



**COLLEGE HEIGHTS
BAPTIST CHURCH**

"Stories"

Part III

Daily Scripture Readings for
July 1 - August 4

WEEK 11 - Mary Magdalene

Monday, July 1 - Luke 8:1-3

What we think we know about Mary Magdalene's story is probably incorrect. Through most of Christian history, we have perceived Mary Magdalene as a conglomeration of Mary of Bethany (Martha and Lazarus' sister), and an unnamed woman who anoints Jesus' feet with ointment in Luke 7:36-38. It was in the year 591 that Pope Gregory the Great authoritatively proclaimed that these women were all the same. The association is made because we clearly read that Mary of Bethany in John 12:3 anoint Jesus' feet with perfume. In Luke 7:36-38, the same event with an unnamed woman occurs. Immediately following, in our passage today, Mary Magdalene is named, and the connection was made between Mary Magdalene and this unnamed woman in Luke 7. Since we know from John that Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus' feet, we assume these stories are one and the same, and the women are all the same Mary. I don't believe this to be so. I will fully admit that it is possible that the unnamed woman in Luke 7 is Mary Magdalene. However, the text doesn't say that, and I think Luke would specifically state that Mary Magdalene was the woman who anoints Jesus' feet with ointment.

It is absolutely clear to me that Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene are two different people, and Jesus had his feet anointed at least two different times. John 12 says the event took place in Lazarus' house, and Luke 7 says it took place in a Pharisee's house. Could Lazarus be that Pharisee? Possibly. But later in Luke 10:38-42, we have a story with Mary and Martha. That story does not connect Mary to Mary Magdalene in Luke 8.

So, who is Mary Magdalene? Today's passage tells us she is a woman from whom Jesus had exorcised seven demons. In addition, in a language and culture where name order indicated hierarchy, she is a leader of the group of women who funded Jesus' ministry, as she is listed first every time a list of female followers of Jesus is mentioned in Matthew, Mark and Luke. She is much more than the person we have given her credit for being. This is the story we will dive into this week.

Tuesday, July 2 - Mark 15:40-41

Who is Mary Magdalene? The picture we receive of her indicates she was a faithful follower of Jesus. She followed him for an extended amount of time during his ministry. She gave of her own money, as we saw yesterday, to fund the ministry. And she never left him. Unlike the male disciples, the twelve, she and the women did not

flee when Jesus was arrested. Mary Magdalene is an example of great commitment to Christ.

When times get tough in your life, when life doesn't go as planned, are you like Mary? Remaining with Jesus? Or are you like most of the twelve? Running away in fear? Mary had what I call stick-to-it-ness. Let's be like Mary Magdalene.

Wednesday, July 3 - Acts 11:1-18

As we continue to study Acts as it relates to 21st century missions tonight, we look at the story of Peter relaying his encounter with Cornelius to the church leaders in Jerusalem. The church was going through a transition from being more of a Jewish sect who saw Jesus as the Messiah to an independent religion without the regulations in Judaism. For the early followers of Jesus, this transition was difficult. All change is difficult, but even more so when it deals with your religious beliefs. Let's talk tonight about what it means "to move beyond the old ways."

Thursday, July 4 - John 20:1-18

Mary Magdalene's commitment to Jesus did not end with his death. On that Sunday morning, she was the first one to go to the tomb. The other gospels report that other women were with her, but John wants to relate the story more intimately between her and Jesus. Her commitment led to her being the first to see the resurrected Christ. Our passage today indicates that Mary did not recognize Jesus' appearance, but realized who he was when he spoke her name. When Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd in John 10, he says that his sheep know his voice. Let us be like Mary Magdalene. Knowing the voice of God when he calls, running to him, and doing as he says.

Friday, July 5 - Luke 8:26-33, 38-39

Was Mary Magdalene here with Jesus? It's impossible to know. It depends if she and the other women followers of Jesus were on the boat crossing from Magdala to Gergesa in Luke 8:22-25. I'd like to think she is for this reason. It seems that Mary Magdalene's first encounter with Jesus could have been very similar. Seven demons were cast out of her. The demon-possessed man in this story is also spiritually healed by Jesus. The reactions are similar to their healing. The man wants to follow Jesus. Jesus tells him to stay here and declare what God has done for him. Mary devotes her life to Jesus after her healing encounter.

Are you devoted to Jesus like these two were? Are you going through the city proclaiming what God has done for you as the man did? Are you funding the ministry of the Kingdom of God as Mary did?

Notice also how this story follows the story of Jesus calming the storm. The wind obeys Jesus. The demons obey Jesus. What about you?

