

## Used by God

### *To Know Christ and to Make Christ Known Series*

Luke 1:1-4; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; August 18, 2013

## The Purpose

### *Why study Luke?*

- It's God's Word to us.
- It is the means the Spirit uses to change us.
- It is the most complete description of the life of our God and Savior, Jesus, emphasizing the sovereign purpose of God and His love to men.
- It is a great follow up to the book of Romans, written by one of Paul's close associates.
- To know Christ.
- To make Christ known.
- To see Jesus as the One who saves us from sin.
- To see Jesus as the One who satisfies us in God.
- To rest more in His righteousness.
- To trust more in His promises.
- To love more according to His commands.
- To grow in serving our Lord, our families, our workplaces, our church and our world.

## The Text: Luke 1:1-4

<sup>1</sup> Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, <sup>2</sup> just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, <sup>3</sup> it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; <sup>4</sup> so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (NASB)

## Intro: Being Used by God

1. A desire to be used by God is common for those who know God and trust Jesus.

*Do you want to be used by God?*

I was asked one time by a mentor when I was in a freshman in college something along the lines of, "What is your dream for your life?" I said something to the effect, "To preach to millions like Billy Graham and be used by God to touch many lives."

2. We can be hindered in being used by God if we have wrong ideas about how He desires to use us.

## Commentary

**1. Luke 1:1-4 is a book dedication which was common in the ancient world and is still today.**

*How is this like what we know of today?*

Book dedications from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*:

TO LUCY BARFIELD

My dear Lucy,

I wrote this story for you, but when I began it I had not realized that girls grow quicker than books. As a result you are already too old for fairy tales, and by the time it is printed and bound you will be older still. But some day you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again. You can then take it down from some upper shelf, dust it, and tell me what you think of it. I shall probably be too deaf to hear, and too old to understand a word you say, but I shall still be

your affectionate Godfather,

C. S. LEWIS

**2. Many had already written about the life of Jesus and we may or may not know about them. (1)**

*Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, (1)*

- Many = written and oral sources; ‘four source theory’ (Mark, Q [what Luke and Matthew used], L [what only Luke used] and M [what only Matthew used])
- Undertaken to compile = ‘setting the hand’ could suggest written accounts
- Account = an orderly account; technical term of ancient historians for different kinds of recounting; written or well-organized reports
- Things accomplished = better ‘fulfilled’; reference to God fulfilling His promises and plans
- Among us = those present and those impacted by it

**3. These accounts relied on the testimony of eyewitnesses which is always the case for history. (2)**

*just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, (2)*

- Handed down = technical term for passing on official tradition

- From the beginning = present from the beginning of Jesus' ministry
- Eyewitnesses and servants of the word = one group referring to the disciples who became apostles; 'servant' is the basis for our word, 'autopsy'

#### **4. Luke decided to also write a thorough account of the life of Jesus for Theophilus and a wider audience. (3)**

*it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; (3)*

- Me = Luke, the Gentile physician (Col. 4:14) and missionary companion of Paul
- investigated = 'to follow along closely' in investigative mode
- everything = investigated reports both oral and written
- from the beginning = births of John the Baptist and Jesus
- consecutive order = an orderly account in view of the message of God's work in history for the salvation of a people for Himself
- most excellent = used in reference to those of high social standing; probably an indication that he was Gentile
- Theophilus = means 'beloved of God'; probably, a new believer or one whose faith needs to be strengthened in light of the church being pressured and suffering rejection and being persecuted; other ancient writers dedicated their works to individuals while writing for a larger audience

*How do we know Luke wrote this?*

- It appears whoever wrote Luke also wrote Acts (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1).
- Whoever wrote Acts was with Paul in his journeys ('we' passages: Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-16; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16)
- Whoever wrote Acts was with Paul when he was in prison in Rome and must then be one of the persons named in the letters Paul wrote from Rome (where the 'we' sections end). (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Philemon 24)
- Luke is the most likely candidate of all the possibilities.
- The writer was not an eyewitness to the events of the gospel and therefore, not one of the original followers of Jesus.
- Luke was a physician (Col 4:14) and the writer of Luke certainly has an interest in the sick.
- Luke according to tradition was a Gentile (Col 4:11, 14) from Antioch and the writing of Luke is that of elegant, polished Greek with an eye for beauty and culture – the style of a scholarly, well read author and meticulous historian.
- The earliest tradition of the church unanimously attributed this Gospel to Luke.

