

Women Empowerment in Christendom in St Luke's Gospel

Wilson I. B. Onuigbo

Medical Foundation & Clinic, 8 Nsukka Lane, Enugu 4001001, Nigeria

**Corresponding Author:* Wilson I. B. Onuigbo, Medical Foundation & Clinic, 8 Nsukka Lane, Enugu 4001001, Nigeria, wilson.onuigbo@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, there is much ado about women empowerment such as in Nigeria. Therefore, in this article, St Luke, who is regarded as a learned man, is shown to have contributed to it. Much as the Gospels of St Matthew, St Mark and St Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels, because they share many stories in common, it has been pointed out that some stories are only found in Luke. In this paper, I aim to show that Luke's singular vision included the empowerment of women.

Keywords: Women, empowerment, world, Gospels, St Luke, Christendom.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there is much ado about women empowerment. For instance, as regards Nigeria (1), Umar and Abdullahi observed "the continuous under representation of women in both the elective and appointive positions at all levels of the society." I am persuaded that biblical sources will throw important light on this important question.

Empowerment of Women in St Luke

The reading of the *Holy Bible* shows that St Luke revealed womanhood all over. And this was right from Chapter 1. The feminine theme was really persuasive. Thus, a verse named Elizabeth as the wife of Zacharias, a priest (2). Note the ideal family background "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (3). It is of interest that Elizabeth was the relative of the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ (4). In this connection, the pregnancies of both women were so divine that the babe in the womb of Elizabeth repeatedly "leaped" for joy when both women greeted each other (5).

Other curious aspects of Chapter 1 include how John the Baptist's father was mute on account of a temple vision (6) and how the mother took over his naming (7). These circumstances were such that their neighbors wondered (8): "What kind of child will this be?"

Be it noted that Chapter 2 brought out several aspects of the woman, Mary, including her pregnancy (9) and the care she took over her

firstborn Son, for she "wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (10). There, the shepherds, who heard the good news from the very angels, visited them (11). As we are told, "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart" (12).

Heart moving was the account concerning Anna, a prophetess and "widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple but served God with fasting and prayers night and day" (13). It was more than mere chance for her to come into the temple "in that instant" (14) when Christ was brought in "according to the custom of the law" (15).

Law abiding were Christ's parents for they went to Jerusalem "every year at the Feast of the Passover" (16). But, during the particular journey, when Christ was but 12 years old, parental care was somehow amiss (17). Thus, after 3 whole days, they had to return to look for Him. On finding Him in the temple, Mary said: "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously" (18)! Thereafter, He returned with them and was "subject to" parental care (19).

Care rendered to Elijah by a widow in Zarepath was instanced by Jesus as a divine selection of one woman out of many. As Jesus had it (20), this occurred as follows:

But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land.

Land of Galilee comes to mind as regards Christ's visit to Capernaum. There, another woman became prominent. It was Simon's wife's mother who was "sick with a high fever" (21). On being requested by some people to see her, Jesus "stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her" (22). Strikingly, she arose and her service, which was rendered to them, was "immediate."

Immediate cure took place in the city of Nain (23). There, the dead body of the only son of a widow was being carried out for burial. It is noteworthy that, during the miraculous outcome, a large crowd was with her, thus showing her popular standing.

Standing of John the Baptist was highly appreciated when, in great sorrow, he sent messengers to Jesus (24). Incidentally, it was a fine opportunity for Jesus to place women on a high pedestal thus (25):

For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

He also surprisingly elevated the status of "a woman in the city who was a sinner" (26). Indeed, when that woman knew that Jesus was sitting at a table in a Pharisee's house, she wept and attended to Jesus – complete with kissing of His feet and anointing of these feet with fragrant oil (27). Thereafter, the much appreciative Jesus said to her "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace" (28).

Peace reigned in the hearts of "certain women." They were listed as "certain women (29) who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities – Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance".

Substance and not mere parenthood impressed Jesus. Thus, when His mother and brothers came looking for Him as He was busy with a crowd, He retorted as follows (30) "My mother and brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it".

