

(Luke) 01a - Introduction Cont.

by Ed Miller

The Gospel of Luke emphasizes Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost, with a focus on his compassion and love for the needy.

Duration: 1:07:09

Scripture: Luke 4:21, Luke 6:47-49, Luke 7:37-38, Luke 15:11-32, Luke 16:19-31, Luke 23:39-43, James 3:17

Topics: "Luke"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the Gospel of Luke and its portrayal of Jesus reaching out to the needy, humble, and broken. The sermon highlights the impact of a movie based on the Gospel of Luke, called 'Jesus,' which has been used as a powerful tool for evangelism. The speaker emphasizes that the film's success is not only due to the Holy Spirit's anointing but also because it accurately presents the Gospel of Luke. The sermon also addresses the concept of God's inspiration, explaining that while the writers of the Gospel were real people with their own personalities and research, they were guided by God from heaven.

Transcript

That in your presence there's rest and joy and love and life and everything. Tonight we come into your presence and we seek light. We ask you by your grace to turn the eyes of our faith unto the Lord Jesus.

Thank you so much for your word in a special way for the gospel of Luke. And guide us as we continue to introduce this marvelous gospel. We thank you that your Holy Spirit is here and delights to put the light upon the Lord Jesus.

We pray that we might see him and seeing him that we might be changed. We pray in Jesus precious name. Amen.

All right, if you'll turn to Luke, please. Ah Probably chapter 1. I can't remember the first passage I quote from Luke, but anyway, we'll be here and there and everywhere. Welcome again to our study of this third book in the New Testament, the gospel of Luke.

Last week I tried to introduce this wonderful book to your heart and to your appetite. And I tried to emphasize several of the characteristics that run through the book. And what I'd like to do is just review a couple of those and then pick up where we left off.

I told you there'd be two introduction lessons. And so tonight I hope to finish introducing the book. I call attention to this truth that as you go through the book of Luke, there is a tremendous emphasis on missions, on evangelism, soul winning.

The book of Luke unlike Matthew and Mark and John is not primarily for the Jews. In fact Luke was not a Jew. He was a Gentile.

It's the only book in your Bible written by a Gentile. And God gave us this Gentile to tell us Luke's vision that Christ is not only the Messiah of the Jews, but he's the Messiah of the whole wide world. He's the Messiah of the earth, of the planet.

I suggested one of our key verses might be chapter 3 and verse 6. Chapter 3, 6, all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Not just circumcised flesh. All flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Luke presents Christ for the world. I suggested also Luke 19, 10 as a key verse. All monosyllables, one syllable word.

How simple can you get? For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. That's the theme of the gospel of Luke. Luke the Gentile is writing for every person on the earth.

Now to see this emphasis is to pick up a distinction that belongs to Luke. You won't see that in Matthew. You're not going to see it in Mark either.

You see it a little more in the gospel of John, but not like it is in the gospel of Luke. It's true the gospel of John emphasizes Christ for the whole world, but in this sense John teaches us that Jesus is God and God is for all flesh. Luke teaches us that Jesus is the Son of Man and the Son of Man is for all flesh.

If you study those side by side you'd see the tremendous difference between those two things. And so Luke has that emphasis. A second emphasis we stressed last time, not only does Luke write for all men, but in a special way Luke presents the Lord Jesus for the neediest of men.

In the book Jesus is presented as the friend of sinners, the neediest person, the lowest, the most helpless, the weakest person. In chapter 4 Jesus goes to his boyhood town in Nazareth, and he stands up in the synagogue and he opens up the scripture to Isaiah 61 and he began to read and he read these words. He said, the Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to preach the gospel.

And then he mentioned to whom he preached the gospel. The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to proclaim the release of the captives, to recover sight to the blind and to set free all those who are downtrodden. Well, that's the emphasis.

And then he closed the book and he said to everyone in attendance, this day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears. He went out of the synagogue and he began to go to the poor and to the captives and to the blind and to the downtrodden and proclaim his wonderful life. That's the emphasis in Luke.

In Luke we read that Jesus saves the publican who's beating on his breast and crying out for mercy for the sinner. It's in Luke that the harlot comes and weeps her tears upon his feet and dries his feet with her hair. It's in Luke that the wounded father in the parable has waited so long for his wayward son who's wasted his substance on riotous living and harlots and the like.

And then he's welcomed back with hugs and tears and a great party. It's in Luke that the despised tax collector comes down out of the tree to receive Christ and salvation and to sup with the Lord Jesus. It's in Luke we learn that the dying thief repented and found salvation.

Luke 15, 2 says this man receives sinners and eats with them. Oh, exactly so. That's what the gospel of Luke is about.

Not only salvation to all men, but the neediest of men. This man of compassion goes into the darkest corners of society, into the dregs of mankind in order to save that which is lost. He goes after the poor and the crippled and the blind and the lame, the immoral and the broken, the broken-hearted, the downtrodden, the rejected person.

They all found hope in Luke. Luke's the one that says, blessed are the poor and woe unto those who are rich. Woe unto you.

Seven parables Luke gives to contrast the poor with the rich and the fool with the wise. I love Luke 12, 21. He said he's a fool who lays up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God.

