

Session Three: The Book of Faith, Women and Justice

Luke 1:46-55 (NRSV)

⁴⁶ And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."



Discussion topic: Women in Scripture (Alternative passages may be suggested)

- John 4 (The Samaritan woman)
- Mark 16:1-15 (The resurrection)

Discussion questions:

1. Be attentive to what aspects of the story seem predictable. What aspects of the story seem unpredictable?
2. How does this story contribute to the overall narrative of Jesus?
3. What does a literary interpretation reveal about the role of women in Jesus' ministry? (See the following additional Gospel texts mentioning women if the group or particular individuals want to delve more deeply into other passages where women are central characters.)

Discussion topic: Jesus redefines power

In the Gospel of Matthew when the Pharisees ask Jesus which is the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:35-40), his response is all encompassing.

Discussion questions:

1. What are the greatest commandments that Jesus lists?
2. How might these commandments affect the way that women, or any group previously discriminated against, are treated?
3. How might congregations or church bodies embody these commandments in the world today?
4. How can we individually embody these commandments in the world today?
5. What are the implications of these commandments for issues of women and justice?

Wrapping up: One in Christ as breakthrough

Read Galatians 3:27-28, the text that sets the path for the work of the Women and Justice Task Force. How does this passage throw perspective on your discussions throughout this study of “Some Issues in Biblical Interpretation Regarding Women and Justice?”

Communication guidelines

1. We agree to listen to each other respectfully without making assumptions or judgments.
2. We recognize that each person has different experiences and has different styles of communicating.
3. We will each own our own thoughts and feelings and speak in “I” statements rather than “you” statements that define others.
4. We will approach our conversation from a stance of being curious and ask questions of each other to draw out the intended meaning of the speaker.
5. We will acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit and be attentive to what is being stirred up in our midst.
6. We will keep confidentiality, which means not sharing the stories of others outside of the group unless specifically told otherwise.

Useful resources

Women and Justice Task Force website: www.ELCA.org/womenandjustice

ELCA Book of Faith Initiative website: www.bookoffaith.org