

Women's Bible Study, April 4, 2025
Holy Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church
The Gospel of Luke
Luke 1 (Lesson 1 [part 1])

1. Introduction to the Gospel of Luke

a. Discuss what we might remember of Luke from our study of the Pastoral Epistles and from Acts.

What I recall, my thoughts: A writer, who wrote Acts after writing this Gospel (which we are about to study), under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. A historian, physician, and dear friend of Paul. Accompanied Paul through his missionary journeys, even to the point of Paul's final imprisonment. Exhibited loyalty and faithfulness, steadfast endurance, humility, and fruitfulness in faith. Unassumingly spent his years shining the light of Christ in all he did, serving Christ Jesus and others, and devoting his life to proclaiming Christ.

b. **Key verse, Luke 24:46-47** -- *"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."* (SG title page, p.1)

c. **Authorship:**

1) Luke is named only three times in the NT; referred to by name in Paul's letters (Philemon 24, Colossians 4:14, and 2 Timothy 4:11). Luke refers to himself in his book of Acts occasionally when including himself in activities with Paul ("we..." sections of Acts: 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). (TPB p.1)

* And, he refers to himself as "I/me" in the preface of each book, but never naming himself.

2) While his name does not appear as the author in either book, there is little doubt that Luke authored this Gospel and the book of Acts. (TPB p.2). Both books are addressed to the same person, and the writing style, use and command of language and structure "indicate that both were written by the same person... [And] his authorship is supported by the uniform testimony of early Christian writings." (CSB p.1540, Introduction to Luke). "The title 'Gospel according to Luke' is found at the end of the oldest existing papyrus Greek copy of Luke, dating from A.D.175-225." (TPB p.1)

3) "Luke was probably a Gentile by birth, well educated in Greek culture, a physician by profession, a companion of Paul... Antioch (of Syria) and Philippi are among the places suggested as his hometown." (CSB p.1540) Notably in both books "Luke had outstanding command of the Greek language. His vocabulary is extensive

and rich, and his style at times approaches that of classical Greek... His vocabulary seems to reveal geographical and cultural sensitivity, in that it varies with the particular land or people being described" (CSB p.1541). According to TPB, "Early tradition suggests that Luke did his writing in the large and important city of Antioch, the home base for Paul on his mission journeys. It was in this city that the disciples of Jesus were first called 'Christians' (Acts 11:26)." (TPB p.2)

d. **Themes** to watch for and keep in mind as we work our way through Luke:

1) **Gospel** (The life, teaching, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ) for all nations, all people. (TLSB p.1700, Introduction to Luke)

2) **Temple** (The Gospel of Luke begins at the temple in Jerusalem (1:8), climaxes with Jesus teaching at the temple some 30 years later (19:45-21:38), and ends at the temple (24:53) after Jesus' ascension outside the city. Note in particular "the shift in location of God's presence from the temple to the body of Jesus as God's temple.") (TLSB p.1700; TLSB p.1705 chart "The Temple in Luke" comment for Luke 1-2)

3) **Service / Servant** ("Servant" characterizes the entire life of Jesus. "On the night before his death on the cross, Jesus said to his disciples, 'I am among you as one who serves' (22:27). Jesus trained a body of servants and sent them into the world as his witnesses. Every believer is a servant of the greatest of all servants, Jesus Christ. Reading the Gospel of Luke will help one appreciate more fully the service which Jesus rendered. It will help all who follow Jesus to become better servants." (TPB p.4)

e. **Church and our Liturgy**: The heart of Luke's Gospel, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ's work, continues through the Church, as we realized in our study of the NT Church in Acts. And it is appropriate that as such "the Church literally sings the Gospel of Luke through the Magnificat (1:46-55), the Benedictus (1:68-79), the Gloria in Excelsis (2:14), the Nunc Dimittis (2:29-32), and a portion of the Sanctus ("Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord"; 19:38)." (SG p.7)

f. **God's Grace in Luke** (from CSB p.1540, Introduction to Luke):

"The completeness of God's grace is one of the dominant characteristics in Luke. The parables of the Prodigal or Lost Son (15:11-32) and the Pharisee and...the Tax Collector (18:9-14) -- found only in Luke's Gospel -- underscore the feature of free forgiveness through God's grace. Luke emphasizes that Jesus 'welcomes sinners and eats with them' (15:2). In Luke Jesus intercedes for the disciple who will deny him (22:31-34), promises paradise to the criminal beside him (23:42-43) and clearly affirms: 'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost' (19:10).

