September 8, 2019, Sunday

Women's Sunday: Remembering and Celebrating Women's Ministry



READINGS: OT Judges 4:4-16 Psalm 132 Epistle Phil.4:1-7 Gospel Luke 8:1-3

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Today, we are again reminded that God created a human society to live our lives with UNCONDITIONAL love, equality, friendship, and trust. In scripture, the story of God and humankind is a story of relationship and longing for relationship: God's costly seeking of relationship with us; our seeking of relationship with God; our relationship with one another. ESPECIALLY celebrating the ministry and relationship between male and female.

Just relationships between women and men, girls and boys are fundamental to human flourishing – the abundant life that God wills for all God's children. However, in our churches and communities around the world, we are falling short of this Gospel imperative. Gendered attitudes, assumptions, stereotypes, and expectations can shape negative behaviours and impose burdens on all of us, especially when it comes to power - who has power and how power is used. Unequal power relations between women and men, whether among individuals or embedded in social, economic, religious and political structures, can have deeply harmful consequences. Women and girls, men and boys may become trapped in distorted mythologies and theologies, to their detriment and the detriment of families, communities, and nations.

Women and girls may be systematically disadvantaged and oppressed across every sphere of life. Gender-based violence is an endemic manifestation of unequal power relations between women and men, girls and boys and is perpetrated across a variety of settings, from domestic to educational and in times of war and political unrest.

When the expectant creature began to live in a state of social order, the idea of balance began to dominate. The Jews did not give importance to women. They were tossed into prayer halls and synagogues. It was an awkward and unacceptable practice for women to go where men were. In this context, Jesus Christ as the Redeemer continued his sovereignty in the world at the dawn of mankind. From that day on, women's lives began to be equitable, and everyone who fulfilled the Father's image was a brother, sister, and mother (Math 12:46-50).

God has created and glorified in his relationship with us. The opposite of wanting to be worthy of one another over the differences of male and female, to hold each other's sides and to live in a mutual understanding.

1. **Personality Capacity:** (Judges 4: 4 - 16) Deborah is portrayed as a woman who is strong and uplifting in a society that sees women as weak, easily seduced, and unable to study. They were seen as honey, with specialties of planning, agility, and giving to others. Deborah was called the prophetess and the mother of Israel because she was the fourth, only female Judge of Israel and was filled by the Holy Spirit. She is a woman who sits under the 'date palm tree' in the Ephraim area between Ramah and Bethel (4:5). She is specializing in the power to inspire the people of Israel, who fear God and are scattered with a pure and sincere vision. As Deborah prophesied, a battle is fought (Barak declines to go without the prophetess. Deborah consents, but declares that the glory of the victory will, therefore, belong to a woman.), and Sisera is completely defeated. The Biblical account of Deborah ends with the statement that after the battle, there was peace in the land for 40 years (Judges 5:31).

Deborah was proud of her ability to act, her personality, and self-respect with the vision of all events. According to the proverb 'The Cradle and the Ruling of the Nation,' the women in the spirit of the Lord should be remembered and honored by the dreamer. Pandit Ramabai's selfless work in the history of the Indian Church and the great service and sacrifice of Mother Teresa are worthy of note.

2. **Standing firm in the call**: (Phil 4: 1 - 7) In Philippians 4:2, Paul urged Euodia and he urged Syntyche to, literally, "think the same thing". That Paul addressed Euodia and Syntyche personally and individually, reinforces the idea that these women were influential members of the Philippian church and possibly were its leaders. "Think" (*phroneō*) is a keyword in the letter to the Philippians. In the preceding verses, Paul had been encouraging mature people to have the same thinking as himself, that of reaching out for the goal of spiritual perfection (Phil. 3:14-15). It could be that Paul is carrying on this thought and, using almost identical language (in the Greek), is saying, "I encourage/urge Euodia and I encourage/urge Syntyche to have the same thinking in the Lord", that of aspiring to spiritual maturity and perfection (Phil. 4:2). Their names are written in the life of those who cooperate with the Lord in the Gospel (Phil. 4.23), those who fought for the good news in good faith in the church, and who lived the life of the Lord and were recognized for their good work. Realizing this, Paul may have been saying that he wanted the women to have the same thinking as *him*, not of each other.

Paul like Christ Jesus had no distinction between male and female. He recognizes and highlights that you are all one in union with Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:27). The development of science and the rise of civilization at this time of life in the midst of shaking humanity and making spirituality unnecessary Blessed are the women who fulfill the things of the Lord's will without any expectation, with modesty and quietness. In the early church, the development of building the faith at the call of the Lord, women were equally eager to serve like men. All those who learn that they are learned are encouraged to recognize and celebrate the work of women.

3. **Dedicated Workers: (Luke 8: 1 - 3)** It was evident in the disciples of Jesus Christ that women too are capable of working with the spirit of commitment in any work. Jesus Christ's turning point in the community, influenced by the principles of the Jewish clergy, revealed a new insight (Luke 8: 1 - 3), that Jesus removed the demonic spirits of Mary and healed her. Not only that, but the women were also unselfish, deprived of their belongings and served with Jesus. The women who accompanied him from Galilee to Judea were near him until the end (Luke 23:27). Also, the women who had the privilege of proclaiming the resurrection to the Lord were women (Luke 24: 9).

From the beginning, they gave themselves as the proofs. In Church history, many women were brutally persecuted and beaten during the reign of the emperor Hadrian (117 - 138) and Antonius (138 - 161). That growth and development in the church which forever thought of and admired is done by women who work in the footsteps of those who have stood for Christ.

Let us not forget Charles Mead, Smt.Norton, Smt. Blant Ford, Smt.Isabella Thobon, Smt. Wilson, Smt. Marshman, Dr. Ida Scaddur, Kiran Bedi, Justice M. Fathima Beevi, Kalpana Chawla, Prathibha Patel, Smt. Meira Kumar, Hima Dass, Gomathi Marimuthu, PV Sindhu etc for the lasting impact they made on society.

May the women's role in the broader vision of theology become a spiritual revival. Personality, the persistence of call and commitment will continue to exist! Let the work be a good guide for the future community. We will hand in hand pursue, in pure heart, the work of the Lord. As those who have received God's blessings, for the Lord's work to continue, let us commit ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

For our Reflection:

How do we equip women to lead better lives in a world that is full of issues and challenges? For instance, every 12 minutes a lady is pushed to disgrace against her will. In India for every 3.5 minutes crimes are committed against women on the basis of dowry, domestic violence, and child abuse. If we look into realities we will understand that a real liberation for women is yet to gain. However, situations are gradually changing and God is using women in India to blow the trumpet for a social change. I am sure a true and full liberation for women in church and society is not very far.

Let us remember and celebrate the ministry of women and give all glory to God.

HAVE A BLESSED WOMEN'S SUNDAY