



Sermon Outline

SEASON ONE - THE THING THAT HAPPENED IN-BETWEEN

LUKE 8:1-3

COME
And SEE

The
CHOSEN



The Thing That Happened In-between

This resource helps you show the difference Jesus can make in the life of anyone by exploring the story of Mary Magdalene. Simply put: this is a gospel sermon. It includes a clip from Season One, Episode 2 to show to the congregation, a suggested script for setting the scene before you show the clip, and a short sermon outline with main teaching points and pastoral prompts.

Sermon Title: The Thing That Happened In-between

Text: Luke 8:1-3

Dominant Thought: This is the testimony of all believers: we were one way, and now we are completely different, and the thing that happened in-between was Jesus.

[Download the Episode Clip: Now I'm Completely Different](#)

Setting the Scene (suggested script)

One of the few details we're given about Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus's followers, is that Jesus drove out seven demons from within her—a moment that's portrayed at the very end of the first episode of Season One of *The Chosen*. In the second episode of Season One, the creators of *The Chosen* imagine a moment in which Mary is visited by Nicodemus, a pharisee who had visited her once before to try to heal her—but was unsuccessful. He wants to see if she's really been healed at all, and if so, how. This is the conversation that unfolds between the two of them...

***If you've never introduced your congregation to *The Chosen*, consider slightly tweaking the last line of the script above:** *"One of the few details we're given about Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus's followers, is that Jesus drove out seven demons from within her—a moment that's*

portrayed at the very end of the first episode of Season One of The Chosen, a television series that explores the life of Jesus through the eyes of followers like Mary. Just after Mary's healing, in the second episode of the season, she's visited by Nicodemus, a pharisee who..."

Sermon Outline

Introduction

*Show the clip from *The Chosen*, using the suggested script above to set the scene.

*After showing the clip, you could transition to the sermon proper with a simple word, like:

"Mary's story is stunning in its power and beauty; but as unique as it is, it's the story of all who have encountered Jesus and believe..."

Sermon Body

I. This is the testimony of all believers: we once were one way—and we learned it's no way to live.

Main Teaching Point: It can be a challenge to identify fully with Mary. After all, according to the Scriptures her body and mind had been ravaged by seven evil spirits. To borrow the language that's so often used: she'd been possessed by the powers at work in this world. And though this is stating the obvious, it needs to be stated just the same: Mary's life was no way to live. From the very first episode of the first season, the creators of *The Chosen* paint a picture of what life might have been like for Mary, and it's a dreadful portrait to take in. She never knows when she'll be laid low once more by spiritual attack. Her room is perpetually ransacked, and she's disheveled and dejected. People stare at her with disgust when she walks along the street—if they even look at her at all. And when Mary's spoken to, most folks don't even call her by her real name. With pity at best and disgust at worst, they call her "Lilith"—or "Lily" for short—a name that was used in mythical Jewish writings and wider Middle Eastern literature as a way to describe female demonic activity. It bears repeating: *Mary's life was no way to live*. Though to be fair, everyone at that time was living a life that was no way to live. While it's true very few were demon-possessed just as Mary was, it's just as true to say *everyone* was possessed in one way or another. Two ways most readily come to mind. No human being has ever walked this earth—not even Adam and Eve—and not been self-possessed. That is, *everyone* from the Garden long ago to the town where Mary lived at the time was obsessed with themselves—with what they wanted, when they wanted it, how they wanted it, and all

of this regardless of others. Self-obsession is possession, is it not? There's no demon at the control panel, but there's certainly a selfish self! *And this was no way to live for the people.* Mary's body and mind had been ravaged by demonic possession; *self*-possession has the power to wreck every last relationship a person has. No one can think entirely of themselves and think they stand much of a chance for lasting community. And as if self-possession weren't enough, everyone at the time of Mary was *possessed by possessions*. While this was true of everyone, the possessions doing the possessing differed from person to person, of course. For a Roman soldier, it was power. For the businessmen and women, profit. For someone like Nicodemus, answers. They all possessed something and were possessed by it. Everyone possessed something that possessed them in return. *And this was no way to live for the people.* The constant work to possess what was most precious to them was exhausting—crippling, even. And when the possession was suddenly stripped from them—who were they at all anymore? Their identity had been stolen! Which had a tendency to bring out the very worst in them—the stuff of jealousy, rage, *violence*. Possession was no way to live—not for Mary, not for all.