Oh, what a fool he is. Luke presents that. It's in Luke's gospel that you read more about women than in any other gospel.

Why? Because woman was put down in New Testament days and Luke raises her up again. It's in Luke's gospel. There's more about children than any other gospel.

Now we read in Matthew that mothers brought their children to Jesus, but in Luke's gospel the word is, and mothers brought their infants of days. Days old, just little babies, brand-newborn, and the disciple said, go away. Jesus doesn't have time for children.

And he rebuked the disciple. He says, you bring those kids here. They're not a nuisance.

And Luke just presents that aspect of the Son of Man full of sympathy and pity and love and mercy and compassion. He's reaching out for the social outcast, the weak, the ignorant, the erring, the sickest are sought out in this book. This is the book of the lost sheep and the lost coin, the lost son.

In this book, he reaches out for the lost. Luke presents Jesus not only as the one who's the Son of Man for the whole world, but the neediest of the world. The Holy Spirit somehow opened Luke's eyes not only to record what happened, but to record what really happened as the Lord Jesus went out into the highways and byways.

We miss a lot by reading only the Jewish emphasis, and we need to study Luke more. In this book, nobody's left out. Nobody's too far gone.

Nobody is hopeless. I don't know if you've heard of that famous missionary film that has been so mightily used of God all over the world. It's just called Jesus, the Jesus film.

Have you heard about that, the Jesus film? Campus Crusade has put that out. It's been translated already into 200 different languages. Such power that film has had.

Millions of people have professed to trust Christ through watching that Jesus film. It's the most realistic film of the life of Jesus ever made. For about five years, John Heyman researched the life of Jesus and then

directed this particular film.

He desired to present the life of Jesus exactly as it happened. I saw the film, and I'll tell you, if you haven't seen it, you ought to see it. It is moving, especially when you come to the crucifixion scene.

If you haven't wept before the Lord in years, you will when you see that thing. You say, why is that so powerful? Why is God using that film, Jesus, all over the world in such a way? Well, of course, the big answer is the Holy Spirit's anointing is upon it. That's why.

But there's another reason. It's the Gospel of Luke. That's what the film is.

That's all it is. The man just went through the Gospel of Luke in order to make a movie. And it shows how Jesus reached out to the most needy.

And he went after the humble and the poor and the broken. Pray for that movie as it goes out. I know a missionary and his family, and that's all he does full-time.

He's a full-time missionary, and the only thing he does is work on the Jesus movie. And he takes it everywhere, and it's just an amazing ministry. In fact, that movie has been so powerfully used, a 200-page book has been written about that movie.

It's the testimonies of those who've come to Christ through seeing the film. And the name of the book is, I Just Saw Jesus. Marvelous little book.

And they tell how that film, all they did by seeing the film, I saw Jesus. And I saw Him in a way I never saw Him. I saw Him as Luke presents Him.

Exactly right, I just saw Jesus. And when you see Jesus, the Holy Spirit wants you to receive Him as He proposes Him. And so this is the Gospel of Luke, and that's why I'm trying to whet your appetites to get into it.

When we closed our study, I tried to home in on the distinctive title that Luke uses, and that I think was Jesus' favorite title for Himself. Eighty times in the New Testament you have this title, and only one time of the eighty is it on the lips of somebody else beside Jesus. In other words, 79 times Jesus calls Himself the Son of Man.

Nobody ever called Jesus the Son of Man except Jesus. You go through the Bible, the only time it's mentioned, He kept calling Himself the Son of Man, but nobody else called Him that. And it's because Luke presents Him as the Son of all mankind.

Other people call Him the Son of God. Other people call Him the Messiah, or the Lamb, or the Son of David. But only Jesus called Himself the Son of Man, and He wouldn't stop calling Himself that.

Not just the Son of Abraham, or the Son of David, but the Son of all mankind. And not just the Son of believers. All mankind, Son of unbelievers too.

And not just the Son of saints. He's the Son of sinners too. He's the Son of all mankind, and I'm going to coin a little expression here.

He came to save the lostest. You say, what's the lostest? The one who's the most lost, the neediest person. And that's how Luke presents Him.

I told you last week as we closed that the way Luke presents the Lord Jesus, there wasn't a prejudiced bone in the body of our Lord Jesus. In other words, He was never aloof from any person who had a need. He didn't shrink from anybody, no matter how corrupt they were, or how much they smelled, or how repulsive they were, or what they'd gotten themselves mixed up in.

He never recoiled from the misfit, or the leper, or the twisted, or the broken, or the criminal, or the immoral person, or the oppressed. And I tried to drive home one of the things God wants to do in our lives as we study the Gospel of Luke. One of the contributions God wants to make is this.

If I study the life of the Son of Man, God wants to make me a son of man. Little ass. God wants to conform me to Christ in order to be like Jesus.

And the more I see Him by the Spirit of God, the more He's going to make me like that. I'll be full of compassion for all mankind, too. And God will begin to amputate my prejudiced bones, and limbs, and those parts in my heart that are prejudiced toward any.