*Who is Luke?*

- One tradition has it that Luke, the writer of the Third Gospel, ‘was a native of Antioch, that he was a physician, that he wrote his Gospel in Achaia and that he died at the age of eighty-four, unmarried and childless.’ (Morris)

*If you could meet any writer, dead or alive, who would it be? What would you want to know? That’s a tough one. But I think I would go with Luke the physician, the author of the third Gospel. I’d want to have a long conversation over coffee (or better yet, over a nice pinot grigio) to learn everything about him — as a doctor, a follower of Jesus and a gifted writer. (Francis S. Collins - director of the National Institutes of Health)*

- He was a close companion of Paul the Apostle and probably a Gentile. (Morris)
- Probably written in the early 60s, used Mark, and quoted from the LXX, from Rome during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment (61-63 AD). (Morris)
- Had a profound impact on Sir William Ramsay who considered Luke a first rate historian. (Morris)

Sir William Mitchell Ramsay (15 March 1851, Glasgow –20 April 1939) was a Scottish archaeologist and New Testament scholar. Mitchell was raised as an atheist and as an archaeologist was convinced that the Bible was fraudulent. By his death in 1939 he had become the foremost authority of his day on the history of Asia Minor and a leading scholar in the study of the New Testament. . . . William Ramsay paid a lot of attention to the New Testament events, particularly the Book of Acts and Pauline Epistles. When he first went to Asia Minor, many of the cities mentioned in Acts had no known location and almost nothing was known of their detailed history or politics. The Acts of the Apostles was the only record and Ramsay, skeptical, fully expected his own research to prove the author of Acts hopelessly inaccurate since no man could possibly know the details of Asia Minor more than a hundred years after the event—this is, when Acts was then supposed to have been written. He therefore set out to put the writer of Acts on trial. He devoted his life to unearthing the ancient cities and documents of Asia Minor. After a lifetime of study, however, he concluded: 'Further study . . . showed that the book could bear the most minute scrutiny as an authority for the facts of the Aegean world, and that it was written with such judgment, skill, art and perception of truth as to be a model of historical statement' (*The Bearing of Recent Discovery*, p. 85).

Of Luke, he wrote: *Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...this author should be placed along with the very greatest historians.*

*How did Luke write this gospel?*

On the Divine level, Luke was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

On the human level, Luke did hard research and used other sources!

- 60% of Mark is repeated in Luke and Luke seems to follow Mark's order of events.
- Luke had time during Paul's two year imprisonment in Caesarea to talk with the other apostles and eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus (Acts 24:26, 27).
- Luke could have gleaned information and done research at other points in his journeys with Paul (Philip – Acts 21:8).

*From where Luke write this gospel?*

Ancient Greece (province of Achaia) or Rome (during Paul's imprisonment). Most likely Rome in light of the book of Acts and his travels with Paul.

*When Luke write this gospel?*

61-63 AD while Paul was in prison in Rome.

