

# 01/05/25 - Luke 1:1-4 - "Faith that Grows"

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please turn with me to the Gospel of Luke. We'll be reading from chapter 1, the first four verses. Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who have 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.

This is God's Word. Thanks be to God. We're walking through a new series in the Gospel of Luke, and I trust that you guys got the memo of the Scripture journals.

Those are very helpful as you go through series, because you have the Scripture on one side and the blank pages on the other side.

And you never realize, but years from now, it might prove really useful at a certain time, as you want to study through Luke, maybe in a couple years from now.

[ 1 : 32 ] And you open it up, and you see sermon notes, and you see all sorts of things that were clicking back in the day, and you're just like, oh, yeah, that's cool. And so I encourage you, \$10, they're in the foyer.

Those would be a good, trusty companion to walk through this series. And I want to open up with a little bit of a story. There was once a young boy who planted a small apple tree in his backyard, and every day he watered it, watched over it, and waited eagerly for it to bear fruit.

And after years, the tree finally produced its first apples. Excited, the boy picked them, tasted them, and enjoyed the sweet reward for his patience.

But then, something changed. He stopped watering the tree as often as he was. He figured it had grown enough and would keep producing fruit on its own.

And slowly, the leaves turned dry. The branches weakened, and the apples became smaller and fewer.

[ 3 : 07 ] And one day, he came outside and found his once thriving tree nearly barren. Sadly, he asked his father, what happened?

His father knelt down beside him and said, Son, a tree never stops growing. The moment it stops being cared for, it starts dying.

You don't just grow something once and expect it to last forever. It needs constant nourishment. Church, how true is this story for each and every Christian who has been given the seed of saving faith from God? Who have come to realize the good news of the gospel and said, I want that. I want God's grace through Jesus Christ. But a seed, it remains and often goes neglected from care, nourishment.

[ 4 : 19 ] Sometimes we can attribute this to a couple different things in life. We could say, well, you know, life is going smoothly, and we kind of get comfort and complacency that leads us to stop earnestly seeking God.

Easy times. Or maybe our hectic culture takes up our time and just drains our energy, causes personal growth to sort of take the back seats in our lives, loses its priority.

Or even challenges and hardships may have the power to pull us away from wanting to grow our faith, resulting in stagnation of any growth and sort of this increase in apathy of woe is me.

Or additionally, overconfidence. Overconfidence. Overconfidence in our knowledge of what we know might actually mislead us into believing that we have everything figured out.

Church, every one of us within this room right now and on the live stream, walking through this series, fits somewhere along that spectrum.

[ 5 : 39 ] Somewhere along that spectrum. Unless you're perfect, as Jesus Christ was perfect. And none of y'all are. Neither am I.

Amen. We don't have less here today. Carmen will be compensating for the amens. I promise not to trap you in a false amen. He's on to it.

But no matter where you are in your walk with Jesus Christ, the depth of God's love and truth is endless. It's not a well that runs dry. It doesn't have a certain level of depth.

It is endless. It's bottomless. Like Red Robin's bottomless fries. It is bottomless. There is no end. And there is such great joy in that.

You thought fries get you excited. God's Word and the depth of His Word should get us more excited. And for that, we all better listen up this morning and along the coming weeks.

[ 6 : 47 ] What better way to begin a new series than to investigate an introduction? You guys are probably like, what is this brother going to preach on?

This is the prologue. But what better way to start our journey than to look into this introduction?

A very important piece with any literary work to help us become better listeners throughout the body and the contents leading to the conclusion as better recipients of the depth of God's love and truth.

Today, the sermon title is A Call to Grow. And the main point of the passage today is worded in a charge to don't let your faith stand still.

Don't let your faith stand still. And we're going to break this prologue into three different sections. And while this sermon may feel different, it will be different.

[ 8 : 01 ] It might actually, you might be checked out right now and saying, well, I want the stories. I want the narratives. I want those details. I want the climax.

I want the tension. Well, we'll get there. But let's figure out a conviction of why we need to listen to the details that will be coming up in the next several weeks, months, and quite possibly years.

We'll see how that goes. And my hope is that by considering these inspired words carefully, these aren't just little facts about Theophilus.

