

Title: A Life of Ministry Worth Imitating

Text: Luke 8:1-3

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Well, Proverbs 4:2 tells us that *"we should not forsake our father's teachings, for he has given us good precepts."* And so, if you have your copy of God's Word with you this morning, and I hope you do, please turn to Luke 8. We're going to be looking at verses 1-3 this morning in which Jesus reveals for us a life of faithful ministry that is worth imitating.

And maybe you haven't noticed it or taken time to appreciate it lately, but having an example of someone who faithfully conducts a life of gospel ministry and therefore is worth imitating is an extremely rare and valuable commodity nowadays. This reality is seen first at a very broad level in American Christianity in particular. The list of those once well-known to evangelical gospel ministry that are now shown to be disqualified just keeps on getting longer. From individuals like Mark Driscoll to Josh Harris to James MacDonald to Bill Hybels, Robert Morris, David Daniels, Steve Lawson, Josh Buice, Tony Evans, Sam Allberry, these are just some examples of individuals who used to minister to thousands and even millions of people. Individuals that were set up as examples worth imitating only for it to be revealed later that their lives and ministries are examples, but not necessarily ones to imitate, but rather to learn from and avoid. And so having an example of someone living a very faithful life of ministry that is worth imitating is rare. We see this at a very broad level.

And second, we often feel this at a very personal level as well. While I was growing up in my home church, we went through multiple church splits and experienced several pastors having to quit and leave for various reasons. Events that kept slowly breaking down the spiritual life of my home church rather than building it up. And so, on the whole, I didn't have many good examples personally of how to faithfully conduct a life of gospel ministry, examples that I could learn from and imitate. So, I felt this at a very personal level, and perhaps that is the experience of some of you as well.

And that is why passages such as the one that we're about to look at this morning, passages that otherwise might just be quickly glanced at and overlooked are so dear to me, they've been a north star of navigation for my Christian life. Because in this passage, we see from the life of Jesus Christ himself, a faithful life of ministry worth imitating my own life after, and every Christian's life. Just think about it. If you were to consider, what type of life do you want to live as a follower of Jesus, think about how Jesus, obviously, is the greatest example of this. In just three years, Jesus as a man, that means with limited time and even physical energy, as a man, in just three years, he started a ministry that turned the whole world upside down. That's something to take note of.

Because all of us are human beings with limited time and energy. How are you going to live your life for the glory of God? See, if I'm to live life for the glory of God, if I am to make the most impact for him in the limited time that I am given, perhaps I should study how Jesus lived his life. How he spent his time, where

he put his focus, and perhaps my life should imitate his. And of course it should. And well, we get a picture of that life here in Luke 8:1-3. We get a summary of how Jesus lived for God.

And what we're going to see is what Luke advocates here is not that complex of a life at all. There's not a hidden formula to living a life like Jesus. In fact, it is beautiful in its simplicity. Jesus' life of ministry is just a simple biblical life focused always on glorifying God. And that gets me excited because this is the type of life that I want to live, and I hope it is the type of life that you want to live as well. And so, I'm excited to show you this morning from Jesus a life of ministry that is worth imitating.

And we're just going to examine four things from this passage. The method of Jesus' ministry, what did he engage himself, what did he do? The message of his ministry, what did he communicate? The multiplication of his ministry, where did he focus? And then finally the members of his ministry, who did he attract? And so, the method, the message, the multiplication, and the members of Christ's ministry, which is a life of ministry worth imitating for ourselves.

And so, with that in mind, please stand if you're able out of attention and honor for the word of God as I get to read our passage this morning from Luke 8:1-3. Our author, Dr. Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes these words for us today, Luke 8:1,

"Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming 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: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means."

This is the word of God who makes us wiser than our enemies when his commandments are ever before us, so let us pray.

Father, we do present ourselves before you today as a people, as the sheep of your flock, and as those perhaps who need to be called into that flock this morning. Father, we present ourselves to you, and as you are the potter, we ask that you would mold us like clay this morning, and that you would bring us to yourself. Father, I pray that if there's someone here that has not put their faith in Jesus Christ, they would do so today. And I pray, Father, for those of us who have trusted in Jesus, that you would show us where a life that is free of sin and full of freedom ought to lead, and that this love of Christ for us would compel us to live a certain type of life. Give us grace, Father, we pray, to understand your word, to love it and believe it and obey it so that we might love you more fully.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

You may be seated.