Saturday, July 6 - Hebrews 12:1-3

Our question for Sunday night will be “What does the Bible say about having faith over doubt?” When I consider this question, I consider it a question of perseverance. How can we persevere in the presence of difficulty? How can we have faith in a God we cannot see when we can see evil all around us? Let’s answer these questions together tomorrow night.

Sunday, July 7 - Psalm 8

How majestic is the Lord’s name in all the earth!

WEEK 12 - The Woman at the Well

Monday, July 8 - John 4:1-8

If you came to our “Are you normal?” Evangelism Training in January, you might remember that our story for the week is a great example of how to witness and share your faith. We begin the story of “The Woman at the Well” today. These first eight verses leave us with many questions, which will be answered later in the week. We can immediately notice that something is amiss in this event. It was noon, and a woman was coming to get water. Two things to know about retrieving water from a well in the first century. It was a boring necessity of life. It was also hard work. For these reasons, women would go in the evening after the heat of the day to fill their jugs of water and they would do it together. The fellowship among the women made the job less boring and doing it in the evening, obviously, made it less hot. So why was this woman getting water by herself at noon? Jesus doesn’t need to use his supernatural abilities to notice she is an outcast in her own community. So Jesus begins the conversation with her by asking, “give me a drink.”

Who do you need to begin a conversation with? Who can you notice that has been pushed to the side of the group or community? Who needs to hear from a friendly voice? Pray for God to give you eyes like Jesus. Noticing when someone is in the

midst of loneliness and needs the presence of God in their life. Will you be the one who brings Christ to them?

Tuesday, July 9 - John 4:9-15

There is something you should know about stories at wells from the Bible. The well was the place to find your wife. Abraham's servant found Rebekah for Isaac at a well. Jacob met Rachel at a well. Moses met his wife Zipporah at, you guessed it, a well. Now, we have Jesus speaking to a Samaritan woman at a well. There is an expectation already developing if you were a Jewish reader of John in the First Century.

We pick up the conversation between Jesus and the woman today with the Samaritan Woman's first response. She is shocked that Jesus would even speak with her. A man does not speak to any woman other than his wife. More than that, a Jew does not speak to Samaritans. Jesus continues the conversation by beginning to use water as a metaphor. The woman is very interested. This man is saying that I can have water that will quench my thirst forever? I don't have to come to this well by myself anymore? I don't have to be reminded of my past and my isolation? Yes, I want this water!

Too often, we try to fill our lives with relationships and passions and hobbies, but every time the result is the desire for more. The thirst comes back. It's different with a relationship with Christ. Christ is the one who gives us purpose, he is the one who makes us feel whole. What are you trying to fill your life with? Is it the things of this earth which will leave you yearning for more? Or is Christ who will satisfy you all the days of your life?

Wednesday, July 10 - Acts 11:27-30

I can't remember who I heard say it, but it's a saying I'll never forget. "In order to allow people to hear the gospel, we must first stop their stomachs from growling." The statistics of people in the United States and around the world who are "food insecure" are astounding. How does this impact our opportunities to share about salvation in Christ? How can we be involved in helping others not go hungry? What did the early church do when a famine came upon the world? Let's talk about it tonight?

Thursday, July 11 - John 4:16-26

One of the things I find interesting in this story is all of the opportunities Jesus has to reveal himself to the woman. In verse 7, he could have said “Hello woman. You are a sinner, and I am the Messiah. Repent and Believe in me!” In verses 9-10, he could have responded to the woman’s question by saying “because it got your attention! Now, let me tell you about God’s love. I’m Jesus.” In verses 15-16, when she asks to receive the water, he could’ve said “well, there’s a problem actually. I know you’ve had five husbands and living with a guy, so fix all that, and then I’ll tell you more.” He doesn’t do any of these things. Instead he listens to the woman, he treats her as a person and not another witnessing project. He waits until verses 25-26 to say “I am [the Messiah].”

How often, when we go and tell others about Jesus, do we do the things Jesus chose not to do with this encounter at the well? Do we judge people immediately when they aren’t in the right place at the right time (a well at noon) and say “Repent and believe in Jesus, sinner!?” Do we have “a hook” in a conversation and immediately shift to a gospel presentation without actually knowing the person in front of us? Do we have a person eager to give their life over to Christ, but withhold the saving power of Jesus because they have noticeable sin in their life?

Jesus and the Woman at the Well is the perfect example of evangelism in my opinion. He got to know the woman. He had a long conversation with her. He let her ask questions and speak just as much as he did. How will this impact your next gospel conversation? How will you be like Jesus when you are sharing about Jesus?

