

Two Worlds

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[0 : 00] Let's just bow our heads for prayer as we stand. Father, we ask now that you would meet with us in your word.

Show us the Lord Jesus Christ. Reveal to us the way. Lift our feet so that we would walk in it. Lift our hearts and our eyes so that we might have joy and love in the doing of it.

And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Well, if you would take your Bible and open to the beginning of Luke, which was read so well for us just a moment ago by Nathan.

We begin a series in Luke's Gospel. And today we're going to do a lot of flicking around Luke, which I'm told is very helpful for keeping us awake. How thankful I am for the first reading.

It is high time to wake from sleep. And I must tell you the nine o'clock congregation was very sleepy. I suppose it's summer. It's coming to the end of summer. But let's help one another.

[1 : 03] And if the person beside you starts to go to sleep, just stand up. I'm kidding about that. You can sleep all you want, but you'll miss out.

There's a card that we've printed off. We will follow through Luke's Gospel. It's so big, Luke's Gospel, that we're only going to get through a third of it before the end of the year.

And even then we're going to be traveling at a very fast pace. I warn you about that. But today, just the first four verses, because I thought that's all we could handle coming back from holidays.

Welcome back. It's great that you're here. We gather here Sunday by Sunday, and our purpose is to learn Jesus Christ. We want to know him.

We want to follow him. We want to learn what it's like to be his person. And we want to meet with him face to face. And I don't think there's any better way to do that than through this Gospel, which is the biggest and most comprehensive of all the Gospels about Jesus Christ, written by the only writer in the New Testament who's not Jewish.

[2 : 18] He's a Gentile. Not an eyewitness, a second generation believer. But if you put his volume one with volume two, he wrote more of the New Testament than anyone else.

He traveled extensively with the Apostle Paul, knew many of the family of Jesus and the early church. And I've got to tell you, he was a very useful traveling companion because he was a medical doctor.

I don't know if you've ever traveled with your own personal doctor. I have, well, I like to call him my personal doctor, Dr. Terry Chang. At a number of Anglican conferences, Dr. Chang has come along.

And it's no surprise that at Gafcon, he was by far the most popular person at Gafcon. Forget the primates.

Dr. Chang was there. And he told me after the nine o'clock service that when people say to him, oh, doctor, you've saved my life, he says to them, no, I just postponed the inevitable.

[3 : 22] LAUGHTER That's my kind of doctor. LAUGHTER So this is written by a doctor, a man of science, who's trained in medicine, likely in Tarsus.

The only kind of place he could have picked up all the languages that he has, widely traveled, extremely urbane, and writes with the most difficult Greek of anyone in the New Testament.

For those of us who've suffered through seminary, week by week we used to have to do vocabulary tests on the Gospel of Luke. And every week there were 70 words per chapter that we'd never seen before.

So thank you, Dr. Luke. However, the thing that Luke picks up and makes his own is that Jesus describes himself as a doctor, as the divine doctor.

Just flick over to chapter 5 for a minute, please, with me. Chapter 5, verse 31, which is on page 60.

[4 : 29] Jesus has got into trouble again. He is eating at the house. Well, he's eating with a tax collector and he's been criticized by the religious authorities.

Verse 31, Jesus answered, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

In other words, Jesus says there's all kinds of sickness, maladies, diseases, but there is a deep underlying sickness of the soul, which he calls here sin. And Jesus understands his ministry as coming from God to bring the only healing that we, in the end, cannot give to ourselves ultimately, and that is the forgiveness of sins through repentance.

So Jesus has come, and this is the portrayal in Luke's Gospel, as the divine doctor to heal those who are sick. Now, most of us, most of us put off going to see our doctors.

I've had two GPs since I've been in Canada. They are both charming, lovely men, but I don't want to see either of them, ever. I'm sorry. And some years ago, my previous doctor, there was something rather wrong with me.

[5 : 55] I've forgotten what it was, and my wife was very concerned and told me to go to the doctor, and I did what every responsible and thoughtful adult male does, and I refused. And I said, besides, what can he tell me that I don't already know?

So my wife went to see the doctor and told on me. It's a true story. And the doctor said, tell David he is a, and he said a very undocctorly word.

So I went to see him, and he was right. Now, I think this is multiplied when it comes to this issue of sin and righteousness.