"The universality of God's grace through Christ is another emphasis of Luke's Gospel -- that is, the Gospel message is meant for all people. In contrast to Matthew, Luke traces Jesus' genealogy to Adam, the father of all human beings (3:23-38). Gentile soldiers are baptized by

John (3:7,12,14), Simeon speaks of Jesus as a 'light for...the Gentiles' (2:32). In discussing John the Baptist, Luke continues the quotation from Isaiah to include the words: 'And all mankind will see God's salvation' (3:4-6)."

g. **Purpose** of Luke's writing this Gospel (we also will look more at this in the next section ['Opening: Prologue...'] below): Luke wrote this Gospel "to strengthen the faith of all believers and to answer the attacks of unbelievers. It was presented to displace disconnected and ill-founded reports about Jesus. Luke wanted to show that the place of the Gentile Christian in God's kingdom is based on the teaching of Jesus. He wanted to commend the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world." (CSB p.1540, Introduction Luke).

*(Personal thought: Perhaps it's no wonder that Luke accompanied Paul and wrote the Book of Acts concerning Paul's outreach to the Gentiles, to reach all nations. This was the purpose the Lord had given for Luke in accompanying Paul.)

2. Luke 1:1-4, Opening: Prologue/Preface; Dedication to Theophilus

a. "Written in excellent Greek style, the prologue not only displays Luke's literary prowess, but also more important, identifies his purpose, his method, and who received his Gospel." (TLSB 1:1-4)

b. Luke's personal introduction and purpose in writing his Gospel --

1) **v.1**, "An account" ("a narrative") of the events that have been fulfilled among us..." -- Luke sees this as a narrative, as history, as a story ...about Jesus' life (not every detail, but a lot about Jesus' life).

2) **v.2**, Based on "eyewitnesses" accounts -- "Luke wants to get us to what actually happened, not just the rumors about what you heard about the life of Jesus. So Luke went out and tracked down eyewitnesses and got their accounts of things. So that those who read it might *have certainty in the things they were taught...*" (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:1-24, Episode 130)

3) **vv.3-4**, Luke is the only one of the four evangelists who introduces his gospel with a kind of personal foreword. He clearly states the purpose here of his writing: "...that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (v.4). (TPB p.7) "This letter (book) is meant to shore up our faith in the reliability of the Gospel's narrative of Jesus Christ." (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:1-24, Episode 130)

2) By the time Luke wrote this Gospel (which he most likely wrote around 60 A.D. [EHV note]), many had already undertaken to write accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and these reports were already being circulated. Luke wanted to assure his readers that he had investigated everything thoroughly and that they could trust this account to be the truth. (TPB p.7)

a) Luke personally based his account on testimony from "eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (v.2), including the preaching and oral accounts of the apostles. (CSB p.1541, "Sources" in Introduction to Luke)

b) "Luke's account is based on firsthand testimony. He would have gathered information from some of the apostles, original disciples, and perhaps even members of Jesus' family." (TLSB 1:2) In particular, regarding Luke 1-2, "Luke carefully details the events surrounding the births of John and Jesus. He writes from Mary's perspective and perhaps bases his presentation on interviews with Mary* (Lk. 1:2)." (TLSB p. 1703, Chart "Luke's Unique Contribution" regarding birth narratives)

* (Personal note, as this brings back memories: Many years ago for "Christmas/Advent by Candlelight" I did a monologue of Mary as if being interviewed by Luke, giving Mary's perspective throughout her years of her being the mother of Jesus, and her accounts of seeing Jesus grow, and in His ministry, His death, and His resurrection.)

