



Luke 6:12-19, 8:1-3

“Living In A Larger Circle”

August 18, 2013
13th Sunday After Pentecost

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“Following Christ from City Center”

"LIVING IN A LARGER CIRCLE"

THE WOMEN ✓

LUKE 6:12-19 LIST OF TWELVE MEN AS A SYMBOLIC NEW ISRAEL

a) v.12 Jesus' Night In Prayer Before A Big Leadership Decision.

12 And it happened in these days, Jesus went out to the mountains to pray; 5:16, 9:28, 22:39-46, //3:21
 and all night he continued in prayer to God. 6:11, In Face Of Rising Opposition, Prayer + Call
9:1-6, 10:1-12, // Mk. 3:7-19, Mt. 10:1-4, Acts 1:13, 21-22; 8:1, 9:1, 12, 17, 18:31

b) vv.13-16 Choosing A Symbolic Community: The Twelve (Tribes of Israel). Eyewitnesses

13 And when it was day, he called his disciples (a larger group), Disciples → Apostles (Students → Agents/Sent Ones)
 and chose (elected) from them twelve, whom he named *apostles*: # Patriarchs, Lk. 22:29-30, Mt. 19:28
Num. 1:1-19, 44, * = Inner Circle, 3 Groups Of 4

	<u>List Of Names</u>	<u>Designations</u>	<u>Diverse Group, Other Information</u>
14	Simon,*	whom he named <i>Peter</i> , and	Know he was married, 5:8
1/4	<i>Andrew</i> ,	his brother, and	Former disciple of John the Baptist
	James* and		Jesus' cousin, "Sons of Thunder"
	John,* and		Other "Son of Thunder" (<i>Boanerges</i>)
2/4	<i>Phillip</i> , and		One of first disciples; see John 1
	Bartholomew, and		"Son of Tolmai," Jn. 1:45 Nathanael
15	Matthew, and		Tax man, "Levi" in parallel passages
	Thomas, and		Twin, Doubter, Evangelized India
3/4	James,	the son of Alphaeus, and	James "the less," Mt.'s brother?
	Simon,	who is called <i>the Zealot</i> , and	Passionate in his faith, <i>zeal</i> for law
16	Judas,	the son of James, and	Also called "Thaddeus"
	<u>Judas Iscariot</u> (city of origin?)	who became a traitor.	Treasurer, suicide, Zealot as well?

New Center, Everyday People, No Elites

c) vv.17-19 Threefold Ministry Of Preaching, Healing, Exorcism. 4th Summary 4:14-15, 31-32, 40-41

17 And *he* came down with *them* and stood on a level place, 5 Circles: 1) Jesus, 2) 12, 3) Disciples, 4) Jews, 5) Gentiles
 with a great crowd of his *disciples* 5:5, 7:22 Also Summaries, New Team Presented!
 and a great multitude of people from *all Judea and Jerusalem* and the seacoast of *Tyre and Sidon* (Gentiles), Acts 1:8
 Truth a who came to hear him He First Heard From God! //5:15, Kingdom 1: Preach & Teach
 Power b and to be healed of their diseases; Teaches In Public, Not Secretly, Kingdom 2: Heal Disease
 18 c and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. 7:21, 9:1-2, Kingdom 3: Expel Demons
 19 And all the crowd sought to touch him, Committed + Uncommitted. Summary Of Kingdom Ministry
 for **POWER** came forth from him and healed them all. Precedes Sermon, 8:44-47, Power Of Spirit; 5:17
Through Them In 9:1-6; 10:1-22

LUKE 8:1-3 LIST OF NOTED WOMEN AS DISCIPLES, WITNESSES, SUPPORTERS

1 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, Only In Luke, Gender Diversity As Strength
 a preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. 4:18, Kingdom Message And Kingdom Deeds
 And *the twelve* were with him, Mk. 3:14, Symbolic Statement: New Israel
 2 c,b and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Kingdom Actions No. 2 and No. 1
 ✓ Always First In Lists, Mary Is Not The Woman Of 7:36-50

<u>List Of Names</u>	<u>Designations</u>	Mary Of Migdal, Grace Received → Investment
Mary,	called <i>Magdalene</i> , from whom seven demons had gone out, and	
Joanna,	the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and	Reach Into Herod's Palace
Susanna, and many others,	who provided for them out of their means.	Source Of Money!!!

LUKE 23: 48-49, 54-55 WOMEN AT THE CROSS AND BURIAL

1) vv.48-49 The Women From Galilee Who "Saw These Things": Issue Of Continuity.