We have this amazing ability to delude ourselves that we're fine. I don't need any help. I don't need a spiritual doctor. Thank you very much. Even when the diagnosis and the need is as plain as the nose in our face, we'll do anything but to turn to Christ for healing.

It's a very strange twist that we have in us. And that is one of the reasons why as we go through Luke's Gospel, you'll see that Jesus coming and Jesus teaching and his actions are very upsetting.

[7 : 12] He keeps befriending the wrong people. He befriends people who are sexually immoral. He befriends people who are traitors, who've made money by swindling others.

He even eats with respectable religious leaders and all for the same reason. He says, I've not come to seek the righteous. I've come to seek those who are sick. I've come to seek and to save the lost.

I've come to call sinners to repentance. And you see, the coming of Jesus upsets the way that we have put the world together. Since the Garden of Eden, we have been building our lives and building our families and building our city and building our culture wrongly, according to Jesus.

And as Jesus comes and he brings the kingdom of God, you watch, as we go through the parables and the miracles, he turns things upside down. The bringing of salvation into our world is a massive reversal.

Whenever Jesus comes to bring the kingdom of God and the saving love of God, he's seeking to restore us to where we were before the fall of sin and actually better than that. And it's very upsetting.

[8 : 23] And in the end, we have to crucify him. And I tell you, I warn you of that because as we read through this gospel, it's not written just to give information. It's written to change us.

Let me give you an example. Take money, for example. Luke gives us more of Jesus' teaching on money than any other gospel, any other book in the New Testament. Today, we measure everything by money, don't we?

We talk about my net worth or that person's net worth. That's the way we measure things. But Jesus comes and he goes, I've got a completely different way of measuring things.

And that is very difficult for us. I think this is a very difficult gospel for a Shaughnessy congregation because Luke is very sensitive to status markers.

You know, it's one thing being a failure. The one thing we must not be is seen to be a failure. And what Jesus does, and we'll see this as we get through later in the book, is he takes all those things that we exalt, that we think are high and lifted up and wonderful, and he says, you love those things, it's a sign of your deep spiritual sickness.

[9 : 40] You need to repent. So the only way that we can read this gospel, brothers and sisters, is if we are ready to change. If you're not ready to change, this is going to be a very painful and very annoying book to look at.

And I warned you of that before we start. So let's go back and have a look at the first four verses for just a moment. I don't like books that take a hundred pages to get to their point.

My wife and I have long discussed, how many pages do you give a book until they get to the point? Until they get good. Well, Luke gets good right from the first word. He tells us two things.

He tells us what he's doing and how we should read it. Very helpful. What is this thing he's writing and how should we read it?

So firstly, my first point, which is much longer than the second, what is the gospel? I'm sorry, what is this thing, this document? And what he says, he says it's two things.

[10 : 45] It's not one thing. It's history and something else. So look at this. Look down at verse five. Luke locates us in history. In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, the division of Abijah, a wife of the daughter of Aaron, her name was Elizabeth.

Well, flick over to 2, verse one. I want to hear much flicking, please. In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled.

This was the first enrollment when Quirinius was governor of Syria. We'll turn over to 3, verse one. In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius, Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being Tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip Tetrarch of the region of Acheria and Trachonitis, Lysanius Tetrarch of Abilene and the high priest Annas.

You see? He's locating in history and everywhere he touches down on concrete historical cultural markers. Look back at chapter one, verse one. He says, inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative, so he's talking about written documents, of the things which have been accomplished among us just as they were delivered to us who are from the beginning eyewitnesses and ministers of the word.

The word things is the Greek word pragmatic. They are the concrete flesh and blood real events involving the lives of real people.

[12 : 09] And as Luke writes this document, he's got written documents as well as eyewitness reports. It's very interesting.

In the book of Acts, Luke's second document, in chapters 20 and 21, we read the story of how Luke travelled with the apostle Paul from Philippi back to Palestine, staying with Philip and his four lovely daughters who prophesied in Caesarea.

I'm not sure why that detail is there. And then they went on to Jerusalem. And they met in the council of Jerusalem which was chaired by James, the brother of Jesus.

Luke was there at the meeting. Soon after, Paul is arrested. He spends two years being shunted between prisons in Palestine. And during those two years, Luke has access to Mary, to James, to members of Jesus' family, as well as all the leaders of the Jerusalem church, a number of the apostles and people who he can check the stories with, the eyewitness events.

