

# Luke

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[ 0 : 00 ] Page 88, Luke chapter 1. Luke is a doctor and he writes this, he says, Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative to write the history 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, just as we've been taught about what's happened.

Verse 3. It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, singular, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things that you've been taught.

And it's 20 years today, actually, that I was on camp in Bala in North Wales, and a friend of mine who has now given his testimony, and he finished the testimony with this hymn that many of you know, When I surveyed the Wondrous Cross, we sang it, I think, last week.

And the last verse goes like this, Were there whole realm of nature life that were an offering far too small? Nothing has been the same since in many ways.

That last verse, love so amazing, so divine, so God-like, demands my life, my soul, my all. As I think back to these past 20 years, you never get beyond that, do you?

[ 1 : 25 ] You never get beyond that. The love of Jesus Christ so amazing, so divine, demands. It doesn't ask you, it demands. Your life, your soul, your all tonight.

And that is why Luke is taking his time, walking us through the humiliation, and the suffering, and the passion of the Lord Jesus.

He takes his friend, Theophilus, who he wrote the Gospel for, and he takes him to the very heartbeat of what Christianity is all about. And Luke is a kind of genius.

What he does is he tells the story as it was. But he tells the story as it was, so that Theophilus and you and I would see the meaning, and see the significance of the story, not just for Jesus, but for ourselves, and for those around us.

And so Jesus is moved from scene to scene tonight. And that's really what we're going to do. I'm not going to point, so we're just going to walk through the passage. That he was despised and rejected.

[ 2 : 35 ] He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He's hurried by the high priest, in order, first of all, at the beginning of chapter 23, to be placed on trial.

Do you see it, verse 1, before Pontius Pilate? But, it's fascinating, in the opening words, then the whole company of them arose, as a single man. They arose like one.

And we see the sheer isolation, and the desolation of this for the Lord Jesus. It is utterly unimaginable. They moved from their proceedings, which had begun as this kangaroo court.

They began at midnight, or earlier, kangaroo court. And now they are deciding legally, what they decided illegally to do long ago. That Jesus must be dealt with.

That there must be something done about him. That Jesus must be crucified. And so they bring their charge, which could never stick. Why could it never stick?

[ 3 : 41 ] Against the Son of God, that he has committed blasphemy, making himself the Son of God. Well, he is the Son of God. But more than that, you notice, when they arrive at Pontius Pilate, they use legal language to describe what they have done illegally.

They use legal language, but it doesn't change that their accusations are just as illegal. I don't know, I've not been in court, but when the judge turns to the jury, and he asks for the verdict, he says something like this, he says, how do you find the accused?

And the foreman of the jury will say, we find the accused guilty, or we find the accused not guilty. And they say, we find this man guilty.

We find this man guilty of misleading our nation, and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar. We find this man guilty of sedition.

Now, it is contrary to all natural justice, in that they hurried Jesus away, having accused him of blasphemy, but they go to another court, and they say, we find him guilty of, not blasphemy, treason.

[ 4 : 58 ] The charge is utterly false, on two accounts, isn't it? They say, he was telling people, not, verse 2, to give tribute to Caesar. But we know, don't we, we've seen it earlier on in Luke's Gospel, that Jesus had urged people to pay their taxes to Caesar.

Remember, when he asked for a denarius, and he says, whose face is on this coin? And they say, well, it's Caesar's face. Then give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Pay your taxes. But make sure, since God's image is on your life, that you give to God what is God's.

So far from committing treason, far from misleading our nation, and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, he's encouraging his disciples to be the very best citizens they can be.

Or they possibly could be. And how false of them to find him guilty of blasphemy, and then to say that they've actually found him guilty of treason. And Pilate sees through the whole thing.

It's amazing. This man, Pontius Pilate, who's so deeply unpopular, a man who is of desperately flawed character, as the story makes clear, but he's at least got enough grasp of Roman law, and natural justice, to say, I find this prisoner not guilty.

[ 6 : 17 ] And then having heard, and this is his out, having heard that Jesus is a Galilean, taking the opportunity that's given to him, by the legal system, to have him tried under the jurisdiction of residence, rather than the jurisdiction he is, he was being charged with this crime of treason, he sends him to out her it.

But his verdict, Pontius Pilate's verdict, is absolutely essential to the story. And you will not understand Luke's story, unless you see that here, and on six other occasions in this chapter, the Lord Jesus is announced, by a variety of individuals, to be not guilty.

The Lord Jesus is utterly innocent. And so he's hurried off to Herod Antipas. And do you notice, in verse 8, when Herod saw the Lord Jesus, he was very glad.

Now this is the Herod, who has executed John the Baptist, who cut his head off, and put it off a plate, when he was in a drunken sleeper. This is the Herod, who earlier on, seems to have at least, have some sensitive conscience.

To be frightened of who Jesus really was. He thought, perhaps this is John the Baptist, back from the dead, and he's afraid of that, to haunt me. But all of that is now in the past.