48 And all the multitudes who assembled to see the sight,
 when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. Grief Noted, Repentance (turn back)
 49 ✓ And all his acquaintances and the women who followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.

1') vv.54-56 The Women From Galilee Who "Saw The Tomb": Issue Of Continuity.

54 It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. Late Friday Afternoon
 55 ✓ The women who had come with him from Galilee followed,
 and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid;
 56 then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. Presumes Death Is Permanent
 On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. Faithful, Pious Jews (Lk. 1:6, 2:22, 23, 27, 39)

LUKE 24:1-4a, 8-12 WOMEN AT RESURRECTION MORNING

1) vv.1-4a JOURNEY TO THE TOMB TO COMPLETE THE BURIAL RITES.

1	But on the first day of the week, at early dawn,	Time: Early On Sunday/ Sabbath Over
✓	they (the women) went to the tomb,, taking the spices which they had prepared.	They Had Seen The Place, Lk. 23:54-56
2	And they <i>found</i> the stone rolled away from the tomb,	Spices: Odor Problem/ Hasty Burial Remedied
3	but when they went in they <i>did not find</i> the body.	1st Odd Sign: Stone Moved, But Who?
4	While they were perplexed perplexed about this, (Two angels appear and announced Jesus' resurrection)	2nd Odd Sign: Body Gone/ Grave Robbing? Gk. <i>Aporeo</i> = Mental Confusion Empty Tomb Alone Does Not Lead To Faith Significance Must Be Explained

1') vv.8-12 JOURNEY FROM THE TOMB TO DECLARE THE RISEN LORD.

8 ✓	And they (the women) remembered his words,	They Believe Angelic Preaching, 22:61
9	and returning from the tomb they told <i>all this</i> to "the eleven" and to all the rest.	Judas Is Now Gone, 24:33, Acts 1:26 Official Leaders/Others, Acts 1:14, Lk. 2:20
10 ✓	Now it was Mary Magdalene and Jo-anna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles (<i>sent out ones</i>);	See Luke 8:1-3. 23:49, 55 Provide Continuity, Acts 1:2
11	but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.	Testimony Dismissed As Delirious/ Condescending See Thomas, John 20:24, Luke 9:45 Cultural Prejudice, Credibility, Problem Of Disbelief Is Among The Men
12	But Peter rose and ran to the tomb, stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home wondering (marveling) at what had happened.	Second Witness To Empty Tomb (Num. 3:30) Second Witness/ No Grave Robbing! Gk. <i>Thaumazo</i> = Marvel

ACTS 1:12-14 JUST BEFORE PENTECOST: EVERYONE IS THERE

12	Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet (which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away),	
13	and when they had entered, they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and James and John and Andrew, Phillip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.	The New Israel : New Family Minus Judas (1)
14	All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with <i>the women</i> and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.	The women In Leadership (2) Jesus Own Family: Old Family (3)

ACTS 2:1-4 THE HOLY SPIRIT'S COMING UPON A UNIFIED COMMUNITY

A) v.1 Preparation = All Together In One Place (Ex. 19:17-18).

1	When the day of Pentecost (i.e. fiftieth day) had come,	Covenant Typology, Lk. 22:20
✓	they (i.e. 120 disciples) were all together in one place. 1/3 Pilgrim Festivals: 1 Day Wheat Harvest, Torah Association	Divine Theophany, //Giving Of Law On Sinai, Jubilees 1:1 1 Cor. 16:8, Preceded By Prayer, Lk. 11:13// Acts 1:13-14
		3rd Month, Feast of Weeks: Ex. 23:16, 34:12, Dt. 16:7-12, Lev. 23:15-21, Acts 20:16

B) v.2 Audition = Something Heard: Like Sound From Heaven (Ex. 19:16-19 LXX).

2	And suddenly a sound came from heaven <i>like</i> the rush of mighty wind, and it filled all the house were they were sitting.	Theophany, Divine Intrusion, Ex. 19:16-17, Dt. 5:4-5, I Kg. 19:11-12, 2 Kgs. 2:11 = From God! Fulfills Prophecy Of Lk. 3:16, 24:49, Acts 1:5-8 Sound, Not Wind (Simile), Sudden Force Of Spirit Upon Them Renewed Divine Presence, Lk. 3:16, 24:49, Acts 1:5, 8, 2:4 Participants Are Aware Of Spirit's Infilling: Phenomena
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B') v.3 Vision = Something Seen: As Tongues From Heaven (Ex. 3:2, 13:21-22 LXX).