That's why he says in verse 3, it seemed good to me having followed all things closely, accurately, for some time past, to write this thing for you.

[13 : 27] He says, I've gone back to the beginning. I've even gone to the people and checked with the facts. I've spoken to the family members, obviously Mary, as we'll see next week. This is not a superficial account.

I've left every stone turned over as far as I possibly could. It's historically accurate. But we're sceptical, aren't we? Because we are used to journalists fudging stories.

Jason Blair, Stephen Glass, fabricated 27 articles, he acknowledged, in the New York Times. And I must say, personally, perhaps I shouldn't say this, but there are no lawyers present, I say personally, that every time I've been quoted in the media, they've got it wrong.

So we're sceptical, aren't we, today, of any claim of truth. But the only reason we are sceptical is because we still believe that there is such a thing as truth. This week, I read an essay by Lee Gutkind.

He is an award-winning author and prof in the United States who is the godfather of a new genre called creative non-fiction. He says, most people think that non-fiction is like plumbing, you know, necessary, but very dull and tedious.

[14 : 50] So the creative non-fiction is taking history and writing it with dramatic flair because Gutkind reckons the truth is always more compelling than fiction. And in this essay which was written in 2005, he gives a number of rules, a checklist for authors in this genre.

He says, make sure that everything you write is as accurate and honest as you can make it. Don't make anything up, don't make any characters up. If you can, share the thing that you've written with the people you're writing about.

That would be a challenge, wouldn't it? And be aware of your own prejudices. You put Luke through that grid, he comes out five stars on every one of them which I think is very helpful if you've just started out on your journey with Jesus Christ.

If you are intrigued by Jesus and you want to go somewhere and get the straight goods about Jesus, you can't go anywhere better than Luke's gospel. What is it?

It's history but it's not just history. You need to be aware of this. There is another side to this. These are not just events. the events are God events.

[15 : 59] They're Christ events. They're Kingdom of God events. The very things that he records are the breaking in of God's rule into the world.

They describe salvation. So if you look back at verse 1, the things, Luke describes, which have been accomplished among us.

Very important word. The word accomplished is the word fulfilled. In other words, the historic and concrete events are God fulfilling his purposes that he promised of salvation.

They are deeply purposeful and they have their source in God. You see? Each event is both historic as well as God engaged. You see that in verse 2.

They're not just eyewitnesses, the people who he went to. They are also ministers of the word. They're not just abstract, factual observers. The people who are eyewitnesses were caught up in the events.

[17 : 03] They experienced the personal reality of salvation in these events. And that is why there's no such thing as a neutral observer when it comes to Luke's gospel.

There's no such thing as a spiritual Switzerland where we're not aligned. What happens is as we read about the divine doctor Jesus, he comes to us and offers us the forgiveness of sins and we have this choice constantly to say, I'm not sick, I'm fine, I'm not sick, go away, or to say, Lord, help me to repent of my sin.

That is why, you see, at the beginning and the end of the gospel, angels break through and they go, joy, joy, joy, joy, joy, joy. This is the happiest thing that has ever happened to the world, good news of salvation.

So in verse 4 when he says most excellent Theophilus, which is his patron, most excellent, he says, I've written this so that you might know the truth of the things of which you've been informed.

He's not so much driving at the historical accuracy, he's driving at the fact that Theophilus will hear the gospel news of salvation and be transformed by it.

[18 : 15] It's wonderful, isn't it? You know, if you write with a bias, it's good to be transparent and Luke is saying these events, they're God stepping into the world, he's fulfilling his purposes and there are other writers who've said this before me.

Theophilus is a very good Anglican, he knew lots of the facts but they hadn't yet turned his world upside down. So as we read this gospel, I want, please, for you to expect this to somewhat disrupt us.

If at the end of reading this gospel we are unchanged, then we have not understood the gospel. That's the what. Secondly, and fairly briefly, we're going to, I just want to ask the question, then how should we read this book?

And Luke is very kind to us. He gives two ways that we should read the book in these first four verses and that's very helpful if you're a first time reader of Luke or if you think you know Luke.

And the first way of reading it, he says, there are two ways, is we must interpret this book in the light of the Old Testament. In the light of the Old Testament. I take that from verse one where he says, these things are the things that have been fulfilled among us.

[19 : 33] What that means is this, that the events, even though they are God events, are not complete in themselves.

