

They Saw No One But Jesus Only.

Text: Luke 1:1-4

Suggested Hymns:

37, 273, 155, 264, 747

1) Luke, The Beloved Doctor And Companion Of Paul

2) That You May Know The Truth

3) The Gospel Of The Universal Saviour

4) The Gospel For The World

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 1:1-4, ¹ *Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us,* ² *just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us,* ³ *it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus,* ⁴ *that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Gospel for today is the account of the transfiguration of Jesus. In that wonderful event three disciples — Peter, James, and John — saw a vision of Jesus' glory such as they had not seen before.

So awe-inspiring was the scene that in the presence of it the disciples fell to the ground, with faces down. Jesus touched them and told them to rise and not to be afraid. Then we read: *“When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.”*¹

Of the four evangelists Luke gives us the most complete account of the life and ministry of Jesus. He gives us a portrait of Jesus in His glory as the merciful Friend and Saviour of all, whose saving love embraces everyone and excludes no one.

Many people move across the pages of Luke's Gospel. But Luke's desire is that people may see but one person among the many — *Jesus only* — so that it may be said of them as it is written of the three disciples: *They saw no one but*

Jesus only. That is our theme for this Transfiguration Sunday. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Luke, The Beloved Doctor And Companion Of Paul

Who was Luke? We know little about him, but from Scripture and tradition we glean this much: He was a Gentile by birth and a doctor by profession, whose home was at Antioch. He was educated, cultured, and skilled in the Greek language.

How and under what circumstances he became a Christian we do not know. His name is mentioned only three times, and each time in one of Paul's letters. He was a close companion of Paul on the apostle's missionary journeys.

The "we" sections in the Book of Acts indicate that he joined Paul at Troas on the second missionary journey, went with him to Philippi, joined him again on the third journey, returned with him to Jerusalem, then sailed with him to Rome and stayed with him until the apostle's death.

When Paul was a prisoner in Rome awaiting death, he wrote in his last letter to Timothy: "*Only Luke is with me.*"² His friends had been reduced to only a few, and Luke was one of them. What a tribute to Luke's loyalty! In his earlier letter to the Colossians Paul spoke of Luke as "*the beloved physician.*"³ This indicates how much Luke's companionship meant to Paul.

It also indicates that Luke ministered to Paul in his times of illness and so, under the blessing of God, had much to do with the physical endurance of the apostle in his labours for Christ. Thus Luke was the first of a long line of doctors who in the name of Christ have served and are serving both humanity and the church.

Luke dedicated not only his person and his medical knowledge to the cause of Christ, but also his literary skill. He was the author of the Gospel that bears his name and also of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles.

Both are addressed to the same person, Theophilus, who may have been a man of some rank. The book of Acts is a sequel to the Gospel that Luke wrote. Both books may have been written in Rome, where Luke was with Paul during the apostle's first and second imprisonments. His Gospel has been called "*the*

most beautiful book ever written.” As author of the Acts of the Apostles Luke has been called *“a historian of the first order.”*

2. That You May Know The Truth

Theophilus, to whom Luke addressed his Gospel, was a Gentile who had been instructed in the Christian faith. Luke’s purpose in writing to him was to give him a trustworthy account of the life and ministry of Jesus so that he might know the certainty of the things in which he had been instructed and be more firmly established in his faith.

Luke was not a companion of Jesus in the days of His ministry, but he had before him the accounts that others had written of Jesus. He had the testimony of those *“who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word.”*⁴

He had the testimony of Paul. He had carefully examined and checked all this testimony. Now under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit he was writing an orderly account *“of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.”*⁵ In this way Theophilus would know the truth and his faith in Jesus would be firmly grounded.

Our faith rests on Jesus, not on the Gospel record about Jesus. But the Gospels were written that we might know Jesus and that, knowing Him, we might believe in Him.

Since our faith cannot rest on uncertainties or human fabrications, we need the certainty that the Gospel record we have of the life and ministry of Jesus is true and trustworthy and that our faith in Jesus rests on a foundation of truth and not on *“cunningly devised fables.”*⁶

That certainty we have. As we study the Gospel record, the Holy Spirit will give us the certainty that this is God’s truth. The Jesus Luke wants us to see is not the Jesus of men’s invention, but the Jesus of history, who came down from heaven, walked the earth from Bethlehem to Calvary to the Mount of Ascension, and returned to heaven. God in His grace has preserved Luke’s Gospel to our day that we may see this Jesus and Him only.

3. The Gospel Of The Universal Saviour

Luke addressed his Gospel to Theophilus, but he wrote it for all the world. He wants all to see Jesus as the merciful Saviour of all people — Jew and Gentile, black and white, man, woman, and child, tax collector and sinner and outcast.

