

Luke 3:15-38 He Must Increase

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[0 : 00] Our Bibles please to Luke chapter 3. Luke chapter 3. And we're going to read the verses 15 through the end of the chapter. Verses 15 through 38 of Luke chapter 3.

So as you get to Luke, you're looking for a big number 3. And then you're looking for a little number 15 beside one of the words. Luke chapter 3, a big number 3.

And then verse 15, a little number 15 beside one of the words. This is the word of God. As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all saying, I baptize you with water.

But he who is mightier than I is coming. The strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn.

But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. But Herod the Tetrarch who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

[1 : 34] Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened. And the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came from heaven, You are my beloved Son.

With you I am well pleased. Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about 30 years of age, being the son, as was supposed, of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Mathat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janai, the son of Joseph, the son of Matthias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esle, the son of 110, the son of Mahas, the son of Matthias, the son of Semen, the son of Joshek, the son of Judah, the son of Jonan, the son of Resha, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Ner'e, the son of Melchi, the son of Arai, the son of Chossam, the son of El-Madam, the son of Err, the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Joram, the son of Mattat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Elakim, the son of Mila, the son of Mena, the son of Matha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salah, the son of Nashon, the son of Aminabab, the son of Admin, the son of Arnie, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor the son of Serug the son of Ru the son of Peleg the son of Eber the son of Shelah the son of Canaan the son of Arphaxah the son of Shem the son of Noah the son of Lamech the son of Methuselah the son of Enoch the son of Jared the son of Mahalil the son of Canaan the son of Enos the son of Seth the son of

Adam the son of God Amen well this is the reading of God's inspired and inerrant word.

Let's turn in our Bibles please to Ruth chapter 4. If you're using one of these blue Bibles, it's page 269. If you're using one of the blue Bibles, it's page 269.

As we read the end of Luke chapter 3, the temptation is just to gloss over what seems like a long list of names. But actually as we're going to see this morning, when we look at those names, we see how surprising some of them are.

[4 : 06] No more so than Boaz perhaps who redeems Ruth here. Ruth the Moabite-esque, Ruth the foreigner, Ruth the outsider to God's covenant community.

And yet it's this outsider who would play a key role in the coming of the Christ. It's this outsider who would be one of Jesus' ancestors, if you like. Ruth chapter 4.

I'm beginning to read at verse 1. This is the word of God. Now, Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the Redeemer of whom Boaz had spoken came by.

So Boaz said, turn aside, friend, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down. And he took two men of the elders of the city and said, sit down here. So they sat down. Then he said to the Redeemer, Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech.

So I thought I would tell you of it and say, buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you will not, tell me that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you.

[5 : 20] And he said, I will redeem it. Then Boaz said, the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead and his inheritance.

Then the Redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it. Now, this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging.

To confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel. So when the Redeemer said to Boaz, buy it for yourself, he drew off his sandal.

Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, you are my witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi, all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Keelon and Mahlon. Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead and his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place.

You are witnesses this day. Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, we are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel.

[6 : 37] May you act worthily in Ephrathath and be renowned in Bethlehem. And may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Timur bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman.

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. And he went into her and the Lord gave her conception and she bore a son. Then the woman said to Naomi, blessed be the Lord who has not left you this day without a Redeemer and may his name be renowned in Israel.

He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age. For your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him. Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse.

And the woman of the neighborhood gave him a name saying, a son has been born to Naomi. They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Now these are the generations of Perez. Perez fathered Hezron. Hezron fathered Ram. Ram fathered Aminadab. Aminadab fathered Nishon.

[7 : 46] Nishon fathered Salmon. Salmon fathered Boaz. Boaz fathered Obed. Obed fathered Jesse. And Jesse fathered David. Amen.

This is a reading of God's inspired and inerrant word. Let us turn to the Lord in prayer again. Let us pray. Heavenly father, as we read these words in Ruth chapter four, we're reminded of your great plan of salvation.

We're reminded of that plan declared to Abraham. We're reminded of that plan even declared to Ruth here, that the nations would be brought in. That as Jesus Christ himself said, that the temple should be a house of prayer for the nations.

So often father, as we read your word, we see the Israelites becoming insular. We see the Israelites becoming concerned with themselves. Forgetting that great promise.

Forgetting that great hope for the nations. And as we gather together this morning, father, we confess that we can often be like them.

[8 : 54] That we're often concerned with ourselves. That we're often concerned with our own tribe. That we're often concerned with what happens here. Sunday by Sunday, Wednesday by Wednesday.

