

“YOU CALLED ME WOMAN” - Workshop
By Denise Caul
AGLOW 2011 Green Lake Retreat – Friday, May 6, 2011

Good evening ladies. I am Denise Caul and I am very excited to share with you tonight. As the Area Team was preparing for this Retreat Gloria Danforth said that she had heard an excellent teaching by Pastor Ed Nelson in June. The title of his message was “Good News For Bitter Women”. ⁽¹⁾ When she started telling us about the teaching, I felt the Holy Spirit saying that I was to share some of it with you ladies today. (So let us begin with prayer. – *That not only our ears will hear what the Lord has to say, but also our hearts. Send the Spirit now more powerfully for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.*)

This message is a spiritual gift to encourage you. We are going to look at the scripture found in John 20:1-18 of Mary Magdalene and Jesus. It tells the story of a woman whose name is Mary. In the days of Jesus people had one name, and many people took the name of the city where they lived for their second name. Mary came from the town of Magdala, not far from Tiberias, on the western side of the Sea of Galilee.

We first see Mary Magdalene in Luke 8:2, 3. She was traveling with Jesus and the disciples as He proclaimed the good news from village to village. In the NIV it says, “...and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had come out...”

“...These women were helping to support them out of their own means.”

Mary Magdalene is thought by some to have been a prostitute. According to the Talmud (which is the collection of rabbinic writings that make up the basis of religious authority for traditional Judaism), the city of Magdala had a reputation for prostitution. (2)

Luke says Mary was a woman who had 7 demons. The number 7 means complete natural order. Mary was completely dehumanized, was less than a human being because of the 7 demons, and would have exhibited animalistic behavior. It's unusual for a person to have 7 demons, although Jesus also delivers a man with a legion of demons in Luke 8. In her case she was 7 times worse, the whole natural order is lost; she lost the image of God. The demonic is designed to make you less than the image God had made, more animal like. She had lost the sense of the image and likeness of God, become a tool, an object, with abnormal behaviors. Jesus goes to Magdala because there is a woman there who needs deliverance. No one would help her; there are no medicines, no rehab to satisfy her needs. She is completely demonized and needs recovery.

Oh, by the way does anyone in this group have the name Mary? Do you know what the name means?

Mary comes from the name Maror meaning "bitter". Now, remember Naomi from the Old Testament. Naomi's name meant pleasantness. But when Naomi came back from the wilderness she was devastated and said call me Miriam. Miriam means bitterness.

All of us have a sense of Mary in us, whether man or woman at sometime. Names can be prophetic. God chose a 16 year old girl named Mary, who was going to have some bitterness in her life and be pregnant by God. God takes the name, the prophetic name, and means that the person is going to deal with some raw issues of life. Raw issues of life are not fair, and always are not fun.

In John 20 v.1 it says, “Early on the first day of the week while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.” It is still dark, because the Jewish day is from sunset to sunset. John tells the story from Mary Magdalene’s view point, not the other women’s because her story is so important. He singles it out for a divine purpose to show us God can bring good news to a bitter woman.

This is Pastor Ed Nelson’s credible idea of how Mary became a prostitute. The word Magdala is Greek for the Hebrew word Migdal which means “tower”. In this city there was an army post with a tower to look down upon the people. The Romans were occupying Israel at this time and in Jerusalem there was a military tower, called Antonio’s Tower, right next to the temple to keep the order & peace in case trouble broke out. In this occupied town of Magdala the Roman soldiers were there to enforce Roman law. The Roman soldiers had no respect for Jewish people. The soldiers lived it up, taking what they wanted, raping, and pillaging. The Roman soldiers’ average life expectancy was about 30 years. A 12-13 year old Jewish girl didn’t have much chance of not being molested in that tower town. The parents protected the girls all the time. If a girl walked alone,

one of the soldiers were likely to take her, molest her. Once molested a girl would feel bitterness; twice it would be worse, she would be feeling rage. Somehow Mary Magdalene was vulnerable. If a girl is molested, she is not permitted to marry because of the rape. Her whole life is torn apart, not just physically violated, but her whole life is taken away, her future husband and family. The penalty for a Jewish girl was terrible, hopelessness, bitterness and so the teenage girl becomes what the prophetic name given to her means. The Jewish law stoned to death the girl and the Jewish man, but because it was a Roman soldier nothing happened. Nothing happened to her either because it was beyond her capacity to defend herself. She was allowed to live in the village, but had no hope. The girl simply gave up on living, was bitter, given to the demonic. The demonic filled her life and no one in the village wanted to have anything to do with the teenager because she is so defiled. The parents' agony is enormous too. So Jesus goes to that village and sets Mary free.

Now it is that woman who in John 20 goes to the tomb on the third day. This woman is so sad; she is the bitterest of all, and prepares the spices for the body of Jesus. Jesus was buried hastily, because the sun was setting and the body has to be in a tomb, a borrowed tomb, by night. The men did it, after getting Him off the cross and buried on the Day of Preparation according to John 19. The Day of Preparation is the day before Passover. The women know that the men don't do the spices right, so they have to go after the men and do it over, make it right.