He wants people to see Jesus as the Saviour everyone can claim; the Saviour of whom everyone can say, whatever his race, nationality, colour, or social rank may be: *“This Saviour is for me! He loves and cares about me!”*

It is Luke who has given us the record of Jesus’ birth with its angel message and angel song. It is Luke who has preserved for us the parables of Jesus about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, which picture the Saviour’s loving concern for the lost and His earnest desire for their recovery.

It is Luke who has given us the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which Jesus teaches us to show love and compassion to those in need, no matter who they may be. It is Luke who has preserved for us the story of the grateful Samaritan leper whom Jesus healed, and the story of the penitent woman of the street who washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and Jesus’ tender mercy toward her.

It is Luke who tells us about the tears that Jesus wept over Jerusalem, the prayer He spoke for those who crucified Him, and His promise of Paradise to the penitent thief. It is Luke who has given us the cheering word that Jesus spoke in the home of the tax collector Zacchaeus, who had just experienced the forgiving and saving love of Jesus, the word that sums up the purpose of Jesus’ mission on earth, as we read in Luke 19:10, *¹⁰ for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*”

The birth, the life, the ministry of Jesus, the words of life He spoke, the mighty miracles He did, His suffering and death, His resurrection — are all there in Luke’s Gospel. We see Jesus in His lowliness and in His glory, in His weakness and in His power, in the humiliation of His suffering and death and in the glory of His resurrection and ascension.

Luke concludes his account with the ascension of Jesus with His hands raised in blessing on His disciples. That blessing was meant to convey to His disciples then and now all the blessed fruits of His life, death, and resurrection.

Running through it all we see the golden thread of Jesus’ love as He shows that love to all sorts of people in all sorts of circumstances and needs. He brings mercy and forgiveness to the penitent, healing to the sick, sight and hearing to the

blind and deaf, comfort to the brokenhearted, and hope to the despairing. He asks no one for his credentials. He offers His love and salvation to all.

This is the Jesus Luke wants us to see — the Jesus who bore the sins of all, who lived and died for all, who offers His love to all. Luke wants us to see Him in His forgiving love and His saving power as the Friend of sinners and the Saviour of the lost. This is the Jesus we need.

As we trace Luke's portrait of Jesus, may the Holy Spirit awaken this response in us, *"What wonderful news about a wonderful Saviour! Praise God, that news was written for me, and that Saviour was born and lived and died and rose again for me!"*

4. The Gospel For The World

Here is the Saviour for all the world. Here is the Gospel for all people, the Gospel given to be preached to all nations, the Gospel that leaps across the barriers of ocean, race, language, culture, and rank.

Luke followed up his account of the life and ministry of Jesus with the story of how that good news was preached in Jerusalem and carried from there to distant places of the world. He records Jesus' command to His apostles: ***"You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."***⁷

Then he tells of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and how they, in the power of the Holy Spirit, went forth to preach the Gospel with boldness and courage to Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and Romans. We find the story in the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke and addressed to Theophilus.

Here is the story of how the church was founded as the Gospel of Jesus was preached to men and as the love of the Saviour drew more and more men to Him. Here is the story of the life of the early Christians and the vitality of their faith. Here is the story of how, scattered by persecution, and they ***"went everywhere preaching the word."***⁸

Here is the story of Philip bringing the Gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch and Peter preaching the Gospel to the household of the Roman officer Cornelius. Here is the story of the conversion of Saul the persecutor to Paul the apostle. Here is the story of Paul carrying the Gospel through Asia Minor and across the

sea to Europe and planting the cross of Christ beside the banners of Caesar in Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, Athens, and Rome.

Here is the story of how men in the face of bitter persecution carried the Gospel far and wide that men everywhere might see and know Jesus in the glory of His saving love and power.

Through the centuries that Gospel has leaped all sorts of barriers to bring the good news of Jesus and His salvation down to us, that we and others in our time might see and know Jesus as the Friend of sinners and the Saviour of the lost. His Gospel is the Gospel for the world.

Now it is our duty and privilege to carry the banner of the cross onward that others may see and know Him as their Friend and Saviour.

We honour Luke for the heritage that he, by the grace of God, has left us in the two books he wrote, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But Luke wants us to look beyond him to the Saviour, of whom he wrote that we may fix our eyes, hearts, faith, and hope on Christ and see *“no one but Jesus only.”* May the Holy Spirit give us that saving vision.

Sir James Simpson, a man of science like Luke, and the discoverer of the anaesthetic property of chloroform, was asked by a student what he considered his greatest discovery.

He answered, *“That I am a sinner and that Jesus Christ is my Saviour.”* That is still the greatest discovery any person can make. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matthew 17:8

² 2 Timothy 4:11

³ Colossians 4:14

⁴ Luke 1:2

⁵ Acts 1:1

⁶ 2 Peter 1:16

⁷ Acts 1:8

⁸ Acts 8:4