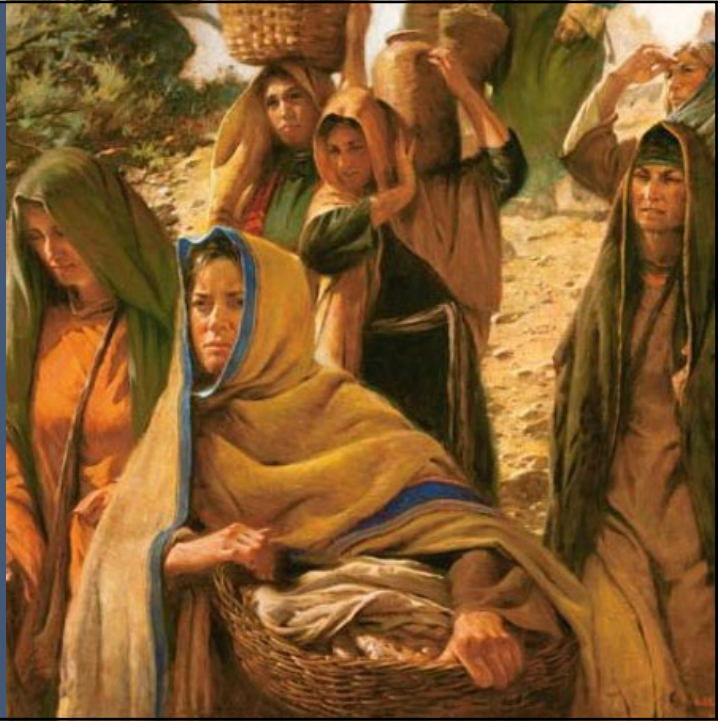


WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

Women in Christian History
MRCC Fall 2021



1



WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

IMAGO DEI

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

(Genesis 1:26-27)

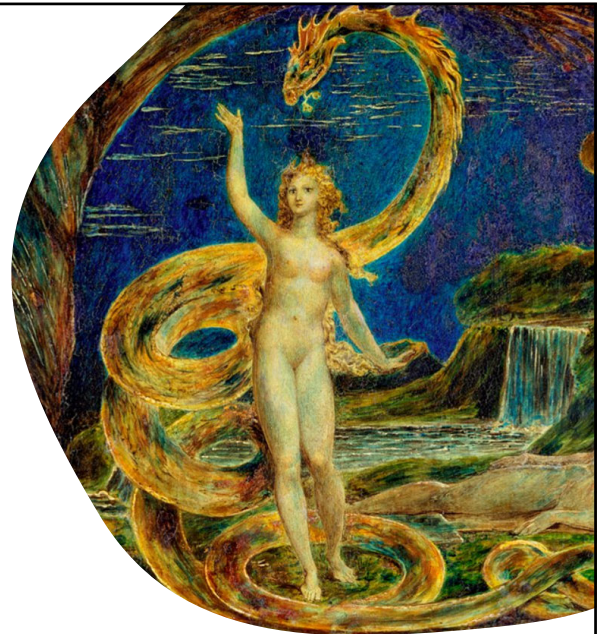
2

THE CURSE

To the woman he said,

“I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.”

(Genesis 2:16)



WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

3



INFERIORITY

“Males are superior and
females inferior **by nature**.
He is made to rule and she
to be ruled.”

(Aristotle, *Politics*)

4

WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS



GYNECOLOGY

“...the female is as it were a deformed male...because females are weaker and colder in their nature...we should look upon the female state as being as it were a deformity...”

(Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*)

5

WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS



ROMAN PATERFAMILIAS

- Literally, “father of the family”
- Male was responsible for its well-being, reputation and legal and moral propriety
- The Twelve Tables allowed him powers of life and death (*vitae necisque potestas*)

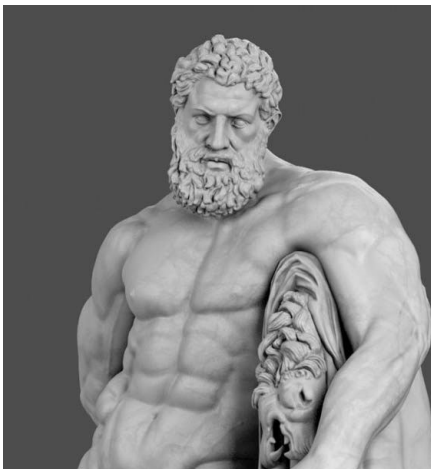
6



PYTHAGOREAN TABLE OF OPPOSITES

Finite	Infinite
Odd	Even
One	Many
Male	Female
Right	Left
Rest	Motion
Straight	Crooked
Light	Darkness
Good	Evil
Square	Oblong

7



THALES'S THREE BLESSINGS

Thales used to say there were three blessings for which he was grateful to Fortuna: "First, that I was born a human being and not a beast; next, that I was born a man and not a woman; thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian."

(Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Thales*)

8



WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

JEWISH MORNING PRAYER

There are three blessing one must pray daily:

Blessed art Thou Lord our God king of eternity who did not make me a slave.

Blessed art Thou... who did not make me a Gentile.

Blessed art Thou... who did not make me a woman.

(Talmud, *Berakhot* 60b)

9

WOMEN HAVE BEEN EXCLUDED

WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

1. Male ignorance, prejudice, envy, and insecurity
2. History telling has focused on public politics and “great men”
3. Women have often refused credit for their work
4. Women have often lacked tools to tell their stories



10

TELLING THE STORY

These stories “attempt to reconstruct early Christian history as women’s history in order not only to restore women’s stories to early Christian history but also to reclaim this history as the history of women and men.... The Bible is not just a historical collection of writings but also Holy Scripture, gospel, for Christians today. Yet as long as the stories and history of women...are not theologically conceptualized as an integral part of the proclamation of the gospel, biblical texts and traditions formulated and codified by men will remain oppressive to women.”

(Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xlv)

11



TELLING THE WHOLE STORY

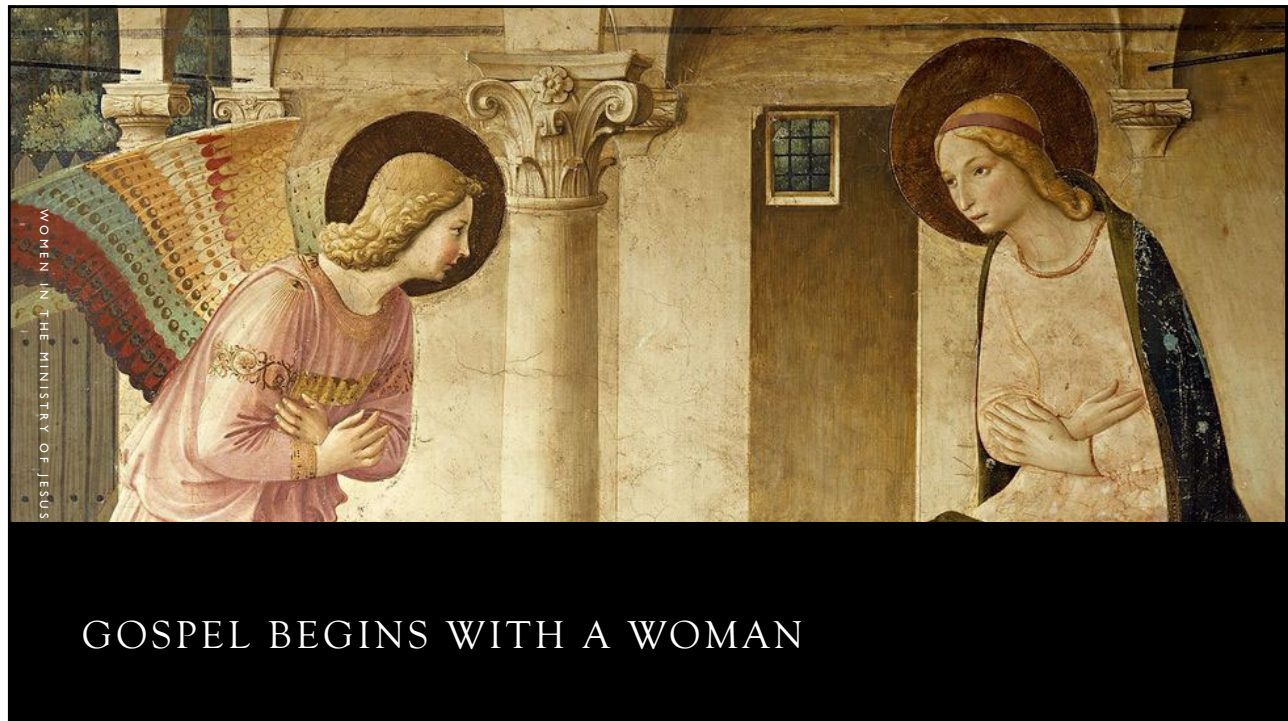
“Like facets of a diamond reflecting the divine image, we need to see and hear from one another in order to appreciate the fullness of the beauty of who God is.”

