

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# DEVO

MAY 19 - 23, 2025



# MONDAY

Read **Luke 8:1-3**

## Mary Magdalene, Disciple

In this sermon series, consider the lives of some of the disciples in the aftermath of Jesus' death and resurrection. One of many Marys in the Bible, Mary Magdalene, was one of Jesus' earliest followers, having joined the band of disciples early in His ministry. She is named over a dozen times in the Bible. She experienced some difficult challenges. Notably, Mary had been possessed by seven demons, she left everything to follow Jesus, and she was present for His crucifixion and burial. But before surveying these experiences, consider how Mary's reputation has been maligned over the centuries.

Secular authors, artists, film makers, and church leaders have suggested that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute or had a romantic relationship with Jesus. However, there is no biblical or historical evidence that this was the case! She is mentioned multiple times and in all four of the Gospels; not one of these references even hints at impropriety. Yet these misconceptions remain. To understand how this came about, we have to go back in church history several hundred years.

In the late 6th century, Mary's identity was incorrectly merged with other women in the Bible, including the sinful woman who anoints

the feet of Jesus (Luke 7). This "composite Magdalene" was popularized by Pope Gregory I around AD 591, who also suggested that demon possession involved sexual sin. In the 20th century the Catholic church corrected this misinterpretation. In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI even noted that early church fathers called Mary the "Apostle of the Apostles," since "Just as a woman had announced the words of death to the first man, so also a woman was the first to announce to the Apostles the words of life." ("Women at the Service of the Gospel")

Why does this matter? If you've ever had your reputation maligned, you know the pain of being misunderstood, and/or of others dismissing your experiences as illegitimate or worthless. We don't want to do this with Mary Magdalene! We rejoice in the reality that God forgives sinners, but this is not the primary take-away from Mary's life. The misconceptions distract us from the fact that her life was one of obedience and sacrifice; one that reflected a faith in Christ that persevered despite hardship.

## QUESTIONS

Can you think of a time your reputation or character was maligned? Or a time you maligned someone else? Ask the Lord to heal any hurts that remain from those circumstances.

## PRAYERS

**Sowing Seeds for Life (SSFL)**

Pray for the time, talent, and treasure of kind hearts to volunteer with Sowing Seeds for Life. Lord, help SSFL to fulfill its mission to minister to the Your people in these trying days.

# TUESDAY

Read **Matthew 8:26-39**

## Mary Magdalene, Delivered

Even though there is no evidence that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute, we do know that she had been delivered from seven demons (Luke 8:3). Demon possession is not something we talk about much today. A quick explanation is that demons are spiritual beings who work in opposition to God and who have some power over humans. While no details about Mary's experience are noted in the Gospels, from accounts like the story in Matthew 8, we can assume she experienced physical, mental, and spiritual torment.

Some scholars believe that demon possession refers to a myriad of physical and mental illnesses rather than something supernatural. But a close reading of the Gospels shows us that casting out demons was a distinguishing feature of Jesus' earthly ministry, often mentioned in addition to healing. (See the Sources page for a list of key biblical references.) Jesus' authority over the forces of evil and His ability to perform miracles, including exorcisms, were signs that God's Kingdom was at hand. *"But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you"* (Matthew 12:28). Mary's experience is a reminder that God has power over evil and that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:38-39).

Mary Magdalene was suffering when she met Jesus, and in that meeting the course of her life was changed. In *The Mary We Forgot*, Jennifer Powell McNutt writes, "In Mary Magdalene's story of healing, we are reminded that Jesus offers redemption for our lives on earth now and for what is to come. He is more powerful than the devil. He is our anchor, who loves to heal, call, and send surprising, unexpected people to glorify His name." Verse three of Martin Luther's familiar hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" points to these truths:

*And though this world with devils filled, should threaten  
to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to  
triumph through us.  
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
his rage we can endure,  
For lo! his doom is sure; one little word shall fell him.*

## QUESTIONS

We all experience times of physical, mental, or spiritual struggle. Are you struggling in one of these areas, or do you know someone who is? Ask the Lord for intervention, peace and comfort.