Now Luke starts off this description of Jesus' life of ministry by directly connecting this. This needs to be pointed out, directly connecting this passage to the account that we have just looked at last week. And he does this by saying, in verse 1, "*Soon afterwards,*" after what? After the event that we saw last week. "*He,*" that is Jesus, "*went on through cities and villages.*" In other words, right after Jesus teaches his disciples and Simon how great forgiveness always produces great love, Luke then shows us immediately afterwards, through this passage, how great love for Jesus is most often and most faithfully expressed. And it's expressed, as we're going to discover soon, through great partnership and participation in Christ's ministry, a ministry that we ourselves are called on this morning, every single one of us, to follow in and imitate.

Luke sets the stage by telling us first that "*Soon afterwards he,*" that is Jesus, "*went on through cities and villages,*" and the Greek indicates here that this was a continual action. In other words, what we're about to study this morning isn't how Jesus sometimes conducted his ministry. This passage describes for us today how Jesus always conducted his ministry throughout his time there in northern Israel of Galilee. And Luke tells us that Jesus would keep traveling from city to city. He never settled down and thought, you know what, this is good enough for now. Enough people are hearing the word of God, so let's just stick with what we've got. No, Jesus was always driven to share the word that he had been entrusted with to more and more people. As Jesus said, if you recall back in Luke 4:43, he said, "*I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns as well.*" This was Jesus's driving compulsion and purpose.

Like the widow who had lost her might, and the good shepherd that has lost his sheep. Jesus was driven by the thought that there were yet more lost souls in Galilee that needed to be reached beyond the town that he was in, that needed to hear the good news of his coming for themselves. And so even before we get into the meat of this passage, we have to pause and ask ourselves this question. Do you believe this, believer? Do we realize this, Grace Chapel, that there are yet still more souls in our neighborhood to reach for Christ, that we should be bringing more worshipers of Jesus here for his honor and for his glory, that there are still more people in your relational circles that you have not talked to about Jesus yet? And you must. This is the compulsion of Jesus.

Do you realize there is a task yet unfinished here and around the world, a world lost to sin? And God has put you in the neighborhood you're in, and the job you're in, and the family you're in, and the church that you're in, so that you might as a representative of Jesus Christ share his saving person and word and work to those around you who are lost and dying in sin. And so, Jesus would do everything to spread this message, to spread this gospel as far as possible, traveling from city to city, and village from village, doing the following things, which is where we begin to see his life of ministry worth imitating. But I want you to see that there are more people who must hear about Jesus. I pray that the Lord would raise up from our midst people who are willing to go from this place and begin a new work for the glory of God in our own country and around the world. But this is where the life of ministry worth imitating begins.

And then Luke begins to show us what that life looks like by clearly showing us first the method of Jesus' ministry, and that's in verse 1, where Luke tells us that Jesus would go "*through cities and villages proclaiming and bringing the good news.*" Now see, wherever Jesus went, he always had one central activity

to his ministry, and that was proclaiming and bringing the good news of the gospel to others. Everything else in his life revolved around the weight of that preeminent calling, as he said in Luke 4:43, *"for this is my purpose."* That was why Jesus, as he testified at the end of his life, this is the reason why I've come into this world, to testify to truth. This is why you and I are still in it. Jesus went first about proclaiming, we see here. That word means to herald, to preach, to publicly proclaim. It was the job of the town crier who would go into a village square and simply proclaim, hear ye, hear ye, here's the message. Take it or leave it.

And I want you to know for a moment, I want you to just consider for a moment, that this is what Jesus' ministry was known for, just for standing unapologetically in the plain light of day and simply delivering the truth of God's word, come what may. And I want you to consider as this is a life of ministry that we are to imitate, believer, are you known for that type of life? Are you known for this? Do you have a reputation of being someone who will communicate relevant spiritual truth even if it is uncomfortable in the moment? Does your love of Christ compel you to speak of him and his truth? Is that what you're known for? Or are you known as someone who is always waiting for the right moment that just never seems to arrive? Let me encourage you from the life and example of Jesus, when you feel that tension about whether you should talk or not, talk. You do your best. Believer, you do your best. When you just throw the truth of God's word out there like a herald, like a fisherman throwing out the net of God's truth out there and just seeing what has happened. This is what Jesus was known for. He would just go about proclaiming.

