

BUILT ON BEDROCK: THE INESCAPABLE, UNASSAILABLE TRUTH

LUKE 1:1-4

INTRODUCTION: A FIVE-YEAR JOURNEY BEGINS

Luke Chapter One—we're starting it today. For first-time guests, you're getting in on the ground floor of a journey that will take us at least 5 years, probably. We go one verse, one chapter at a time. Just in my preliminary sketching of sermons from Luke, I have charted over 200 sermons. With 52 weeks in a year, breaking for summer and Christmas, I'm thinking it'll be four and a half, maybe 5 years we'll be here.

Pray that the Lord would use it. The biggest myth persisting among pastors today is that if you just do the right things, it'll work. But nothing works apart from the Spirit of God. You can correctly preach the truth, but unless the Holy Spirit works in our hearts, there will not be transformation.

SCRIPTURE READING: LUKE 1:1-4

"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." (Luke 1:1-4, ESV)

PRAYER

Father in heaven, we come humbly before you now. Our prayer has been from the start that you would be walking amongst your people, speaking to our hearts, encouraging us and reassuring us. We know you promised where 2 or 3 are gathered in your name, there you are among them. As we look at this opening prologue to Luke's Gospel, we ask that your Spirit would open our hearts to receive and understand and believe what you are saying. Our prayer this morning is that as Luke was writing pastorally to Theophilus that he might have certainty, we're praying that you would create that same certainty and conviction in us this morning. In Jesus' name, amen.

WHEN TRUTH COSTS RELATIONSHIPS

Two childhood friends, now grown, now married, but best friends for over 40 years: Shelly and Christie. Shelly found herself one bright summer morning staring at a text message from Christie, her coffee growing cold. The words felt like a weight crushing her:

"I can't believe that you still think this way about marriage. You know I love you, but your biblical views are really hurtful to me. Maybe we should skip Sunday dinner after all until you can be more accepting."

Three months prior, Christie had announced she was leaving her husband of 12 years to pursue a relationship with her female coworker. "I finally found who I really am. God wants me to be happy, Shelly. Surely you can see that." The accusation that followed cut even deeper: "It seems you care more about some ancient book than you do about real people, than you do about me."

Maybe you know this feeling. Several of you have had these same conversations with coworkers, family members, or relatives. You're holding to the truth as God has spoken it, yet individuals in your life continue to challenge you. Every conversation feels like a test of loyalty—like you're not really loving them if you won't affirm them in their lifestyle or decisions.

There are days when you read God's Word with bedrock certainty, but there are other days when you wake up and realize what it's costing you. You're losing friends, being mocked. You wonder: "Is it true? Maybe I'm overstating it, maybe I'm taking it too far, maybe I'm misreading it."

If that's you, understand that Luke's Gospel is addressed to people just like you.

WRITTEN FOR CERTAINTY

Luke is writing to a man named Theophilus. We don't know much about him, but Luke makes it clear he's writing so his friend might have **certainty**. Look at verse 4: Luke writes to "most excellent Theophilus" that "you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."

THE MEANING OF "CERTAINTY"

This word for certainty will transform how you read this Gospel. The Greek word is *asphaleia*. This same word appears in two other New Testament passages:

- **Acts 5:23** - When Peter was miraculously delivered from prison: "We found the prison locked in all *asphaleia*"—securely locked, bolted shut. This word speaks to something that has been fixed, bolted, slammed shut like a prison door that's been clinked home.
- **1 Thessalonians 5:3** - Paul describes unbelievers deceiving themselves: "While people are saying there is peace and *asphaleia*, then sudden destruction will come." He's describing a false security, but the word means locked, bolted, secure.
- In the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament), it's used 19 times and almost always means **safety**.

Luke is saying to Theophilus: *"I want you to know the **locked down, bolted down, secure, unshakeable, solid, stable, immovable, safe reality** of the things you have been taught."*

WHY THIS MATTERS

It is extremely dangerous to trust in stories that are not true. It's never safe to believe a fairy tale. Luke is saying: "This is no fairy tale. There is safety in this truth. It is bedrock."

It's incredibly precarious to hold to values rooted in a cultural understanding that's always shifting, always changing definitions. Luke is saying: "This thing will never change. It's bolted down."

Many Christians today know biblical truths like knowing a cloud in the sky—beautiful, but as soon as you begin to trace its outline, a breeze blows it away. Luke doesn't want us to know biblical truths like clouds. He wants us to know them like a mountain climber knows the rock face he's clinging to, confident that rock face will hold him, because apart from that, all else is certain death.

Luke is saying we can climb this book to the summit where God is, and hold it with all our life, confident that it will not fail us.

MEET DR. LUKE: THE AUTHOR

Luke was a physician—I'll affectionately call him Dr. Luke. Let me tell you what it means for Luke to be a physician:

Luke the Scholar

- He's highly educated, highly articulate, very meticulous
- He's a historian of the first caliber
- More thorough than Matthew, Mark, or John in recording biographical detail
- Particularly concerned with context—geographical and historical
- Familiar with the world as Paul's traveling companion

LUKE THE PHYSICIAN

Luke is trained in **precision**, devoted to **accuracy**, and committed to a **life-and-death understanding of truth**. In the first century, if a doctor treated an incorrect diagnosis, there were real consequences—he could kill his patient. Luke's desire was to care for life, and therefore he was very interested in understanding exactly, with precision, what was going on.

As he's helping Theophilus pastorally, that same concern for precision and accuracy will be evident in his pursuit of the Gospel.

LUKE'S METHODOLOGY

COMPREHENSIVE SOURCES (V. 1)

"Many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us."

