

We have been in the Gospel of Luke for two years now with over eighty sermons. Because we are prone to forget, I would like to conclude the series by touching on the highlights and try to bring out some of the uniqueness of this Gospel. It is one of the three synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), but it has many accounts not found in the other Gospels. It has the personality of the Doctor Luke recording things that were important to Jesus which he learned from eyewitnesses (Luke 1:2<sup>i</sup>). It was probably the third Gospel to be written, so he could draw from Matthew and Mark. Luke was the only Gentile author of a portion of the New Testament. His Gospel and Acts together make up the largest portion of the New Testament from one author. Though the Gospel of Luke has less chapters than some New Testament books, it has more words than any other.

Luke's Gospel is a gospel for the world. He was a Gentile writing to a Gentile. The genealogy he gives us, unlike Matthew's that takes it back to Abraham, goes all the way back to Adam. When he wrote, he was traveling with the Apostle Paul and could see that the number of Gentiles in the church was growing. He wanted them to see that Jesus came for all mankind. He alone tells of the trip to Egypt when Jesus was a toddler. He tells of the healing of the Roman Centurion's servant. He reports the well-loved parable of the Good Samaritan which is not found in the other Gospels. He also records that the only leper to return and give thanks, out of ten who were healed, was a Samaritan (17:16). In both accounts the hated half-Jew is the hero, the definition of being a neighbor to others, and the one to emulate.

The Good Samaritan parable was just one of eighteen unique parables found only in Luke, many more unique parables than found in the other Gospels. They bring out some of Jesus' emphasis on women, prayer, the poor, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

## WOMEN

This emphasis on women begins with **Mary** in the very first chapter. It seems that Luke interviewed her for he tells us accounts that only she would have known. He tells of the annunciation by the angel (1:28-33), the miraculous conception (1:35), her willingness to be God's servant (1:38), her joyous song of praise (1:46-55), her time with her cousin **Elizabeth** as well as the story of her pregnancy, of the baby leaping in her womb at the sound of Mary's voice (1:44).

We are also told of the widow **Anna** who dedicated her life to prayer in the temple and how she realized who baby Jesus was. She gave thanks to God and told those who were waiting for the redemption of Israel that He had come (2:36-38).

In 7:40-50, Luke recorded the account of dining with Simon in which a repentant woman anointed Jesus' feet with a perfume. This account also touches on another theme in Luke: forgiveness of sins. Simon was upset that Jesus let a woman "sinner" touch Him. Jesus responded with a parable of two men who were forgiven a debt, one small amount and the other quite large. Jesus explained that the one who is forgiven much loves much and that He came to call sinners to repentance (7:47<sup>ii</sup>).

In chapter fifteen, Jesus gave three parables in a row emphasizing God's heart for the lost. The first about the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14<sup>iii</sup>) was touched on in Matthew's Gospel, but the next two were unique to Luke and included a woman who had lost a coin

from her wedding necklace. The joy of a sinner repenting is seen in the woman's joy when after sweeping her home she finds the lost coin, a part of her dowery.

Rabbis addressed men exclusively, but Jesus included women even among His traveling followers. Though they certainly would have slept in separate areas, the very fact that He allowed them to travel with them and be students was somewhat scandalous. Some of the women He healed became supporters of the ministry (8:1-3).

Another parable touches on Luke's emphasis on prayer and includes a widow as the exemplary character. Luke 18:1-8 tells of that widow who was seeking justice from an unjust judge against her adversary. Her persistence to bring the case caused the judge to finally decide in her favor. Jesus brings out how much more God is willing to answer our prayers when we continue to have faith that they will be answered.

Luke alone records the prophecy Jesus gave to the women as He went up Calvary. Women were also the first at the tomb on Sunday morning, and Luke lets us know that the disciples did not believe their account of the angels' message (Luke 24:9-11). While other Gospel writers tell of the women going to the tomb, Luke emphasizes that the men did not believe them. Luke's accounts of women inform us of their importance to Jesus. He dispels the idea that they are not as important as men and that they have key roles in the life and ministry of Jesus.

## **PRAYER**

In addition to the parable of the persistent widow, several other parables on prayer are unique to Luke. In chapter eleven, the disciples saw Jesus praying and asked Him to teach them to pray. That is when He taught them what we call the Lord's Prayer (11:1-4). He continued by telling of a man who had guests arrive at midnight. He went to his neighbor to ask for some bread to serve his guests. At first the man would not get out of bed, but at the friend's insistence he finally got up and gave him what he needed to be hospitable to his guests (11:5-8). This showed that if we keep knocking on heaven's door, God will answer.