Second, though, what's interesting is that Jesus would also go about bringing the good news and that word in the Greek is a more personal word. It means to bring a joyful message to someone. It means to evangelize. And so, what we learn here from Jesus' own method of ministry is that he would share the word declaratively and he would share the word of God conversationally. He would declare God's message to crowds of individuals at a time like the Sermon on the Mount or many other messages that he gave in synagogues, and Jesus would also share the word of God individually to other people like the woman at the well. And this was the essential aspect of Jesus' ministry, though, it was communicating the word of God. Everything else revolved around that central purpose. Jesus ministered how? By sharing the word of God. He had a word-centered and word-saturated life of ministry.

Now you might wonder, well, with everything that Jesus could have done in life, why was sharing God's word so important to him? Why was it such a singular, dominating focus for him? I mean, didn't he realize how bad the government was back then? Didn't he realize how many people were in poverty and in hunger? But why was this the primary focus of Jesus' life? Why was it such a singular, dominant focus for him? And the answer is because Jesus, as God in human flesh, knew the true spiritual state of man and our greatest need. And that is that they are ignorant of God's truth, blind to God's truth, and spiritually incapable of arriving at the truth.

As Ephesians 4:18 says, *"They are darkened in their understanding."* You see, God created a universe that is both material physical and immaterial spiritual. And man's understanding is partially darkened when it comes to the first. We're still finding out about this universe that God has created. And we are completely darkened when it comes to the second. We do not understand God, nor the things of God, naturally.

As Job confesses in Job 9:1-12, though God is the one who has stretched out the heavens, established the boundaries of the seas, and formed the innumerable stars and all their hosts, Job says, *"Behold, if God was to pass by me, who can see him? If he moves on, who can perceive him?"* Left to ourselves, we as human beings are in the dark when it comes to the most important realities of the universe that we're living in. We are blind men, as 2 Corinthians 4:4 says. We're ignorant concerning the things of God, and what understanding man does have is darkened. We cannot work our way to the light of the knowledge of the truth because our spiritual faculties are dead, depraved, and darkened. And this is why the worst thing that you as a believer can do for someone is to stand back and say, well, they've got to find their own way to God.

If you were to leave a man to himself to try to find out his own way to God, he will die in his sins because you've expected him to do the absolute impossible. He's dead. He's depraved. He's darkened. He cannot find his way to God. And the reality is, brothers and sisters, if men and women and children are to ever know the truth about God, then it must be given to them. In our brokenness and sin, we cannot work our way to God. We cannot come to him. He must come to us. And that is exactly what has happened, and what we're learning about here in the Gospel of Luke. *"In these last days,"* God has done what, *"spoken to us by his Son."* Jesus Christ, the word, and truth and very person of God, came down to earth to shatter our darkness, to, as he taught in his very first sermon in Luke 4:18, to proclaim good news, to give sight to the blind, and to give understanding to the ignorant.

This is why Jesus continually went around sharing God's word with everyone. It is because, as God, he understood better than we do that if men and women and children around us are left to themselves, they'll never come to the saving knowledge of God, and they will perish in their sins. Jesus knew that if he did not speak, then how would they be saved? And that's a good reminder for us, isn't it if this is a Gospel that you believe. We believe that God is sovereign in salvation. We believe that he does the work, but we cannot forget that God does his saving work through his people sharing his word. *"And that if we do not speak, how shall they be saved?"* As Paul says in Romans 10:13-14, *"everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But how will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in him in whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone,"* what, *"preaching?"* And so, faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ. We must never forget that the God who is sovereign over salvation came to earth and was a constant evangelist. And we as disciples of Jesus Christ must follow in his footsteps as well.

As Spurgeon wrote, if sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies and if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for. This is how Jesus lived his life and this is how we are to live our lives as well. Jesus is the evidence that God is here and that he desires to show us love because he is not silent. God the Son in human flesh came to earth and he went from city to city, and he preached, and he evangelized, and he talked to people with the word of God so that the glory and truth of God would shine in a darkened minds and hearts like you and me that they might be saved. And this was the method of Jesus's ministry.

Luke then highlights for us next the message of Jesus's ministry and that's at the end part of verse 1 where we're told that Jesus went everywhere *"proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God."* The message that Jesus brought from God's word was the good news of the kingdom of God. He evangelized with it. Jesus evangelized with the message of the kingdom of God. The good news of the kingdom of God was Jesus's message. He never deviated from it. We often hear around election years how important it is for politicians to what? Stay on message. To not have a thousand different messages about a thousand different issues that you're trying to communicate but to just have one message about one great pressing issue. Well, Jesus stayed on message. The message of the kingdom of God, it was the one message that he was commissioned by God to give and to share.