Pastoral Prompt: When we encounter someone in Scripture who is possessed—whether it's Mary or the man just on the other side of the Sea of Galilee (who's often simply called “the demoniac”) or the boy Jesus encountered at the foot of the mountain where the Transfiguration occurred—we view ourselves as completely separate from them with regard to spiritual condition. But for those of us who now believe, we would tell you: we once were possessed, too. We once were *self*-possessed. That is, we once were obsessed with ourselves—with what we wanted, when we wanted it, how we wanted it, and with no regard for our neighbor. *And we found that it was no way to live.* It ravaged every last relationship we had. And we would tell you that we were once possessed by possessions. For some of us it was power. For others it was profit. For still others, it was answers. And it was no way to live. Working to maintain our hold on those possessions that were so precious to us was exhausting, and we confess with no small amount of shame that we did anything—*anything*—to keep hold, and it would sometimes cost us everything. Borrowing a bit from the scene we watched of Mary in *The Chosen*, this is the testimony of all believers: we once were one way—and we learned it's no way to live. Will you lay claim to your own possession, as unsettling and uncomfortable as it might be to do so?

II. This is the testimony of all believers: we are now completely different—and the life we live is good.

Main Teaching Point: While the scene that's been shown from the second episode of Season One of *The Chosen* is beautiful in and of itself, it's all the more beautiful if you've seen the first episode. As mentioned once already, in that *first* episode, the viewer is introduced to Mary as a disheveled, dejected woman afraid of her own shadow, because of the shadows that have taken up residence in her body. But in the scene from Episode 2 that's been shown, when Mary first steps into view, there's a radiance to her, isn't there? She's a tad shy, but she's smiling to herself just the same—and for once even willing to look someone in the eye and offer a greeting. She's not stooping and stumbling along; she's moving through the street with grace and a proper confidence. *She is completely different.* And of course she is, because evil has been sent fleeing. Her body and mind have been swept clean in one divine fell swoop. She no longer rages at others in uncontrollable ways. She doesn't look for hope in the bottom of a bottle. She's living a new way and the life she now lives is good. Though to be fair, Mary was *the first of many* who found themselves living a new way—living a life that was good. All about her at that time were scores of people from all walks of life—fishermen, housewives, children, the diseased and the suffering, zealots, and even tax collectors—who were one way one minute and completely different the next. All about her were people who had been possessed in their own way—self-possessed and possessed by possessions—but were now dying to self and sacrificing what they once held as precious for the sake of their neighbor. The new way of living was hard, but it was good. It was a shattering of the cycles that had ravaged relationships and cost them everything.

Pastoral Prompt: We once were self-possessed—obsessed with ourselves, thinking only of what we wanted, when we wanted it, how we wanted it, and with no regard for our neighbor. It ravaged every last relationship we had. And we once were possessed by possessions, and working to maintain our hold on those possessions that were so precious to us was exhausting and compromising. It cost us everything at all times. This is the testimony of all believers: we once were one way—and we learned it's no way to live. But this, too, is the testimony of all believers: we were one way, and now we are completely different. And we're completely different in two ways. First of all, we are learning to die to self and to sacrifice what we once held as precious for the sake of others (and also ourselves). We are embracing a way of life that runs completely counter to the common way. And the second way we are different is in our very spirit. If you had known us before, you would hardly recognize us now. Like it was with

Mary, there's a radiance to us that once wasn't there. There's a beaming within and often on our lips. We lock eyes with strangers and offer a greeting. We're far less prone to stoop and stumble along. We move along the street with a little more grace and a proper confidence. *This* is the testimony of all believers: we are now completely different—and *the life we live is good*. It's difficult and there is no absence of pain. Make no mistake about it! It's hard; but it's good. Will *you* lay claim to your own possession, as unsettling and uncomfortable as it might be to do so? Will *you* confess it's led to a manner of living that is just no way to live? And like Nicodemus peeking in on Mary's transformation with astonishment, will *you* take a look about you and see that there are others here and there who seem to be completely different—others who have entered into a new way of living that is *good*?