Another parable on prayer only found in Luke is the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9-14). In that parable Jesus told of a proud Pharisee who boastfully prayed aloud in the temple about how faithful he was to God. He contrasted himself with a tax collector who was beating his breast and asking God for mercy. But Jesus said God heard the tax collector's prayer and not that of the self-righteous Pharisee.

Luke also tells us that Jesus would find private places to spend time talking with His Father in heaven (5:16). Only Luke tells us that Jesus spent the entire night in prayer before choosing which disciples would be His apostles (6:12,13).

## **THE POOR**

Luke also shows more clearly than the other Gospels that Jesus had a heart for the poor. Luke's version of the Beatitudes is very different. It may have been a separate teaching that was focused more on the physical conditions knowing that Jews relate the physical to the spiritual. Unlike Matthew's "poor in spirit," Luke simply says blessed are the poor and hungry (Luke 6:20,21). He contrasts it with a warning of woe to the rich and those who are full (Luke 6:24,25), which would include most of us.

Luke gives us the only parable of the rich fool in 12:13-21. A man was asking Jesus to mediate in the distribution of an inheritance. Jesus told him to watch out because man's life is not about possessions. Then He told of a rich man who had a great harvest and built barns to hold it all. He thought he had it made and could kick back and enjoy life. That night his soul was required of him. That is a picture of all who lay up for themselves but are not rich toward God.

Jesus told another poverty versus riches parable in 16:19-31. A poor man, Lazarus, was laid at the gate of wealthy estate. He would have been blessed to eat the crumbs from the rich man's table. Dogs licked the sores on the poor man. He died and then the rich man died. The rich man looked up from a place of torment and saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. He asked for Lazarus to be sent with a drop of water to cool his tongue. But there was an impassable gulf between them. Abraham told him he had good things in his life while Lazarus suffered. Now Lazarus was comforted and the rich man in torment. So, the rich man asked that Lazarus be sent to warn his brothers. The response from Abraham is another emphasis in Luke: the sufficiency of God's Word. Abraham said that if they don't believe God's Word, they won't believe even if someone is raised from the dead.

Luke was using Jesus' teachings to dispel the idea that to be poor was to be under a curse and to be rich meant you were blessed. It was a common belief in Jewish culture. Luke was writing to a wealthy benefactor, but he didn't let that stop him from relaying Jesus' word's faithfully. It certainly does not mean that the rich cannot enter the kingdom, but as Jesus taught, wealth can be a difficult hurdle. But Jesus added that nothing is impossible with God (Matthew 19:26<sup>iv</sup>).

One of Jesus warnings in that regard is another parable unique to Luke. It is found in 12:41-48. Jesus told of the master of an estate who went away on a long journey. If the manager abuses his position, when the master returns, the manager will be punished. If he is faithful and awaiting the master's return, he will be rewarded. Jesus' conclusion was, *Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.* Luke 12:48b My understanding is that is applicable to spiritual truth as well as physical authority and wealth.

## **GOD'S WORD**

There is also an emphasis on the Word of God in a way that is different from the other Gospels. In Luke 10:38-42 Luke introduces us to an early meeting of Jesus with Martha and Mary. Mary sits at Jesus' feet and listens to Him teach while Martha is busy preparing the meal for her guests. She asks Jesus if He can tell Mary to help her. Here again we have Luke emphasizing the importance of women and their spiritual hunger. Jesus told Martha that Mary had chosen the good thing that would not be taken from her. In other words, it was better for Mary to sit and listen than to be busy preparing food. The physical food could wait. The primary importance was the spiritual food.

We saw that same importance placed on the Word in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. And at the end of Luke we see it again when Jesus expounds on the prophecies about Him in all the Scriptures, both to the couple on the road to Emmaus and to the those hiding in the upper room (24:27,44).