*Who is Theophilus?*

- Both Luke and Acts are dedicated to Theophilus – such dedications were common in books intended for a wider audience (as today).
- Could have been Luke's patron who helped him publish the book.
- Probably a person of rank because of the greeting which was indeed used for governors and those of the highest rank (Acts 23:26; 24:3)

**5. Luke wanted Theophilus to have assurance of the truth about the life of Jesus and what it means. (4)**

*so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (4)*

- So that = indication of Luke's purpose in writing
- Exact truth = 'certainty' is used by Luke in reference to assurance or determining the facts with certainty
- Taught = instructed or informed (get our word, *catechism*)

**Implications**

*What is important to understand regarding being used by God?*

Clifton Fadiman, in *The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes*, tells a story about Vladimir Nabokov, the Russian-born novelist who achieved popular success with his novels *Lolita* (1955), *Pale Fire* (1962), and *Invitation to a Beheading* (1969). One summer in the 1940s, Nabokov and his family stayed with James Laughlin at Alta, Utah, where Nabokov took the opportunity to enlarge his collection of butterflies and moths. Fadiman relates: Nabokov's fiction has never been praised for its compassion: he was single-minded if nothing else. One evening at dusk he returned from his day's excursion saying that during hot pursuit near Bear Gulch he had heard someone groaning most piteously down by the stream. 'Did you stop?' Laughlin asked him. 'No, I had to get the butterfly.' The next day the corpse of an aged prospector was discovered in what has been renamed, in Nabokov's honor, Dead Man's Gulch. (IPT 202)

Some think this story is not true. It may or may not be. The point is that we often live our lives like this: pursuing 'butterflies' instead of 'loving' those around us!

We need to love those 'right in front of us' rather than chasing what we may think is a 'great thing' or even what we all agree would be a 'great thing,' especially if chasing it causes us to fail to love those God has put in our lives.

1. Our goal should be to love people not to do 'great things' for God.
2. The greatest thing we can give someone is a word from God about the salvation of their soul and it's worth whatever time and effort it takes!
3. God uses secondary means to bring about primary events and accomplishment so don't expect God simply to drop things out of the sky or to speak directly to your ear!
4. God uses us without 'speaking from heaven' and telling us that He is going to use us!
5. God uses people who do good things but their impact is only for a season though it can have eternal consequences.
6. God could have used technology to record the life of Jesus but instead, chose to use the means used by most historians throughout the generations: eyewitness accounts passed on in oral tradition and written reports!
7. God uses sinners who need and proclaim a Savior in Jesus!

## **Practical Applications**

*Are you doing what you can do?*

In Elmer Bendiner's book, *The Fall of Fortresses*, he describes one bombing run over the German city of Kassel: Our B-17 (The Tondelayo) was barraged by flack from Nazi anti-aircraft guns. That was not unusual, but on this particular occasion our gas tanks were hit. Later, as I reflected on the miracle of a twenty-millimeter shell piercing the fuel tank

without touching off an explosion, our pilot, Bohn Fawkes, told me it was not that simple. On the morning following the raid, Bohn had gone down to ask our crew chief for that shell as a souvenir of unbelievable luck. The crew chief that not just one shell but eleven had been found in the gas tanks – eleven unexploded shells where only one was sufficient to blast us out of the sky. It was as if the sea had been parted for us. Even after 35 years, so awesome an event leaves me shaken, especially after I heard the rest of the story from Bohn. He was told that the shells had been sent to the armorers to be defused. The armorers told him that Intelligence had picked them up. They could not say why at the time, but Bohn eventually sought out the answer. Apparently when the armorers opened each of those shells, they found no explosive charge. They were as clean as a whistle and just as harmless. Empty? Not all of them. One contained a carefully rolled piece of paper. On it was a scrawl in Czech. The Intelligence people scoured our base for a man who could read Czech. Eventually, they found one to decipher the note: It set us marveling. Translated, the note read: ‘This is all we can do for you now.’ (IPT 204)

*How can I be used by God?*

1. Make it your goal to love.
2. Focus on spreading the truth.
3. Utilize your gifts and take advantage of your opportunities.
4. Utilize the help and insights and work of others.

**Concl: Receiving and Resting in Jesus**

*Where do you begin?*

1. Receive and rest in the Lord Jesus Christ for His righteousness.
2. Trust God for all He promises.
3. Love by obeying God’s commands.