I'm not going to be too religious to touch the leper, or moral misfits, or those who have gotten themselves all messed up in life. Those who study Luke under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are not going to be covered in cobwebs as they sit in the pew of some church and die away. It can't happen.

You've got to study Luke to see Jesus, and seeing Jesus, we're going to become like Him. Now, I think I might have brought some confusion by that emphasis, and so let me clarify. What I do not mean is this.

We do not become sons of man by imitating the Son of Man. It would be a great mistake to study the Gospel of Luke, and then try to go out and copy Him, and try to live like that. He is not only my example.

He's my life. In other words, the one who lived that way in his physical body on the earth for 33 1/2 years wants to live now in his spiritual body, the church, and he wants to live that way again. He doesn't change.

If he ever felt that way, he still feels that way. And so it isn't me copying Jesus. It's me appropriating the life of Jesus so that He can live again the same way He lived when He was here.

He wants to live that way again. I follow Him by letting Him live in me. So we don't want to just try to go copy Him.

It's Christ Himself in us. Jesus was in society when He was on the earth, and now we are the Jesus that is in society. He still reaches out to the poor, to the weak, to the depressed, and so on.

And we can't be too elite and too pious and too aloof. As I said last week, sometimes it seems like folks are just preaching to the choir, and the world goes out there and dies by itself. If we're going to see Jesus, we're going to become sons and daughters of all mankind.

And then here's the second clarification I want to make. As you go through the Gospel of Luke, did Jesus touch every leper? Did He receive every harlot, every drunkard, every criminal? And the answer is no. And when you go through the Gospel of Luke, you're going to see that Jesus didn't have any bones that were prejudiced, but it was the seeking lost that He reached out for.

Not all. Only those who were seeking Him. It's the rejected Christ-touched, but the rejected who wanted to be touched.

Not every criminal. The repenting criminal found life. Not every tax collector.

The tax collector who climbed up the tree and was looking for Jesus. Not every publican. But the publican that went out and prayed, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Not every harlot, but only those who came to His feet to pour out their hungry hearts and souls upon Him. I'm sure there were many prodigal sons that never returned. Who was the one that was embraced? See, the Father didn't go after them.

But the Father was there when He came back. And so don't get the wrong idea. In Luke 15, 14, it says, He began to be in need.

15, 17, when He came to His senses. 15, 18, I'll go, get up, talk to my Father. I'll say, Father, I've sinned against Heaven and in Thy sight.

So it's not every outcast, but those who wanted to be reached. I tell you that so that you don't read the Gospel of Luke and then think, oh, God's calling me to open a drug rehabilitation center or a soup kitchen or a halfway house for somebody or a mission for derelicts or a center for abused people. Maybe He'll lead you to do that.

I can't say He won't lead you to do that. But what I'm saying is you could do a lot of that in a flash. I could do a lot of that in a flash.

And that's not the message of Luke's Gospel. Jesus went out to seek and to save that which is lost. And all the lost who wanted to be found, He reached out and touched them.

His mission was salvation. It was compassion. It was pity.

And He came to give life. So please don't study this or don't think my emphasis is, okay, now we've studied Luke. Let's go out and set up a program for the poor.

Great day, they don't need a program. They've got enough programs. They need Jesus.

They need life. They need salvation. Some say, well, they're not going to take salvation if you don't give them a sandwich.

Well, you walk before the Lord on whether you give them the sandwich first or later. God may, I'm sure, cause you to open your heart and open your home to those who have hit bottom. Give them a sympathetic ear and a shoulder and a good meal and maybe some clothes and a bed or something like that.

I'm not saying He'll never do that. But if you're going to become a son of man, you don't need to say, I've got to go out and be a friend of sinners. That's off center.

You've got to be a friend of the one who was the friend of sinners. That's a different direction. That's not the same thing.

And once again, Luke's going to take us into the relationship with the Lord. He wept over Jerusalem. He wept over sinners.

I can't become like Him and not weep over sinners, weep over Jerusalem. But you don't do that by running after sinners. You do that by running after Jesus.

Someone said, oh, pray for a burden for souls. I used to pray for that. I don't pray for that anymore.

I don't want a burden for souls. I want a burden for Jesus. If I have a burden for Jesus, I'll have a burden for souls.

You can be off center on all of that thing. We need to see the Lord Himself. And so, I just wanted to clear that up so that we don't get the wrong idea.

This is the message of Luke. Jesus was the Son of Man, and we're to become like Him as we study this gospel together. You know, that emphasis is ever true.

Remember, Paul said it in 1 Corinthians 1, 26. Consider your calling, brethren. Now, don't go judging everyone.

Don't go looking around. Just consider your own calling, brethren. But isn't it true what Paul said? Not many mighty according to the flesh, not many noble.

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. The weak things and the base things, the despised things. I remember one time going through that passage, and I went through it phrase by phrase.

And the Lord was exercising my soul, you know. And as I went, I began to confess each one. And God says, God didn't choose the mighty.

I said, all right, Lord, I'm weak. And then He says, you know, God chose the weak things. I said, yes, I'm weak.

The base things. And I prayed, yes, Lord, I'm base. Despised things.