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is also an emphasis in Luke on the Holy Spirit. From the very first chapter we read that John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb (1:15). We find that it was the Holy Spirit caused Mary to be with child (1:35). Elizabeth is filled with the Spirit when Mary greeted her (1:41). Zechariah was filled with the Spirit and prophesied about John's life (1:67). The Spirit was upon Simeon when he was waiting in the temple to see the Messiah (2:25,26). John the Baptist predicted Jesus will baptize people with the Spirit. In John 3:16 we have the promise that those who receive Jesus will have everlasting life, and in Luke 3:16 He will baptize them with the Spirit and fire. In 3:22 the Spirit descended like a dove on Jesus after He was baptized. In 4:1 Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit as He goes into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. In 10:21 Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit that God revealed truth to the simple while hiding it from the wise and learned ones. Then in 11:13, one of my favorite verses, Jesus said the Father would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. 12:10 tells us blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. 12:12 encourages us that when we are put on trial for faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will tell us what to say. And finally, in 24:49 Jesus' last words on earth were to tell the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for power from on high, which is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

## FAVORITE VERSES UNIQUE TO LUKE

My favorite verses unique to Luke, some of which I have already mentioned, are those that challenge my thinking and behavior. The first is regarding following Jesus.<sup>62</sup> *Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."* Luke 9:62 The Gospels all make it clear that we must persevere in our faith. The world is always calling us to turn back from following Jesus. By God's grace, we will endure to the end.

<sup>13</sup> *If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*" Luke 11:13 This is a promise I often claim. We are leaky vessels. We need to be filled and refilled. How we need the Holy Spirit to do anything of service to our Lord! So much work in the church at large is meaningless because it is not empowered by the Spirit!

<sup>15</sup> *And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."* Luke 12:15 We are bombarded with advertising that tells us things will make us happy. They never have and they never will. Things just distract us from the main thing. The one who dies with the most toys doesn't win but was simply busy his or her whole life maintaining all of them.

<sup>33</sup> *So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.* Luke 14:33 If we want to be a disciple, all competition for our love must be renounced as much less significant. The first commandment is still a command to us. We should have no other gods before Him (Exodus 20:3<sup>v</sup>). Whatever He asks of my possessions I must be ready to gladly surrender for His service.

<sup>15</sup> *And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."* Luke 16:15 When I justify my wrong actions, I need to realize God sees my heart and

never falls for my excuses. These last three verses really go together in the sense that material possessions can be an abomination to God. What man praises is usually worthless in eternity.

<sup>16</sup> *“The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.* Luke 16:16 This helps us understand the transition from the age of the office of prophet to the present kingdom they predicted.

<sup>10</sup> *So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’”* Luke 17:10 No matter how great our service to God is in the eyes of men, it does not earn us merit with God. It is our honor and duty to love and obey the One who gave Himself for us. Never be uppity about any accomplishment, for it is God who works in you to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13<sup>vi</sup>).

<sup>27</sup> *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.* Luke 24:27 This is the key to understanding the Old Testament! It is all about Jesus in one way or another.

I hope you have been blessed by our journey through Luke’s Gospel. And I hope this review has helped you to hold on to some of the things Luke felt important to convey from the teachings of Jesus. We covered a lot today, but my prayer is that the Holy Spirit helped you to see life the way heaven sees it: the value of women, God’s heart for the poor, the importance of prayer and God’s Word, and our need for the Holy Spirit. Perhaps you will want to commit some of these key verses to memory so that your mind will be renewed by the Word of God (Romans 12:2<sup>vii</sup>). Luke has tried to show us the things that people remembered that Jesus emphasized in His teaching. By God’s grace may they be our emphasis as well.

Next month we will begin our study in Joshua. The closing verse regarding Jesus in the Old Testament reminds us that it won’t just be a study in history, but in the life of Joshua whose name in Greek is the same as Jesus. And if we have ears to hear, we will see Jesus at work in our lives!

#### Questions:

- 1 How is Luke different from other Gospels?
- 2 What are the main themes Luke addresses?
- 3 What do Luke’s accounts tell us of Jesus’ attitude toward women?
- 4 How does Luke emphasize prayer?
- 5 How does Luke emphasize the poor?
- 6 How does Luke emphasize the Word?
- 7 How does Luke emphasize the Holy Spirit?
- 8 What is your favorite verse in Luke?
- 9 How would you describe Luke’s Gospel compared to the others?
- 10 What is your take home thought in this summary of Luke?

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<sup>i</sup> Luke 1:2 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us,

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ii **Luke 7:47 (ESV)**

<sup>47</sup> Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

iii **Matthew 18:12-14 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?

<sup>13</sup> And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.

<sup>14</sup> So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

iv **Matthew 19:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

v **Exodus 20:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> “You shall have no other gods before me.

vi **Philippians 2:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

vii **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.