3	And there appeared to them tongues <i>as</i> of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them.	Philo, Decalogue 9:33, 46, 11:46, Special Laws 2.31.186-189 Vision From God, Appeared To Them, To The 120 Disciples Not To Crowd, "As Of" Fire- Not Fire (Simile), Ps. 104:4 Communal/Individual, LXX Psalm 28:7, New Torah From God Sound, Fire, Speech: Sinai Theophany = Divine Intrusion Into Earthly Realm Visions/Audition: Acts 9:4-16, 10:3-15, 12:7-8, 16:9-10, 23:11, 27:23-24
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A') v.4 Action = All Receive The Holy Spirit = Empowered To Do God's Will In Speech.

4	And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.	//Lk. 3:21-22 Jesus' Empowerment Before Mission, Unveil The Trinity!! Philo, On The Decalogue 9:33, 11:46 For Parallels At Sinai Xenolalia, Not Glossolalia: I Cor. 13:1
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A Brief Treatment Of Luke 6:12-19, 8:1-3

The texts before us are a compilation across Luke/ Acts on Jesus' closest followers and show that 1) Jesus was always accompanied by a larger entourage beyond the symbolic *twelve* males, and 2) that women figured prominently. Jesus was radical in naming twelve as a public symbol of Israel's renewal and in inviting women to be his fellow-travelers and financial supporters. Jesus sets a trajectory towards an egalitarian community of followers. The church has always had trouble following her Lord!

Jesus' life of prayer is highlighted in Luke, and here- after opposition becomes clear (6:11)- he retreats to a mountain for a night of communion and discernment. What Jesus acts out in public is the divine will discerned in conversation and submission. Jesus is no mere activist but one who acts on the plan revealed in stages, thus the need for repeated withdrawals for prayer. Both Jesus' dependence and his obedience are constant. We learn the reason for the vigil in v.13 where Jesus calls *twelve* from the larger pool of disciples and gives them a new title: *apostles- ones sent out to extend his ministry and share the rule of God's people* (9:1-6, 10:1-22, 22:29-30). They are symbols of Israel renewed and a living memory bank for the future. Jesus determines leadership in partnership with the Father. That the twelve patriarchs were men dictated that only men be chosen if the symbol is to work. He *called*; he *chose*; he *named*. Jesus exercises authority; no one was invited to apply for the job! It wasn't a popularity contest.

The list in vv.13-16 is post-resurrection, reflecting Peter's restoration and Judas' suicide. The first four are two sets of fishermen brothers. James and John were Jesus' cousins since their mother Salome was Mary's sister; they had relationship before Jesus showed up (5:1-11). Three of the four (Peter, James, John) form an inner circle. Peter is nicknamed *Peter (rock)*, and Andrew is *his brother*. The second group is headed by Phillip (a Greek name, as is Andrew), followed by Bar-tholomew (son of Tolmai) who is likely Nathanael of Jn. 1:45. Then Matthew- likely the Levi of 5:27- and Thomas. The final group each have tags. The second James is *the son of Alphaeus* and may be Matthew's brother; the second Simon is *the Zealot* which may refer to either his political or religious radicalism; the first *Judas* is distinguished from the last by being *bar-Jacob, the son of James*, and the last is *Judas Iscariot* whose last name is disputed but whose actions are clear, *who became a traitor*. The only moral difference between the head and the end of the list is that Peter did not act as judge and jury on himself as did Judas.

Verse 17a places Jesus at the center of a series of circles to emphasize his mission through his followers to the world: 1) Jesus, 2) the twelve, 3) a great crowd of disciples, 4) Jews from *Judea and Jerusalem*, 5) Gentiles from *Type and Sidon*. Jesus is in deep continuity with Israel, but inclusive of women and Gentiles to an extent his peers are not. With the whole world present (Acts 1:8), Luke again rehearses Jesus work in three parts: 1) announcing and explaining *the kingdom*: people need to know! 2) Showing the kingdom in healing: people are sick! 3) Expelling unclean spirits or demons: people are in bondage to evil! *Love as truth plus power that heals* was Jesus' formula. Where did it go?

We jump ahead to 8:1-3 for a report of how the team was on tour *through cities and villages*. Here the same three events are highlighted: the news of the kingdom, healing, and deliverance, this time with an emphasis on women who joined Jesus after a liberating encounter. Note how the listing and designation follows the form of vv. 13-16. Mary has the moniker *Magdalene* (i.e. from Migdal) and a hot testimony of before and after. Joanna is highly placed. Then there is Susanna *and many others* who payed bills!



LIVING IN A LARGER CIRCLE

*“And the twelve were with Jesus,
and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities.”*

What an entourage that must have been!