All right, I'm despised too. And you know how that ends up? Things that are not have God chosen. They don't even exist.

Things that are not. And I had to confess, you're right, Lord. You've chosen things that don't even exist.

Well, that's the gospel of Luke as we've looked at it so far. Mary, the virgin mother of our Lord Jesus, certainly had it right when she said, chapter 153, He's filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He sent empty away. He sent away empty-handed.

And that's exactly right. All right, that's where we left off. Before I give you... What's this? Exactly.

Before we look at other striking characteristics in Luke's gospel, I want to say a couple of things about the Son of Man, Son of all mankind. Because I think it will help us in the gospel of Luke if we connect the gospel of Luke, the message, Jesus, Son of Man, with the message of the rest of the New Testament, especially as it's been expounded to us by the Holy Spirit's message through the Apostle Paul. It might help you to actually turn to this passage, 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15, as I relate Son of Man to the whole message of Son of Man in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 47. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 47 says, The first man is from the earth, earthy.

The second man is from heaven. All right, now, who's the first man from the earth, earthy? That's right. That's Adam.

Adam was the first man. Who's the second man from heaven? It's the Lord Jesus. The Son of Man.

Now, why is Jesus, by Paul, called the second man? I read this statement. I don't know if it's true. I don't know how you could find out if it's true.

It's estimated today that there are as many people alive on the earth right now as have ever lived since Adam. In other words, there's about 5 billion or so people on the earth, and from Adam until now, there's been about 5 billion people on the earth, 10 billion people on the earth. And when our Lord Jesus was on the earth, there were thousands and hundreds of thousands and millions and maybe billions of people, of men.

And yet, Paul says, he is the second man, as if there were no other man, as if since Adam, Adam's the first man, and all these people live and die and live and die and live and die, and finally we come to Jesus. And Paul says, at last, a second man. What about all those other men? See, the Bible teaches that there have only been two men that have ever lived on the earth.

You say, well, I think there's millions of men. No, those are fallen men. They're not men.

Not men as God created man to be. Adam is man as God created man to be. And then he fell.

We had to wait for 6,000 years until Jesus came. And now, once again, Luke is going to present the second man. Man as God created man to be.

The ideal man. The perfect man. What God wanted for everybody.

If you're still in 1 Corinthians 15, look at verse 47. Jesus is called the last Adam, the life-giving Spirit. We have the first Adam.

Now, be careful. Sometime I've heard Christians say that Jesus is the second Adam. I'd be careful about saying that.

The Bible says He's the last Adam. He's the second man and the last Adam. And the reason I say that is because second implies third, and third implies fourth, and fourth implies fifth.

And there is no Adam after Jesus. Adam won. The second man is the last Adam.

There'll never be another Adam. He's the only one, and it's our Lord Jesus. Now, I call attention to that.

It was very fitting that Luke, a Greek, should write this gospel, address it to Greeks, because, you know, they were in quest of the ideal man. The Greeks were always looking for that perfect man. They humanized all of their God.

You see it in their art. You see it in their poetry. You see it in their literature.

You see it in their sculpture. Man, they're looking for the perfect man. Whereas the Romans, they idolized power and authority and military strength.

But the Greeks were looking for the perfect man. And Luke comes along, and he says, I found him. His name is Jesus of Nazareth.

I found the ideal man. I found the perfect man, the last Adam, the second man. Now, I'm not going to develop this, but just as an aside, you know, you hear all this talk in Christian circles about being born again.

And I'm sure you've heard the expression, and you know very well what it means. Well, it all ties in to the first man and the second man, or the last second man, last Adam. It all ties into that, because how did I get into Adam, Adam 1, how did I get into his race? And the answer is, I was born into it.

I didn't have a choice. I was born into a race that was under the curse, a race that was condemned to die. I got in by generation.

Now God says, there's another race. We're starting all over. There's a second man.

There is now another Adam. And he has a whole race. I say, my, how can I get into his family? Same way I got in the first one.

Got to be born into it. Say, yeah, but you got into the first one by generation. I get into the second one by regeneration.

It's all part of the plan. And that's what this whole idea of being born again, is I got to get out of Adam 1's race, and I got to start all over in a new family, under a new federal head, in a new race, and I've got to get in the same way. Back to Luke.

Luke not only emphasizes missions, Luke not only emphasizes the down and outer, Luke not only emphasizes the last Adam, the second man, the son of all mankind, ideal man as God intends man to be. But now let's carry on. Here's another characteristic of Luke's gospel.

Luke's gospel has been called the happiest gospel. Luke's gospel has been called the gospel of praise, the gospel of joy. It's full of praise, thanksgiving, adoration.

The book of Luke begins with five songs. The book of Luke ends with a hallelujah chorus. And all the way through the book is singing and dancing and making merry.

You see, Matthew begins on sort of a sour note in a minor key. Matthew begins with the wailing of mothers who had lost their babies because of the terrible slaughter of the infants under Herod. Matthew ends with seven woes on religious hypocrites.

Luke doesn't begin with wailing and end with woe. Luke begins with song and ends in song, and they're singing all the way through it. Let me give a couple of illustrations of this.