And these are inspired words. They're included for a purpose. We will be bountifully equipped if we pay attention to them to receive the content that follows.

And so this will serve as a wedding of our lips. We'll, if you like steak or whatever food you like, you smell the aroma and it just makes you hungry.

[ 9 : 04 ] And this is what the prologue does for us today. So let's pray and reflect upon an excerpt from the Valley of Vision. Please join me in prayer.

Father, we gather before Thee, hungry for Thy Word, needing Thy wisdom, longing for Thy voice. Prepare our hearts as fertile soil that the seed of Thy truth may take deep root, growing in faith, love, and obedience.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So let's break this passage up accordingly. Three sections today.

One main point. The first section is the old work that shook the world. And we see something happening and being revealed, sort of presupposed of something that was fairly significant.

[ 10 : 16 ] Verse 1, which was read this morning, in as much as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who were from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word have delivered them to us.

We see in verse 1 that there is an old work that has taken place. There has been a previous documentation.

There's many who have undertaken to compile a narrative here. This is a, this is likely a direct reference to the author's dynamic approach in what he is doing here with his gospel.

And the author of this gospel is none other than many people agree that it was Luke because throughout the book of the gospel of Luke, there's a lot of we references that would insinuate that Luke is the gospel.

He does not necessarily state it. And so, if we can come to that agreement and be proved along that point along the way, we'll save ourselves the trouble of questioning who wrote the gospel of Luke.

[ 11 : 33 ] But this is likely a direct reference to Luke's dynamic approach which considers some other gospels that were available, that were written in this time period, especially the gospel of Matthew and the gospel of Mark.

In fact, the gospel of Luke overlaps 40% of those gospels. What you find in Luke will also be found in those other two gospels.

However, that leaves with a 60% sort of a unique vantage point. And he might even be referring to here of maybe some Apocrypha. It's not necessarily bad to read historic documents as Apocrypha was, but it seems like there was a work that was going on that many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us.

In other words, something significant took place and it was worth writing about. If they had social media, you better believe that X would be filled with...

Are we calling them tweets anymore or are they exits? I'm going to X Elon Musk and see what we got to do with that terminology.

[ 12 : 54 ] Whatever you call it, social media would be filled with this record of narratives. And not only that, we see that there's some sort of credibility along what has been accomplished among us with Luke being one of them.

Not only was this account of the old work done through written means, but it's not just a bunch of stories. There were eyewitnesses and ministers that have orally testified to such accomplishments that had taken place among them to capture the narratives.

this old work is talking about history. History took place. Significant history.

And this history shook the world. You see, when we experience something significant in our lives, isn't it pretty difficult to just keep it to ourselves?

ourselves. Right? I don't know if you have young kids, but we're the first people to figure out who did what and who pulled whose hair out, if you saw my Instagram.

[ 14 : 12 ] Yeah, that was fun. Seeing the child get dragged across the floor. There she goes. A savage fight. And we heard all about it. My kids report the findings constantly.

I mean, we live in a culture that takes pictures of our food before we eat it. And these little things that are just like minorly significant, we tell the world about them as if we want to see what your dietary plan is.

Right? We got drones flying around. It's significant. And people are reporting it to WKBN. You can report your own news to the news station.

Imagine that. There should be compensation for that. What do you do for a living? Report to WKBN. For my couch.

But what could be so compelling to occur in history that filled with many undertaking to compile a narrative of it?

[ 15 : 15 ] To fill bookshelves? To fill the newspaper? To fill the airways? Well, Luke doesn't actually explicitly mention what that was.

But he writes about it in the body. So let me clue you in. It's the fact that God entered history.

Timeless, infinite God entered time and history.

history. Historic, miraculous birth is which we'll see. Historically obedient life. Historically submitted himself to execution upon the cross.

Historically was buried. Historically was raised to life again. History took place. And you see, history makes a lasting impact that reverberates through the span of time.

We see that with all sorts of history. If you remember the bubble boy and remember the thing that they thought the kid was in the bubble.

[ 16 : 28 ] Those things take their, they still ripple through time. But divine history has a different power. History that is divinely inspired and significant shake the world today just as it did back then.