And forgetting that great promise. That Jesus Christ is building his church. That there are people in darkness who need to see the great light. And to that end, heavenly father, we come before you this morning, asking you to bless the town of Dumfries.

Asking that there would be a spiritual awakening in our town. We know that there are many, father, who are in darkness. We know that there are many who are held in the thrall of sin and death. And so as we come this morning, father, we ask that you would enlighten them. We ask that you would open their eyes. We ask that that great gospel light would shine forth. And that many would come to put their trust in Christ.

We remember our friend, AK, who we've been praying for, for quite some time now. We pray, father, that you would bless him in these difficult days. Bless him in these stressful days that he is in.

[10:08] We confess as we come, father, we don't know his heart. You know his heart. You know whether he is yours or not. That whatever the home office might say, whatever the officials might say, you know whether he is a child of yours or not.

We thank you for the outward signs of repentance in his life. We thank you for the contact that he's had with Govan Hill Free Church. And we pray, father, that in the situation, in the days that lie ahead, we pray that your will would be done.

We don't know what that is, but we have that great confidence that you are the God who is in control. That you are the God who is all powerful. So overrule in that situation we ask.

Remember the situation in the wider world. As we come this morning, we stand on the threshold of another outbreak of viruses, father.

And we pray, father, that you would keep your hand upon all those who have been affected. Keep your hand upon all those who are infected.

[11:16] And we pray, father, this coronary virus outbreak wouldn't be severe. That you would keep your hand upon it. As we come this morning, father, we remember our friends in, in Dornoch, as they minister in a small rural community.

We pray, father, you would bless Duncan McLeod as he ministers there. We pray for their, their contacts with our community. We thank you for the location of the building. We thank you that it's right in the middle of the community.

And we pray that it would be mightily used of you. We pray, father, for all of our, the believers, all of our brothers and sisters who meet there in Dornoch.

May they have that gospel vision. May they have that gospel passion. May they reach out to those around them with the good news of Jesus Christ. And we pray now for ourselves, father, that as we come to this passage in Luke's gospel, pray that you would be with us.

Pray that you would give us insight and understanding. Pray that the Holy Spirit would open our eyes, we ask. In Jesus name. Amen. Well, just before we consider that passage in, in Luke chapter three, we'll sing from Psalm 42.

[12:34] Psalm 42. It's on page 53. As pants the deer for flowing streams, so longs my soul, O God, for you. I thirst for God, the living God.

Where can I meet? When can I meet? With God. And you. Psalm 42, verses one to five. It's on page 53. And we'll stand if we're able to sing.

Okay. Yay! Yay! Thank you. Yay. Yay! Yay! Yay!

Yay! Yay! Thank you.

Thank you.

[14:11] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

But then thirdly, we want to ask the question, well, who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? So first of all, we want to think about John fading out. John fading out. And we see that in verses 15 through 20.

[16:54] The first five verses of this section, verses 15 through 20. So remember where we left off last week. So remember where we left off last week. We left off with John preaching a baptism for repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Some people come out for the show. Some of the religious leaders come out for the show. And John doesn't really have time for those people, did he? He didn't have time for those who were there only to see what was happening. Remember what he said last week?

But we finished last week by noticing that there were some who genuinely repented. Some who were genuinely cut to the heart by what John said.

And they said, well, what should we do? How should we live in light of this new message? How should we live in light of this new repentance? And it's at that point then that we come to verse 15 this morning.

And you can see people wondering. You can see people beginning to think, well, who is John? Could John be the Messiah? Look at his message. Look at the crowds who are responding to him. [17:56] Could John be the Christ? He preaches with power. He preaches and people turn to God. Could he be God's Messiah?

Notice John's response though. It's almost that there's this sense of anticipation building behind him. You know, much like an election campaign.

You can imagine this force building behind John. Well, he is the Christ. Could he be the Christ? Could he be the one? People are starting to think and believe that John really is the Christ. And what does John say in verse 16? I baptize you with water. But he who is mightier than I is coming.

There's one better than me coming. You might be asking yourselves if I'm the Christ. Well, the answer quite simply is no. There's one more powerful than I coming.

[18:55] There's one whose sandal I am not worthy to even untie. John isn't interested in self-promotion. John isn't interested in the acclaim of the public.

John doesn't want to take a role that isn't his. Rather, he says to the people, if you think what I do is good. If you think what I do is important, powerful and significant.