## PRAYERS

### Sowing Seeds for Life (SSFL)

Pray for grace and compassion that is necessary when helping others. Pray for the volunteers who drive the trucks and deliver food to the elderly. Pray for the kind hands who pack food in cars of families at the pantry. May more kind hearts join SSFL in its mission.

# WEDNESDAY

Read **Luke 8:1-3**

## Mary Magdalene, Devoted

The most likely reason Mary is called “The Magdalene” is that she was from Magdala, a fishing town on the coast of Galilee. While other towns had similar names, Magdala is within walking distance of Capernaum, where Jesus was based at the start of His ministry. Recent archaeological findings in the current day Israeli town of Migdal, including a 1st century synagogue, support this explanation. There are other theories about the title “Magdalene,” including the idea that it had to do with her hairstyle. It has also been suggested that this was a nickname that meant “Strong Tower.” Whatever the origin, this “nickname” helps us distinguish her from other Marys in the Bible.

Mary Magdalene’s deliverance marked the start of her journey with Jesus, but her story didn’t stop there. From that point on, she fully devoted her life to following Christ. Luke tells us that Mary and a number of other women joined the band of disciples and contributed to their support. Richard Bauckman writes, “Throughout the New Testament and frequently outside the New Testament, the Greek phrase used here refers to ‘material possessions or economic means.’” The same phrase is used in Matthew 19:21 when Jesus tells the rich young ruler to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. This means that we can interpret this to be financial

rather than domestic support, although the women undoubtedly also helped in that way.

A close reading of the Gospels suggests that these verses are not referring to a one-time event, but describing what is true going forward. Jesus traveled with a wider group than just the Twelve, and the group included women. Matthew recounts that when Jesus was crucified, “*Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee*” (Matthew 27:55).

When the Twelve are called, we read that “*they left everything and followed Jesus*” (Luke 5:11). This concept of “following” is often used to describe discipleship in the Gospels, and it is used here in reference to the women. For the early disciples, following Jesus meant giving up all that was familiar and comfortable, including the safety and security of their homes, their family and relationships, even their reputations.

## QUESTIONS

What might God be calling you to give up in order to follow more closely in this season?

## PRAYERS

### Sowing Seeds for Life (SSFL)

Pray for Sowing Seeds for Life to continue to serve those in need through all obstacles, especially in this difficult year. Help this ministry to receive the blessings of the community so that they can share them with those in need.



# THURSDAY

Read **Mark 15:40-41**

## Mary Magdalene, Determined

All four Gospel writers tell us that women were present at the crucifixion and death of Jesus. Matthew names Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Matthew 27:55-56). Mark also names Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and adds Salome (Mark 15:40-44). Luke identifies Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James (Luke 24:10). John expands the list to include the mother of Jesus, His mother's sister, and Mary of Clopas (John 19:25).

Some scholars believe there may be overlap in the lists. Even taking that into account, the fact that six to eight women are singled out of the "many women" mentioned in the text is telling. For many of us, this radically changes our vision for who was present that final week of Jesus' life.

When the disciples headed to Jerusalem that fateful week, their expectations were likely quite different from what they experienced when they got there. Once Jesus is arrested, the disciples respond in three ways. Some run (including Peter), some watch from a distance, and some stay near the cross.

While most of the male disciples are conspicuously absent from this point in the story, Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us that many of the women are still present. John places four of them (including Mary Magdalene) "*near the cross*" along with "*the disciple Jesus loved*" (John 19:25). This smaller group is close enough to have a private conversation with Jesus.

We might give the male disciples a pass for not having the courage to stay near that day, thinking that the risk might have been greater for them than for the women. But historical accounts tell us that the Romans had no qualms about crucifying women or even children. (Stackexchange.com)

Not only did Mary Magdalene stay until the very end, she took part in the burial of Jesus and returned to the tomb on the third day.

## QUESTIONS

This week take the opportunity to evaluate your own walk with Jesus and to count the cost of discipleship. Are you willing to follow in the steps of those who were "with Him"? Will you stand near, watch from a distance, or run in the other direction?

