

Being a pastor's kid can be a mixed bag, especially around the holiday season. One of the challenging things was that we didn't get to open presents right away on Christmas morning. Every single morning, we would have to wait to open our presents until my father read the Christmas story from the gospel of Luke. Now, I love Jesus, and I like the story, but it always felt like it took an eternity. The first two chapters of Luke are 132 verses. It takes a while to read. Especially as a child who just wants it to be done so you can open presents.

We have been looking through each of the gospels to see the different ways that they tell the story of Jesus's birth. We are ending at the gospel of Luke, which is the most well-known version of the story. Anytime you are thinking about the Christmas story, most people are thinking of Luke. What I want to ask this morning, as we look at it, is why does Luke tell the story this way when the other gospels did not?

And we are primarily gonna be in the first few verses of Luke. I'll talk about the details and the rest of the story. But I think these first couple of verses in Luke give us the answer for why he will tell the story of Jesus's birth this way. I hope that we are encouraged. And that it will remind us what this entire Christmas season is about.

Turn in your Bibles to Luke 1.

I. The virgin birth of Christ is a (historical fact) (1:1-2).

Verse 1, **"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us,"**

Luke is trying to tell us the truth of what actually happened when Jesus was born

He is not trying to give us myths or rumors or stories.

He is not just out to inspire and encourage.

He is trying to present the truth and the facts of what happened.

Now all of the gospels believe this is a true story.

But Luke is really emphasizing the historicity of what happened.

He is trying to emphasize and point out to as many details as he can.

The other gospels are more interesting in other things, but Luke is writing this gospel with an extra emphasis on helping people understand that they can believe what they have heard about Jesus in some ways, Luke is like an investigative journalist who is down to discover the truth. Because there are plenty of people all around in Jerusalem, and Israel, who have heard stories about this guy named Jesus. And they may be wondering themselves if these accounts of miracles are true.

Or if the story of the miraculous birth is true, and so when Luke talks about the birth of Jesus, he spends way more time on it.

He does not skip over it.

He does not cover it quickly.

He gets deep into the weeds to tell us about it.

And he does far more than just tell us an angel came to visit Mary and then she was pregnant.

He gives us set up before that happened and after that happened so this is why Luke includes so many details that the other gospel do not.

It's not because the other gospels didn't know those details but because Luke wants them on the record.

Verse 2, **"just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us,"**

And Luke mentions particularly that his account is based on eyewitnesses.

He is not just saying what he heard from someone who heard it from someone else who heard it from someone else.

Every time he records what happened and what the angel said to Mary, the only reason he knows that is because he talked to Mary.

And we got this long section about Zachariah and Elizabeth and how the people around them felt and what they did and what Luke is telling us is that he talked to Zachariah and he talked to Elizabeth and he talked to people who serve a Zachariah at the temple to confirm that what they have said is true and so Luke's account is based on eyewitness testament is

based on people who were there who saw these things with their own eyes who heard it with their own ears

Every time a name is mentioned, it is Luke telling us who eyewitnesses are. It is an invitation to go and ask these people and those who knew them. Yes, Zachariah and Elizabeth and these people who are at the temple go to the temple and ask about them.

And if they're still living or if they're not, you can ask people who knew about them if the story is true.

When you write a paper or a book it may have a citation.

The footnote will say, this quote is from this book on this page.

If you don't believe me then go check it out for yourself.

Luke is saying if you don't believe these stories about Jesus here's the people who saw it.

Here's the eyewitness testimony, go ask them.

This is hard for us to appreciate in a world filled with fake news, propaganda, AI, and exaggerated stories from bad actors who only want to enrage us.

But what Luke tells us is true.

He has chased all of these things on his own.

And he wants us to have the truth.

This is important for us to understand because the gospel and the story of Jesus is true.

Our faith is founded on what God actually did in history.

We see Luke mention that these things came from **"ministers of the world have delivered them to us."**

He means this is what the church and apostles have taught.

He heard these things preached in church.

And then he went to investigate on his own.

And what he found over and over was that all the stories were true.

These things actually happened.

And so, his story fills us in.

And in verse 3, **"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,"**

He is writing an orderly account.

He has gathered up all the stories and testimony into a narrative.

He puts things in the proper chronological order.

And everything he describes really happened.

I am going to walk through a lot of his narrative now.

Because I think it is important to remind us that these things are true.

We believe these things to not just be nice stories.

These are historical facts.

They happened to real people in a real place.

Luke begins with John the baptist's birth.

And he even starts again in verse 5 by giving us exact dates and names.

