

Do you see this woman?

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Growing up it was in the kitchen every Sunday where I would witness the most frenetic, clamorous work of our church community. Huge spoons banging against steel bowls, steam rising from the enormous pots of soup and steamers, platters of side dishes crowding the counters, and all our mothers and grandmothers shouting playfully about different methods and jokingly shoving each other out of the way. The very image of the old adage "too many cooks in the kitchen," but in this case a good thing.

I did not always see them.

Though the women in our community were hard to ignore, they were often tucked away in the kitchen. I do not recall seeing a woman leading in worship or in the pulpit until I was well into seminary, and even then it was some years after that I saw an Asian American woman preacher. It didn't strike me as significant until I noticed the lack.

These days I regularly find myself at the soup kitchen. As the lunch shift closed up one day a mother and a young boy, maybe seven or eight years old, came in at the last minute. We filled up two plates heaping over with tamales, rice and cheese, and extra fruit. I watched her try to figure out where to go--there were tables nearby where a group of people lounged and digested their food, a coma setting in. She set down her bags but she looked uncertain. The group was loud and argued with one another using crass language. She instructed the boy to use two hands to carry his

plate, much in the same I do with my kids when they have a glass full of milk that's swishing around and threatening to spill.

As I made a move to run around to the other side to help her, Heather--a woman I've often seen at the shelter--walked up to her and asked if she needed help and whether she wanted any more food. Heather told her about the family room in the back, where it's a little quieter, and without hesitation she picked up the mother's things and showed them the way.

I'm struck by the final verses tacked onto this lectionary passage (8:1-3). Jesus goes on his way to other villages and towns, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. Luke records who was with him, and this includes a handful of women such as Mary of Magdalene, who experienced Jesus' healing touch. It is a reminder to see those who are made invisible, tucked away into the corners of communities--including those unexpected ones, like the woman who enacts such extravagant and courageous love for Jesus in such a precarious setting. Who is on the periphery of our communities doing the work of love? What would it mean to enact that same gratitude?

I appreciate Jim Kast-Keat, whose [media projects](#) help me to see the ways those who are often invisible are doing that creative work--all around us, all the time.