

Rise Up! ¡Levántate! Women Arising in the Gospel of Luke
Los Angeles Religious Education Congress 2018
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The Gospel of Luke has more episodes featuring women than any other Gospel, which led early feminists to say that Luke is the Gospel for the advancement of women. Later feminists have examined the roles that women play in the Third Gospel and have concluded that it relegates women to silent, passive roles, and when women speak, they are corrected or not believed. This presentation will show that the women at the tomb emerge as faithful, persistent hearers and proclaimers of the word, even as women fall silent in Luke's second volume, leaving us with an ambiguous message.

I. Women in the Gospel of Luke

- a. Women Prophets
 - i. Elizabeth (1:5-7, 24-25, 39-45, 57-66)
 - ii. Mary (1:26-56; 2:1-52; Acts 1:14)
 - iii. Anna (2:36-38)
- b. Women Healed
 - i. Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-39)
 - ii. Jairus' daughter and the woman with a hemorrhage (8:40-56)
 - iii. the widow of Nain (7:11-17)
 - iv. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and other Galilean women (8:1-3)
 - v. a woman bent double (13:10-17)
- c. Women in parables
 - i. a woman baking bread (13:20-21)
 - ii. a woman who searches for a lost coin (15:8-10)
 - iii. a widow demanding justice (18:1-8)
- d. Women who Encounter Jesus
 - i. A widow of Nain (7:11-17)
 - ii. A forgiven woman who showed extravagant love (7:36-50)
 - iii. A woman who utters a blessing (11:27-28)
 - iv. the women of Jerusalem lamenting Jesus on the way of the cross (23:26-32)
 - v. a widow who gives her whole life (Luke 21:1-4)
 - vi. the Galilean women who witness Jesus' death and burial (23:44-49,50-56)
 - vii. and who discover the empty tomb (24:1-12)
- e. Women Disciples
 - i. Galilean Women follow, minister (8:2-3)
 - ii. Witness the crucifixion
 - iii. Witness the burial
 - iv. First to discover the empty tomb
 - v. Commissioned to proclaim resurrection
 - vi. First to encounter the Risen Christ
 - vii. Mary Magdalene as Apostolic Witness
 - viii. Receive the Spirit: Acts 1:13-14; 2:1-13

II. Silencing of Women in Luke and Acts

- Beyond the infancy narratives, no woman speaks except to be corrected by Jesus (10:41-42; 11:27-28; 23:28) or to be disbelieved (24:11) – D’Angelo (*JBL* 1990)
- Women receive the word, believe, are baptized, follow Jesus, host house churches
- No women are called, commissioned, endure persecution, minister by the power of the Spirit; no women preach, teach, heal, exorcise, forgive, pray.
- 57 instances of “preach,” “proclaim,” “announce” – only once used of women (Luke 24:9)
- Luke 23:49 - addition of “all his acquaintances” but *horōsai*, “watching,” indicates women were original witnesses
- Delay in naming the women until 24:10; cf. Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1
- No commissioning of the women - cf. Mark 16:7; Matt 28:7, 10 John 20:17
- Women are not believed (24:11); their words are “idle tale” (NRSV), “nonsense” (NAB)
- No appearance of the risen Christ to the women - cf. Matt 28:9-10; John 20:11-18
- Peter verifies 24:12; Christ appeared to Simon: 24:34

III. Who Speaks and What they Say

- A. Opening Chapters: significant theological and christological proclamations made in the opening chapters by Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, Anna, and John the Baptist. In the infancy narratives, the amount of speaking by females is approximately equal to that of males.
- B. Jesus’ Ministry: Jesus is the primary one that articulates God’s word. Few theologically and christologically significant utterances:
 - the men healed of demon possession: 4:34, 41; 8:28
 - Peter at 9:20
 - the crowd at 7:16
 - **the multitude of disciples, presumably women and men** (19:37-38)
 - the centurion at 23:47
 - **Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and the women** with them (24:9)
 - Cleopas **and his companion** (who could be female) at 24:19-24
 - the eleven and **those with them** (who likely include women) at 24:34.

IV. Speaking and Silence: Women and Proclamation of the Word

- A. Correspondences between Luke 1—2 // 23:44—24:12
 - i. Scenes in the temple in Jerusalem: 1:18-23; 2:25-35, 36-38, 41-51 // the disciples are “continually in the temple” (24:53).
 - ii. References to Galilee (1:26 // 24:6)
 - iii. Appearances of heavenly messengers (1:26 // 24:4)
 - iv. References to the words and deeds of God (1:45) and Jesus (24:6-8)
 - v. Disbelief: Zechariah (1:20) // male disciples in 24:11, 41, contrasted with the women’s acceptance of the angels’ messages (1:38; 24:9)
 - vi. Joy and jubilation (1:41, 44, 47, 58 // 24:41, 52)
 - vii. Blessing by Elizabeth (1:42, 44) // Christ blessing the disciples (24:50, 51).
- B. Remember (24:6, 8)
 - a. Hear the word and take care of it: 2:19, 51; 8:15, 21; 10:39; 11:28; 24:44
 - b. Remembering + action: Num 15:39
 - c. God’s remembrance: Gen 8:1; 9:15, 16; 19:29; 30:22; Exod 2:24; 6:5; Lev 26:42, 45; Num 10:9; 1 Sam 1:19: **Luke 1:54, 72**
 - d. Jesus: “Do this in remembrance of me” 22:19; “Jesus, remember me” (23:42)

- C. The women's proclamation: proper response of faithful disciples;
elegon (24:10) – repeated telling
- D. Names of witnesses are given at the conclusion of their testimony (24:10)
- E. Reliability as witnesses; verification (24:22-24); cf. those who refused to believe (v. 11)

V. Not the Last Word

- a. Acts: male disciples, primarily Peter and Paul, take over the role of testifying;
Women who speak: Sapphira (5:8), Lydia (16:15), a slave girl in Philippi (16:17).
Indirect speech: Rhoda (12:14-15), Prisca (18:26), Philip's four daughters (21:9).
- b. Ambiguity: Luke is both a friend to women and a dangerous narrative.
Enter in --- stand apart
Luke does not provide final answers but stimulates further questions
- c. Memory of women proclaimers of the word: not only to recall the past, but to lead to present enactment

For Further Reading

Barbara E. Reid, *Choosing the Better Part? Women in the Gospel of Luke*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996.

_____. *Wisdom's Feast. An Invitation to Feminist Interpretation of the Scriptures*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016.

_____. "The Gospel of Luke: Friend or Foe of Women Proclaimers of the Word?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78 (2016) 1-23.

Wisdom Commentary Series: www.wisdomcommentary.org [forthcoming volume on Luke by Barbara Reid and Shelly Matthews]