Here are some characteristic words that are found in the gospel of Luke. Praising God, blessing God, giving praise to God, the word exult, the word rejoice, the word joy. Nineteenth time the word joy is used.

Only Luke uses this expression. You won't find it anywhere else in your New Testament. And three times Luke uses the expression leaping for joy.

Not just joy. Leaping for joy. 141, 145, and 623.

Just leaping for joy. Luke writes about joy in heaven. Joy in the presence of the angels.

It's Luke that tells us even the stones would shout up. This is a gospel of joy. One of my commentators called Luke the first hymnologist.

First one to write hymns. Well, I think this is sort of the end of the Hebrew psalm and the beginning now of the Christian hymn. I told you in the first two chapters of Luke there are five wonderful songs.

I think some of us came from a more formal religious background than others. And so you may not be at all interested in this, but I was really interested because I saw it every week and I never knew what it was. And now I know.

In our hymnals in the church where I grew up, I grew up in a Lutheran church. And in our church we had in our hymnals some Latin words. And I didn't understand those Latin words.

I wish someone would have told me those are the five songs in the first two chapters of the gospel of Luke. That would have helped me. Let me just give you those five songs with the references.

Number one, I'll give you the Latin words. Ave Maria. Chapter 1, verse 28 to verse 31.

And then also chapter 1, verse 42. I'll explain it in a moment, but let's get those down first. Number two, the Magnificat.

M-A-G-N-I-F-I-C-A-T. Magnificat. 146 to verse 55.

The third song, the Benedictus. You ever hear these Latin titles? B-E-N-E-D-I-C-T-U-S. Did I give the reference? 168 to 79.

Here's one you're probably familiar with. The Gloria in Excelsis. The Christmas hymn made that one pretty famous, didn't it? Gloria, you can spell that in Excelsis.

E-X-C-E-L-S-I-S. Chapter 2, verse 14. And then the last song is the Nunc Dimittis.

N-U-N-C-D-I-M-I-T-T-I-S. Chapter 2, 29 to 32. Let me explain these Latin phrases, because almost all commentators and Christians go by these names.

By the way, these are the Latin phrases that are taken from the first line of each song. So if you forget what the name means, just read the first line of the song, and you'll know what it means. Ave Maria.

That was the salutation that Gabriel gave to Mary. When Gabriel came down, he said, Hail Mary. That's what it means, Hail Mary.

And then later on, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, continued the Hail Mary. Now since then, the Roman Catholic Church has taken that prayer. I'm sure you're familiar with the Hail Mary.

But the additions that they've made to it didn't come until the 16th century, and they didn't come out of the Bible. So when we say Ave Maria, we're talking about Luke and that song, and no other song than that. So that's the one Gabriel sang and Elizabeth sang.

The second song, the Magnificat, in chapter 146, this is Mary's song. She said, My soul magnifies the Lord. That's what it means, Magnificat.

My soul exalts in the Lord. Literally, the word means to tell out. And what was Mary telling out? How great the Lord was.

And it was just Mary's song to magnify the Lord. The Benedictus, in verse 68, 168, Blessed be the God of Israel. You see the word benediction in Benedictus, and that's what it means.

It just means blessed. Zachariah is the one, Zacharias, father of John the Baptist. He's the one that sang that song.

When Gabriel told him he was going to have a son, and what John the Baptist was going to do, he got all excited and he broke in the song into the Benedictus. The fourth song is the Gloria in Excelsis. And chapter 214, Glory in the Highest.

That's the host of angels. When Jesus was born, the host of angels just broke out in that glorious song, Glory in the Highest. Glory to God in the highest.

And then finally, Notamidus. Remember Simeon the priest? The aged priest in the temple? And he picked up the Lord Jesus in his hand, and he said, Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. He's looking into the face of a baby, and he's calling him salvation.

Salvation is a person. It's not a plan. It's Jesus.

And when he said, Notamidus, he said, Now, that's monk, Now, dismiss. That's what Notamidus means. Dismiss.

And he said, I've seen Jesus. Now dismiss. Take me home.

I'm ready to die. That's what that song is all about. I only bring up these Latin words because I think if you haven't heard them, you will.

And I think you should know them. And these are the five songs. Now, I'm not trying to teach you Latin.

That's not the point of this. I'm trying to show you that Luke is a gospel of joy. And it just starts out with all of these songs.

Gabriel's singing, Elizabeth's singing, and Mary's singing, and Zacharias is singing, and the host of heavenly angels are singing, and Simeon is singing. That's how Luke begins. Everybody's rejoicing.

And so you have this service, this book starts with five hymns. Let's sing five hymns before we hear the message. And that's what he does.

I think you see the same thing in the middle. Probably most Christians would take Luke 15, that one parable, not three parables, one parable in three parts, the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Most would take that to be the central teaching of the gospel of Luke.

It's such a powerful parable because it calls attention to the joy God has when a lost sinner is found. That's what it's all about. See, Luke's just carrying his theme through, the theme of joy and good news.