Friday, July 12 - John 4:39-42

I explained earlier this week the narrative that is set up around water wells. A husband-wife relationship is usually developed from this type of setting in a story. What happened at this well was more important than any relationship on this earth. This woman came to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Others in the community came to believe the same. Our relationship with God through Jesus is so much more important than any relationship on this earth. I want all of you to love your spouse, parents, children, grandchildren, but your love for Jesus must be number one. I believe Jesus knew the well narrative and used this setting to show this importance. The woman was trying to find happiness in relationships with men and it left her getting water by herself at noon. Jesus was able to give her fullness in life. She found something more important than a husband at the well. She found a relationship

with God through Jesus. Others in Samaria found the same relationship because of her. Put Christ first in everything. Every other love in your life must be less than Christ.

Saturday, July 13 - Acts 1:8

Tomorrow night is our Ice Cream Social. Who are you going to invite? Who are you going to be a witness to? Neighbor? Friend? Family Member? Random person at the grocery store who God is leading you to? Where are you going to share about Jesus today?

Sunday, July 14 - Psalm 9:1-2

WEEK 13 - Job

Monday, July 15 - Job 1:6-12

Why do bad things happen to good people? Are good people only good when everything goes their way? Why does a good, loving God allow evil to exist at all? Job's story addresses these questions. While they are not answered in the way we would prefer, they are addressed by the cast of characters in Job. Today's reading is the set up for the rest of the story. Job becomes a pawn in this wager between God and Satan.

We don't like what we don't understand, and we don't understand what we don't know. Thus, we don't like what we don't know. I don't have a problem telling you this is my feeling about the book of Job a lot of the time. The agreement between God and Satan is just the start of the concerning ramifications I have as it relates to Job. What do we do with a God who gives people over to Satan like this? These are the types of questions we will stew on this week and hopefully have some clarity at the end of the week.

Tuesday, July 16 - Job 8:1-7, 20-22; 9:1-2

Job had three friends. They were horrible. Today's reading is representative of their advice throughout Job's story. Bildad says that Job's children died because of their transgressions. It's their fault. Then says if Job just (paraphrase coming) prays more and lives a more godly life, everything will get better.

Do not fall into this trap of believing in this way. Living a good life does not guarantee blessings from God. I think all people should live their life for God, but that

lifestyle does not guarantee riches or health on this earth. And even if it were so, what is good anyway? Job says it best in 9:2 “how can a mortal be just before God?” None of us are good when compared to God. We might be better or more polite than other people, but other people aren’t our measuring sticks. Amos 7:8 tells us that God is our plumb line. God is the one who we measure our lives against, and none of us have lived good lives when compared to a perfect God.

Moral of the story for today? Don’t believe in the lie that a good life equals blessings from God. 2nd moral for today: have better friends than Job.

Wednesday, July 17 - Acts 13:1-5

We read this passage a few months ago as it related to the story of Barnabus. Tonight, we will look at the passage as it relates to 21st century missions and sending missionaries. Are all of us supposed to be missionaries? Or are missionaries set apart from other Christians? What can the church do to support those whose life work is in missions? Come tonight to hear more!

Thursday, July 18 - Job 31:35-40; 40:1-9

There are two excerpts of Job’s story for you to read today. Job 31:35-40 are the final verses of Job’s request to God to know what he did wrong to deserve what happened to him. He basically summarizes his past inquiries by saying “if I knew what I did wrong, I would accept my punishment willingly.”

God responds in Job 38-41, but the second part of our reading picks up in 40:1. Throughout the three chapters, God continually asks questions and provides statements to show his superiority to Job. God’s answer is essentially, “I’m God. Don’t question me. Be a man and accept what has happened to you as it is.”

Maybe that sounds like an inappropriate characterization of God. And maybe you’re right. My problem is what else can you do with this non-answer from God? God has an answer to give Job. We read it in Job 1. Instead of rebuking Job, God could have said “I wanted to prove you were devoted to me and not the stuff you are blessed with, and I was right. Good job, my good and faithful servant.” I don’t know what to do with that. What do we do with a God who doesn’t give straight answers, but belittles the questioner?

Friday, July 19 - Job 42:10-17, Genesis 8:21-22

Whenever I have heard Job preached, the conclusion is given that because Job was faithful to God in the bad times, God blessed him more abundantly than he previously had. But I have some questions. Does a blessing like this make up for what happened to Job? Is the blessing God's way of saying he's sorry for agreeing to Satan's wager? Does the blessing contradict the understanding of the rest of the story that bad things can happen to good people?

