. And then while she's cooking the food, she's getting all worked up in her heart because Mary is not coming to help her.

And she comes to Jesus and says, Lord, don't you care, verse 40, that my sister, just sitting here lazily, not helping me. And she expects the Lord to give a big rebuke to Mary. And what a surprise she gets.

When the Lord says to Martha, Martha, you're the one who's wrong. You are worried and bothered about so many things. And Mary has chosen the good part.

One thing is needful. And Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her. Now, this has an application for us.

I found in more than 40 years of Christian ministry that there are two types of Christian workers. Some like Martha and some like Mary. Both may be unselfish, self-denying, but the Marthas are the ones who are always running around doing something for the Lord.

Not for themselves. They're going here, going there, doing this, doing that, doing the other thing all the time. And they think that the Lord is happy with them.

He's not. And that's the surprise they're going to get when they stand before the Lord one day and says, Lord, I did this and I did that and I did the other thing. And the Lord says, I never wanted you to do all that.

Mary was different. She sat and listened. And that doesn't sound a very spiritual thing.

You know, we live in a world where activity and doing something is more impressive. And people are more impressed by the statistics we can produce when we tell people where we have traveled and what we have done and how many people responded, etc., etc., etc. But in the long run, we will discover that the one who listens and does what the Lord tells him to do accomplishes a lot more than the Marthas who go around in this restless, soulish activity.

Do you know that God doesn't want you to just do something or the other for him? You know, in the Lord's Prayer, the Lord taught us to pray, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. I thought of that expression. How is God's will done in heaven? The angels are not running around heaven trying to do something for God.

You know, that's an expression. God, go and do something for God. And imagine Michael telling Gabriel, Go and do something for God.

Come on, don't just sit around there doing nothing. No. The angels are not like that.

The angels wait before the Father. They wait before God and God says, Come here, Gabriel. Now go down to Nazareth and do this.

Or go here and do that. And they do it immediately. They drop everything and they do that and they come back and wait before God.

That was Mary's attitude. When I was a young Christian and the Lord called me out to serve him, I tried to study the lives of Christian workers around me that I saw. And I saw these two types.

As a young Christian in the 20s, I saw it. I saw certain people who were so busy. They were always talking about their activity.

They'd do this and do that and do the other thing. And then there were certain others who spent a lot more time listening to what God was saying to them. They waited on God and did only what God told them to do.

And I found that these were the ones who accomplished something lasting. They would go somewhere and there'd be lasting results there. And they'd go to some other place and there'd be lasting results there.

And I said, Lord, that's the way I want to do it. That's the Mary's. You know, when the Martha's come together, they're always talking about what they've done for the Lord.

When the Mary's come together, they're talking about what they heard from the Lord. What the Lord is speaking to them. Which one are you? You may think that the Lord should commend you for all your activity and for all your sacrifices.

Do you think there wasn't any sacrifice? Martha working away there in the kitchen, making food for 13 hungry people. That was a lot of sacrifice there. And she was rebuked.

Is it possible for us to serve the Lord sacrificially, unselfishly, perspiring, sweating away? And when we finally stand before the Lord, for the Lord to say to us, you wasted your time. You never did what I, you never came to me and asked me what I wanted you to do. You just did what you felt like doing.

There's a very beautiful paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 4 verse 2. In the Living Bible it says, the most important thing about a servant is that he does just what his master tells him to. If you have a servant working in your office or factory or whatever, do you want him to just run around doing whatever, something or the other in the factory or office or in your home? Or would you rather have a servant who listens to you and does what you tell him to do? That's the type of servant God is waiting for. For more than 45 years in my life, God has spoken one word to me.

Listen, my son, listen to me. One thing is needful. Don't be like the rest of Christendom that's running around doing all types of things.

Listen to me. You'll accomplish a lot more in your life if you listen to me. And I've tried to listen.

Many people, their prayer life is speaking. You know, prayer is like speaking on a telephone to God. Now, when you're speaking on a telephone to someone who is, let's take a human conversation.

When you're speaking to someone on a telephone who is far more mature than you, far wiser than you, much older than you and much more experienced in the Lord, would you listen more or talk more? I hope you'll listen more. That's courtesy. That's wisdom.

Because you can learn a lot. Imagine talking to God in prayer and all I do is, Lord, this, this, this, this, this, this, this. Amen.

Put the phone down. And I don't give him a chance to talk to me. This is how a lot of Christians pray.

I'll tell you something. It'll change your life completely as it has changed mine. In prayer, listen more than you talk.

It's just like when you talk to an older, more mature, godly person. Listen more than you talk. There's nothing you can inform God that he doesn't know.

He already knows it. He gives you the opportunity of unburdening yourself. That's why he tells you to pray.

But once you pray, listen. God speaks. I remember hearing the testimony of a non-Christian who, when he accepted Christ, the first time in his life, he was reading the Bible.