We call it the parable of the prodigal son, but if you read it carefully as God's given it to us, you wouldn't call it the parable of the prodigal son. You'd call it the parable of the happy father because that's what it's

all about. In 15, 6 and 7, as a shepherd rejoices when he finds his sheep, verse 9 and 10, as a woman rejoices when she finds her coin, verses 18 to 32, as a father rejoices when his son returns, so the courts of heaven vibrate with joy every time a sinner comes to the Lord Jesus.

That's what that parable's all about. And once again, it's just joy, joy, joy. It begins with choruses and antiphonies and they're singing all the way through.

In Luke, you read those parables in Luke. There are 23 different parables. How many of them have to do with joy and family and sitting at the table and a great feast and fellowshiping together? That's the gospel of Luke.

Now let's look at the end. It starts with music and the middle is joy. Turn to 24, if you would.

Verse 50, And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. It came about while he was blessing them he parted from them. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple praising God.

The last words in the book of Luke, praising God, praising God. Now, I told you on another occasion that Luke takes the gospel story further than either Matthew, Mark, or John. In fact, it even starts earlier.

You see, the others start with Bethlehem, but this one starts with the forerunner, the story of John the Baptist. So it starts earlier. And the others end with resurrection.

This takes you all the way to the ascension. Picture yourself standing there. This is the last time you're going to see your Lord Jesus.

And he's standing there, and the Bible says he's holding out his hands like this, and he's blessing them. Now, I'm not Jesus. If I were, and I held out my hands like this, what would you see? You'd see the nail prints.

You'd see his glory scars. Don't lose that. Because he had been to the cross, and the cross is the day of atonement.

He had made the sacrifice. He's the Lamb. At the end of Numbers 6, it tells you what happened after God accepted the animal sacrifice.

The priest would come out, and he'd hold his hands like this. Numbers chapter 6, verse 24 to 26. And he would say, The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. That's what Jesus was saying as he ascended.

And as they stood there, they watched him. And as he pronounced those words, not everybody was blessed. Only those who had offered the Lamb were blessed.

And as they watched him, he ascended into heaven with his arms stretched out in the high priestly benediction. Now, that was a one-time act, but it's an everlasting attitude. He continues to have his hands stretched out for all those who will offer the Lamb.

And he continues to want to say, The Lord bless you and keep you. No wonder the book ends with singing and rejoicing and praising God. You say, what's Jesus doing in heaven right now? He's a priest.

He ascended as the priest. And now he's carrying on his high priestly ministry. Luke introduces us to that.

And Acts, of course, is going to develop that. So Luke is a happy Gospel. And as you go through the Gospel of Luke, you ought to call attention to those things.

Let me review the contributions or the emphasis Luke has. He stresses missions. He stresses the downtrodden.

He stresses the ministry of Christ as the Son of Man. He stresses joy. Here's another thing that Luke emphasizes.

Luke is a book of contrasts. It's a book of contrasts. I told you last week how smart Luke was.

He's a physician. He's a doctor. Some of the most refined Greek in the Bible is right in the Gospel of Luke.

In the first four verses, they haven't found any finer Greek anywhere. The vocabulary this man had. He's got words in here, hundreds of words in the Gospel of Luke that are not even found in the rest of the New Testament.

Because he was so brilliant a man. And yet he's so simple. That's what's great about Luke.

A little child can understand Luke. And one way he makes things simple is by contrast. It's either black or white.

It's either this or that. It's one thing or the other. He doesn't leave much middle ground.

And he constantly weaves contrasts into his teaching and into his parables and so on. And so you're one chapter deep and you have the contrast of unbelieving Zacharias and believing Mary. They almost said the same word.

Lord willing, we'll look at that next time. We read about anxious Martha over against Mary who is pious and reverent and so on. We read about the proud Pharisee and the humble publican.

We read about the religious priest and the compassionate Samaritan. We read about the unthankful lepers that were cleansed and the one that came back to glorify God. We read about the prodigal son and the elder brother.

We read about self-righteous Simon and over against the harlot that washed his feet in her tears. We read about the rejecting thief and the blaspheming thief. We read about Barabbas and the Lord Jesus.

Everything's in contrast. And when you go through this, he's the one that's going to say, there's new cloth, there's old garments, there's new wine, there's old skin, there's the house on the rock, there's the house on the sand, there's the faithful servant, Stuart, there's the unfaithful Stuart, there's the lost sheep, there's the ninety and nine, there's the lost coin, there's the nine coins that were not lost. All through the book.

He just contrasts everything and it becomes so simple. The foolish rich who trust their riches, the humble poor who trust the Lord, the rich man in torment, Lazarus in Abraham's bosom and in paradise of God, the fool and the wise. I call attention to that because it helps you understand the book.

This man is brilliant. He could blow your mind with fifty-cent words and all these hard things. We couldn't understand.

But he doesn't do it. Even though he's so smart, he just gives us the simple truth. And we'll call attention to that more next week.

I want to call attention to one more emphasis. Not only missions, not only the downtrodden, not only the Son of Man, not only joy, not only contrast, Luke, now, I almost have to put both books together, Luke and Acts. Luke is the gospel of the Holy Spirit.

You would think the gospel of John is the gospel of the Holy Spirit, but it's not. It's the gospel of Luke. Luke mentions the Holy Spirit over and over and over again.