(Andrea Turpin, “Whose Stories We Tell,” 96)

12



13

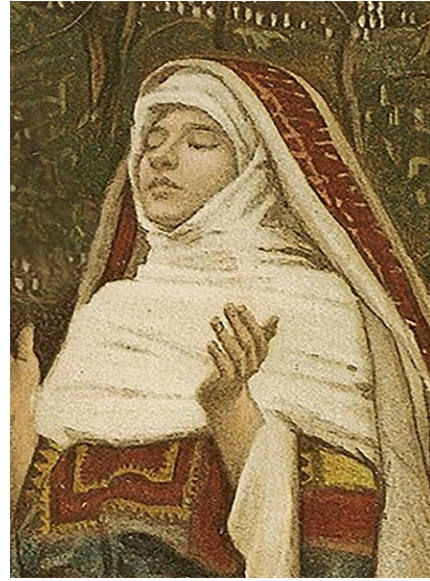


14

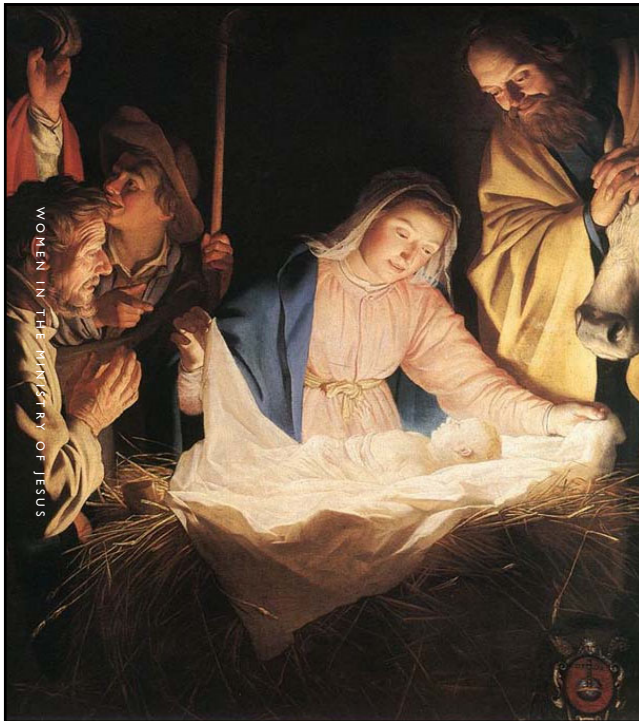
MAGNIFICAT

WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
**He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;**
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”



15



16

MARY

While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!”

But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!”

(Luke 11:27-28)

WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

MARY



Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you."

And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

(Mark 3:31-35)

17

WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS



JESUS MINISTERED TO WOMEN
THE SAMARITAN WOMAN (JOHN 4)

18



19



STUDY DISCOURAGED

Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, the Tanna mentioned above: “Women’s wisdom is solely in the spindle.” He added, “The words of the Torah should be burned rather than entrusted to women” (JT Sotah 3:4, 19a).