When Jesus began preaching for the very first time, Mark 1:15 tells us that this was his message, *"The time is fulfilled."* The kingdom of God is at hand so repent and believe the gospel. Now I know that there have been oceans of ink spilled concerning the nature of the kingdom of God, how there are many spiritual elements that are already and many physical elements that are not yet, but I just want to blow all past that this morning and just give you the core essence of what being in the kingdom of God means. There's a lot connected to the concept, trust me. Do a study of all the times the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven are mentioned in the Old and the New Testament. It will be a rich study. You will love it.

But for this morning, I just want you to see the simple reality at the heart of it all and the reality is made crystal clear in Matthew 19:24-25 where after a rich young man turns his back on Jesus, Jesus tells his disciples in Matthew 19:24, *"Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."* Now listen to verse 25, *"When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be,'"* what, *"saved."* Entering the kingdom of God, becoming a citizen of God's eternal and coming kingdom is the same thing as being saved. That's how Jesus' disciples understood it and that's how we're to understand it as well. To enter the kingdom of God is to be put under the saving sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

So, when it says that Jesus here was going around proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God, he wasn't preaching a political message though it had political ramifications and he wasn't preaching a social message though it did have social implications. He was preaching primarily a salvation message, a message of who is God, who are you, who is Jesus and how must I respond. That was the message of Jesus' life, a message that says to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, a message that says that sinners can be saved, that they can be delivered out of a domain of darkness and be transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved son, a message that says that you can have righteousness and joy and peace this morning by the Holy Spirit, a message that says you can be born again.

And so, when Jesus preached the kingdom of God, he was preaching salvation. He was inviting people to repent of their sins, to believe the good news about him and to abandon everything in order to enter into the kingdom of God by following him. Jesus stayed on message, and I want you to see here that there's a connection between Jesus' message and his method. Because Jesus had one message, he had one method. Because he had one interest, the kingdom of God, he had one approach to the word of God.

It is an inescapable truth that the kingdom of God in someone's life always and is ever instituted only by the word of God. 2 Timothy 3:15 says, *"it is the word of God that is able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."* James 1:21 says, *"it is the implanted word, which is able to save your souls if you receive it with meekness and faith."* Psalms 19:7 says it very simply, *"it is the perfect law of the Lord that revives the soul."* And because Jesus had one interest in life, the kingdom of God, he had one method in life in the relationships that he had, the word of God.

This is a convicting rebuke, I was thinking about it, to our American Christianity. Considering first, why are there so many believers who have no time for the Bible in their life? The answer is, is because they have no time for the kingdom of God in their life. They're not seeking first God's kingdom; they're still seeking their own. And so believers have no time for reading their Bible, for praying, for being discipled, but they've got plenty of time for school sports, they've got plenty of time for careers and hobbies, they've got plenty of time for political parties and ambitions, an hour isn't too far to drive for this activity that they really like, but driving 20 to 25 minutes to meet with other believers to worship God or to pray about the issues of life or to be discipled by another individual, that's just too far.

And considering second, why are there so many churches who are trying so many other methods rather than simply proclaiming and bringing the word of God to people's lives? The answer is because they really don't have that one singular interest that Christ did. They have a thousand different interests and therefore, they have a thousand different methods and activities. And so, I just want us to point out really quickly that the example of Christ calls us back to this today, that if you're truly seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, then you will be giving your attention first to the study and the sharing of God's word with others. Because God has one method and one method alone for advancing his kingdom in your life and the lives of others and that is by his word. And so, what should be my method be for reaching the men and women who are around me for the kingdom of God? It is to simply bring the word of God to them. Jesus had precision in his ministry with limited time and limited energy. He didn't waste his efforts. He preached the kingdom of God by the word of God.

And so that's a life of ministry worth emulating, advancing the kingdom of God by the word of God. We've seen the method, the message, next let's see the multiplication of Jesus' ministry. It says there in verse 1, *"And the twelve were with him."* So, Luke tells us that just as Jesus went around proclaiming the good news, his twelve disciples were with him in those moments, not preaching or performing miracles at this point. That comes later. They were just there, observing, watching, learning, and being discipled life on life. Though Jesus shared God's word with many people, he nevertheless invested a majority of his time and attention on twelve ordinary men that God had given him.