It was a faithful woman that was reported elsewhere. I like the way it was said of her (31) that her flow of blood had not stopped despite spending all her wealth on doctors! In contrast (32), stopped was the flow when she purposely merely touched just the border of the garment of Jesus. Importantly, there was even added benefit

thus (33): "Daughter, be of good cheer, your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

Peace was reigning in the house of a ruler of the synagogue named Jairus. Alas! The man had an only daughter who was dying (34). On arrival at her death-bed, Jesus (35) "Permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl." Finally (36), He raised the dead girl and "the parents were astonished."

Astonished was "a certain woman named Martha (who) welcomed Him into her house" (37). Interestingly, she had to complain about her sister, Mary. Note how Jesus dealt with that family misunderstanding (38): "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

Her voice was noticeably raised in the crowd while Jesus was speaking. Who was she? She was described as "a certain woman" (39). As she intoned, "Blessed is the woman that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" Incidentally, Jesus replied (40): "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it."

It pained Jesus that He was dealing with "an evil generation," i.e., one that "seeks a sign" (41). Thereupon, He offered the following example of shining womanhood (42): "The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here."

Here on earth, what did Jesus say that he brought? "Do you," He said (43), "Suppose that I came to give peace on earth?" He continued (44): "Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." Then, He concluded thus (45): "Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?"

Time came when Jesus was teaching on the Sabbath in one of the synagogues and a woman showed up greatly deformed by up to eighteen years of suffering (46). Of course, He cured her that Sabbath day to the consternation of the ruler of the synagogue. Thereupon, Jesus argued thus (47): "So ought not this woman, being a

daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound – think of it – for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” Little wonder that His adversaries were put to shame and all the multitude rejoiced.

Rejoiced, as a parable portrayed, was the woman who had ten silver coins, lost one coin, lighted a lamp, and swept the house until she found it (48). With this example, Jesus concluded as follows (49): “Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Repents is something necessary in the issue of divorce. It was found to be an adulterous practice by Jesus (50). On this issue, He was emphatic: “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.”

Adultery was not the only issue to be aware of but even normal marriage. This came up when Jesus compared what would happen to Him with what occurred during the time of Noah (51): “They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.”

All were utterly destroyed. This was why He exemplified with the story of Sodom (52). As he stressed (53), “Remember Lot’s wife.”

Wife, who had lost her husband, was used by Christ to teach the need for persistence in praying. The particular case referred to a judge (54). Apparently, the famous “importunate widow” succeeded because the judge’s introspection was singular (55): “Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.” Good for everyday life.

Life after death was the subject of a discussion (56). It was between some Sadducees and Jesus in terms of one wife who survived as many as 7 brothers but still had no issue! Jesus answered them well by explaining that, in heaven, there is no marriage, seeing that, as He put it (57), “they are equal to the angels and are sons of God.”

God, incidentally, does not favor pretentious “long prayers” (58).

This was what Jesus taught when He exemplified with scribes who, despite such prayers, “devour widows’ houses.”

Houses could not have concerned the widow who had only two mites! I like this story very much (59). This is because Jesus used the plural “two” mites.

If she had only one mite, the decisive aspect of choice would have been absent. As it happened, she had the two mites and gave both, i.e., she gave all!

All the disciples were pitied by Jesus when He contemplated the coming of evil days. Such days included betrayal “even by parents” (60). And, as for pregnant and nursing mothers (61), they too were pitied because “there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon the people.”

People, as things turned out, eventually joined in condemning Jesus to death. There was even the betrayal by Peter. Thus, when “a certain servant girl” (62) said to Peter that he was one of those with Jesus, there was vehement denial. “Woman,” Peter asserted (63), “I do not know Him.” However, in due time, poor Peter was constrained not just to weep (64), but to weep bitterly.

Bitterly did women mourn and lament when Jesus was being led away to be crucified (65). Note how Jesus responded to them (66): “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore, and the breasts which never nursed!”

Nursed was the painful experience of seeing Jesus die on the cross. This concerned the “women who followed Him from Galilee” (67). Next, this same group followed Joseph of Arimathea and observed “the tomb and how the body was laid” (68). Moreover, “they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils,” but had to rest on the Sabbath (69); this was “according to the commandment.”