[ 7 : 43 ] Herod is like the person, who comes to church, and goes from church, and on his way, although the preacher, has maybe raised his voice, and spoken about the depth of sin, and the wonder of the Lord Jesus, says on the way out of church, he says, well actually, I didn't get much out of that today.

It's like water off a duck's back. This person can hear the most moving sermon, can hear of their need of Christ, and they think, but I didn't really get much out of that.

It's like being like Herod. This man who is interested, and then scared, and now hardens. And it's like being like Herod, isn't it?

And the danger is, the next day, and the next day, well actually, you get to the stage, where you can make fun of Jesus. And you can make fun of Jesus' people. And you join in the fun, about Jesus and his people.

How foolish that is to do. How glad he is to see Jesus. You have a conscience, that is peaceful, and is clear, clear enough to make fun of the Lord Jesus.

[ 8 : 48 ] Well if that's you, your name is Herod. And your need is desperate. And this was his situation. Can you see what happens? It is appalling. We don't often linger on this.

And of all the gospel writers, Luke may be the most careful. So just stand a little bit back, from all that the Lord Jesus is going through. But look what happens.

Here is a man, who gathers the chief priests, who are accusing Jesus vehemently. Here is a man, who encourages his soldiers, his soldiers of all people.

His most disciplined of people, his most disciplined of men, who obey his will. He encourages his soldiers, to mock and deride the Lord Jesus.

To play games with the Lord Jesus. And he joins in. And they array him in splendid clothing. And even from a human point of view, it should break our hearts.

[ 9 : 45 ] But the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been declared, just been declared, by the highest court in Jerusalem, to be utterly innocent of all the charges, should be treated with such contempt.

It's interesting. You must have noticed it in your own life. People who have no reason to do it. And they blaspheme in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Every single day. And their consciences, they go home at night, they eat their meals, they lie down, they sleep the sleep of death. Because nothing touches their consciences.

And they're the most desperately needy people, in all the world. And you can be one of them, this evening. You've heard the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, it touched your conscience, you know, I need to get right with God.

I know that I'm a sinner. And yet you've hardened your heart, again and again and again. So now you can sit through all the sermons in the world, and it doesn't affect you. I'm reading, John Elias, his biography.

[ 10 : 56 ] He's a Welshman in the 18th century, he's a great preacher. And it's a good story. And John Elias used to go down to his blacksmith. And his blacksmith obviously helped John Elias with his transport problems.

The blacksmith used to put shoes on his horse. And he put new shoes on his horse. And Elias loved to go down and speak with the blacksmith every couple of weeks. And each year, the blacksmith hammering on the anvil, you know that noise of sparks and bright red metal coming up the water.

And as he prepared this new shoe for John Elias' horse, he went down one day and he discovered that John Elias had a new dog. And every time the hammer went down on the anvil, the dog went absolutely crazy.

The dog would howl and howl and howl. The hammer would come down, bang, bang, bang, and the dog would respond with howl, howl, howl. Elias got on his horse, thought nothing of it.

He went on his preaching tour. And he came back from another part of North Wales. And as he was approaching the blacksmith, he heard the hammer, bang, bang, bang, on the anvil. But there was no howl, howl, howl.

[ 12 : 08 ] What had happened? Well, the dog was lying fast asleep when he went in. Because the dog had got a used and sound with the bang, bang, bang, didn't it?

And your conscience can be like that dog. You can have a peaceful conscience that knows the message of the Lord Jesus Christ but has done nothing about it.

And it used to disturb you, but now it doesn't disturb you at all and you sleep the sleep of death. And that's what this man has. And we don't often reflect on how awful it must have been for the Lord Jesus.

Maybe we should do that more. None of the ransomed knew how deep were the waters crossed or how dark was the night that our Lord passed through to find the sheep that was lost.

Well, now he's back to Pontius Pilate. They've taken him to Annas the Caiaphas, to the Sanhedrin, to Pilate, to Herod, all in a matter of hours. He's been poured to and fro geographically, physically.

[ 13 : 14 ] He's been despised, demeaned, rejected. His glory has been turned into shame. And now he is back with the man who lives in notoriety because every Sunday, millions of believers around the world confess the Apostles' craze, that he suffered under Pontius Pilate.

And so he's on trial before Pilate. And he's taken to Herod. And now he suffers under Pontius Pilate. Do you see it? Mob violence breaks out. This is your saviour.

This is not some figure in a stained glass window. This is our saviour. And mob violence breaks out against him. And they demand that he should be crucified. Pilate begins to wilt.

He stays with Roman justice. Strict Roman justice. He says, doesn't he, he has done nothing deserving death. Do you see that? Look at verse 22. I have found in him, just over the page on page 884, I have found in him no guilt deserving death.

Therefore, I will punish him and set him free, release him. What kind of logic is that? Do you understand that? Therefore, I will punish him and set him free, even though he's done nothing wrong.

[ 14 : 32 ] What kind of logic is that? What kind of court does that stand up in? He's done nothing wrong, therefore I will punish him. And Pontius Pilate is saying this, isn't he? I don't want to yield, but the pressure is too great.