III. This is the testimony of all believers: we were one way, and now we are completely different, and the thing that happened in-between was Jesus.

Main Teaching Point: In this second episode of Season One, the creators of *The Chosen* imagine Nicodemus having heard rumors of Mary's healing—of her suddenly being completely different—and he finds it hard to believe. After all, he'd seen first-hand the dire demonic state she'd been in, because he'd been enlisted to try to drive out the demons himself. And so he goes to find her, to see if she's really been healed at all, and if so, *how*. It all leads to the conversation we watched play out, which all leads to Mary's stirring testimony: "I was one way, and now I am completely different, and the thing that happened in-between was him." She's talking about Jesus, of course. She's talking about the moment that occurs at the end of the first episode of Season One. While at a local bar, she encounters Jesus, who tells her there is no hope to be found in drink. She does her best to run from him, but he calls to her by her real name—not "Lilith"—causing her to stop dead in her tracks. As he draws near, he quotes from Isaiah 43: "Thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.'" And he takes her head in his hands and it is clear that in that moment, the demons flee. As Nicodemus plays the role of investigator, doing his best to tease a testimony from Mary, she bluntly tells him how she has been healed. It isn't anything Nicodemus did in his earlier visit to her. It's certainly nothing she did. "*Jesus changed me,*" she says. "*Nothing more, nothing less.*" And this was, of course, the testimony that could be offered by anyone who encountered Jesus and chose to turn and follow him. You see this throughout the New Testament. Whether it was a fisherman, a housewife, a child, a crippled man, a zealot, or a tax collector, they could each and all say, "I was one way, and now I am completely different, and the thing that happened in-between was him." They didn't experience Jesus taking their haunted head in his hands to send demons fleeing. While some of them experienced a miracle of their own, most of them—and entire crowds of people—

were changed simply by Jesus's teaching. Through, say, the Sermon on the Mount or a slew of parables, they were introduced to a new manner of living that taught them how to die to self, taught them how to shatter the vicious, destructive cycles of the wider world. But the common denominators for Mary and for them all were (1) an old and broken way of living, (2) a new and good way of living, and (3) Jesus, the one who introduced the way and was the way into it.

Pastoral Prompt: We once were self-possessed and possessed by possessions—and both proved devastating for us. This is the testimony of all believers: we once were one way—and we learned it's no way to live. But this, too, is the testimony of all believers: we are now completely different—and the life we live is good. We are learning to die to self and to sacrifice what we once held as precious for the sake of others. We are embracing a way of life that runs completely counter to the common way. And while it's difficult and there is no absence of pain, it's good and restorative. But the testimony isn't complete. This—this—is the testimony of all believers: we were one way, and now we are completely different, and the thing that happened in-between was Jesus. Mary's testimony is our testimony. And Mary's testimony and ours can be yours.

Conclusion

*This clearly is a sermon that lends itself to a time of invitation that honors your congregation's faith tradition. While the sermon is mostly about Mary, one suggestion is to close the sermon by circling back to Nicodemus. In the scene that's been shown—and really, in all of Season One from beginning to end—Nicodemus struggles to find his way to belief. The evidence is there, but he can't overcome his doubts, his cynicism—his own self-possession and being possessed by possessions—and in many ways the entire season finds him mirroring “the old Mary.” He's always spiritually stooped and stumbling along. By the end of the season he's a weeping mess. It's tragic to watch it unfold. You can issue the call that no one's testimony has to be Nicodemus's—that anyone's testimony can be Mary's and that of all believers.