Commandment having been obeyed, action followed “very early in the morning” to the extent that this particular group as well as “certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared” (70). Note the recurrent word “THEY!” It appeared SIX whole times during that eventful day (71). Included in their unique experiences was seeing the two angels who informed them that Jesus “is risen.” At this final stage, some women were named (72) thus: “It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother

Women Empowerment in Christendom in St Luke's Gospel

of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles.”

Apostles, i.e., the men folk, actually featured quite late. Thus, it was at this final stage that Peter “arose and ran to the tomb” (73). Moreover, the two men, who were travelling to Emmaus and who were conversing with the risen Christ, told Him point-blank (74):

Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said: but Him they did not see.

CONCLUSION

See, in the fullness of time, would be the full empowerment of women. For instance, there was a time in Britain when only men went to the Universities. Thus, “alumnus” stood for a male student with “alumni” as plural. Therefore, in order to rightly include university women, I proposed elsewhere in 2005 an all embracing word (75). Indeed, I borrowed it as “alumna” just as “manual,” e.g., manual labour, is the English rendition of the Latin “manus.” Promotion, in conclusion, should be sought by one and all in what must be the ultimate goal on earth. What is it? It is to make heaven. So did St Luke! Consequently, let us all pray through the merits of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!

REFERENCES

- [1] Umar MZ, Abdullahi A. Women empowerment and Nigeria's development: Perspectives, challenges and prospects. *Journal of Research in National Development*, 2007; 5(2): 1-1.
- [2] Lk 1:5.
- [3] Lk 1:6.
- [4] Lk 1:36.
- [5] Lk 1:41,44.
- [6] Lk 1:22.
- [7] Lk 1:60.
- [8] Lk 1:66.
- [9] Lk 2:5.
- [10] Lk 2:7.
- [11] 2:15.
- [12] Lk 2:19.
- [13] Lk 2:37.
- [14] Lk 2:38.
- [15] Lk 2:27.

- [16] Lk 2:41.
- [17] Lk 2:43.
- [18] Lk 2:48.
- [19] Lk 2:51.
- [20] Lk 4:25.
- [21] Lk 4:38.
- [22] Lk 4:39.
- [23] Lk 7:11-15.
- [24] Lk 7:19.
- [25] Lk 7:28.
- [26] Lk 7:37.
- [27] Lk 7:38.
- [28] Lk 7:50.
- [29] Lk 8:2-3.
- [30] Lk 8:21.
- [31] Lk 8:43.
- [32] Lk 8:44.
- [33] Lk 8:48.
- [34] Lk 8:42.
- [35] Lk 8:51.
- [36] Lk 8:56.
- [37] Lk 10:38.
- [38] Lk 10:41-42.
- [39] Lk 11:27.
- [40] Lk 11:28
- [41] Lk 11:29
- [42] Lk 11:31
- [43] Lk 12:51
- [44] Lk 12:53
- [45] Lk 12:56
- [46] Lk 13:11
- [47] Lk 13:16
- [48] Lk 15:8
- [49] Lk 15:10
- [50] Lk 16:18
- [51] 1 Lk 5:30
- [52] Lk 17:28.
- [53] Lk 17:32.
- [54] Lk 18:2.
- [55] Lk 18:3-5.
- [56] Lk 20:28-31
- [57] Lk 20:36
- [58] Lk 20:47.
- [59] Lk 21:4.
- [60] Lk 21:16.
- [61] Lk 21:23
- [62] Lk 22:56.
- [63] Lk 22:57.
- [64] Lk 22:62
- [65] Lk 23:27.

Women Empowerment in Christendom in St Luke's Gospel

[66] Lk 23:28-29.

[67] Lk 23:49.

[68] Lk 23:55.

[69] Lk 23:56.

[70] Lk 24:1.

[71] Lk 24:1.

[72] Lk 24:10.

[73] Lk 24:12.

[74] Lk 24:22-24.

[75] Onuigbo WIB. Language, Latin and learning. Bulletin of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, 2005; 34:8.

Citation: Wilson I. B. Onuigbo, "Women Empowerment in Christendom in St Luke's Gospel", *Journal of Religion and Theology*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 24-28, 2018.

Copyright: © 2018 Wilson I. B. Onuigbo. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.