Luke had access to far more than just the four Gospel accounts we know today. Many had already undertaken this effort, and he pursued comprehensive research.

PRIMARY SOURCES (V. 2)

"Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us."

His sources were **primary**. He talked to the original apostles who were there—eyewitnesses who were with Jesus during His earthly ministry and ministers of the word whom God had appointed to proclaim this truth.

The phrase "delivered them to us" uses a technical Greek term for transmitting an **authoritative tradition**.

THOROUGH METHODOLOGY (V. 3)

"Having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account."

- **"Having followed all things"** - He looked at every possible argument, even things that might subvert the narrative he was writing.
- **"Closely"** - With meticulous attention to detail.
- **"For some time past"** - The Greek word *anōthen* means he went back to the very beginning—before the beginning. Luke starts not with Jesus' birth, not even with John the Baptist's birth, but with the **announcement** of John's conception. He wanted the complete picture.
- **"An orderly account"** - Luke arranged his material with exactness and precision, seeking to convey Gospel history with utmost accuracy.

ANSWERING THE SKEPTICS: THE JESUS SEMINAR

About 25-30 years ago, the Jesus Seminar concluded that roughly **82% of everything in the Gospels was pure fiction, and only 18% may have been fact**. Their theory: Jesus was crucified around 30 AD, Luke wrote between 55-70 AD. They claimed that fond memories of Jesus led to embellished, exaggerated, fanciful tales.

Their chief argument: **"Oral tradition cannot be trusted."**

THE RELIABILITY OF ORAL TRADITION

But these skeptics miss the point. They're reading our 21st-century approach back into first-century Judaism.

We don't remember things unless we write them down. We've outsourced our memory to technology. But this wasn't the way in the first century.

FIRST-CENTURY JEWISH CULTURE

- To become a man, to be considered equal in society, you had to memorize entire books of the Old Testament
- At your bar/bat mitzvah, you recited this among extended relatives and friends who **all knew the material**
- First-century Jewish rabbis were far less forgiving than modern Awana teachers—you got it 100% correct, every word

RESEARCH ON ORAL TRADITION

Experts say that if you have to choose between a community trained in advanced mnemonic devices versus modern methods (photographs, written documents), **oral verbal tradition is actually the better method**.

Example: In the 1960s, scholars analyzed Hindu Vedic scrolls from 950 AD against the same community's oral recitation. They found **99.2% accuracy preserved** over more than 1,000 years.

When an artifact is entrusted to a community committed to preserving its truth—combining a historical document with a community that understood, interpreted, and memorized it—this creates the best preservation method. It's **virtually impossible** to lose that document or truth over time.

EVIDENCE FROM THE DISCIPLES

If the Gospels were fiction, you'd expect the heroes to be portrayed as supermen. Instead, we find normal guys who were basically cowards at the outset:

- When Jesus was crucified, they were terrified and hiding behind closed doors
- When women reported the resurrection, the disciples said, "You're crazy" and demanded physical proof
- Thomas demanded to put his finger in Jesus' nail holes
- Peter denied Jesus three times and went back to fishing

Yet just weeks later, Peter was preaching Jesus to the very men who executed Him—to people who could kill him, and he wasn't afraid.

This transformation proves it wasn't sentimental feeling that led to facts, but facts that produced the feeling and faith.

WHAT JESUS ACCOMPLISHED

Luke writes about "the things that have been accomplished among us" (v. 1). In Acts 1:1, Luke tells Theophilus: "In the first volume, I dealt with everything that Jesus **began** to do"—meaning Acts is about what Jesus continues to do through His church.

WHAT DID JESUS ACCOMPLISH?

He accomplished **once and for all the deliverance of His people from their sins**, satisfying for all time the demands of justice and breaking the chains. We see this in the miraculous transformation of terrified disciples into bold preachers.

SHELLY'S STAND

Remember Shelly? At Christie's birthday party, surrounded by friends promoting "progressive Christianity," they mocked her:

"Shelly's still stuck in fundamentalism." "She might be a fundamentalist, but at least she puts the fun back into fundamentalism." "You don't really believe all that literal interpretation stuff, do you? We know better now. After all, love is love."

Shelly's response: "I love you, but I don't think you can have love apart from truth. In fact, love itself depends upon the truth."

The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13 that **"love rejoices in the truth."** Love only exists within the sphere of what is true, never apart from it.

CONCLUSION: AN INVITATION

Over the next 4-5 years as we preach through Luke's Gospel, understand this: Even though Luke writes history, we're not preaching just what is historical. Even though Luke writes biography, we're not preaching simply details about a man. Even though Luke crafts a compelling story, we're not just telling you a story.

Luke wants Theophilus to know, and he wants you to know: Jesus is the Son of God, and the only one who can save you. He is the truth.

My invitation this morning:

- **Journey with us** week by week for the next 4-5 years
- But don't just study this Gospel with us—**stake your life on it**
- Don't just read about Jesus—**meet Him**
- Don't just appreciate the historical evidence—**hear the call of God** and answer that call with faith
- **Put all that you are into Christ's hands**

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we love you. Thank you for sending your Son to die for our sins. We know your truth can set us free. All the other definitions of this world are murky and shifting and constantly changing. To understand meaning, and above all, to really understand what love is, none of it can be found apart from your Word. Help us to stand on your Word. Strengthen our faith. Open our eyes to see the reliability of your Scriptures, that they can be counted on above all else. Turn skeptics into believers. Turn doubters into confident mountain climbers. Make us individuals who boldly cling to the granite and bedrock of your Word. Help us to see your Son, Jesus, in the Word, that we might know Him, believe in Him, and enjoy Him forever. In Christ's name, amen.