

Women and the Ministry of Preaching at Culver Palms Church of Christ

Creation: The conviction that gifted women may proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ through preaching is rooted, first of all, in creation. Both men and women are created equally in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and are together the crowning act of God's creation (Genesis 2:18-24). Sin enters the divine/human story and with it distorted and alienated relationships between the sexes and God and humankind. Yet, God continued to work through women like Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, and Mary.

The Ministry of Jesus: As Jesus of Nazareth ushers in God's kingdom, barriers that once divided people are crossed. Jesus welcomes women to sit at his feet and become his disciples (Luke 10:38-42) as well as travel with him and support his ministry (Luke 8:1-3). Women "bear witness" to Jesus as the Messiah, the bringer of living water (John 4:39-42). And in God's providence, Mary Magdalene is the first witness to the resurrection of Jesus and the one sent to "announce" the good news of the resurrection to the other disciples. The resurrected Jesus commissions his disciples, without regard to gender, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21).

New Creation: As God's new creation breaks into the world through the resurrection of Jesus, God's promised Spirit is poured out upon all flesh such that "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17-18).

In this new creation, those who have clothed themselves with Christ in baptism are to realize there is "no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). As a result, women pray and prophesy in the gathered assembly for worship (I Corinthians 11:1-16). God gifts all followers of Jesus for ministry, without gender distinctions, (Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:1-31, 14:1-33; I Peter 4:10-11) to build up the church and as a witness to the world.

And while circumstance, culture, and sin may at times limit the full realization of God's new creation (I Corinthians 11:1-16, 14:32-40; I Timothy 2:8-15), God's intention is that "we proclaim Christ crucified" (I Corinthians 1:23) for it is the "power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith" (Romans 1:16). And so God gifted women like Phoebe to be a deacon and benefactor (Romans 16:1), missionary evangelist/teachers like Prisca and Mary (Romans 16:3,6), apostles like Junia (Romans 16:7) and church leaders like Lydia (Acts 16:11-40).

And God's Spirit continues to be poured out on both women and men. And when women discern they are gifted by God to preach the gospel and receive confirmation of this gifting by the church, who are we to "quench the Spirit" (I Thessalonians 4:12)? For in a broken, sinful, and alienated world, "...how can they call on someone they don't have faith in? And how can they have faith in someone they haven't heard of? And how can they hear without a preacher (Romans 10:14 CEB)?" As a result, women gifted for the ministry of preaching can proclaim the gospel and its implications at Culver Palms to build up the body of Christ and witness to the world.