And there's something that we should learn here. Grace Chapel, we are not only called to reach more and more people outside of our families and outside of our church with this saving gospel of Jesus Christ, but we are also called to reach the people already in our families and already in our church. To be faithful in little before being asked to be faithful over much. What we see here is that Jesus' strategy of multiplication was to begin investing his life into those who were already around him. He did not worry about how can I

build a crowd in all these different ways so that I can reach them. He simply said, how do I reach those who are already in front of me?

I remember this was one of the first lessons that God taught me about gospel ministry. I heard a message from Matthew 16 about how Christ builds his church where Jesus says, *"I have given you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.... I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* And that was a wonderful freeing truth for me because all I've got to do is declare the word of God to the flock that God has already given me and if I am faithful in that, then Christ will do everything else. And that's the way it always has been, as Paul said at the end of his life to Timothy, *"the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust these things to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."*

Some of you might be here this morning sitting there thinking, I wonder what God wants me to do with my life. What's the ministry he wants me to be involved in, right? How am I supposed to make an impact in this world? And I think for most of us, God is looking at you this morning saying, what are the relationships I've already given you? What have you done with those? Are you seeking first the kingdom of God by the word of God in those relationships, or have you let a thousand other interests distract you? This is the life of Christ that he shows us here.

Jesus was willing to disciple 12 ordinary men and those 12 ordinary men were willing to be disciples. And I think all of us as Christians this morning need to grow in both aspects of that willingness. Some of us here this morning need to be more willing to count the cost and invest our lives in others around here at church. And others of us need to be more willing to count the cost and be invested in by others. We need to make sure that with all of our outreach we always start with discipling those whom God has already given us. That will only happen when we have one interest, the kingdom of God and others. Multiplication comes from discipleship. If you strive to be of some spiritual good to a few, you will end up being of some spiritual good to many, many more. As one person put it one time, take care of the depth of your life of ministry and God will take care of the breadth of it.

So, we've seen the method, the message, multiplication of Jesus' ministry and finally in conclusion, let's see the members of Jesus' ministry as in verses 2-3. Jesus did not conduct his ministry alone like some lone wolf. He had individuals who supported him in it. Not only as disciples whom he was investing in but also as verse 2 says, *"and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities."* Now I want you to know that was dramatic in that culture. Back then the Jewish first, the Jewish rabbis would have taught that women were not capable of learning spiritual truths and that they shouldn't be taught. Even among the Greeks the idea of educating women was despised. I'm not even going to go there, what I read about Aristotle and what he said about women.

Everywhere you looked in that world there was a low regard for women, but I want you to see not here with Jesus. He not only had 12 men with him, he had women following him too. Women whom he would teach doctrine to. Women who had been delivered by Christ's power over physical and spiritual realms. Women who had become believers. They were now disciples and students of Jesus right alongside the men. And then think about the quality of them. These were women who had been healed of evil spirits

and infirmities. Jesus did not let your past define your present relationship with him. Most rabbis tried to take the cream of the crop, the smartest people in the room and say, hey, you will be my disciple. Jesus was like, I will take all of you. Whoever is willing to come to me, I will lead you on the path of eternal life.

And so, you had women who were healed of evil spirits and infirmities. And they were now disciples and students of Christ. And Jesus gives us three examples and they are diverse. They are diverse because this good news is for everyone. First was *"Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out."* Now Magdalene was just a way to distinguish her from all the other Mary's that ever-followed Jesus in the gospels. Magdalene simply means that she was from a town called Magdala and contrary to sensational media reports that you may have heard in recent years, she was not married to Jesus. There was no ancient source, whether orthodox or heterodox that says that she was ever married to Jesus, let alone had a son with him. In fact, there is no source that sees that Jesus was married at all. So that is not what makes this woman significant.

What makes her significant is that Mary of Magdalene was a woman who was completely transformed by the redeeming power of Jesus Christ. That's what gave her life significance. It was what Jesus had done for her. Jesus delivered her from the terrifying torment of Satan's power. She found peace like the woman that we learned of last week who found all of her sins forgiven. She entered into peace at the hand of Jesus, and she never left his side again. Every time you see a list of women who followed Jesus in scripture, you'll always find Mary Magdalene there. Unlike so many, she was there at his cross, at his burial, and was one of the first people who saw him when he had risen from the dead because she was joined to Christ. She was faithful to the end.