LUKE 8 : 1 b - 2

Jesus was a *magnetic* leader; when he turned around, people were following. They wanted to be around him because he was the intoxicating mix of what we need most: truth and love in equal doses. Jesus was a *savvy* leader; he was sensitive to the power of public symbols, which is why he chose twelve- the number of the ancient tribes of Israel- and not nine or fifteen, as if to say, “I’m the leader of our renewed mission as a people.”

Jesus was a *creative* leader; he called men and women beyond their culturally assigned roles to new cooperation with him and one another in the messiness of close relationships on the road together. Jesus was a *focused* leader; he had a clear vision of why he came and what God called him to do which was to announce and demonstrate his Father’s kingdom at ground level, then face the inevitable consequence of disrupting everyone’s world. Jesus was also a *visionary* leader; he took ordinary men and women and laid them as foundation stones in a spiritual house that’s now lasted two thousand years and is still growing. Jesus was a *deep and responsive* leader; his public decisions were rooted in the solitary disciplines of prayer and silence and listening. Jesus was a *transforming* leader; he turned fishermen into evangelists, tax collectors into gospel writers, socialites into servants, and demonized women into resurrection witnesses.

And while you may never have considered it, Jesus was a *multi-generational* leader; he provided successors who together faithfully retold all he said and did.¹ Jesus was a *charismatic* leader; he joined the energies of the Holy Spirit and the

¹ Acts 1:21-22.

longings of men and women in a new community around himself whose single purpose was to embody the benevolent reign of a God who was breaking in to free men and women from the ancient curses of accumulated ignorance, unforgiven sin, unhealed diseases, and demonic distortion. Jesus was a *generous* leader; he gave away everything God gave him, and Jesus is an *enduring* leader, precisely because he is now alive with resurrection life, and we- if you can believe it- are his present day disciples, other words for which are *students, followers, apprentices, or understudies*.² To have this man at the center of your affections, your calendar, check book and future is to belong to him, to his Father and his Spirit as they collude in the seriously joyful business of making us into a new kind of human being, ones who bear up under the realities of divine love and become its agents. Jesus is a leader worth following and training under.

TURNING TO THE TEXT

Appointment Of Twelve (6:12-16)

Like an expert climber about to ascend a steep peak, Jesus roped himself to twelve novices, and the rope that bound them to him was love. But even Jesus lost one in a great fall, the one who now stands at the end of Luke's list as a reminder that human freedom is honored, spiritual warfare real, and casualties assured in this great battle for the soul of the world, verse 16: "Judas Iscariot, *who became a traitor*." He who was once faithful became it's opposite. That could be my name, Pastor Phil- *who became a traitor*. We are each more like Judas than like Jesus, and none of us are exempt from the risk of treachery, none immune to evil and deception. For whatever reason- was it money? or politics? or simple impatience? Judas chose to untie himself from the rope of love, to stand apart from the others in the isolation of sinful independence. He broke rank. Luke and John independently say Satan entered him,³ and his end was ugly.⁴ Judas tried to take control, and in the process lost himself. No one has the right to be God- to be judge, jury, and hangman in their own life. By his

² The best current summary of discipleship is Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006); see also Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006).

³ Luke 22:3, John 13:27.

⁴ Matthew 27:3-10.

actions Judas declared, “There is no hope *for me*. I am beyond the reach of mercy. I have committed the unpardonable sin. I must judge myself,” and in this chain of self-centered thought he was dead wrong. Think about it. Peter was restored; Judas could’ve been if he’d waited and not taken rash action. But Judas said, “I am *my* responsibility.” By weeping and waiting Peter said- if only passively, “I am *his* responsibility.” Judas forget someone important had *called* him.

But that’s what happens when we hide part of our hearts from the healing touch of Jesus. Something inside rots in the darkness. Judas was on the team; he healed the sick, preached the kingdom, and cast out demons when they were sent out two by two.⁵ He knew the powers of the kingdom. But in the end he was picked off by the Evil One who circles the ranks looking for independents who want to *make something happen* instead following the Lord’s lead.⁶ There are days I want to quit, then I remember, “I’ve been called, and he will just have to see me through.” Then I laugh at myself and go make a hospital or home call.

None of this was fated from the start; Judas was not a patsy, only the weak link in the chain to be exposed though temptation, and there is no way to enroll in the school of Jesus without having the deepest flaws of your character revealed. Peter was exposed as a braggart and coward,⁷ James and John as schemers hiding behind momma’s skirts,⁸ Thomas a doubter⁹ and Judas a traitor.¹⁰ Yet Jesus didn’t fire any of them; he knew what was in them from the start, average young men invited to an incredible new life way of life that was way out of their depths. God gave them to Jesus after a night of prayer, and after his commitment to the Father, they were next on the list of his loyalties because to them his movement would be entrusted.