Theophilus, who, and we read about right at the start of Luke's Gospel, he was probably a Roman figure. A patristic figure. Probably he was a government figure, perhaps.

Perhaps this is one way, as Luke writes this, he is praying, Lord, break through into Theophilus' heart. Show Theophilus, this is where he is with respect to the Lord Jesus.

Show Theophilus, that this is where he is with respect to the Lord Jesus. I want the Lord Jesus to be free, but I'm not willing to pay the price of him being free in my personal life.

And so over and over again, they cry out, crucify him, crucify him. And they shout out for Barabbas, give us Barabbas, the insurrectionist, the localized terrorist, the murderer, instead of the Lord Jesus, the Savior.

[15:42] And Pilate hands him over. And I wonder, as Luke is writing this, he's projecting forward, isn't he? Because he wrote this years and years after the event.

He wrote this when he already knew what would happen. In the first 15 or so chapters in the Acts of the Apostles, Luke doesn't personally appear in the Acts of the Apostles right until the middle.

So he already knew of that occasion when the early church saw this as the fulfillment of all kinds of biblical prophecies. Luke knew that. That the kings of the earth, set up to, would gather together against the Lord and his anointed one.

Or that wonderful story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, who's reading Isaiah chapter 53, that he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, as a lamb before his shearers, is dumb, and again and again in this passage.

Luke goes to great lengths to say, Jesus said nothing. Jesus said nothing. Jesus said nothing. It is as though he is saying to you, do you see what's happening here?

[16:57] Do you see that Jesus is the suffering servant? He is despised and rejected of men. Do you see that Jesus is the Lamb of God who will take away the essence of the world?

Do you see that Jesus is standing silently because while judged to be utterly innocent, he is willing to be treated as though he were guilty? And not least, how significant that he is innocent of, but he is condemned for blasphemy and treason.

Which, as you read through the passage with me, did you notice they were the two crimes of Barabbas? That he was charged with treason and murder. And murder, if you know your Bibles at all from the early chapters of Genesis, murder is a capital crime in the Bible because it is an offence against the image of God.

And I wonder if Theophilus ever saw what is really being acted out here. Of the man who was guilty of blasphemy and treason was being set free.

Because the man who was the son of God and who lived in obedience to God was going to be crucified. I wonder if it ever dawned on him that he was in the same position.

[18:22] Because these are actually my essential sins as well as yours. Blasphemy, what have you done? What have I done? I have made myself rather than the Lord the centre of the universe.

If I asked you to stand up tonight if you've never done that you know, don't you, there wouldn't be a single person that hasn't made themselves the centre of their universe.

It's the very heart of our sin. We are so accustomed to being the centre of our universe that we don't even begin to think that it's actually blasphemy against God.

But he hasn't become to you and I the centre of our universe, of our life, of our adoration, of our homes, of our ambition, of our families, of everything that we do. And treason.

That we have denied Jesus as absolute king over our lives. And so this is the story of the gospel. That Jesus again and again is innocent.

[19:25] He is innocent, not guilty. He is pure and righteous and holy while I am a blasphemer. And I am guilty of treason against the most high God.

And in the most amazing providence of God, Jesus is the one who is crucified and Barabbas and I and you are the ones who may go free. And if you ever really want to understand how awful your sin is, if you ever want to understand how awful your sin is, how awful your blasphemy is, how awful your treason is, please do not compare yourself with anyone else.

But you go to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and you watch everything that takes place in these 24 hours before his crucifixion.

And you say to yourself, if this alone will take away my sin, how profound and how awful my sin must be.

And the amazing thing is this, the amazing thing is this, that the name Barabbas means son of the father. That's what the name means.

[ 20 : 46 ] Bar Abba. Son of the father. And so you might say, the very first man in history during the life and story of our Lord Jesus, who would ever be able to say, in my place, condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood.

Hallelujah, what a saviour, was a man who was privileged to live the rest of his life and somebody said to him, who are you? Who are you? He could say if he ever came to trust in the Lord Jesus, my name is the son of the father.

I am the son for whom the eternal son of the eternal father took my flesh and bore my judgment and paid the penalty for my sin to set me free to live as a child of God.

We don't know. We don't know whether that was ever true of Barabbas. But the one thing that really matters is that it should be true of you and it should be true of me. Have you ever seen your sin?

There is no way to the joy of grace without seeing your sin. But there just isn't another way.

[ 22 : 12 ] There is no other way to see the marbles of his grace and his kindness and his fatherly care until you realise why that grace is marvellous.

So the gospel's first word to you tonight is have you seen your sin? Have you seen how much Jesus suffered for you? He suffered and bled and died for you and he did that for you in order to take away your sin?

And I wonder if I and perhaps you are in the position that I think I was in 20 years ago. But reading this chapter I want to say with all my heart, whatever the future holds, love so amazing, so divine, shall have my life, my soul, my all.

And if you've never done that, why not do that tonight? Let's pray.