Another woman who was there at Christ's resurrection, and that was a woman named *"Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager."* So, you have someone who had seven demons cast out of her and then you have the wife of Chuza, a very high ranking official in King Herod's court, being the official manager of the king's own estates. So, Jesus reaches out and he transforms the life of a woman from the nowhere town of Magdala. He reaches out and transforms the life of a woman from Herod's own household and finally he reaches out and transforms the life of a woman named Susanna. We don't know anything about Susanna, and I think that's what makes her significant. She was just one of the many unknown people whom Jesus reached out to in transforming love and redeemed. People like you and me.

Chances are there will never be a single book written about any of us. But what makes our life significant in eternity is that we have been redeemed by the Son of God. As the end of this verse makes clear, *"and many others, who provided for them out of their means."* Jesus didn't let cultural, economic, or racial lines get in the way of declaring the saving words of God to every man, woman, and child whom he was with. He shared the good news with everybody because everybody needs to hear it. And those who had been transformed and blessed by his ministry supported him. If you remember, Jesus had nothing. He said, *"Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."* He was homeless. And at the end of his life, the only things that the soldiers could divine among themselves was the clothes off of his own back. Jesus and his disciples had nothing, and they were dependent upon serving and the helping of these women.

Just like Paul instructed in Galatians 6:6, *"the one who was taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him."* And so, Jesus' ministry was supported by the contributions and service of those he had impacted just like every gospel ministry is. They had been forgiven much, therefore they loved much, and they loved much, therefore they served much in participating in and partnering in and supporting the mission of Jesus. As we are called to do this morning as well.

So, we've seen this morning the method, the message, the multiplication, and the members of Jesus' ministry. A great life of ministry, a faithful life, one worth imitating. We as disciples of Jesus Christ must set ourselves apart by having one singular focus to our lives, the kingdom of God. What do you want out of the relationships that you have? What sets us apart for the glory of God? We live in a world where people use and abuse others. How will we stand apart? We stand apart by genuinely desiring what is best for them, and that is that they would come under the saving authority of Jesus Christ. We must set ourselves apart by having one singular focus to our lives, it is the advancement of the kingdom of God. And if we have that one focus then we like Christ will have one method to share the word of God to those who are not saved, and to disciple with the word of God those who are. And that by being faithful over a little, over the lives that he's already given us in our families, in our communities, in our church, God by his grace might make us faithful over more.

But in the meantime, we should focus on the depth of our ministry that God has given us, and he'll take care of the rest. And that's a life of ministry worth imitating because that is the life of Christ himself. May God give us grace in following his example this week.

And this is the word of God from Luke 8:1-3, which I consider a great privilege to be able to share with you today, and which I now commit to your further study in your faithful obedience until Jesus who is the good news of our gospel returns.

To that end, let's pray.

Father, I thank you that when you spoke in your word that those who seek to save their life will lose it, but those who lose their life for your sake and for the sake of the gospel will find it. We thank you that you keep that not at a broad level that we do not understand, but you give us the details. Father, I thank you for the new life that you give to all those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. Father, I know that perhaps there is someone here today that knows in their heart of hearts that they are still lost and dead in their trespasses and sins, that they keep on trying to look for life in all these different areas and ways, and yet it just keeps on making them feel more dead inside.

Father, I pray that this morning they would feel the compulsion by your Spirit to come to him who is the resurrection and the life, and that they would be born again like the woman that we studied last week, that they would find a new life of being forgiven much and be filled with great love. And then Father, I pray for the rest of us, for those of us who have been forgiven, as we consider, how are we supposed to live our lives. Father, we see now very clearly that great forgiveness leads to great love, which leads to great

service. You have not kept us here on this earth so that we can keep this transforming message of Jesus Christ to ourselves.

You have not given us this gospel so that we can be politely silent for the rest of our lives, but so that out of great love and compassion we would proclaim the good news and we would evangelize the good news to those who are around us. Father, grow our love so that we would partner in this mission, so that you would send out of this room this morning 300 evangelists who would just seek to reach one for the gospel of Christ, for that is why we are still here. Father, thank you for giving us a life of ministry worth imitating, and may we by your grace be faithful in following it.

For your honor and for your glory in this place and at this time we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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