A righteous couple was old and blameless, but had no child.

Then one day Zechariah is chosen by lot and goes to burn incense.

And while a whole crowd is outside, he sees an angel.

And the angel tells us him that his wife will be pregnant and their prayers have been answered.

Their son will be a prophet and forerunner for the Messiah.

Zechariah does not believe and the angel makes him mute.

And a massive crowd, plenty off people who were there knew that he had seen a vision and could confirm his muteness.

Then exactly six months later, an angel visits the virgin Mary.

And tells her that she will give birth to a son.

And she goes to visit Elizabeth her cousin and both discover that they are miraculously pregnant.

And my favorite detail is that John leaps in the womb for joy.

Already acting as an unborn prophet.

And Mary and Elizabeth encouraged one another.

And then Mary gives this beautiful song of praise. We sometimes call the magnificent.

It's this almost prophetic song of what Jesus is going to do.

And then he tells us about Elizabeth's time comes to give birth and all of the neighbors in the relatives and everyone around here's this happens and they'll rejoice and they all celebrated.

And they celebrate and they rejoice because they recognize this is a miracle.

She shouldn't be able to have this baby and yet they witness that it happened.

And then they witnessed the miracle of Zachariah's mouth being opened as soon as he named the son John, like the angel commanded.

And everyone around from John's very birth recognize God is going to do something significant with him.

And then Zachariah prophesies as well as he filled with the Holy Spirit about what John is gonna do but what John is gonna do is really to pave the way for Jesus.

And after the child grows up, he goes in the wilderness until he appears for his public ministry.

All of these are details that are included because Luke knows about them.

John didn't just appear out of nowhere.

People know who John's parents are.

People know when John was born.

They know the story of his birth.

And they've written down and remembered exactly what Zachariah prophesied and what Mary sang in praise.

In chapter 2, we get the most beautiful well-known part of the story.

And it begins to let us know exactly the days when this happened and who the governor is

Joseph and Mary had to go back to Bethlehem, and he describes the birth of Jesus in detail about how he had to be laid in a manger because there weren't any beds available for him.

At the same time, Angels appeared to the shepherds.

The angels tell them that the Savior is born, and then if they go, they will find him lying in the manger.

They run to find him.

And they don't just tell Mary and Joseph why they are there.

It appears they told everyone, including Luke.

Look at this even more detail details to Jesus is eight days old. He goes to the temple to be presented.

Have to make their sacrifice, and Luke even gives us the detail that they give the poor sacrifice because Jesus's parents do not have money.

And while they were waiting, there is another man who is named named Simeon.

Who is full of the Holy Spirit who is righteous, and who God said he would not die until he saw the Messiah

Everyone would've known this promise.

Everyone would've heard him say it.

You could go to the temple and find people who knew him.

And he takes Jesus and he holds him and says this is the one God told me I would see.

This is the Messiah.

And if that's not enough, there's another prophetess Anna.

Luke gives us her name, her parents name, her tribe.

And we get more details about her life.

She has spent decades in prayer and fasting.

And at the same time that Simeon said this is the Messiah.

She comes out to prophecy how he will save God's people.

Two different prophets who are named who miraculously speak at the first month of Jesus's life to say this is the Messiah.
This one has been born of the Holy Spirit.

The birth of Jesus didn't just happen somewhere that no one saw.
The birth of Jesus happens miraculously, and there are people who saw it.
People witnesses these miracles.
There are people who saw and heard the birth of John miraculously.

If you're uncomfortable with the miracles in the Bible, you're gonna have a hard time with Luke.

The greatest miracle is that a virgin would give birth to a child through the power of the Holy Spirit, but there are a lot of other miracles that happen at the same time.

There is another miraculous birth from a woman who is too old to have children.

There are angels who appear several times of multiple different people, their prophets and prophetesses who speak in prophecy.

As believers, we say that these things are true.

And Luke gives us all of the details.

Because there are people who are alive who witnesses these things.

You could go to Bethlehem and ask questions.

You could go to the temple to ask about Simeon and Anna.

You could ask those who heard John the Baptist preached.

There are places to ask if these things happened?

What we need to remember this Advent and Christmas season, is that the story of the gospel is true.

These are things that we believe.

We believe these miracles happened.

We believe these conversations happened.

We believe these are the words of God.

More than anything, Luke wants to tell us the true story.

These facts should do more than just give us information.
They need to produce a change in us.

II. The (historical fact) of Christ's birth should (encourage) our faith (1:3-4).

This should be the result of reading the story.

It is not just so that we can be informed of some facts.

It is not just so that we can know the truth.