c) We also can be certain of the truth of what Luke wrote for he was guided and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as he wrote this portion of God's Word (as he also wrote Acts). Recall our study of 2 Timothy: "All Scripture is God breathed (given by inspiration of God)..." (2 Tim. 3:16) whereby we receive the "word of truth" (the Gospel which we are to handle rightly [keep front and center] when telling others, 2 Tim. 2:15).

c. Intended recipient of Luke's Gospel (to whom he writes) --

1) "most excellent Theophilus" (for whom Luke also wrote Acts) -- His name means "friend of God" or "one who loves God." He might have been a Roman official, as "most excellent" would be directed toward high Roman officials (TLSB 1:3), or at least he was a person of high position and wealth. He most likely was a Gentile Christian. He perhaps was "a prominent Christian in the early church; some suggest he may have paid for the parchment on which this gospel was written" (TPB p.7).

2) "Theophilus had a basic knowledge of the Christians faith. Luke's purpose in writing was to deepen his familiarity with Jesus' life and teachings." (TLSB 1:4)

3) Some suggest that Theophilus ("Friend of God") is symbolic in referring to anyone who reads the Gospel in faith. (TLSB 1:3; TBP p.7) "Each person who reads this Gospel must hear himself addressed as the lover of God who seeks to know the truth about Jesus Christ." (TPB p.8)

a) Interesting to notice the distinct differences in the intended audience of each Gospel writer, particularly in Matthew and in Luke. "Matthew's Gospel was directed primarily towards Jewish people to convince them that Jesus was their promised Jewish Messiah. If Matthew was doing that, Luke was writing to convince the world that Jesus is ALL of their

Messiah, not just the Jewish Messiah, but the Savior for the Gentiles as well. So you will see that throughout Luke's narrative" (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:1-24, Episode 130). And from the SG (**SG pp.8,77 #1**): The Book of "Luke was written especially for the Gentiles."

b) "Luke's introduction shows that the original audience for his Gospel had already received teaching about Christ from within the Church, by her ministers and writings. Luke was writing to the Church for the benefit of those already in the Church... Luke's book is to be used by the Church in its proclamation of the Gospel to the unbaptized and the baptized." (TLSB p.1703, Chart "Luke's Unique Contribution")

3. **Luke 1:5-17**, Zechariah and Elizabeth; The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

a. **v.5**, Right from the beginning of his narrative, notice that Luke anchors his writing in the historical context: "*In the days of Herod, King of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zechariah...*" (Luke, the historian, helps us place this in the framework of time, in history.)

b. **v.7**, "*Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.*" -- In ancient times barrenness was generally considered to indicate divine disfavor and often brought social reproach. (CSB 1:25) It was also a most difficult thing, as children were a security for the parents in their advanced years, not to mention the natural blessing of having children in the family.

1) Now in their advanced years they thought they had no hope of ever having children, and they had accepted the reality of this, as hard as it was. Yet they still devoted their lives in serving the Lord. (30 Minutes in the NT- Episode 130)

2) They had undoubtedly prayed for years when they were younger, praying the Lord would be gracious and provide them with children (See Psalm 127:3). But now well past childbearing years, they would have no longer prayed about this, as it seemed to be God's will to not grant them children. In faith they had accepted this as their lot in life according to God's purpose for them (See Psalm 34:19; Hebrews 12:11). (30 Minutes in the NT- Episode 130; **SG pp.8,77 #2**)

c. **vv.8-17** --

1) **v.13**, "*Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard...*" -- We have to assume this is old prayer from many years ago. Probably these prayers were uttered decades ago. (Zechariah's response would indicate as such, as if he might be thinking, "You're a little late on this one, Lord.") (30 Minutes in the NT- Episode 130)

a) God always seems to love dealing with impossible births. Consider Abram & Sarah (an old couple who can't have kids, and yet the father of nations... [Gen. 16:1-5]); consider Rachel (Gen. 30:1); consider Hannah (1 Sam. 1:5-6), etc. And, we know what's coming for Zechariah & Elizabeth (Luke 1-2), and then a virgin named Mary with the most impossible birth, a virgin giving birth to the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1-2). Impossible births! This is God doing the impossible and delivering on His promises, and doing it in a way that only He can be responsible for! (30 Minutes in the NT- Episode 130)