You see, John has a different emphasis. He tells us why we need the Holy Spirit and why the Lord Jesus was so anxious to leave to send us the Holy Spirit. But in the gospel of Luke, the Holy Spirit is presented in terms of the Son of Man and a lot in connection with his prayer life.

There's more on the prayer life of Jesus in Luke than any other place. You know why? Because He's the Son of Man and He needs to depend upon the Lord. He needs to trust in the Lord.

The references to the Holy Spirit in the gospel of Luke, if you just trace that out, you'll see that not only what Jesus did, He went down to the poor and to the weak. It tells you how He did it. By the power of the Holy Spirit.

He lived by the life of God. 135, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. 322, He was baptized by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 4, verse 1, He was tested by the Holy Spirit. 414, He was empowered by the Holy Spirit for ministry. 1021 tells us that Jesus rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit.

That's how He lived. In the power of the Spirit. And the Holy Spirit was the life by which He lived.

Now at the end of the book, in chapter 24, verse 49, He's also promised to us. Now Luke is introducing in book 1 the Holy Spirit. You get to the book of Acts, you read anything about the Holy Spirit? Ho, ho, ho, indeed you do.

He's wetting your appetite in Luke. He's getting you ready in Luke. Because in Luke He says, this is how Jesus lived.

By the Holy Spirit. Now He comes to the church, He says, how are you going to live? And He's going to teach you how to live the same way. By the same Holy Spirit that He lived by.

So you've got to see this emphasis and I'm just calling attention to that so when you're going through Luke, you'll be able to follow that. Let me close with an outline, a suggested outline for the book. In chapter 1, verse 1 to 4.13, that's sort of a section, and we'll call that the preparation of the Son of Man.

That takes you all the way through His temptation. From His announced birth to His temptation. And then 4.14, this is almost the heart of the book.

4.14 to 19.28, we'll call that the ministry of the Son of Man. Now most people divide that into two chunks. I'm going to take it as one, but let me just give you the subdivision.

In 4.14 to 9.50, we have what's called the Galilean ministry of Christ. And that's mostly Jewish. The Galilean ministry.

But then in 9.51 to 19.27, we have what's called the Judean and Parian ministry of Christ. Almost all the information you have on that comes out of the Gospel of Luke. That whole part of His life.

We would have known nothing about that if it weren't for this. So that whole section, we'll just call the ministry of the Son of Man. In the first part there, the Galilean ministry, that's where you read about all His miracles.

Twenty miracles Luke records. Six of them nobody else records. If it weren't for Luke, you wouldn't even know it.

And then in the Gentile part of His ministry, that's the parables section. He gives 23 parables. Eighteen of them not found anywhere else in the Bible.

Eighteen parables we would never have if it wasn't for the Gospel of Luke. And so that's the teaching section. So through 4.13 is the preparation of the Son of Man.

And then from 4.14 to 19.28, the ministry of the Son of Man. And finally 19.29 through chapter 24, which is the last week, the resurrection and the ascension, we'll just call that the triumph of the Son of Man. The victory of the Son of Man.

Well, we could close there. You want me to go further or you want to close? It doesn't matter to me. I'll go a little more.

Alright. Let's do chapter 1. Let me just do that introduction. 1 to 4. Follow along please as I read.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word, in my opinion that word, Word, should be capitalized. I believe it's a reference to the Lord Jesus. Have handed them down to us.

It seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write out for you in consecutive order most excellent Theophilus so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. Glance at verse 3. Who is Theophilus? Since Luke says most excellent Theophilus, it's believed that he was some kind of an important person. That's the word used for a nobleman.

Remember before I quoted 1 Corinthians 1.26? Not many noble are called. But it doesn't say not any. It says not many.

Theophilus was one of the ones that was called. Some people believe that he was a rich slave owner and that Luke was his slave. And after he came to Christ, he let Luke go as a slave.

There's no evidence, there's no proof of that, but that's tradition. We don't know who Theophilus was. Do I think he was a real person? Yes, I do.

But I don't know his background. The reason I ask do I think he's a real person is because of the meaning of his name. Some people think he didn't really exist, that it's sort of like John Bunyan created a man, Mr. Woolly Wise.

The word Theophilus means lover of God, someone who loves the Lord. And wouldn't you expect Luke to write his message to somebody who loved the Lord? I think he was a real person, but for our discussion, he's just a lover of God. I pray you're a Theophilus.

I want to be a Theophilus, a lover of God. And the message of the Son of Man is addressed to lovers of God. Verse 3. Luke says he wrote in consecutive order.

And so some hot shots have gone through the Gospel and they've said, ah, now look here. He didn't keep chronology. It's not in order.

Luke told us a fib. It's not in the right order in which it happened. Consecutive order doesn't necessarily mean chronological order.

It could be logical order as well. You can get things in order. It doesn't have to be chronology.

Now, most of Luke is in chronological order. But Luke is writing in logical order because he's telling the story of salvation. He's not only being a historian, but he's telling us about the Lord and his salvation.

In those four verses, Luke claims he was not an eyewitness. In other words, he never heard Jesus teach. He never saw Jesus.