I think a parallel event can help us understand a little more about the character of God as it relates to Job's circumstances and restoration of his fortune. When we read Genesis 8:21-22 at the end of the Flood, we see God realize that the Flood did not rid evil from this world. That humans will always have an inclination to evil. God's commitment to not flood the earth again is similar to him giving Job riches, health, and family again. It is a promise that life continues. I don't think Job's future is because of his faithfulness to God, but more his honesty with God. Job 42:7 indicates Job spoke rightly of God when the friends did not. Job questioned God throughout the story. He asks why he has been cast this lot in life. God seems to indicate that Job has questioned correctly. God almost seems to admit that the contest with Satan was a bad idea. Much like the promise that God gives the world after the flood, God gives Job through fortune here. He will not bring about this unnecessary event again.

Saturday, July 20 - Luke 9:23-26

What does it really mean to follow Jesus? What does the Bible say about that? I think the answer lies in our verses today. But what do these words mean? Come tomorrow night, so we can learn together.

Sunday, July 21 - Psalm 10:12-18

WEEK 14 - Noah

Monday, July 22 - Genesis 6:1-8

I classify these eight verses as the hardest verses to interpret in the Bible. This is how far away from God creation had gone. Sin was so rampant that God has sorry he made humankind. Because of the evil of the heavenly beings and humans, all of creation would suffer. Our actions have consequences not just for ourselves, but for the people around us too. All of the living things on the earth would be destroyed

because of their disobedience. Except for one man and his family. Noah was one who found favor with the Lord. Our story this week will be on Noah. He was righteous and blameless. He was one who walked with God. Could the same be said about you? Would others look at you and see one who walks with God? Pray that in the face of wickedness, you could be seen as blameless.

Tuesday, July 23 - Genesis 6:11-22

You probably know the highlights of the story of Noah. I'm not going to spend our time retelling it. If you do not know the story, I'd encourage you to read all of Genesis 6-9 this week. Our focus today will be on the first few words in Genesis 6:11. In most translations, the verse begins with the phrase "the earth was corrupt in God's sight." The King James and its contemporaries says "the earth was corrupt before God." It is so interesting the attempts that humans make to be seen as good in the eyes of people. We want to impress people by our actions, intellect, work, humor, etc. We want people to say "she's a good person." Here's the thing. Our ultimate judge is not our neighbor, family member, or friend. The ultimate judge of our character is God. Are we seen as corrupt in the eyes of God or blameless like Noah?

Here's where it gets difficult. If you asked a person if God thought of them as a good person or a bad person, the majority of people are still going to say good. It's only a small segment of Christians who will actually say God thinks they are bad people. As Christians, we have to explain to people that anything short of perfection causes us to be seen as corrupt in God's eyes. It is only then can people have the saving power of Jesus explained to them. Someone taking your punishment doesn't make sense if you don't think you deserve punishment. We are corrupt in God's eyes. Luckily, we have a Savior in Jesus who took the punishment for our corrupt nature to allow us to be seen as blameless before God.

Wednesday, July 24 - Acts 14:24-28

What is the value of hearing reports of what God is doing around the world? Why should we take time to do that in our time together? Because it is the encouragement we need to be on mission for God in our community. Come tonight to share with each other what God is doing in your life and hear how God is moving his Kingdom forward.

Thursday, July 25 - Genesis 8:13-19, Genesis 1:28

The point of reading these stories this summer has been to focus on characters who can teach us how to live our life for God. Because this is Noah's story and not the Flood story, we will skip the flood itself and pick up the story when the ark is opened and Noah and his family are allowed to exit back onto dry land. Noah and his family, along with the animals, are given the command that humankind received in Genesis 1:28 of "be fruitful and multiply." The second command in Genesis 1:28 of "have dominion of the animals of the earth" was already being done. Noah and his family took care of these animals throughout the flood. Basically, God reinforces to Noah the original commands God gives the first humans (We will talk more about these commands in a couple weeks on a Sunday night).

Quick question, how many days were Noah and his family on the ark? If you quickly said 40 days, you are wrong. It rained for 40 days according to Genesis 7:12. However, Noah was on the ark for much longer than that. When you look at Genesis 7:11 and compare it to Genesis 8:14, you see that Noah was on the ark for 1 year and 10 days or 375 days! Does this knowledge add anything to the story of Noah? Not really. It only shows us that Noah's commitment to God was much longer than we think when we say it rained for 40 days and 40 nights. How committed are you to God? Is it build an ark and spend a year of your life stuck in there committed? Or is it closer to being committed when it's sunny and I don't have to work at my faith? Be like Noah and his commitment to God.