* "God is in the business of making something out of nothing. He is the One who can actually do that. He does it in Creation; He speaks things into existence by the power of His Word. And the same is true here. There just seems to be a thread through all of Scripture, in that God likes to take the weak, the foolish, the 'nothings' of the world, the barren of the world, the people that have no hope for fruitfulness, and make them fruitful for His glory, for the sake of His Name." (30 Minutes in the NT- Episode 130)

** That's very much what's going on here with Zechariah and Elizabeth.

b) "You are to give him the name John" -- The name (derived from the Hebrew) means "The Lord is gracious" (CSB 1:13) [or "The Lord has shown favor" (TLSB 1:13)... isn't that the truth!!]. As we pray "Thy will be done" we sometimes have to wait, in which case the Lord's answer is "No, not now." Other times His answers to our prayers are simply "No" or a "Yes" according to His will. Consider that Zechariah & Elizabeth prayers were from years ago, and here, with John's name, we realize that "the Lord is [always] gracious!" We can trust that He hears, He cares, and He answers. His will is always best for us. (SG pp.8,77 #3)

2) v.17, "...he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah..." -- Here the angel is quoting the very last verses of the OT (Malachi 4:5-6), which Zechariah would have been familiar with. "John's ministry paralleled Elijah's prophetic career in key ways..." (30 Minutes in the NT- Episode 130; TLSB 1:17)

a) "John was not Elijah returning in the flesh (John 1:21), but he functioned like that OT preacher of repentance and was therefore a fulfillment of Mal. 4:5-6." (CSB 1:17)

b) Elijah is the prophet that becomes the picture of all prophets... he becomes the prophet that doesn't die. He is taken up in the midst of the river Jordan, up to Heaven. (We will see the connection to John's work later.) (30 Minutes in the NT- Episode 130)

c) The last words in Malachi were God's last words to Israel before putting a 400 year pause here, before speaking to His people again. Those last words point to the fulfillment here, where in Luke we read God's first words after those 400 years. God's first words after those silent years were spoken to a priest, and were about to usher in a gift for His people

Israel. God picked up exactly where He left off (Malachi & Elijah), and now Luke gives us the narrative of the fulfillment of those words. Luke is showing continuity here. God is continuing His plan. Zechariah's son John is being set aside as God's special prophet to prepare the way for the Lord, the Messiah's coming. (30 Minutes in the NT- Episode 130)

4. Luke 1:18-25, Taking God at His Word

a. v.18, But Zechariah begins to question this. He is an old man, and he is dumbfounded, to say the least. He does not believe. (CSB p.9)

1) When we cannot understand through our own intellect/reasoning, we begin to doubt, and we stand on our own perceived wisdom which is so inadequate. We, too, easily find ourselves failing to believe in our Lord. (The impossible; really, Lord?) (Personal notes; SG pp.9,77 #4) ("Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding..." Prov. 3:5)

2) But notice the grace... Zechariah's unbelief is not the qualifier as to whether God will still fulfill His promise to give him a son. This WILL still take place. God's promise to Zechariah and His promises to us are not predicated on our faith. I am saved, not because of the size of my faith, but I am saved because of the size and greatness of my God. (30 Minutes in the NT- Episode 130)

b. vv.19-20, The Lord shuts Zechariah's unbelieving mouth. This also is a grace. While it is a chastisement from God, in which Zechariah was unable to speak for the entire nine months of Elizabeth's pregnancy, there is a touch of grace about it, a "time of grace" in which Zechariah would acknowledge his sin and experience repentance, a time where he would more fully lean on the Lord and not his own understanding, and he would watch the Lord work and bring about His gracious promise. (Sometimes I need the Lord to "shut my unbelieving mouth," too, and I quietly need to stay connected to the means of grace before me, study His word, pray for the Holy Spirit's help, and keep leaning into the Lord my Savior alone!) (Personal notes; SG pp.9,78 #5)

5. Luke 1:26-38, The Birth of Jesus Foretold

a. vv.26-27 --

1) Six months after Gabriel's assignment to Zechariah (the 6th month of Elizabeth's pregnancy), the angel now is sent by God to a little podunk town of Nazareth. ("Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Just you wait and see! [John 1:46]) From the very beginning Jesus is associated with the lowly, even the lowly place of his childhood.