He never was there when Jesus did his wonderful miracles. He didn't see him die. He didn't see him when he was alive again.

Luke was a stranger to the Lord Jesus. He was not an eyewitness. But being a scholar, he was a reporter.

He was an investigator. And according to these verses, he looked up the eyewitnesses. And he sat down with them and he interviewed all the eyewitnesses.

I can't prove it in a test tube or a court of law, but from reading chapters 1 and 2, I think I know one of the eyewitnesses. I think he went to Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus. How are you going to get all this information in chapters 1 and 2? I know God the Holy Spirit could dictate it.

I don't doubt that. But he said, I looked up the eyewitnesses and I talked. Mary said, the Bible says Mary treasured certain things in her heart.

I think she treasured them for Luke. I think God knew the day when her and Luke would sit down and she could pour out the treasures that were in her heart. We've got those treasures now.

And they're right here in the first couple of chapters of Luke. And so Luke was an investigator and he searched everything out. He got the eyewitnesses together.

At that time, there were spurious Gospels around and he gathered all the literature and there were oral reports. Everything he could learn about Jesus. He sat down and he arranged it all.

The eyewitness reports, the documents, the oral tradition. He traced out everything scientifically. He studied it.

He sifted it. He examined it. He arranged it all.

Now someone says, give me a break. All that legwork, where does inspiration come in? I thought Luke was a book in the Bible. I thought this was inspired by sending a reporter to do all the donkey work, by sending out someone to interview eyewitnesses and gather materials and arrange data.

Doesn't that sort of rule out inspiration? I think one of the things God gives us in these first four verses is a clear view of God's inspiration, not a mechanical view of God's inspiration. The idea that God's instruments were robots, that all of a sudden, the Spirit of God came on them and they went into a trance. Then God said, write, and they began to write.

That's not how it happened. God used real people. And He used their temperaments and He used their personalities.

And He used their thoughts and their research. But as they wrote, they knew that they were being guided from heaven. I want you to look please at verse 2. And your Bible depends on which one you have.

It says, just as those who from the beginning or at the first. I'm going to quote you a verse from John 3. Except a man be born... Finish. Again, and the Greek word is from above.

From above. Listen to James 3.17. The wisdom that is from above. This is the same Greek word in Luke.

He says in chapter 1, verse 2, just as those who from above, from the beginning, from above, were servants of the Word, and that's why I think it's Christ, were servants of Christ, servants of the Word. In other words, Luke knew he was writing the Bible, and he examined everything carefully. He did all of the donkey work, but he knew that he was being guided from heaven.

Let me close with this. Look in verse 4. The purpose of his writing, that lovers of God might know the exact truth about the things that they have been taught. He wrote it that Theophilus might be sure.

Not guess, not hope, not think, not wonder, but that he would have absolute certainty. That he might be assured. The same word is used in Romans 4.21. Fully persuaded.

Fully assured. When you study Luke, one of the things God wants you to get is certainty. When you see Jesus like this, you won't scratch your head anymore and wonder about His love, about His compassion, about His willingness to receive you over and over again.

When you study Luke, that's why I say, if you find somebody who is feeling rejected or down and out, don't give them the Gospel of John. I know somebody will quarrel with me on that, but you give them the Gospel of Luke. Let those people who feel left out read the Gospel of Luke.

And God can use that in a mighty way to bring them to the Lord. So as you go through Luke, God's going to make you more and more certain. And one way He does it, I didn't tell you about this, but Luke, if it wasn't for Luke, you'd never know Jesus ministered for three and a half years.

See, we just sort of say that. Jesus ministered for three and a half years. How do you know that? Because Luke was a stickler on facts.

He wanted facts. And Luke mentioned facts. In the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch at that time of Galilee, his brother Philip being tetrarch of some

other place, Judea or whatever it is.

He nails it down so that you can go back and say, my faith is not philosophy. It's fact. It's history.

And you can look it up, and they have calendars. No document has been more proven than the Gospel of Luke. People come, destructive critics, they'll go to all the books in the Bible, and say, I'm not sure that was really written with Luke.

They know, because he's nailed everything down. You know why? Because he knows your faith must rest on fact and not on feeling. Three men were sitting on a wall, feeling, faith, and fact.

When feeling took an awful fall, and faith was taken back, so close was faith to feeling, faith stumbled and fell too. But fact remained and pulled faith back. Then faith pulled feeling too.

That's the Gospel of Luke, that you might know, that you might have certainty, be fully persuaded of these things, because they're built on fact. And Luke is about now to give us all of the facts. We'll close there.

Comments or questions? Heavenly Father, thank You so much for the revelation of Christ as the Son of Man. Lord, the temptation in our heart is to go out and try to imitate You. Teach us what it means to appropriate Your life, to live as You lived by the Spirit of God.

Make us sons and daughters of all mankind. Teach us what it means to know You as the Son of Man. And now, Lord, we ask You to guide our fellowship together.

Thank You again for the love of those who have so faithfully provided refreshments. We just pray that You'd nourish our bodies with the refreshments. Give us good fellowship together.

We ask in Jesus' name.

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