Friday, July 26 - Genesis 8:20-9:7

We read part of these verses along with Job last week. Here, we see Genesis 8:21-22 in context. It is a scene of worship. God has saved Noah and been faithful to his promise, so Noah brings an offering to the altar. Genesis 9:6 reminds us of the importance of humanity among creation. It is humankind who has been made in the image of God. Usually, I'll use this phrase to explain that you need to remember to focus on the image of God instead of yourself. Today, I want to encourage you in a different way. Being in the image of God means you are important. That God thought you so important that he imprinted his likeness on you. Take that message through your day this Friday. God loves you. You are created in the image of God. That makes you important.

Saturday, July 27 - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 10:9-13

Tomorrow night's sermon will be a sensitive topic. While no one specifically asked to learn "what does the Bible say about being gay," I have been asked enough about the topic to know people are interested. I have chosen the two passages for today to give you my general thoughts on homosexuality. I hope you will join us in the conversation tomorrow night. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, there will be childcare provided for children through 5th grade if you desire. At the same time, your kids are going to learn about it. Why not be the first one to bring up the conversation so you can allow the Bible to mold their thoughts first?

Sunday, July 28 - Psalm 11

The Lord is righteous. He loves righteous deeds. How are you living a righteous life for God?

WEEK 15 - John the Baptist

Monday, July 29 - Malachi 4:1-6

With these words, the Old Testament concludes. A promise is made from God that before the Day of the Lord arrives, the prophet Elijah will return to call people to turn back to God. With this promise, the Jewish people have been watching for Elijah to return for the last 2400 years because that means the Messiah isn't far behind. Our last story for this series is the story of the man who is the Elijah discussed in Malachi. John the Baptist came to prepare the people for the Messiah to be on the earth. John prepared the way for Jesus.

This passage mentions that John will speak a message to turn people's hearts back to each other, so that God does not strike the land with a curse. This comes from Deuteronomy 11:26-29. The Law of God is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing to your life if you follow it, and it is a curse if you do not follow it. God is saying in Malachi, Elijah will come again to prepare you for this moment when the Law is fulfilled, so it will not be a curse. This week, we look at the one who came to call the people to prepare for the Lord.

Tuesday, July 30 - Luke 1:57-66

Zechariah's story makes me laugh every time I read it. He didn't believe that Elizabeth could become pregnant. An angel made him mute as a sign. The moral of the story is never doubt what an angel of the Lord tells you.

Today's passage sees the power of God upon John even at his birth. He is clearly set apart by God because of the angel proclaiming his coming to Zechariah, his special name given by mother and father, and Zechariah's muteness is healed when John is named. John is a man destined by God to do great things. John means "the Lord has been gracious." God was gracious to Zechariah and Elizabeth to allow them to have a child when they were unable to for many years. God is gracious to send John to prepare the world for Jesus.

Wednesday, July 31 - Acts 15:1-21

We will conclude our study of Acts as it relates to 21st century missions tonight. We will take a look at what is called the Jerusalem Council and get to see an early church business meeting. The big item on the agenda was what to require of Gentile Christians. What was their conclusion? How can that influence our decisions across cultures today? Let's answer those questions together. See you tonight.

Thursday, August 1 - Luke 3:7-14

I have learned that it is not nice to call people weird. With that said, John was a weird guy. The passage in Matthew 3 that has the same story as our Luke passage today, tells us he wore camel's hair and ate locusts. Like I said, weird guy. However, his message to Israel speaks so much truth. Too many people, then and now, rely on their family name or social status for salvation. Verse 8 tells us very plainly that God can raise rocks to become the family name or your social status. Repentance and faith in the Messiah is the only way to "bear good fruit."

Let us not forget to read verses 10-14 as well. Here we have practical advice for how to live the Christian life (coming attraction: Next week, we will start a series on this very topic). How do I bear good fruit? Share your clothes and food. Do your job in an ethical, moral way. Take care of each other. There is work to be done after the baptism. Baptism is not the last step to repentance, it's the first. John is preparing the world for the Savior.

Friday, August 2 - Matthew 4:12-13; 14:1-12

The end of the story of John is brutal. We are told in Matthew 4 that John was arrested fairly quickly after the beginning of Jesus' ministry. It isn't until Matthew 14 that we have an explanation why. John stood up for what is right. Herod took his brother's wife as his own and John told him this was wrong. Standing up for what is right can have severe consequences. What is going on around you that you have been silent about, but know is wrong? I pray you can be bold like John to speak the truth no matter what.

Saturday, August 3 - 1 Timothy 6:3-11

There are over 2000 verses in the Bible about money and possessions. So the answer to the question "What does the Bible say about money?" is A LOT! One of the more famous passages is our Scripture for today. What are some conclusions we can make about finances when we study the Bible? Let's talk about them tomorrow night.

Sunday, August 4 - Psalm 12