Wait till you see Jesus. Wait till you see the one who comes after me. Every concert you go to will have a warm-up act.

They're a band, a person who's responsible for getting the crowd going. Who's responsible for making sure that the crowd are in good form by the time the headliner arrives. And that's what John's saying here.

I'm not the headline attraction. I'm not the one that you've come to see. I'm not the big gig around here. But Jesus is.

[20:01] And he's coming. My job is to make sure you're ready for him. The minister of a church is worth listening to.

To the extent that he points us to Christ. The minister of a church is worth listening to. To the extent that he points us to Christ. It's very easy for ministers, and I include myself in this, to develop a Messiah complex.

We need to be the ones who are at the center of attention. We need to be the ones who know everything. But the minister of a church is never the main attraction.

Jesus is. A minister should never point to himself. But point to Christ. You see, John here wasn't going to accept the people's acclaim.

He wasn't going to put himself in the position of being the Messiah. He wasn't going to put himself in the position of being the Christ. Despite the public pressure. Despite the public support that he had.

[21:08] He pointed instead to Christ. There's something better coming. Something fuller coming. But notice the phrase that John uses here.

What is it he says about Jesus? He says, look, if you think this is good. If you think this is important.

You think this is significant. Well, let me tell you. I baptize you with water. But he who is mightier than I is coming. The strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

In the culture of the day, a rabbi wasn't paid by his students in terms of money. But the students would do various little jobs for him to help him out.

They would do things for him in terms of payment. In lieu of payment for him. But interestingly, one of the tasks that they weren't allowed to do. One of the tasks that was considered so low, so menial.

That the students weren't allowed to do. Was to take off the sandals of their rabbi. And yet that's exactly the phrase that John uses here. Don't forget that the people are lauding him.

[22:09] The people are saying, could he be the Christ? The people are saying, could he be the one? And John in response simply says, no. The one who's coming, I can't even do the most menial of tasks for.

The one who's coming, I'm not worthy even to do the most menial of jobs for. Such is his superiority to mine.

So much better is he than me. I can't even do that for him. But what is it that makes Jesus so much superior?

Why is Jesus so much better than John, if you like? John gives us the answer, doesn't he? I've baptized you with water, verse 16.

But he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. And with fire. Jesus' baptism is so much greater. The effect of Jesus' baptism is so much greater.

[23 : 16] Jesus is the one you're looking for, John says. It's not me. But it's Jesus. And he follows that up, verse 17.

What does he say? That his winnowing fork is in his hand to clear the threshing floor. To separate the wheat and the chaff. Now what does that mean? What's John saying here? He's saying effectively that the work of Jesus will be to what?

Judge the people. Jesus is greater. Jesus is so much more superior to me. And what is it that he brings? Well, it's essentially a judgment.

The wheat is gathered into the barns. The wheat is kept safe. While the chaff is burned in the fire. John says, I'm not the Christ.

I'm not the one who is coming. He keeps preaching this message of the Christ that is coming. But notice how Luke describes that, verse 18.

[24 : 16] What does he say? So with many other exhortations, he, that is John the Baptist, preached good news to the people. With many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people.

The judgment of Jesus Christ was part of the good news that John preached. The judgment of Jesus Christ was part of the gospel that John told people.

But how can the judgment of Christ be good news? How can the judgment of God be good news? We live in a world that says, well, God is a God of love. We live in an age, sadly, when many in the church say that God is a God of love. And there's no room for the judgment of God. And even if we accept the judgment of God, it's kind of the bad news end of the good news of Jesus Christ.

It's kind of the bad news that we're escaping from as we get to the good news of Jesus Christ. Yet Luke here describes the judgment of God as part of the good news of the gospel.

[25 : 31] Part of the preaching of John. The judgment of God this morning is essential to the good news of the gospel.

It's the judgment of God this morning that assures us that one day all things will be set right. It's the judgment of God this morning that assures us that one day all sin will be called to give an account for.

that the mass murderers of the world that the dictators of the world won't simply get away with it. It's the judgment of God that assures us that ultimately sin will be dealt with.

If we dismiss the judgment of God from the gospel then the good news isn't good news. Because there was nothing to save us from.

Nothing to keep us from. The righteous, holy judgment of God this morning is central to the gospel. It's central to the good news of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 41] Then we notice John's ultimate kind of fading out, if you like, don't we? We have fuller explanations in the other gospels as Luke records it here. Verse 19, Herod the Tetrarch, who had been reproved by John for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

We know ultimately John was beheaded at the request of Herodias' wife and daughter. John fades out quite abruptly, but even with that Luke's telling us something.

John has come. John's part in the narrative is over. John's death here would occur a few months down the line.

Luke doesn't deal with things exactly chronologically. But John's done. He's prepared the way. He's made the paths straight.

And so he fades out. Jesus Christ is rising to the fore. Jesus is coming to the forefront as John fades out.

[27 : 51] But there's tremendous reassurance for us even in that, isn't there? Because you see, God might bury his workers.

John the Baptist, dead and buried. Moses, dead and buried. Abraham, you get the idea. But God's work continues. Here we are some 2,000 years after John the Baptist, still praising God, still worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is still building his kingdom and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. God might bury his workers, but the work always continues.

We do our best here in Dumfries. We labour in hope and do our best. Ultimately, we know that one day we will die. But ultimately, we have that assurance that the Lord will bring to completion the work that he's begun.

There's John fading out then. Secondly, we want to see how Jesus fades in. Jesus fades in. And we see that in verses 21 and 22.

[29 : 04] Verses 21 and 22. So John's dead. Been beheaded. He's faded out of the picture. He's gone. But now Jesus comes to the fore in Luke's Gospel.

But notice how quietly it all begins. We're told, verse 21, when all the people were baptised, when the people were flocking to John to be baptised, when the people were coming to him in their droves to be baptised, Jesus was baptised too.

There's nothing else recorded for us in Luke, really. The other Gospels tell us that John tried to prevent Jesus from being baptised.

John recognised that he needed to be baptised by Jesus, not the other way around. But Jesus insisted. Remember that phrase that Jesus used, that it's fitting to fulfil all righteousness.

Why did Jesus insist? Why did he have to be baptised by John? We're going to find out in just a few moments as we consider that list of the names of Jesus' genealogy.

[30 : 07] We're going to see how Jesus came to be the second Adam. He had to identify. He had to be with humanity in all its weakness. He didn't need John's baptism.

Please hear me when I say that. He didn't need John's baptism because John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. Jesus didn't have any sin. So he didn't need John's baptism, but he needed to identify with humanity fully.

The sort of clearest example I can think of in Scripture is Paul and Timothy. Remember the episode, Timothy didn't need to be circumcised.

Paul himself said that on several occasions. But in order to smooth out Timothy's witness to the Jews, in order to make Timothy more acceptable to the Jews, Paul had him circumcised in order to identify with the Jews.

Jesus didn't need John's baptism, but he did it to identify with sinful, fallen humanity. And as we see here, as Jesus prayed, verse 21, the heavens were opened.

[31 : 17] The Holy Spirit, we're told, verse 22, descended on him bodily like a dove. As Luke puts it here, and this voice comes from heaven, you are my beloved son. With you, I am well pleased.

Here we have Jesus standing on the cusp of his ministry. Jesus standing on the cusp of his public ministry. And at this key moment in his life, he has that assurance that ultimately he is God's son, that ultimately God is pleased with him.

That God's love rests and remains on him. But notice the Trinitarian nature of the baptism here. God the Son is baptized.

God the Spirit descends on him like a dove. And the Father speaks from the cloud, declaring his pleasure in his Son and in his baptism. The word Trinity doesn't appear in the Bible.

I have to say that. But the Bible is clearly a Trinitarian book. The scriptures are clearly Trinitarian. Think of Genesis 1.

[32 : 27] Let us make man in our image. Think of the Spirit of the Lord hovering over the darkness. The Bible from beginning to end is an inherently Trinitarian book.

But the question might be for you this morning then, you're sitting here, we've thought about Jesus fading in, we've thought about his baptism, we've thought about the assurance from heaven.

But the question then for you is, well what difference does this make to me? How does this affect me this morning knowing this? Well it confirms to us that Jesus is nothing less than the Son of God.

That Jesus Christ is fully divine but also fully human. That when Jesus speaks, we can trust what he says. When Jesus says, I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me, we can accept that.

When Jesus says, that I have come not to be served but to serve, to give him my life as a ransom for many, we can trust that. That when Jesus comes as a sacrifice for us, we can look to him because he identifies with us, because he knows our weakness, because he has been tempted in every way just as we are.

[33 : 44] And yet is without sin. It reminds us that Jesus is both fully God and fully man. But I think secondly, it also reminds us of the necessity of the Holy Spirit in our day-to-day lives.

The Spirit came and descended and rested, remained on Jesus. If the second person of the Trinity had that closing with the Spirit, if the second person of the Trinity needed that closeness with the Spirit, how much more do we as fallen, fallible, sinful human beings need it?

If we are going to achieve anything of purpose, if we are going to achieve anything in the Christian life, how much do we need the ministry of the Spirit? How much do we need to keep in step with the Spirit?

So we thought about John fading out. We have seen ultimately his death. We thought about Jesus fading in in this very gradual way with his baptism, with his assurance that he was the Son of God. But thirdly, finally this morning, we want to think about the question, well, who is Jesus?

Who is Jesus? And we get the answer to that in verses 23 through 38. This list of names that we see recorded here for us, and we want to notice just a few things from this section.

[35 : 09] We won't pick out everything by any stretch, but we want to notice just a few things. First of all, we see verse 23. What are we told? Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about 30 years of age.

30 is a significant number in Judaism. 30 was the age when a priest began his service. It was the age when people were considered wise, when people could speak with authority.

So we see the wisdom of God here in waiting until Jesus is 30 before beginning his public ministry, if you like. It's something that the people would have been familiar with from the priests. It's something that people would have recognized as the age at which he entered the service of God. But it's also an age when people would have begun to listen more seriously to what Jesus had to say. It's an age where his opinion would have carried some weight, would have carried some gravitas. But secondly then, as we come to this list of names, we're going to pick out just a few of those names.

We're told ultimately, of course, that Jesus is the son of David, fulfilling the promise that the Messiah would come from King David's line, that he would be King David's greater son.

[36 : 21] We see verse 32. What are we told? We're told that David was the son of Jesse, who was the son of Obed, the son of Boaz. We read from Ruth chapter 4.

We're reminded there how Boaz married Ruth, the Moabitess, how they had this son, Obed, who of course would become one of the descendants of David and ultimately, of course, one of the descendants of Christ.

Here was a stranger. Here was a foreigner. Here was an outsider. In the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Boaz himself, who of course was the son of a prostitute, Rahab.

It's not exactly a lineage. It's not exactly a heritage in many senses to be proud of, is it? And yet that was the heritage of Jesus Christ. God always desired, God always planned that the foreigner, that the outsider come into his kingdom, that the outsider come in and be saved, that the plan of salvation always included those outside the nation of Israel, that salvation was not ethnic to the Jew alone, if you like, but those outside would also come in.

So we've picked out some of the names. We say, well, you know, we know a little bit about Obed, we know a little bit about Jesse, we know a little bit about Boaz, but if we're honest and we look at most of those names, they're fairly obscure.

[37 : 54] Most of them are just ordinary people living ordinary lives, but they were all links in the chain to the Messiah coming.

Ordinary people living ordinary lives, but they were links in the chain to the Messiah of God coming. As you gather this morning, we're all living fairly ordinary lives, I suspect.

We may simply be passing on the faith to our children. We may simply be passing on the faith to our grandchildren. We may simply be being faithful over what we have.

But we never know what God might do to that ordinary everyday faithfulness. Think of the example of Timothy in Scripture.

Just a mother and a grandmother being faithful and passing on the gospel to their young son or grandson. We don't know what God might do for us and through us.

[39 : 06] He obviously won't bring forth the Messiah, but never overlook, never demean those ordinary everyday moments of faithfulness.

That passing on of faith from generation to generation. That trust and hope in the covenant promises of God. God can God can God can and does achieve great things.
John faded out so that Jesus might fade in. John decreased so that Jesus might increase.
John knew who he was. but he also knew who Jesus was. Do you know who you are this morning? Do you know yourself as a sinner? Those who don't live up to God's standards, those who don't live up to your own standards. But more importantly, do you know who Jesus is?
[40 : 23] The one who saves us from our sin, the redeemer of mankind. we need to know ourselves. But we also need to know Jesus.

Amen. Amen. As we conclude this morning, we want to sing from Psalm 2. It's very near the front of our psalm book.

It's on page 2 of our blue psalm book. And we're going to sing the verses that are marked 7-12. 7-12 of Psalm 2.

The king then solemnly declares, I will proclaim the Lord's decree. Today your father I've become. You are my son, he said to me. Now therefore, kings, verse 10, true wisdom find, you judges of the earth give ear.

With reverence come and serve the Lord. Bow down with joy and trembling fear. Verses 7-12 of Psalm 2 on page 2 and we'll stand if we're able to sing.