2) "...a virgin betrothed (ESV) [*"pledged to be married"* (NIV,EHV)] to a man whose name was Joseph..."

a) Yes, Mary was **truly a virgin**. (If we lose the importance of her being a virgin, we lose everything! [Theologically speaking, Jesus, both fully human and fully God, was not of the same sinful line of humanity, not born with our sin nature, so that the sinless, spotless Lamb of God could take our sin upon himself to be our Savior and Redeemer.]) (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:25-56, Episode 131)

* "The Bible clearly speaks about Mary's virginity at the time of Christ's conception and how important this fact is for us (see [below] also Hebrews 4:15; John 8:46). Because of His supernatural conception, Jesus did not inherit (original) sin (Romans 5:12,19 [below]). The denial of the virginity of Mary at Christ's conception is a tacit denial of His divinity." (**SG pp.9,78 #6** for this note and the Scripture passages following)

Hebrews 4:15 - "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Jesus did not succumb to the temptation He experienced but remained wholly faithful to His Father. TLSB Heb. 4:15)

John 8:46 - "Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?" (Here Jesus is showing that the burden of proof lay on Jesus' opponents. TLSB Jn 8:46)

Romans 5:12,19 - "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sin... For as by the one man's [Adam's] disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's [Christ's] obedience the many will be made righteous." (One man--Christ--has redeemed us and changed humanity forever. TLSB Rom. 5:12-21)

** Scripture proof that Jesus was born of a virgin:

Isaiah 7:14 - "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Matthew 1:18-25 - "...an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people for their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)..." (vv.20-23)

*** What this meant for Jesus' conception and birth:

2 Corinthians 5:21 - "For our sake He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (*Christ was without sin, for our sake, to take our sin upon himself so that his righteousness could become ours. "Christ alone is our Righteousness, who is true God and man, because in Him the divine and human natures are personally united with each other." (Formula of Concord, Epitome (1577) Article III, paragraph 1; TLSB 2 Cor. 5:21)*

Hebrews 7:26-27 - "For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since He did this once for all when He offered up Himself." (*A true human being. He is also truly the Son of God from eternity and so is forever without sin.* TLSB Heb.7:26. [Luther: "The cross was the altar on which He, consumed by the fire of the boundless love which burned in His heart, presented the living and holy sacrifice of His body and blood to the Father with fervent intercession, loud cries, and hot, anxious tears (Heb. 5:7)" (Luther's Works, American Edition 13:319; TLSB Heb. 7:26-27)

b) "Jewish betrothal was binding in ways that modern engagements are not. Betrothal usually preceded marriage by at least nine months to assure that the bride was not pregnant. The young man would give the bride's family a gift ["bride price" Genesis 34:12]. The fathers of the families would sign a marriage document" (TLSB 1:27); "...and [the betrothal (engagement)] could only be broken by divorce" (CSB Matt. 1:18).

3) "...to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house David." -- "Joseph was a descendant of David. Mary also came from that royal family; her son would be given the throne of his father David." (TPB p.11)

b. vv.28-33 --

1) v.28, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

a) "Greetings" -- "Ave" in the Latin Vulgate (from which comes "Ave Maria"). (CSB 1:28)

b) "highly favored!" ("O favored one" ESV) -- could be translated "Graced one" / "highly graced"; she's a recipient of grace. This grace, favor is directly connected with "The Lord is with you." (It has nothing to do with the person, and everything to do with the presence of the Lord!) And because she's a recipient of grace and the Lord's presence, that's why she's able to carry what the angel is going to tell her next. This is such a "good news" type of greeting! (Personal notes; 30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:25-56, Episode 131)

2) vv. 29-30, Mary's initial fear -- always the first response of anyone when greeted by an angel in Scripture or when given a glimpse of the glory of the Lord. Her fear is removed by the angel again mentioning the favor/grace of God. God was graciously looking upon her right there!