That if we want to understand those events, we must understand them in the wider context of the promises of God which go right back to creation. We cannot understand Luke's gospel in isolation from the Old Testament, which makes us a very lucky group, doesn't it?

We just happen to have looked at Exodus and Genesis in the last two years. So let's do some flicking and let's look at this. In verse five, we meet an old couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, who are godly and childless.

And immediately in our minds, we think of whom? Abraham and Sarah. And we think of the promise of God to bring blessing into the world through Abraham and Sarah.

And we think, is this now going to come to fulfillment? Do you think the word blessing will be used at the beginning of this gospel? And so we slide our eyes down to chapter one, verse 42, to Elizabeth.

[20 : 49] When she meets Mary, she exclaimed with a loud cry, blessed are you among women, blessed is the fruit of your womb, in verse 45, blessed is Mary, who believed all that there would be.

And then Mary breaks into song in verse 48, second half, for behold, henceforth, all generations will call me blessed. And then Zechariah bursts into song. The first thing he says in verse 68 is, blessed be the Lord God of Israel.

Blessing, blessing, blessing. If we don't understand what happened with Abraham, we're not going to understand this. Keep your finger at the beginning and turn over to the last words of Luke, chapter 24.

I'm on page 86. Verse 50, this is after Jesus was raised from the dead. He led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up his hands, he blessed them.

And while he blessed them and parted from them and was carried up into heaven and they returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple, blessing God. The book begins and ends with blessing.

[22 : 03] This is the fulfillment of the covenant of Abraham. We'll turn back to chapter 4 for a moment. Here is the first sermon that Jesus preaches in Nazareth of Galilee.

And he takes the scroll in verse 17 and he reads in verse 18 a quote from the book of Isaiah. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down and the eyes of all the synagogue were fixed on him and he began to say to them today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Jesus is saying my ministry is the fulfillment of the prophet Isaiah's prophecy. And what I have come to do is to bring release for the captives the new exodus.

[23 : 16] The exodus that we looked at last year from Egypt was a rehearsal for the great exodus that Jesus is going to achieve here in his death and resurrection. That's why you remember in chapter 9 on the mountain of transfiguration when Moses and Elijah meet with Jesus they talk about his exodus.

or take the baptism of Jesus in chapter 3 just a couple more illustrations verse 23 as Jesus comes up out of the water God the Father speaks audibly from heaven you are my beloved son with you I am well pleased you know where that comes from God the Father is quoting two verses from the Old Testament do you think it might be important to understand those verses in the Old Testament would take the opposition to Jesus we know from Genesis 3 that the enemy of humanity and the enemy of God is Satan himself who is it after his baptism in chapter 4 Jesus goes out in the wilderness to face who is it in the parable of the sower who snatches away the word from our hearts who is it that binds people in sin and sickness in Luke's gospel who is it that enters

Judas to betray Jesus who is it who is behind the Pharisees attempt to have Jesus killed who is it who Jesus says in Luke's gospel he has come to overthrow it is Satan our ancient enemy so you see as we read Luke's gospel because we are New Testament Christians we read the Bible forwards and we read the Bible backwards we say we cannot fully understand that New Testament without understanding more of the Old Testament and we cannot understand the Old Testament unless we read it backwards through the New Testament as well because the Christian life is not just Jesus and me we're caught up in this big saving purpose of God that goes back to creation through Abraham himself Jesus comes as the fulfillment of the Old Testament he's the key to all the scriptures that's how we read Luke that's the first way we read Luke in light of the Old Testament and secondly and briefly back in chapter 1 the end of verse 3

Luke says it seemed good to me also having followed all things closely for some time past to write to you an orderly account very important word orderly it's not strictly chronological he sometimes has flashbacks in the gospel but what he is saying is this I have put these events in a particular sequence to draw out some of their meaning every part of Luke's gospel every section is going to take some of its meaning from where it fits in the book it's the difference between taking a handful of precious stones and scattering them on a velvet background or taking those stones and putting them very carefully and artistically into a necklace so that each stone bears a relation to the others Luke's gospel is not just a random collection of great stories about salvation it has been arranged by Luke to bring out the significance I'll give you one illustration in the prodigal son the parable of the prodigal son should our focus be on the prodigal son or on the older brother have a look over at chapter 15 this is our last flick here is a beautiful chapter one of the most beautiful