Christian discipleship is not about looking good, not about polishing your

⁵ Luke 9:1ff.

⁶ 1 Peter 5:8-9.

⁷ Mark 14:72.

⁸ Matthew 20:20

⁹ John 20:20-34.

¹⁰ Mark 14:43-45.

image and enhancing self-esteem. It's trusting his call, not my competence. It's relying on his prayer *for me* rather than my performance *for him*. Jesus was a leader, and in our day the church must again risk becoming what we were from the start: a floating classroom, a community of disciples learning the ways and means of the kingdom from Rabbi Jesus. This is what this faith is about. Jesus invites us into his friendship, into his world, into his mission, into his gifts- the greatest of which is a healed relationship with the Father because the blockage of our sins has been removed through the forgiveness offered in his presence and sealed for all the world in his cross and resurrection. We are a community of forgiven followers being trained in a whole new life by the invisible Holy Spirit and by faulty, human leaders. And in our day perhaps the word *Christian*- because of all its historical baggage- may need to be replaced with *followers of Jesus*. When someone asks, "Are you a Christian?" don't say *Yes*. Instead answer, "I am a Jesus follower, and he is arranging my life around his priorities." Then let them ask several follow up questions.

A strange new movement was then emerging in Galilee on the northwest shore of the lake, drawing crowds and challenging current leadership with a different vision of God's work in the world. Jesus' response to the mounting pressures and need for help is found in verse 12, "And it happened in these days, Jesus went out to the mountains to pray; *and all night he continued in prayer to God.*" No sleep. A crowd of disciples at the foot of the hill wondering what he's doing up there alone under the vast night sky. "What next, Father? These Pharisees want to do me in!"

This is perhaps the deepest test of Christian leadership. Where do you go with your troubles? In a world that values knowledge and how-to, it's easy to read a book and enroll in a seminar, but Jesus went away to a night of opening his heart to the heavens. Preaching is no substitute for prayer; programs are no substitute for prayer, policy is no substitute for prayer; neither is personality. There is no substitute for a long dialog with God. As others slept, he listened. Then the Father spoke:

"Together we will rebuild my people. Once there were twelve tribes; now twelve apostles, a new Israel growing in the midst of the old. And here are their names.... I choose them; you call and equip them. Pour yourself into them without reserve; they will eventually pour themselves out for others. They will make you laugh and break your heart. Give them everything I give you. Teach them to pray and heal and teach and correct and love and live together in the freedom of forgiveness. First you do it with them watching as a model. Then they do it with you

observing and coaching. Eventually they will do it by the power of the same Spirit after I've brought you home in death and resurrection. People will get the message, and we will have us a church to reach across the ages, both tough and tender. It all starts at dawn."

"Yes, Father; thy will be done through me, on earth as it is in heaven."

Jesus' mob of followers would become an ordered movement. Jesus- though if anyone could have it was him- refused to be a *one-man-show*; and for every move he was dependent on his relationship with the Father and the Spirit.¹¹

Friends, this is not a list of a dozen winners. It's a list so odd only Jesus could mold them into a unit around himself. At least two sets of brothers- perhaps three,¹² four fishermen, a tax collector for the occupying government, maybe two Jewish nationalists and freedom fighters who hated Matthew, then a skeptic, plus another looking for a better deal, and who knows what else? Men with histories, men away from home, the dirty dozen. They didn't come off the cover of *GC* and were not chosen because they were the best and the brightest. Take *Simon bar Jonah*, son of John; it sounds so holy after long usage. His tag was *Cephas* in Aramaic, *Peter* in Greek, from *petros*- stone or rock. *Rock John's-son*, that's what Jesus called him: *Rock Johnson*. And his brother Andrew, the quiet evangelist, always bringing someone to Jesus.¹³ Then two cousins; their mother Salome was likely Mary's sister. James and John, *Boanerges* in Aramaic- the *sons of Thunder*. Sound likes more like a motorcycle gang or rock band than a seminary class of intellectuals: *Rocky Johnson and the Thunder Boys*. Among men nick-names are tags of affection, and if you lived with Jesus, he'd have one for you as well. I fear mine is *The Little Professor!*

The middle four are men about whom we know little. The second James is known by the name of his dad, *son of Alphaeus*, and Simon by his radical political leanings- a *Zealot*, a believer in Jewish freedom and guerilla action. Finally two named Judas, one the son of James, the other forever marked with the worst decision

¹¹ John 5:19-30.

¹² Ben Witherington, *On The Road With Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Abington, 2011), 35, raises the possibility that James the son of Alphaeus and Matthew/Levi are brothers.

¹³ John 1:40ff.

of his life, “Judas Iscariot, *who became* a traitor.” The *Iscariot* surname may refer to his village *Kerioth*; it could just as easily refer to a dagger- Latin *sicarius*, which was always on the ready under the cloak to take out a Roman soldier or Jewish collaborator, thus Judas in his former life many have been one of the *dagger men*.¹⁴ Both ends of the political spectrum are in Jesus’ band.

The perspective of the list is definitely post-Easter. Peter at the top only because he’d been restored after his denials,¹⁵ Judas at the end because he betrayed the one who called him, then did himself in. But at this point in Luke’s unfolding story none of this was yet clear. They were *the twelve*, a symbolic unit with a leader named Jesus who gave nicknames that stuck. Jesus loved these guys; they were already his followers, and they became the ones the Father gave him in prayer as official extensions. They were the cards God dealt, and Jesus played his hand well. I suspect not all the stories made it into the New Testament! I suspect the jokes were not always sanitized and that occasionally someone woke up with a headache after too much wine at a wedding.¹⁶ And if you are offended by my speculations, so be it. I cannot get away from the rough-n-ready description of Nikos Kazantzakis:

“My prayer is not the whimpering of a beggar nor a confession of love. Nor is it the trivial reckoning of a small tradesman: Give me and I shall give to you. My prayer is the report of a soldier to his general: This is what I did today, this is how I fought to save the entire battle in my own sector, these are the obstacles I found, this is how I plan to fight tomorrow. My God and I are horsemen galloping in the burning sun or under the drizzling rain. Pale, starving, but unsubdued, we ride and converse. ‘Leader,’ I cry. He turns his faces towards me, and I shudder to confront his anguish. Our love for each other is rough and ready, we drink the same wine in this low tavern of life.”¹⁷

They *hung out* together, and in his transforming friendship they were molded

¹⁴ Witherington, *On the Road*, 35-36.

¹⁵ John 21:15-25.

¹⁶ John 2:1-12.

¹⁷ From *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises* in Reuben P. Job and Norman Shawchuck, *A Guide to Prayer* (Nashville, TN: The Upper Room, 1983), 116.

into the leaders and servants they were called to be.¹⁸ It was an open, and often-chaotic process, a morning-to-evening, seven-day-a-week floating graduate school of hillside lectures, living human laboratories, and the daily surprises of living with Jesus at the edge of a whole new world. And unless some of the romance and adventure of this gets in your bones, you’ve not yet begun to understand what it means to serve *the living Lord* among his people. Imagine what it was like that day to stand among the larger circle of disciples and hear your name called. “And the twelve finalists are....” A call to be exposed and to be told the truth about cowardice and evil in my own life. A call to belong to Jesus and serve his people whether you feel like it or not, whether you like it or not, life as surrender.

Snapshot Of The Kingdom (6:17-19)

I’ve often skipped over the next three verses as a snapshot and general summary of Jesus’ early ministry, and so it is, but there’s something more here. I now see a series of five layers starting with Jesus in the center, then out through two layers of followers to his Jewish people and- beyond that- to the Gentile world. It gives us the trajectory of the mission as centered in Jesus, mediated through his front-line and second-tier followers, and aimed at the Jewish and Gentile worlds:

“And Jesus came down with them (i.e. the twelve) and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon,”	Center: Jesus Circle 1: Twelve Circle 2: Disciples Circle 3: Jews Circle 4: Gentiles
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And this is why the crowd came:

“to hear him
and to be healed of their diseases;
and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured.”

At the center is Jesus, our visible window into the cooperative working of the Holy Trinity- the will of the Father and the Spirit’s powers through an obedient agent- Jesus the Son. The innermost circle is the twelve who’ve just been chosen as living

¹⁸ To get the flavor of their rugged friendship, see the earthy meditation of John Eldredge, *Beautiful Outlaw* (New York, NY: Faith Words, 2011).

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symbols of God's renewed people; the second circle is the *great crowd of his disciples* who continued to travel with them; the next layer is a *great multitude* of Jews, and in the outermost circle people from the Gentile coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon who've come with their sick and spiritually tormented.

Much of the art I've seen portrays Jesus walking down a shaded dirt road with twelve guys, but that's not true to history. His was a much larger and more diverse entourage, perhaps as many as to seventy five to one hundred twenty or more men and women, and it was from the larger pool of students that twelve were selected for a symbolic function and greater access. It was expensive and complicated to keep such a band on the road. When Jesus and his mob arrived, there were lots of mouths to feed and people to house! Think of a army company instead of a single squad.

Remember that there is only one ministry in the church, and that is the continuing ministry of the risen Jesus, in which we each have a part because we are organs of his extended reality- the body of Christ says Paul, each with special gifts.¹⁹ I don't want to have a ministry on my own. I've tried that. It's not very impressive, full of silly charades, clerical smoke and mirrors instead of the real stuff. The real stuff is here in verses 17 and 18:

“... who came to *hear* him
(that's the ministry of teaching and preaching God's kingdom),
and to be *healed* of their diseases
(that's the church as a healing and wholeness center);
and those who were troubled with evil spirits were *cured*
(that's the church as a spiritual battleground).”

But verse 19 is the climax, “And *all* the crowd sought to touch him, for power came forth from him and healed them *all*.” How many? *All!* We Methodists don't know much about that power do we? Somehow over the years we've delegated most of the great experiential stuff to our offspring, the Pentecostals and Charismatics- which is why they're growing! They expect God to mess with people! But we are learning again how to listen and follow the prompts of the Spirit. I often pray, “Holy Spirit, come near the Methodists again as you did before. We are so sorry for trying to run the church without you. We miss you.”

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:1-30.

As we've sung recently, "Jesus' hands were kind hands, doing good to all." Strong hands, hands through which the gifts of the Holy Spirit flowed to others, the touch of the Great Physician. Through the calloused hands of a charismatic rabbi, people were touched by the living, loving God. Jesus- to use the language of later theology- is the sacrament of God, the physical mediation of an invisible grace. And when that kind of power is flowing- as it still does at times of God's choosing- you need no publicity. Good news travels fast, especially when it concerns the restoration of the supernatural to the church. There is much controversy here, some fraud, often showmanship, guaranteed frailty and ignorance, but the fact remains that spiritual healing through touch, through anointing with oil, through the sacraments, and through prayer and spiritual gifting is still a reality.²⁰ It has never ceased since the days of the apostles and always reappears in seasons of revival.²¹ And when it comes by the grace of God, people feel the love of God enveloping them.

So it was with Kathryn Kuhlman, the well-known healing evangelist who captured the hearts of millions starting with the 1940's up through the 70's. She was a woman of deep emotion and real theatrical flair. Her biographer, Jamie Buckingham, gives this account of the love of God that flowed through her:

"I saw her, on dozens of occasions, take a child that was lame, maybe paralyzed from birth, and hug that child to her breast with the love of a mother. I am convinced she would have... given her life in exchange for that child's healing. She would hug bleary-eyed alcoholics and mix her tears with theirs.... And little old women, hobbling along on canes and crutches, some of whom couldn't even speak English but were drawn by the language of love. No man could ever have loved like that," writes Buckingham. Then he tells why, "It took a woman, bereft of the love of a man, her womb barren, to love as she loved. Out of her emptiness- she gave. To be replenished by the only lover she was allowed to have- the Holy Spirit."

²⁰ A good treatment is Alexander Venter, *Doing Healing: how to minister god's kingdom in the power of the spirit* (Cape Town, SA: Vineyard Int. Publishing, 2009).

²¹ See especially Appendix A: Signs and Wonders in Church History and Appendix B: Signs and Wonders in the Twentieth Century in John Wimber, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1986), 156-173; David Pyles, *Does God Speak Today?* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1989).

That perhaps, I risk to say, is how it was with Jesus the celibate rabbi, that the lack of the warmly human love of a wife and children hollowed out in his masculine heart an immense reservoir for the love of the Father to flow through him to others. Can you imagine the depths of patience and stamina it took to minister with the most broken and demanding people hour after hour? And from time to time to run into a demonized person through whom the spirits shouted in fear, "You are the Holy One of God."²² It was loud; it was messy, a sea of need and gawking onlookers straining to see what was going on. Pressing in, crowding closer, threatening to crush Jesus, the disciples serving as buffers and crowd control. They were a unified front: verse 17, "And he came down *with them* and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of disciples...." Church unity is important: in basic doctrine, in ethics and morals, but beyond that in love and worship and the sense of unity without uniformity that only the Spirit can bring as he reveals the church as a community of ministers. What Paul spoke of as the body of Christ we see here in the unified front of Jesus, the twelve, and the disciples engaging a perpetual emergency room of human brokenness.