3) vv.31-33, We learn a lot about Jesus right up front, as the angel Gabriel gives a sort of a credal statement about who Jesus is/will be. Gabriel lays out a lot of claims about Christ, valuable information from the very beginning before Jesus is even born. Mary learns...

a) "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High" -- clearly His divinity

b) He is the one prophesied about as being the One sitting on "the throne of his father David" -- "Refers to the Davidic covenant wherein God promised the Messiah would descend from David and rule eternally." (TLSB 1:32-33)

c) "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end." --(Genesis 49:10, a key part of Jacob's blessing of his sons, prophecy of the Messiah fulfilled in Jesus Christ); "...and His Kingdom will have no end!" -- Something we hear often in liturgical worship, in credal statements, upon which our hope stands firm. (30 Minutes in the NT, Episode 131)

4) vv.34-38 --

a) v.34, Mary's virgin status; Mary's question in faith. (In contrast to Zechariah's skeptical question in v. 18, Mary wonders in faith. [TLSB 1:34])

b) vv.35-37, How this will happen... Read phrase by phrase, and marvel at the glorious wonder happening! Via the Holy Spirit, the Son of God becoming human. The fully divine becoming fully human, the holy Son of God. And over all will be the Most High, God's overshadowing presence upon Mary.

c) v.38, No greater responsive faith than this!! ("Hard to believe? Without a doubt! Yet the faith of Mary shines brightly in contrast to the doubts of the priest Zechariah." [TPB p.12]) Not understanding, when it makes no sense, but she trusts in the Word of God fully. It doesn't have to make sense to believe. God can do the impossible.) In faith Mary, with great humility and purpose, identifies herself as a slave/servant ready to serve God and graciously trust in His will. (30 Minutes in the NT, Episode 131)

6. Luke 1:39-45, Mary Visits Elizabeth

a. Mary learned of Elizabeth's pregnancy from the angel Gabriel. Who better to go visit than another one who has experienced the impossible from God.

b. Notice the response of the baby in Elizabeth's womb!

If we ever doubt that infants/babies are capable of acknowledging the presence of God, capable of believing in God, capable of praising God, here we learn it is possible. Faith is from God, yes, even for little ones in the womb, even for newborn babies. By God's grace alone, through the Means of Grace He gives us... Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. (30 Minutes in the NT, Episode 131)

c. Notice Elizabeth's response:

1) Filled with the Holy Spirit (that's the key!). "Elizabeth recognized that Mary was carrying a child who was the 'Lord,' knowledge that only the Holy Spirit could reveal." (TLSB 1:41-44)

2) Elizabeth is the older one. Mary would normally be the one giving respect to Elizabeth, but here the older is giving praise to the younger. For she sees God's hand in this. (30 Minutes in the NT, Episode 131)

3) "Above all, Elizabeth praises the faith of Mary. Remember that at this time no sounds were coming from the lips of Zechariah because of his unbelief. Elizabeth had good reason to marvel at the faith of Mary." (TPB p.13)

4) Mary most likely stayed with Elizabeth for three months, until Elizabeth's baby John was born. (One can't help but wonder of the conversations they had, and if they visited each other frequently after their boys were born. Did Jesus and John spend time together growing up? This relative who was to be the forerunner of the Messiah. What a special relationship they must have had, Jesus and John the Baptist. (30 Minutes in the NT, Episode 131)

7. Luke 1:46-56, The Magnificat (Mary's Song of Praise)

[See "Christian Worship" Hymnal #956]