I think anywhere in the New Testament there are three parables all about being lost and found verses 3 to 7 lost sheep 1 in 100 lost coin 8 to 10 1 in 10 and then 11 to the end lost son 1 in 2 but look at the beginning of the chapter now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him and the Pharisees and the scribes murmured saying this man receives sinners and eats with them therefore he told them this parable so you see Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees the point of the prodigal son is more the attitude of the older brother so our purpose for meeting here Sunday by Sunday is to learn

[28 : 08] Jesus Christ is to know him and to grow in following him and to meet him face to face but it's one of the unique things about the Christian faith it's not based on religious speculation it is based on historical events it's not about our journey to reach up and try and grab God it is about the fact that he has sent his son to seek and to save us while we were lost to come as the divine doctor and to deal with our deepest and every need and Luke writes to Theophilus so that Theophilus might know the truth of these things so that he might find the grace of God in Jesus Christ or better still he might be found by the grace of God in Jesus Christ and that's my prayer for us as well as we come to Luke in this fall term Amen Please kneel to pray

Dear Heavenly Father Father we thank you for your provision for your people from the beginning of time for your grace to the church for the past 2,000 years and for your love of the Anglican church we pray that where it moves in your will you will strengthen it where it moves against your will you will correct it remind us to return constantly to your word so that we may know your mind and do your will give us wisdom and discernment to see false teaching as it arises and give us courage to call it false teaching if it is give us the humility to always exercise grace even as we stand firm for your word remind us and comfort us with the knowledge of your promise that all that we need you will provide even in these times of great uncertainty give us your joy to share with the world

Lord in your mercy we pray for your persecuted church around the world protect strengthen and comfort all those who face any opposition or trial because of their faith in Christ we pray for those who labor for you in the Middle East and China and other areas where belief in your saving message is not accepted sadly today we must also pray for those closer to home who are being persecuted for maintaining their faith we pray for the parishes of St. Matthews and St. Matthias and St. Luke and all other Anglican congregations who are being chased away from their buildings provide for them all they need in these testing times soften the hearts of those who seek to evict people from their churches and cause them to model grace and charity in all dealings with their brothers and sisters in Christ Lord in your mercy strengthen and equip our leaders with knowledge wisdom and grace give them boldness for you and courage to do your will even when the world speaks against them give us courage and the discipline to follow them as they work to your will we pray especially for David

Dan and Jim we pray for Sean in Richmond for all those in our church who work in pastoral ministries administrative matters in the care and teaching of our children and in the teaching of Bible studies while they toil in the work of the gospel bless them constantly and refresh them so they may continue on in preaching the good news of Christ's salvation to us and through us to our community and the world Lord in your mercy we pray for our governments at all levels especially as we face elections this fall raise up gospel believing leaders who will help create a world in the order that you want we pray for our prime minister premier and mayor give them wisdom courage and the will to do your will so that the world will recognize you and know the love you have for all people Lord in your mercy we pray for our troops and for all those who for reasons of security and peace are separated from those they love protect and comfort the peacekeepers and their families comfort the grieving and keep safe those who do your work for peace we remember especially

Bradley Christopher and David Robinson's brother and of course Heather Bellamy all in Afghanistan strengthen their spirits and their wills protect and encourage them refresh them when they are tired and let them feel your constant presence with them even when they feel alone and far from home Lord in your mercy we pray for the beginning of term for the students teachers and administrators as they return to class kindle in them a desire to learn and to teach not just that facts may be known but that real knowledge may be gained and through that wisdom we pray especially for Sunday school and youth group as it starts up please supply the teachers to nurture and grow our youth in the knowledge of you we pray also for Regent and Artizo be with all faculty and students as they begin their year create in their hearts not just a thirst for knowledge about you but for the joy and enthusiasm that comes with a relationship with you bless their ministries going forward that they may emerge into the world to bring in great harvest for you

[34 : 04] Lord in your mercy we pray for the sick in our immediate family of the church we pray for Rowena Fiona Marguerite Johanna and Carolyn and we pray for right resolution for Maran be a comfort and strength to all of them in all adversity Lord in your mercy and finally most merciful Father we humbly thank you for all your gifts so freely given to us for life and health and safety for power to work and the leisure to rest for all that is beautiful in creation and in the lives of all of us we praise and magnify your holy name but above all we thank you for our spiritual mercies in Christ Jesus our Lord for the means of grace and for the hope of glory fill our hearts with all joy and peace in believing through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen