

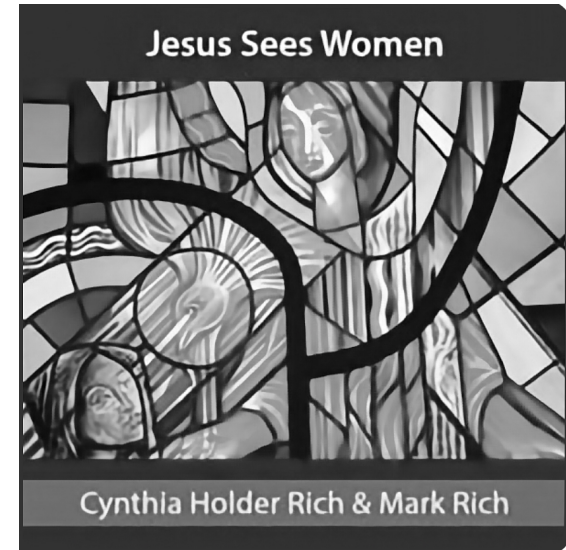
THINKING POINTS:

In what way does this lesson change, or enhance your understanding of God/Jesus/Spirit?

Next week's lesson:

"The Woman Who Stole Her Healing"

Mark 5:24-34



TALKING POINTS

Lesson 1

"The Woman Who Lost Everything"

Luke 7:11-17

Focus scripture

Luke 7:15

"The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother."

Food for Thought:

Think of a time, lately, where you felt you were unseen.

“Attention is the beginning of devotion.” Mary Oliver

Discussion: Who do we “see” or not “see”?

THE PLIGHT OF THE WIDOW

Some historical and cultural clarification:

Roman Law provided for women’s independence, property ownership, inheritance, etc., but only applied to Roman citizens. It was not Jewish law that resulted in ill-treatment of women, but social status, wealth, nature of family relationships and the like.

As it is true today, note “Life for Widows in Tanzania” (in today’s study notes), and other third world countries, widows are more vulnerable to injustice, poverty, and violence, than women who have strong family ties and wealth. Here are two examples:

Afghanistan: “A few years ago, one of our neighbors in Afghanistan fell from his roof during the winter. He got injuries and lost his life. After his passing, his wife’s life changed drastically. A few days after his funeral, his mother took his kids and kicked out his wife out. His family firmly believed that she was the reason for his death because she had brought bad luck. After few days, the widowed woman had to move to Iran to live with her brother because she had no means for economic self-sufficiency.

“According to the United Nations, there are an estimated two million women widows in Afghanistan. They account for about six percent of the population and face a wide range of issues including legal discrimination, lack of economic opportunities, and stigma. Too often when a man dies, many of his wife’s rights do as well. There is a tradition of marrying widowed women, often without their consent, to their brother-in-law. This is done partly so they have someone to financially provide for them and partly to maintain familial rights and ownership over the children and inheritance of the woman. In addition, Afghan women don’t have custody rights over their children after the father passes away. Often grandfathers or uncles on the side of the father receive custody over children. This is partly due to lack of economic opportunities for widowed women. When they can’t afford to provide for their children, their deceased husband’s family is more likely to take over custody.” What Life Is Like for Afghan Widows Zahra Wakilzada, contributor, Free Women Writers <https://www.freewomenwriters.org/2017/06/23/life-afghan-widows-afghanistan/> June 23, 2017

Iraq: “...in 2009, one of the grounds for the Minister for Women’s Affairs’ resignation was that she had no resources to register and address the needs of what she called “an army of widows”. Nothing has changed since then, and Iraqi widows are living in extreme poverty, fear and vulnerability to violence, sexual violence, abductions, forced remarriage, honor killings and trafficking.

(continued:) Few widows actually are able to access the pensions, which in any case are derisory in value and inadequate to support minimal living costs.” Issues Of Discrimination In Widowhood In Iraq Margaret Owen, WPD (Widows for Peace through Democracy) Director

WHO DOES GOD SEE & WHY?

In each of the Hebrew scripture references

1. To whom does God give attention?
2. Is there a reason?
3. Is there a warning or a blessing?
4. Why do you think God included these admonitions in Jewish law?

Exodus 22:21-24; Deuteronomy 12:17-18; Deuteronomy 14:28-29; Deuteronomy 24:17-22; Psalm 146:5-9; Proverbs 15:25; Isaiah 1:16-17; Zechariah 7:8-10

5. To whom should we give attention besides widows and orphans?
6. Why would God admonish God's chosen to "see" these people?
7. How might this relate to God's opinion concerning divorce?
8. What do these scriptures tell you about God's nature?

HOW DID JESUS DO? Read Luke 7:11-17

9. Consider the story from the perspective of the crowd of mourners, Jesus' disciples, Jesus, and the widow. What might be their reactions?
10. In Jesus' time, a woman's children were not their own. The woman belonged to the male head of the household. If divorced or widowed, those children would belong to the surviving male head of household. The widow could be taken in or dismissed, but the children were not hers. In this context what did Jesus do to the son in the story?
11. What kind of a statement did Jesus make by doing that?

HOW DID THE EARLY CHURCH DO? Read Acts 6:1-3

12. What does this story say about followers of the Way living as Jesus commanded?
13. Consider also: Did they relegate this as "women's work?" If it took seven men to distribute food, how many widows might there have been, and what does that say about the makeup of the early church?