

"LUKE, WALK THRU THE BIBLE."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for Sermon: Luke 1:1-4; 5:30-31; 19:9-10; 24:46-48

Introduction.

This evening we resume our journey through the books of the Bible and the four Gospels.

I have used the analogy of Route 66 for the 66 books of the Bible. This past Thursday was the 100th anniversary of Route 66, the Mother Road.

This road has led us to the unique writings that open the New Testament. The four Gospels which are objectively true records of the events and words of Jesus' life on earth. They tell us what actually happened and what Jesus actually said.

The Gospels declare we live in an open universe. Heaven has come down and invaded earth, we live in the visited planet. The Gospels present Jesus in our midst, alive and in person.

As I have said before each Gospel presents a portrait or perspective of Jesus from a slightly different angle, but all four of them (along with the epistles that follow) portray the same recognizable man. As one writer said, this "makes Jesus a unique figure in world literature: never have so many writers managed to convey the same impression of the same human being over and over again" (Thomas Cahill).

Matthew

We have considered the first Gospel in our NT, Matthew's portrait of Jesus emphasizes Jesus' royal identity, as the Son of David, the promised King.

Matthew is the bridge from the OT promises and prophecies to the NT fulfillment. Matthew is the hinge that turns from the old to the new. But this new religion is anything but new. The very first verse gives a clue.

Matthew 1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Matthew connects Jesus with the two great men of Israel's past and shows Jesus to be the promised one and the fulfillment of the OT promises/prophecies.

Matthew is the Jewish gospel, written by a Jew from a very Jewish perspective, writing to his fellow Jews to convince them Jesus is the long-awaited prophesied Messiah, the inheritor of the Davidic kingship, and He is the fulfillment of the covenant promises made to Abraham, the promised seed who is the blessing of the nations.

Mark.

The Gospel of Mark is the earliest Gospel and most likely one of the first books in the NT.

This first Gospel, this unique first of its kind literature became the model, a literary influence starting a new form of literature called Gospel, a book of witness and testimony. It became the model that Matthew and Luke picked up and used.

Mark is the shortest of the Gospels. It is just over half as long as Matthew and Luke. He was a close associate of the Apostle Peter, Peter called him his spiritual son (1 Peter 5:13). Mark's Gospel appears to be the recorded

testimony of everything Peter told him about the sayings and deeds of Jesus.

Luke.

This evening we come to the third Gospel and the third of the three synoptic Gospels. Synoptic means seen together, meaning similar, as in sharing a similar point of view, and sharing similar resources. Matthew and Luke borrowed about six hundred verses from Mark.

If I asked you who made the most significant contribution to the New Testament, you might think it was Paul or Peter or John. If you were a smart aleck, you might say Jesus. Of course, that would be right. But in terms of total verses written, it is Luke.

Luke is by far the longest of the Gospels and the longest book in the NT. Add to that Luke's second volume, Acts, and that is almost a quarter of the NT. Luke wrote more than all of Paul and John put together.

Luke was the only non-Jew to write a book in the NT. As the only Gentile writer of a NT book, he is a Gentile writing for Gentiles. He is writing to us. To those who Paul says in Ephesians were both "separated from Christ and alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

The good news of this Gospel is for us. It holds out to us certainty, a sure foundation for faith.

The facts concerning Jesus are the ground of all truth and faith, truth which when proclaimed changes the lives of men forever.

Paul refers to Luke in Colossians 4:14 as the beloved physician, so a man trained to observe the human condition.

Luke was a close friend and traveling companion to Paul as evidenced in Acts.

Acts 16:8-10 So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” 10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately *we* sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called *us* to preach the gospel to them.

At that moment, the narrative of Acts suddenly shifts to the first person plural—we. Later in Acts 21:17 says Luke accompanied Paul on the apostle’s final visit to Jerusalem. At the end of his life, Paul wrote “only Luke is with me” (II Tim. 4:11).

Unique emphasizes in Luke

When you are flying over a book of the Bible at 30,000 feet, about the best you can do is point out some of the prominent highlights and unique contributions of Luke’s Gospel.

Some regard it as the most beautiful book ever written. Certainly in the NT it’s the most literary, the work of a careful, trained scholar. He sets out to write a thorough, accurate and order account of the testimony of eyewitnesses.

Luke’s Gospel is the gospel of the underdog.

Luke highlights Jesus’ ministry to the down and out, the outcasts of society, the poor, lepers and losers, Samaritans and foreigners, many of them on the fringes of “acceptable” society. But also to the rich and powerful, Pharisees, soldiers and courtesans, tax collectors like Zacchaeus. Today it might be meth dealers and IRS agents, or a Marine colonel in the

Pentagon. Luke likes to zoom in on specific individuals, Peter, Zacchaeus, the one leper.

Jesus' first sermon declares good news to the poor from Isaiah's scroll. This is powerfully illustrated when Jesus heals the sick and invites "the outcasts" to join his new covenant community.

Luke the physician gives a special flavor to his Gospel. His calling and training are evident. His business was to heal, which carries the double meaning, to save.