Do you know that there are 2 Sabbaths the week of Passover? Passover, also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread, was in the spring on the 15th day of the first month, lasting 7 days. The regular day of Sabbath is Saturday. The Great Sabbath is called “Sabbot Hagadal”. It can be any day that week. John 19 tells us it is the next day after the crucifixion, the Great Sabbath is Friday. By law the women have to wait until Sunday morning to put spices on the body.

The women have gone to the tomb to prepare the body of Jesus. Mary finds the stone rolled away. She thinks that the Roman soldiers have taken/ abducted Jesus and runs to tell Peter and John. John outruns Peter but doesn't go into the tomb. Peter arrives, sees the strips of linen and the folded burial cloth from Jesus' head, separate from the linen. In the past there have been many stories told about “folded napkins”.

Pastor Ed Nelson has traveled around the world as a missionary, evangelist, church planter for years. In a remote place in a foreign country he had an experience concerning “folded napkins”. After a meal Pastor Nelson started to fold the banana leaf on which his food was served away from himself, when he was stopped by his native associate. It was explained to him that if you fold it towards yourself, it means that you enjoyed the meal and want to come back again to eat with the host. If you fold it away, it means that this was the worst meal ever eaten and that you never want to eat here again. So Pastor asked when is it ok to fold it away. Culturally it is ok to fold it away at a funeral, because under these

circumstances it means I'm not coming back this way again. Pastor wondered if Jesus folded his linen away to say, "I am not coming back, this way, again."

Scripture says next, that finally John went inside. "He saw and believed."

Peter & John go home, everyone leaves, but Mary does not have anywhere to go. It is likely that John eventually takes Mary in as he takes in Mother Mary. Mary stayed & stood crying, hurt, broken, angry, possibly saying, "leave me alone", because the One who saved her is gone. Mary wept.

Mary now bends over to look into the tomb. She saw what none of the others had seen, not even Mary, Jesus' mother, not Peter nor John. God had a better plan! He takes the bitterest of them all, and the bitterest of them looks into the tomb. The place is lit up with the glowing light, radiant light of 2 angels. She sees "the 2 angels, one at the head and the other at the foot". It is like a picture of the Ark of Covenant! The 2 cherubim and the mercy seat. It's the Transitional picture of the Ark of Covenant. The Ark of Covenant had been lost; it's not in the temple. But now, it has now become personified in Jesus Christ Himself. He is the Ark of Life between the 2 cherubim. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead!

The 2 angels speak, although one verse says one angel spoke, possibly they spoke as one in unison. They say "Woman", which is "ish-sha" in Hebrew, "why are you crying?" Oh my, no one has called her woman but Jesus, the Master, Savior.

The 2 angels from heaven are calling her the same name, 'Woman'. In Jesus' culture the word "woman" would never have been used to describe Mary.

“Woman” was reserved for a woman of highest order, equivalent to a queen, nobility, whose character is so beyond the norm to be called woman. This is not how we use the word today.

The 2 angels and Jesus call Mary “woman”. They are calling her by her heavenly name. She is given a new label. We all have been called different names over the years. It is like being covered with sticky notes all over us. Gossip, hurtful names, self-negative talk, labels, they all add to the sticky notes we wear.

Mary turns around, sees Jesus behind her in the dark, but she did not realize it was Jesus. He is not bright yet because He is not glorified yet. Mary does not recognize him because his face is different. Jesus had his beard torn off during the beatings and now appears clean shaven. (Just a little example of another man not recognized. My husband had a beard for almost 2 decades and then shaved it off for our son’s wedding without telling me he was going to. He walked into the room clean shaven. It was a shock. He looked sooo different! Several people did not recognize him at all.)

Jesus’ first word as He calls to her is “Woman”, ish-sha “Why are you crying?” Surely she was puzzled that the gardener is calling her “woman”. Then He calls her Mary. She turns and cries, “Rabboni!” Jesus called her woman when he delivered her from the demons. Jesus called her woman restoring humanity to Mary and brought her to the highest order of humanity. He attributed to Mary characteristics like Eve, the highest order of woman. When God created Eve he made her from the *rib* of Adam. She was equal to Adam, created in God’s own

image (Gen 1:27, 28). God told them to be fruitful, multiply and subdue the earth. He gave Eve the same authority He gave Adam. She had a place/position of authority before sinning.

In the village of Magdala Mary had not been called “woman”. No one had thought to call Mary woman before Jesus, never woman, but a lot of other names before when she was a sinner. That’s how the mercies of God are, when we’re saved.

In verse 17 Jesus says, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.” Usually the commentaries say that Jesus mildly rebukes & scolds Mary. Pastor Nelson finds this conclusion unsatisfying. Jesus wouldn’t say to someone at the end of His life, “I don’t have time for you, leave me alone.” Nelson says, “That’s not my Jesus.” Jesus isn’t rebuking Mary because He is so holy and she was so far away. Jesus Christ came to earth that we could touch him. He is so approachable! Jesus said, “...don’t touch me for I have not yet ascended to the Father.”