And when a non-Christian who's never read the Bible before reads the Bible, they discover some things which we who are familiar with it don't discover. And I was so challenged when he said that he turned to the Bible and he turned to the first chapter in Genesis. And he saw again and again and again and again and again this expression, and God said, and God said, and God said, and God said, and God said.

He said, hey, this God of the Christians is the God who speaks. So different from the God I worshiped so long who wouldn't say a thing. Did you see that in Genesis chapter 1? It didn't strike me till I heard that.

And God said, and God said, and God said. The first page of the Bible, God's trying to say, hey, I'm trying to speak to you. And it says there, God said, every day he said something.

Every day he's trying to speak to us. But we may not hear. Many, many Christians have missed God's best because they have not chosen that one thing that this Mary chose, to listen.

So I hope we learn something today from this Mary who got God's approval, not by activity, but by listening. And later on we read in John chapter 12, it's people who don't listen, people who listen don't just spend all their life just listening. Service comes forth from that listening.

In John chapter 12 we read that after Lazarus was raised from the dead, it says here, Mary took a pound of ointment, very expensive, and poured it out at the feet of Jesus. That's the picture of service. Here she was, of worship and service, taking that which is very expensive and pouring it out at the feet of Jesus.

And you know, in Matthew chapter 26, which I believe is a parallel passage to John chapter 12, we read there when the disciples complained saying, why is this waste of money? Jesus said, leave her alone. She's done a good thing because she has anointed my body for my burial. This is just a few days before he was crucified.

She has anointed my body with that perfume for my burial. You know why that is interesting? Because after the Sabbath, you know the day Jesus was buried, on the day he was crucified, they couldn't anoint his body, there wasn't any time because the Sabbath was approaching. But after the Sabbath, when the women went to anoint his body, did they get an opportunity? No, nobody got an opportunity.

Mary got that opportunity because she did it beforehand. If you do something for the Lord when you have the opportunity, take it now. Because in a future day, you may not have the opportunity.

Those who wait for tomorrow to serve the Lord will find the opportunity is gone. Mary anointed, when she had the opportunity, she never knew. She said, Lord, I think I better do it right now.

And she did it. See, this is the advantage of listening. When we listen, we find so much more comes out of our life.

I mean, I've experienced that for 40 years. So many situations, I said, Lord, I'm so thankful that I didn't waste my time going here and there where you never wanted me to go. Here and here and here and everywhere.

It's something like, you know, supposing there's a vast vineyard. God's work is like, the world is like a vineyard where God's work has to be done. And instead of going into the vineyard and just doing whatever I feel I should do.

This has been my experience in the ministry. If I were to say, Lord, this vineyard is so vast. I mean, where do you want me to go? Where is the fruit ripe? You know, Lord.

And as you wait on the Lord, the Lord says there. And I've discovered again and again and again. You go to some place and you go to a tree where the fruit is just ripe and ready to fall.

Now, if I hadn't listened to the Lord, I'd go sitting waiting under a tree where everything is green. And wait and wait and wait and wait and wait for the fruit to be ripe. Wasting my time.

This is how a lot of people are working for God. They're like Martha's. There's something we can learn from Mary.

Listen. I also want to show you a third example. And that is Mary Magdalene.

We read of Mary Magdalene in Luke's Gospel chapter 8 and verse 2. About certain people who traveled with Jesus. Jesus traveled around, it says in verse 1, with the twelve disciples. And not only with the twelve disciples.

He also took certain women with him. Now, in the Old Testament, women were given such a low place. They were not given their rightful place that God created women to be when he created Eve for Adam.

And one of the wonderful things that Jesus did was to raise women from that low place where Jewish society and where heathen society had placed her. To her rightful place. Next to man.

In God's work. And here we see that the twelve disciples went traveling and certain women. Among them, Mary, who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had been cast out.

She had been a demon-possessed woman. We saw the example of a young, pure girl like Mary. And a very submissive, listening, obedient woman like Mary of Bethany.

But here's one who was so different. She was probably a sinful woman. We don't know details about her life.

But I've seen demon-possessed women. And they have such a bad testimony. They don't comb their hair.

They don't dress properly. It's terrible. Imagine a person with seven demons in her.

And this woman, a sinful woman, Jesus delivered her from those demons. And made her a co-worker of his. Along with the disciples.

And not only that. It says here that there are three women's names mentioned here. It says Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Luke 8 verse 3, the wife of Cusa Herod-Skeward, and Susanna.

Three women who supported Jesus financially. You know, that was expensive for 13 men to quit their jobs and to go around preaching. Where did the money come from? To take care of their meals for some of them who were married like Peter.

To support their families back home. These wealthy women supported Jesus and his work. And he had the humility to accept it.

It is right for one who serves the Lord to be supported. By those who are blessed by his ministry. Paul says that.

If we have blessed you spiritually, is there anything wrong in our being blessed materially? And the wonderful thing is Jesus himself lived like that during those three and a half years. He was supported. And he was willing to accept this support.

And Mary Magdalene, I don't know how much money she had. But she also gave her little and Jesus accepted it. One of the wonderful things we see about Mary is towards the end of the Gospels.

It says here in John's Gospel chapter 20. That when Jesus rose up from the dead, it was Mary who came first to the tomb. Remember this.

It was not the mother of Jesus. It was not the other Mary. It was this sinful woman who had been forgiven much.

And Jesus said one who is forgiven much, loves much. And she loved much. Because she had been forgiven so much.

She knew what a wretched life hers was. And how Jesus had delivered her from that. She was the last to leave from the cross.

And the first to be at the tomb. On that Sunday morning. Before all the others.

When the others were sleeping. She went there and she found that the stone was rolled away. And she didn't know what happened.

She thought that the body of Jesus was stolen. She ran to tell the other disciples. And they came and they found the body was missing.

It says Simon Peter and John. John's Gospel chapter 20. It says they saw the tomb empty.

And they went home to sleep. But not Mary. She couldn't sleep.

She had to find out where have they taken the body of my Lord. All the others. We don't know where they were.

This is probably 4 o'clock in the morning. And Mary was there waiting. I've got to find out.

Where is my Lord. And then it says here that as she was standing there. She saw someone who she thought was the gardener.

And said. He asked her. What are you looking for? Why are you weeping? What are you seeking? And she said.

If you have taken away his body. Tell me where he is. I'll carry that body.

And Jesus said Mary. You know I've thought of this. That way back in eternity.

When God was planning the earthly life of Jesus. Right from birth. To death.

To resurrection. God planned that one human being. Would be.

Would have the privilege and the honor. To be the first person. To see the resurrected Lord Jesus.

To see the triumph over sin, Satan, the grave. The beginning of the new creation. And among all just like he chose Mary.

The mother of Jesus to be. The one who was to give birth to her. When he chose.

The one who was to be the first person to see the resurrected Jesus. It was not Peter. It was not Mary the mother of Jesus.

It was a sinful fallen woman. Who loved Jesus so much. Because he'd been forgiven so.

She'd been forgiven so much. Mary Magdalene. Was given the privilege.

I don't know whether you realize. What a tremendous honor it was to be the first person. To see the resurrected Jesus Christ.

And that was because. The Lord wanted the world to know that Jesus Christ came into the world. Not to save holy people.

He came to save sinners. He came to save the worst of sinners. And they who were the worst.

Could rise to the greatest height. She could be a saint. The first person.

To see the resurrected Lord. And not only that. She was the first person.

Who proclaimed. The message. Of the resurrected Lord.

It was a woman. It was not a man. It was not a holy woman.

It was a woman who had lived a life of sin. She was the one who had been forgiven. To whom God gave this message.

To take and give to the apostles. That Christ is risen. You know the word apostle.

Is a Greek word which means. Sent one. And Mary Magdalene.

Was sent. To the apostles. She was an apostle.

To the apostles. That's the honor. God gave.

To this sinful woman. To be an apostle to the apostles. To be sent to the apostles with the message.

Christ is risen. From the dead. Now what comes to me through all this.

Is. That Jesus lifted woman. To her rightful place.

By the side of man. Heathen religions. Give no place to woman.

A woman is like a slave. A chattel. Just to serve man.

I see that. In the villages of India. That's what heathenism.

That's the place heathenism has given to woman. And unfortunately. A lot of Christianity.

Has also done the same thing. Because they haven't understood the spirit of Christ. There was an old saint.

I'm not sure who it was. Who said. When God wanted to make a woman.

He didn't take. A bone out of Adam's head. So that she would rule over him.

He didn't take a bone out of Adam's foot. So that he would rule over her. But he took a bone out of Adam's side.

So that. She would be his partner. Equal with him.

And that is the place. Dear sisters. That God has given all of you.

As. The daughters. Of God.

That's the place to which Jesus wants to bring. Every woman. It doesn't matter if you were like Mary Magdalene.

And lived a sinful wretched life. In the past. Through being cleansed by the blood of Christ.

God wants to lift you up. And make you a witness. Of the fact that Christ.

Is alive today. And I want to say. To.

And I want to say. To every husband. And to every man here.

Give. The place to women. That Jesus gives them.

Otherwise you are not. In tune with Christ yourself. Give the place to your wife.

That Jesus. Wants her to have at your side. And not below you.

Recognize her. As one. Whom Jesus elevated.

To be equal to you. Brought back to the place. That God made Eve.

To be for Adam. So when we look at these three Marys. We see wonderful examples.

From which we can learn a lot ourselves. And if we follow these examples. We too.

Can win the approval of God. In our lives. Let's pray.

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