Luke includes numerous stories of liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed (Luke 4:18).

a man with leprosy
a paralyzed man
a man with a withered hand
a formerly dead son
a demon-afflicted man
a woman with a flow of blood
a child who died

To show His power and authority over sin's ultimate effect, Jesus heals people from all manner of sin's immediate effects.

Luke is particularly interested in telling the story of the Healer/Savior who came into the world to deliver men both from sickness and from sin. He is telling the story of a man who has the power and authority to do the kind of work that Luke himself was trained to do (Michael Wilcock).

The church is not meant to be this neat and nice and clean. It is meant to be a place of welcome and refuge for the least, the lost, the lonely, the unlovely.

Luke's portrayal of Jesus reveals our Lord ministering and showing compassion to all people, no matter their station in life. Only Luke gives us the conversation with the thief on the cross.

Luke gives us a very elevated status for *women*, giving them honor and respect. Elizabeth, Mary, Anna, widows, sinful women, crippled women, Mary and Martha. They were most prominent at the beginning and end of Jesus' ministry. The women were the last at the cross (Luke 23:55) and the first at the tomb (Luke 24:1). And after His resurrection, the Lord appeared to the women first (Luke 24:5-8). Luke refers to more women than any others.

Luke gives us more than the others of man and his needs, as might be expected from a doctor. There is no kind of person left out, or beyond the reach of the Gospel. There is no limit to the reach of the cross. Anyone can be saved.

The Gospel is for Jews and Gentiles, and for Romans and Samaritans. It is not only for males but also females, and not simply important women, but widows, cripples, and prostitutes. It is not only for freemen, but slaves, and all the others society tends to despise and reject, the poor, weak, outcasts, even tax collectors and thieves.

Jesus is the Savior of the world, of all mankind.

Luke is also the one who highlights the work of the *Holy Spirit*, especially when you take Acts into account. There are more references to the Holy Spirit in Luke than in Matthew and Mark combined. All of the main characters are empowered for their work by the Holy Spirit (John the Baptist, 1:15; Mary, 1:35; Elizabeth, 1:41; Zacharias, 1:67; Simeon, 2:25-26; The Lord Jesus, 4:1). The entire life of Jesus was lived by the Spirit: conceived by the Spirit (1:35), baptized by the Spirit (3:22), tested by the Spirit (4:1), empowered for ministry by the Spirit (4:14, 18), cheered by

the Spirit (10:21), and He expected His disciples to complete their work in the power of the Spirit (24:49). JD

Luke includes Jesus in *prayer* more than any others. Nine prayers of Jesus are included in the Gospel (seven of which are found only in Luke), along with parables on prayer recorded only in Luke. And speaking of parables, there are fifteen that are found only in Luke's Gospel.

What a gift this unique Gospel is in all that it gives us concerning who Jesus is.

Jesus

When I turn in each book to consider where Jesus is, in the Gospels He is everywhere, from start to finish. But there is something unique in Luke.

What stands out is the prominence Luke gives to the journey of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem. The key verse is:

Luke 9:51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

From chapter 9 to 19 Luke shows Jesus setting His face like flint toward Jerusalem. The meaning of Jesus' life for Luke is described as a journey with a mission, Jesus is going to Jerusalem in order to die (9:51).

Jesus' death and resurrection was the whole reason and purpose for His coming to earth. Jesus is on a mission to fulfill the will of His Father, not the will of the Jews or Judas or Pilate or Herod or the mob. Nothing will keep Him from accomplishing His will. That is the gospel.

Implications and application.

Doctor Luke diagnoses the problem of sin, gives the prescription for sin's treatment (including the staggering cost of the treatment), and gives the prognosis for those who are saved from sin's malignancy.

Sin has infected us all and it is a terminal disease. Unfortunately, it is misdiagnosed by almost everyone, especially by those who should have known, Pharisees, scribes, rabbis, so-called experts in the Law.

The only cure comes from the only person who is immune to it. The seriousness of the disease requires drastic measures. Jesus refrained from saving Himself in order to save us.

Luke was captivated by Jesus, he could not ignore Him, he had a passion, a love for Jesus. This love and passion drove Luke to thoroughness, to accuracy. He would be faithful in getting it right, "that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught" (1:4).

You need to come face to face with the claims of the Gospel. You need to be convinced of the certainty of the things taught, so that by believing you may have eternal life in the name of Jesus. Your life depends on this. This is the truest truth you will ever read or hear.

This is the record of the testimony of the most unique person in the history of the universe. Jesus Christ is the greatest gift ever given to all of humanity by God. The Gospels take us on the greatest adventure in human history and in our life. The Gospels tell us of events in the past, but they call for a response of faith and obedience.

Through the Gospels may we all have a greater desire to know this Jesus who abides in us and with whom we will spend eternity, and a greater desire to share Him.

I John 1:4 We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

Let's spend time in the NT together for the sake of our joy. Heaven and earth will pass away, but these words will abide forever, they will never pass away.

John 20:31 *these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for inspiring Luke to give us this great testimony of your love for us in Christ, for all of us, all kinds of us from all walks of life. Thank you that your church is not a gathering of the self-righteousness and self-important. We are the weak and foolish, poor and needy, poor in spirit. Give hearts like the tax collector, like the thief on the cross, like the woman in tears, like the broken-hearted and the truly repentant.