The Galilee Sorority (8:1-3)

We all know that a map is not the territory, that a symbol does not exhaust the reality to which it points and in which it participates. Jesus was in a sense limited by the repertoire of symbols his Jewish tradition gave him. Each of the old twelve tribes of Israel was headed by one of the sons of Jacob. *Patriarchs* they were called. So if Jesus was to use that symbol as a sign of what he was doing in the reconstitution of God's people, he was limited to naming men. But then to say that women cannot be pastors or priests now because the twelve were all male is to confuse the limited symbol Jesus employed with the kingdom intent he displayed. So Luke in the first three verses of chapter 8 provides us with a second list of women in the same format as the twelve: a ministry report, a list of names and designations:

“Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him and *also some women* who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities....”

Just like the men they were a diverse group, low life and high life, the down-and-out and the up-and-out: Mary of Magdala, from whose tormented soul Jesus

²² Mark 1:24.

evicted seven demons, and Joanna the wife of King Herod's property manager, and Susanna, *and many others who provided for them out of their means.*"²³

Did you catch that final phrase? Who bankrolled the traveling Jesus' movement? Women with money who personally benefitted from Jesus ministry, "... *and many others who supported them out of their means.*" We do not pay for God's grace because it's beyond price, but one way to participate in the spread of the good you've received is through giving, and here the women excelled. How hard was it for Peter to go to Mary Magdalene and ask for lunch money? These men were called to depend on Jesus, to depend on one another in spite of their differences, and to depend on a bunch of sisters with checkbooks. It was a new day and a new deal!

If Jesus were to come today, I'm convinced he'd call women not just to be disciples and contributors but to be part of the core community of leaders. Not the twelve tribes of Israel but the President's Cabinet might be the model. Churches that open ordained ministry to women are acting in line with the clear kingdom intent of Jesus, even if they are not- as the Roman Catholics and Baptists and conservative Presbyterians love to remind us- in strict accord with the all-male symbol of the twelve. It was the Galilee sorority who were at the cross, saw the burial, and were first at the tomb on Sunday. To them was given the news of resurrection, and when they went back and told the guys, *they did not believe them:*

"... and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them (quite a crowd!) who told the apostles; *but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.*"

Luke is honest, and we have much to learn from the rich partnership between men and women the Lord made such a part of his ministry, even if it was soon lost in the burgeoning mission of the church. Male apostles, female disciples and witnesses, the one a living symbol, the other giving money. These are different forms of power, differing gifts and genders in one new humanity around Jesus Christ. It's what we need to do; it's where we need to go. For all that is wrong with Methodism, this one we got right. We are to be a community of equals who follow Jesus together.

²³ On Jesus' generous attitude towards woman as expressed in Luke's theology, see Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke* (New York, NY: Crossroads, 1982), 90-94.

The following are two journal entries as a wife and husband reflect on the same day's events. Her journal first:

“Tonight, my husband was acting weird. We made plans to meet at a nice restaurant for dinner. Conversation wasn't flowing, so I suggested we go somewhere quiet to talk. He agreed, but he didn't say much. I asked what was wrong. He said, ‘Nothing.’ I asked if it was my fault he was upset. He said he wasn't, that it had nothing to do with me, not to worry. On the way home, I told him I loved him. He smiled slightly, and kept driving. At home he just sat quietly and watched TV. He continued to seem distant and absent. Finally, with silence all around us, I decided to go to bed. About 15 minutes later, he came to bed, but I still felt he was distracted, and his thoughts were somewhere else. He fell asleep. I don't know what to do.”

His journal: “Rough day. Boat wouldn't start, can't figure out why.”²⁴

We are complexly different, and it takes all the gifts of both genders to even have a chance at being the lively body of Christ in our day. And so on the day of Pentecost- when they'd been together without him for ten days of prayer and conversation: the apostles, the male and female disciples, and also Jesus' family- then the Spirit was poured out on them all in a great explosion of indwelling love. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit now have a new people through whom to work.

When it was built for an international exposition, the structure was called monstrous by the citizens of the city who demanded it be dismantled. Yet from the moment its architect conceived it, he took pride and defended it against detractors. He knew it was destined for greatness. Today it's primary landmark of Paris. The architect- of course- was Alexandre Gustave Eiffel whose tower was built in 1889.²⁵

The One who designed this awkward and gangly thing called church, who knows how prone it is to corruption, will one day return and turn our glorious destiny into reality. It is now our high privilege to be part of what he is doing, right here and right now among his people. We do not get to choose our comrades; Jesus' friends must be our own. So I invite you to live *In A Larger Circle*.

²⁴ PreachingToday.com search under Luke 8:1-3.

²⁵ “To Illustrate,” *Leadership*, Summer 1985, 68.