["One of four canticles in chapters 1-2. [They add to Luke's narrative!!] They introduce an important Lukan theme: God delights in exalting the poor and humble, while bringing down the rich and proud." (TLSB 1:46-55)]

a. Magnificat -- My soul magnifies (glorifies) the Lord. Shows forth the greatness of the Lord, glorifies Him. Giving God all the credit, all the glory. Mary is speaking as one who has been graced, pointing away from herself, recognizing her humble status as a servant. (TPB p.15)

b. Theme of this wonderful song of praise: God's great reversal. God lifts up the lowly, the humbled, and the broken. God brings down the haughty, the arrogant, those who think they can do it on their own. (30 Minutes in the NT, Episode 131) Mary is "recalling some of the Lord's great acts of mercy, how He works in contrasting ways. The proud He brings down, but he lifts up the humble" (TPB p.15) [An OT parallel is found in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, Hannah's hymn]

c. Mary sees herself as the beginning of the fulfillment of God's prophecy, that which the Jewish people have been waiting on for centuries and centuries. And she remains profoundly humble in this whole thing.

(30 Minutes in the NT, Episode 131)

d. The virgin Mary is an example for all Christians, as seen in her humble service and in her simple trusting faith even when nothing makes sense. She recalls the Lord's mighty acts and His great mercy. Her heart is steadfast in glorifying the Lord and in proclaiming His goodness and grace, with her words and with her willingness to be used of the Lord. She truly knows the Lord's grace. (Personal notes; and SG p.9 #7)

"Refer to verses 28 and 30 ('favor' means 'grace') and verse 47 (needed a Savior)... Through the Word, God gave Mary the gift of faith in the work to which God called her. Christians are also given faith through the Word (Gospel and the Sacraments) so that they may serve the Lord in their vocations. Like Mary, they acknowledge their sinfulness and God's grace." (SG pp.9,78 #7)

8. Luke 1:57-66, The Birth of John the Baptist (The Forerunner's Birth)

a. vv. 57-64 -- Names were important for carrying on the family name during that time, and so Zechariah and Elizabeth were going against the norm in suggesting a name not associated with carrying on the family identity. Especially since they had been barren and this was their only son, people would expect them to want to name this child after dad to carry on the family name. (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:57-2:7, Episode 132)

1) It appears that they hadn't told anyone about anything concerning this child (about the angel's visit, Zechariah's encounter and about the instructions given, about such an impossible miracle happening for this old barren couple). Apparently loads of people didn't even know Elizabeth was pregnant as she had secluded/hidden herself (v.24) and Zechariah wasn't talking (vv.20-22). Neighbors and relatives didn't seem to hear about this until the baby was born (v.58); what a surprise, what cause for rejoicing & celebrating.

(30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:57-2:7, Episode 132)

2) When Zechariah affirmed the baby's name, writing it out, "His name is John," he was then given his speech back. As he affirmed the name the Lord had chosen for their son, he was also affirming his faith in the Lord. And with his now-believing mouth, he was able to give witness and praise of the Lord's good news of what was happening before them all. (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:57-2:7, Episode 132)

* "At once the tongue of Zechariah is loosed, and words of praise flow from his mouth. Here is conversion -- doubt turned to faith, skepticism replaced by adoration." (TPB p.17)

b. **vv. 65-66** -- The neighbors were filled with awe as they took notice of all of this. "No wonder the people of the hill country of Judea talked of hardly anything else for quite a spell." And they wondered and asked, "What then is this child going to be?" It was a question the new father would answer. (TPB p.17) It seemed apparent to all that "the hand of the Lord was with him [John's life]." (v.66)

9. **Luke 1:67-80, Zechariah's Prophecy (The Benedictus)**

[See "Christian Worship" Hymnal #954]

a. **v. 67** -- And Zechariah answered the people as he *was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied!*

b. **vv.68-75** -- Blessing and praising God as he prophesies of the salvation now coming.

1) The Benedictus (from the Latin translation of the first word "*Blessed*") "This canticle has been used for centuries in the daily morning service (matins) of the church." (TLSB 1:68; TPB p.18) Translated as "Blessed be..." ["Praise be to the Lord"]. Worship to God, praise for God's redemption.