## PRAYERS

*Sowing Seeds for Life (SSFL)*

Pray for the light of the Lord to shine on and direct the programs of Sowing Seeds for Life and those who provide them. Help them through these difficult times personally, physically, and professionally so that they are always able to do good works while giving all glory to God.

# FRIDAY

Read **John 20:10-18**

## Mary Magdalene, Sent

We can only imagine how devastated Mary was after watching Jesus die and be buried. When she returned to the tomb on the third day, she was even more devastated to find that the stone covering the entrance had been rolled away, revealing an empty tomb. Not only has her Lord and Savior been crucified and buried, now the body is gone. Distraught, she asks someone standing near (not recognizing the risen Christ) if He knows where the body has been taken. The Man replied, “Mary,” and she knew it was Jesus.

Have you ever stopped to consider how meaningful it is that Jesus chose to make His first appearance to Mary Magdalene rather than to one of the other disciples? It seems appropriate, considering Mary had experienced the most dramatic life transformation, had traveled with Jesus throughout His ministry, and had remained at His side until the end and beyond. Her devotion is rewarded in this quiet intimate moment. Once again, her life is transformed from one of despair to hopefulness. Not only that, Jesus sends her to tell the other disciples that He has risen! She is the first person to encounter the risen Christ and the first sent out to share the good news.

It is disconcerting that when Mary and her companions run to tell the other disciples, we are told that they don’t believe the women.

Referring to this encounter, Heidi Strate writes, “We, also, come to know the Savior in small, intimate moments of love and grace and sudden understanding.

“We feel the message of hope and joy, and the call to our eternal family of God, burning on our hearts with the same passion that Mary Magdalene does—and yet our words will still, thousands of years later, sometimes fall upon the deaf ears of disciples who have retreated to their upper rooms.

“But for all of that, we still serve a God who chooses to be known in quiet garden moments and through the transformed hearts of the lowly, a God who meets us in the midst of our tears and grieving and sends us out into the world to tell of what we have seen.”

## QUESTIONS

What strikes you most about the encounter between Mary Magdalene and Jesus? Reflecting back on the week, how has your understanding of Mary changed? What lessons might you take away from her life that can deepen your own walk with Jesus?

## PRAYERS

### Sowing Seeds for Life (SSFL)

Continue to pray for Sowing Seeds for Life that all who use these resources are nourished in body, mind and spirit.

## Sources



- Biblical references to Mary Magdalene: Matthew 27:55-56, 61, 28:1-9; Mark 15:40-41, 47, 16:1, 9; Luke 8:2, 23:49, 24:1-11; John 19:25, 20:1, 11-18).
- “Women at the Service of the Gospel,” Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, 14 February 2007, [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2007/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20070214.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20070214.html)
- Biblical accounts of Jesus casting out demons: Mark 1:21-28, 5:1-20; Matthew 8:28-34, 12:22-23, 29; Luke 4:31-37, 8:26-39.
- Jennifer Powell McNutt, *The Mary We Forgot: What the Apostle to the Apostles Teaches the Church Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2024), pp. 144-145.
- Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress,” 1529, [https://hymnary.org/text/a\\_mighty\\_fortress\\_is\\_our\\_god\\_a\\_bulwark](https://hymnary.org/text/a_mighty_fortress_is_our_god_a_bulwark)
- Magdala Archeological Park, [www.magdala.org/archaeology](http://www.magdala.org/archaeology)
- Richard Bauckman, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), p. 113.
- “Could Women Be Crucified Under Roman Law?” taken from <https://history.stackexchange.com/questions/23954/could-women-be-crucified-under-roman-law>.
- Heidi Strate, “The Commissioning of Mary Magdalene” (The Junia Project, 2015). <https://juniaproject.com/commissioning-mary-magdalene>.

*These devotionals are written by a team of Glenkirk volunteers who represent a range of beliefs within the evangelical spectrum. As such, some of the expressed views may not necessarily represent those of pastoral leadership. If you find yourself challenged by a devo, explore why that might be and, should you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Kate Wallace Nunneley at [KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org](mailto:KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org). If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.*