Something bubble boy, drones, and all sorts of things. Even your meal along your dietary plan doesn't have the power to do. Divine history shakes just as it did originally.

A message worth writing is a message worth living. And we see something here as we continue along this pathway. The new work reinforced the old.

You know, our generations today might bring their presuppositions into Luke's intent. The boomers might say, ah, great, another young'un trying to recreate the wheel.

Here we go. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Come on, right? Or millennials, they love Luke because it seems like the intent was to challenge tradition as all millennials are known for.

[ 17 : 38 ] disruption of the system is good, right? Put on nirvana. Right? And Gen Z's are just like, what are you, forget all the old stuff.

Like, it's irrelevant as which Gen Z is known for. Well, what is Luke's intent? Well, he reveals it in verse 3.

it seemed good to me also. Along with those who have undertaken to compile an error, 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.

And here we discover the author's intent and in fact, we really learn a lot about the author here, believe it or not. It seems as if Luke is analytical.

It seems like Luke is investigative. creative. He tests. He challenges. And he's thorough.

[ 18 : 57 ] Sounds awfully like a doctor, doesn't it? Luke is actually referred to as a physician in Colossians 1 or Colossians 4, 14, and multiple times, a close companion of Paul, if you remember at the end of Acts, it was him and Luke calling for Timothy and some friends as he awaited his execution.

And his writing, even this introduction, scholars have been baffled by the eloquence of his writing style. His writing is eloquent and medical, presenting himself as both a scholar in both Jewish culture and non-Jewish culture.

It's like, this guy's really, really intelligent. And he writes, all of which makes his perspective, yeah, unique and definitely worth it.

Luke is a metaphorical painter, as we might want to call him, with a blank canvas sitting in front of him. And as he studies, all of which that he's documented over the span of time that he's been following very close for some time past, he's gazing at this movement of what has been accomplished among them, and he turns to the canvas and puts a brush stroke.

He stares at it again for a period of time and putting that to a canvas. Luke's gospel paints a unique portrait of the same momentous events that Mark saw, that Matthew saw, and that John decided to write about as well, about 40 years later, 30 years, throwing 20 years later.

[ 21 : 02 ] Same object being painted, but differing perspective. And so you might say, well, why do we have to listen? I just studied, I just read through my Bible reading plan, the gospel of Matthew.

Well, it's because this message has supernatural power to it. This isn't just any ordinary history, this is divine history.

This has supernatural power to unbind a sinner's heart from their deadness to sin and bring them into new life, new nature, new status, a righteousness not of our own life, not earned on our side, but given by a holy God and bring us into new life.

This is the power of the gospel for us today, sitting here in 2025, realizing that God entered history, He changed history, and He rewrote our history through the good news of the gospel.

He saved us from a path leading to destruction. If you don't believe in Jesus Christ today, I hope you do realize the hope awaiting you right now, in this moment, on this Sunday.

[ 22 : 28 ] And this is a very dependable message and a reality that is very dependable. as we see in this last portion of the verse, we see the new work's purpose in us, that you may have certainty the things that you have been taught.

This new work was intended to bring assurance. It's supposed to assure us. this is known as the purpose statement of Luke's gospel.

And every chapter, every verse, every word in Greek that he uses unites succinctly with this purpose.

It all points back. Luke knew that truth doesn't need to be reinvented. It needs to be reinforced.

And he wrote his gospel. Luke's intent wasn't to fill in the gaps of the old. He didn't like how Mark left this thing out.

[ 23 : 44 ] He didn't like how Matthew phrased that so he's going to rephrase this. No. But to reinforce their truth through an expansive new work that God obviously saw fit to shake Theophilus' generation and still shaking our generation today.

In other words, as we audit the history and the hope of the gospel, we find quite a robust reason to believe in Jesus Christ, in the narrative of the gospel.

We have every reason to be assured in what we have heard and what we know and what we have been taught. Luke, the historian, will make us certain about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Luke, the theologian, will reveal God's love and grace in Jesus Christ. Luke, the physician, will help us love people as Jesus Christ did, especially to non-Jew folk.