*Note: "Whereas the Magnificat is similar to a psalm, the Benedictus is more like a prophecy." (CSB 1:68-79)

2) "Zechariah speaks of the salvation that will come through Jesus as a fact which has already been accomplished. And this before Christ is even born! We are at the very end of the Old Testament [era], the time of promise. With Luke chapter 2 we enter the New Testament, the time of fulfillment." (TPB p.18) (Note: Chapter 1 is in transition, so to speak... Recall the continuity from the last verses of Malachi to the first spoken words of God after 400 years to Zechariah, Luke 1:13-17.)

3) **v.68, "the Lord... has visited and redeemed his people"**

a) "*visited*" in the Greek means "*look after, appear in order to help*" (TLSB 1:68) 400 years had passed without a visit from the Lord. This is good news!

b) "*redeemed*" in the Greek means "*redeem or ransom from slavery*" (TLSB 1:68) Buy you back!

4) **v.69**, "...[He] has raised up a horn of salvation..."

a) David himself in Psalm 18:2 said of the Lord, "He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Now Zechariah uses this same term, "*horn of salvation*" to refer to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. (TPB p.19)

b) "*horn*" indicates strength ...Jesus, the Messiah from the house of David, has the power to save. (CSB 1:69; **SG pp.10,78 #8a**)

5) **vv.70-71**, "[He] spoke through the prophets ...that we should be saved from our enemies..."

6) **vv.72-74**, During those 400 silent years, when they didn't hear from God, the people were feeling defeated by their oppressors. They were waiting for the promised release from their captivity. (We all have been oppressed by sin, death and the devil.) (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:57-2:7, Episode 132)

c. **vv.76-79** -- Clearly in this prophecy Zechariah sees his son's role toward preparing the world for the Redeemer drawing near. (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Episode 132)

1) Now Zechariah's prophecy shifts to his son: John's job will be to dispense forgiveness and knowledge of salvation in Christ.

2) "*Sunrise*"...this is the dawning of a new era (NT)...the light of Christ is dawning upon them, to bring light to their darkness. John's job will be to get the people looking unto Jesus as the one will bring this light and salvation. John is preparing the way for people to look to Him. (**SG pp.10,78 #8b**; TLSB 1:78; 30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:57-2:7, Episode 132)

3) **v.79**, Here Zechariah describes people who have no knowledge of the Savior. They "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" and they have no knowledge of "the way of peace." "Natural man is spiritually blind and dead. The Gospel illuminates the hearts that "sit in darkness" and fills them with spiritual light. Note how Zechariah's hymn expresses Christian faith, joy, hope, and peace that come only through the arrival of God's grace-filled presence (Isaiah 60:1-3)." (**SG pp.10,78 #9**)

d. v.80 --

1) When does John goes out into the wilderness?...We don't know. (Luke probably knew more about John from all his eyewitness accounts, but he didn't think it essential for his readers to know. He didn't share more for the purposes of his narrative...to focus on Jesus!) (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:57-2:7, Episode 132)

2) It is significant that John is to go into the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. Moses was in the wilderness before leading the people to the promised land. Wilderness experiences point people to the promised land. Jesus is our promised land! Also, "throughout Israel's history, the wilderness serves as a place of spiritual formation and testing in God's presence." (30 Minutes in the NT, 1517 podcast, Luke 1:57-2:7, Episode 132; TLSB 1:80)

3) Compare this last verse of Luke 1 to the last verse of Luke 2.

"Luke parallels the births of John and Jesus. In each case the angel Gabriel makes the announcement foretelling the birth; both the mother of Jesus and the father of John sing hymns of praise...; then comes the description of the two births and the rite of circumcision that follows. While there are some parallels between John and Jesus, above all we must recognize how much greater Jesus is than John. Both are servants of God, but the service that Jesus renders is far superior to anything John does. Above all, Jesus is the Son of God; John is ...the blessed offspring of two very pious and aged human parents." (TPB p.9)

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Bible translations used:

EHV = Evangelical Heritage Version

ESV = English Standard Version

NIV = New International Version