Why do you think He said that? Here’s the answer. In the time of Aaron in the Exodus the first High Priest on the day of Passover, on the day of slaughter killed the last lamb, which occurred on Preparation Day, the 14th day of the 1st month. The next day, is the Day of Unleavened Bread, 1st Fruits, the Day of Resurrection. There is a saying the priest has said for hundreds of years, at 3:00 p.m. precisely when he goes to slay the lamb for the altar.

What time did Jesus die? 3:00 p.m. While Jesus is dying the High Priest is at the temple, not watching Jesus die, watching the lamb die at his own hands. He slits the throat of the lamb. The High Priest follows the custom from ancient times of using a golden cup, with thumbprints in it in the shape of a cone, without a bottom to collect the blood from the neck of the lamb. This is living blood and the priest must move quickly, because it will coagulate, while the blood is hot to place it on the altar. He puts his thumb print in the cup and shakes and stirs the cup so that the blood doesn't coagulate. The priest moves from the place the lamb is slain to the altar. He approaches the altar from the "South" side. A saying is developed because people might talk to him. As soon as he cuts the lamb, he says, "It is finished!" and the lamb is dead. Simultaneously as the High Priest says this, "It is finished", Jesus on the cross declares the same words as the High Priest. He is the lamb on the cross and is declaring He is the Lamb of God! As soon as Jesus declares the words, "It is finished!" Jesus dies. Jesus didn't finish the ritual, because he's dead. But the Priest continues that day stirring the blood, moving and says, "Do not touch me, I have not yet ascended the altar." The Priest steps to the altar and he takes his fingers and sprinkles the blood on the altar.

Remember that the altar is a pattern of the heavenly altar. The Temple was built as a pattern of what it is like in God's presence. When Jesus speaks to Mary He says the same words. He is treating her as a Priest! A woman priest. Christ has taken the bitterest and lowest ranking woman, a prostitute lower than a child or eunuch, to restore her to her humanity. She understood it! John understood this

and wrote it down for us to understand also. Jesus did not say this to a man, not Peter or John, nor Mother Mary, but Mary Magdalene, and treats her like a priest to watch the transaction between heaven and earth. This is a truly incredible moment! (Awesome, awesome, awesome.)

Jesus then tells her to go tell the brothers. Then Jesus disappears. Why? He went to the Altar of Heaven for the sprinkling of His blood on heaven's altar. He is now the stamp of living blood on the altar. The Blood is alive right now, still warm, still uncoagulated and reserved for eternity. There is Power in the Blood today as there was for Mary Magdalene. Power for the cleansing of sinners, power for the testimony that they can be treated as children of God. God has elevated us to a place of priests unto God because of the blood of Jesus. Jesus brought good news. If He can give good news to a bitter woman, you can give good news to anyone. God goes to the bottom of the latter and says there is no one too far away. There is no one Jesus' blood can not reach out to and save with His loving kindness.

So, what is going on in your life today? What makes you tick? What hurts do you still have in your life? What wounds are still open? Do you call yourself the worst of sinners? What negative labels do you still carry? What labels do you have that keep you apart from God? What has corrupted or contaminated you?

The Good News for you is that Jesus, who took Mary Magdalene and elevated her, can elevate you to "woman", elevate you to a Priest of God.

Take a sticky note, write down your labels on the sticky note and put it on your blouse or shirt until everyone is finished. (pause)

Now everyone take off that sticky note, stand up, put your feet on the note, stomp on it and repeat after me, “THAT’S NOT ME ANYMORE ...I’M REDEEMED...I DO NOT NEED TO LIVE LIKE THAT ANYMORE BY THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS!” It is not only an act of confession but a “foot stomping ceremony”. Your story is probably not like Mary Magdalene’s story, but Jesus seeks to deliver you. Say, “I AM FREE BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS!” If you have been delivered, clap your hands.

Now let’s enter into a short time of praise and worship. Please throw away your sticky notes before you leave.

1) CD tape of Pastor Ed Nelson “Good News For Bitter Women” June 2010 @Metro Harvest Church www.ed-nelson.com

2) p. 389. Nelson’s Compact Bible Dictionary by Youngblood & Harrison, C2004.

(Read Holy Spirit Inspired poem by Denise Caul 5/20/2011)

Wednesday, April 20, 2011

“Welcome are your words to Me,
 Cause my heart to sing,
 Love your words,
 Holy to Me.
 Welcome your ways,
 Ways of love cascading over Me.
 Welcome your arms,
 Surrounding me,
 Covering me always.

Loving me now and always.

Light filters through your home, through your life, through your heart.

Gone are the ways of the past,
Open are the ways of the future.
Gone is the hope of nothing,
Gone is the loss of joy,
Gone is the laughter over nothing,
Gone is the song of joylessness.
Gone are the days of yore,
New are the days ahead, forever.
Gone is the love of old,
New love here!
Gone is the wondering what is,
Gone is the lack less joy."
"True joy abounds."

"My people know my name and I know them. "