Luke, the musician, will set our hearts to singing for joy for the work of Jesus Christ. And in fact, if we believe in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, we can only understand that it is not Luke behind this work and his intent, but God's ultimate sovereign plan by inspiring Luke to put the words upon the page, to put the brushstrokes upon the canvas.

[ 25 : 23 ] And since God is behind this work, God is the project manager for this investigation, what a loving God we have that He desired to reveal hope to the hopeless.

And God doesn't just want to inform us of history. He wants to transform us by way of this history. divine history. This God knows what it's like to lead forgetful people through the wilderness. This God knows what it's like to provide judges and kings that they wanted to rule over forgetful people. This God knows what it's like to speak through prophets and to guide and to warn forgetful people.

Don't you see? God's love is a common denominator throughout redemptive history. We're the ones that forget.

And so knowledge of God, knowledge of His truth, needs continual growth, continual care. It's hard work.

[ 26 : 46 ] And Theophilus had a desire for assurance, didn't he? It says, having followed all things closely for some time to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things that you have been taught, things that you have been catechized with, the things that you have played upon your heart, that you may have certainty that you will be nourished in the things that you learned, so you may be assured in it.

Luke had the intent to comprehensively document, and God paved the way for it yet again, just as it was through the Old Testament prophets, so too through Luke's pen.

And what an opportunity for us to find historic hope in Jesus Christ through the gospel of Luke. And so we must remember that certainty, certainty is not just about remembering.

It's not just about remembering. It's about deepening. It's about strengthening. It's about nourishing our hearts with the truth over and over and over again.

Theophilus seemed hungry. Even though that he's referred to as most excellent, meaning that he was probably a high-standing individual, probably had some money, probably the commissioner of this work, he paid the gas bill for Luke to write, even though this most excellent Theophilus, this guy who has it all together, perceivably from an outside point, still was deficient of what he truly needed.

[ 28 : 45 ] And what he needed was deepening. What he needed is strengthening. What he needed is nourishment. Theophilus was hungry, ready to listen, ready to yield, ready to surrender and trust.

And so the question, as we are the audience now, will we listen? Will we yield? Will we surrender and will we trust? will be in the first Sunday of the month.

We only have 51 left. All right? It will take commitment to accomplish this work, the strengthening, deepening.

It will take more work than just Sunday morning. It will take Sunday evening. It will take house church, small group.

It will take meeting with a friend at Panera, reading through Scripture together. This is what it takes to be strengthened. Don't let your faith stand still.

[ 29 : 55 ] Theophilus didn't. Thinking back to the boy who neglected the process of care for the seed that he planted after receiving its fruit for the first time, he enjoyed it and then just forgot it.

We have to realize that if we are not growing, we are fading. That is a theological reality. We have to realize that if we are not growing, we are fading.

We need to stop learning. When we stop learning, sorry, when we stop learning, we start losing what we once had.

And that is coming from somebody who took a language class in Greek. And boy, you forget very quickly. Anybody with their MDiv can attest to that.

What we neglect today is prone to wither tomorrow. And churches, we open God's Word this year. let's come with hearts ready to grow, to be stretched, and to be deepened in our understanding of the truth.

[ 31 : 06 ] And I understand many of you have probably studied through the Gospel of Luke. Many of you have heard the narratives, but we have to remember, even if we went through this series last year, we haven't heard the Gospel of Luke in 2025 yet.

And we have to remember that there is a newness with every changing season in our culture, in our world, that makes it relevant to listen and heed the imperatives in a newness and submitting to the stories that you think that you learned and you got it in a WANA class and you know what's going to happen.

Yeah, Jesus is born. Yep. Virgin. Yep. Got it. Yep. Well, slow down. Slow down. You haven't heard the narratives before from this pulpit in 2025, and we will all hear that.

So may we trust that as we press into God's Word this year, God reveals more, as God reveals more of Himself, filling us with love, filling us with grace, and filling us with unshakable joy.

And I'd like to ask a question that might take a year for you to answer. A year from now, will you be deeper in your faith or drier in your faith?

[ 32 : 27 ] The encouragement stands. Don't let your faith stand still. Let's pray.