20



WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

JESUS HEALED WOMEN

21



WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

JESUS CALLED WOMEN TO FOLLOW

22

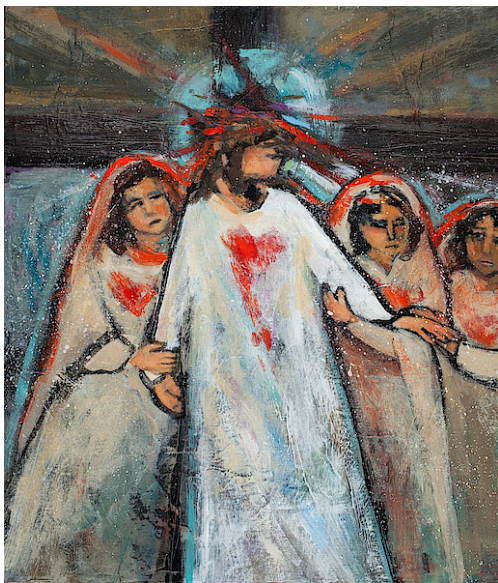
WOMEN DISCIPLES

Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as **some women** who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities:

Mary, called Magdalene,
 from whom seven demons had gone out, and
Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and
Susanna, and
many others,
 who provided for them out of their resources.
 (Luke 8:1-3)



23



JESUS'S DISCIPLES

“There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were

Mary Magdalene, and

Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and

Salome.

These used to follow (*akolouthon*) him and provided for (*diakonoun*) him when he was in Galilee; and there were **many other women** who had come up with him to Jerusalem.”

(Mark 15:40-41)

24

WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

WOMEN ON MISSION

Jesus called the twelve and began to send them out **two by two**, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits....So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

(Mark 6:7-13)

25

WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

UNNAMED WOMAN

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. **Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.**"

26



WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

MARY MAGDALENE

- Prostitute?
- Confused with Mary of Bethany (Luke 10:39) and unnamed “sinful woman” who anointed Jesus’s feet (Luke 7:36-50)
- Pope Gregory I identified her as a prostitute in an Easter Sermon in 591 AD

27



WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

MARY MAGDALENE

- Leader of Women Disciples
 - Always mentioned first
 - Magdala means “Tower,” perhaps a nickname like Peter (“Rock”) and James and John (“Sons of Thunder”)
 - Later remembered as an apostle
- Present at Crucifixion
 - “All of [the male disciples] deserted him and fled.... There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome” (Mark 14 and 15)
 - Gospel testimony about crucifixion comes exclusively from women

28



MARY MAGDALENE

- Leader of Women Disciples
- Present at Crucifixion
- First Witness to the Resurrection
 - “When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.” (Mark 16:1)
 - “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her.” (John 20:18)
 - All later Christian memories of the resurrection originated with Mary – “the apostle to the apostles”

29



“But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex.”

(Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 4.8.15).

30



MARY MAGDALENE

- Leader of Women Disciples
- Present at Crucifixion
- First Witness to the Resurrection
 - “When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.” (Mark 16:1)
 - “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her.” (John 20:18)
 - All later Christian memories of the resurrection originated with Mary – “the apostle to the apostles”
 - Why didn’t Paul mention her in 1 Cor 15?

31



WOMEN IN THE GOSPELS

- Gospels begin with a woman’s “yes” to God
- Women are portrayed as model disciples who do not deny or abandon Jesus
- Jesus is anointed and recognized as messiah by a woman
- The first proclaimer of the resurrection was a woman

32



WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

JESUS CHALLENGED TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

“Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:31-35)

His disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” But he said to them, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.” (Matthew 19:10-12)

33



WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

JESUS CHALLENGED TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Challenged “patriarchal marriage” – hierarchical arrangement in which men rule over women.

“So Jesus called the disciples and said to them, ‘You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers **lord it over them**, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you!’” (Mark 10:42)

Replaced traditional family with *syneisactic* structure – new gendered arrangement of shared discipleship and equality.

34

RESOURCES

Leanne Dzubinski and Anneke Stasson, *Women in the Mission of the Church* (Baker Academic, 2021).

Mary Malone, *Women & Christianity*, 3 volumes (Orbis, 2001).

Elizabeth Gillan Muir, *A Women's History of the Christian Church* (University of Toronto Press, 2019).

Ruth Tucker, *Extraordinary Women of Christian History* (Baker Books, 2016).

Ruth Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church* (Zondervan Academic, 1987).