Luke does not just want to write an accurate history book.

He tells us the facts in order to encourage our faith.

Verse 3, **"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,"**

Notice what Luke is saying.

His is writing this not just for a general audience, but with a particular hope.

He has a Christian in mind.

He wants this particular Christian to have his faith encouraged.

Verse 4, **"that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."**

This verse is the main point and idea.

He has written this whole orderly account.

He has spoken to so many eye witnesses.

He has done all of the work to write this by hand.

All so that Theophilus can have certainty.

Luke addressed this Theophilus, but he means us too.

We should be able to have certainty because of the Scriptures.

This was written in order that our faith can be strengthened and encouraged.

There are a couple of different ways this account should strengthen our faith.

First, it should remind us that our faith is reasonable.
Our faith is trustworthy.
Our faith is logical and coherent.

There are so many people in the world who challenge our faith.
Who this time of year will laugh and question.
Someone will ask you if you really believe Jesus was born of a virgin?
They will ask if we really believe all these stories about angels?
There are those will bring up scholars you may have never heard of.
They may raise a question you have never considered.
And if you are not prepared to give a defense for your faith, that could be
overwhelming and bewildering.
But, we need to remember, these things are true.
They are trustworthy.
This is a factual account of what happened.

We might not have all of the answers of the top of our head.
But we can have confidence that because this is the truth, there is an
answer.
And we can trust what the Bible says.
No matter what the world says about it.

We also can have certainty about **"what you have been taught."**
What this reminds us.
We can have certainty that what we preach here this morning at TBF.
What you have heard being taught in Christian churches.
Is the same thing that Jesus taught.
It is the same message the apostles taught.
We can have confidence that the message has been accurately passed
through the ages.

Opponents of Christianity will tell you the Bible and gospel is just a game
of telephone.
They will allege that everything has been twisted and changed.

They will say this was all made up years later on.
And there are detailed, long explanations and responses to those.
You may not have a good answer in the moment.
But you should be encouraged and have confidence to know that there is an answer.

The church has been around for 2,000 years.

There have probably been whole books written to answer whatever assertion someone makes about the Bible or the gospel.

So, if you don't know the answer right now that is okay.

But you should know there is one.

And you can find it.

If you ever need help come and find me.

Part of my job is helping you know what those answers are and how to find them.

But the easy version is, no.

The gospel and the message has not changed.

The gospel we preach today is same gospel Jesus preached.

It is the same message John preached.

It is the same message the apostles preached.

Nothing has changed.

And we can have certainty.

Because these things we have in our hands are the very words of God.

And they are the words of John, of Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon, and others.

Our faith is true.

And reading the gospels should give us more certainty of our faith.

There is also this assumption in the phrase.

Luke wants him to have certainty about what he has been taught.

A part of the assumption is that the church needs to teach the faith.

That the gospel and the message of Jesus has to be taught.

So this is also an encouragement to us, I think.

If we want people to have certainty in their faith, then we need to teach the faith.

But in so many of our churches in our country, we actually don't intentionally teach what we believe.

We don't teach doctrine and we don't teach theology and we don't teach the essentials of the faith.

Instead, what happens is we really assume it.

That's not the churches deny these things we just aren't intentional about teaching it.

Church would assume everybody knows it and so let's talk about something else.

This is one of the reasons as a pastor I'm convinced, and we use a church or convince that we are just gonna preach through books of the Bible.

It is why I will teach things that are hard and unpopular.

It is why I might teach theology and church history on Wednesdays that can seem obscure or not exciting.

Because we are trying to teach our faith.

What does it say if we go to churches they never teach through the Bible? Or if there are large amounts of books of the Bible, that Christians have never read?

So often, their people who grow up in church and go to children's ministries that are filled with lots of games and fun and youth groups that are filled with great events and then they go to college and their faith is challenged and they don't have any answers because they've never been taught with the faith is.

If we want to have certainty, then we need to teach the faith.

And if we don't have certainty about what we believe then we need to be taught the faith.

We cannot just assume that we know the faith.

We can't just assume because we've been at church forever and have followed Jesus since we were children that we know the faith.

We need to be taught.

We have to care about teaching theology and teaching doctrine and teaching what we believe more than just entertaining people and trying to draw a crowd.

We cannot assume the faith, we must teach the faith.

And if we read these gospels.

The accounts should help give us certainty in an uncertain age.

We live in wild times.

We live in days filled everyone contending for what truth is.

We live in days filled with war and violence.

Every day there could be a news story about another war.

Another assassination.

Another massive shooting.

Another bombing or terrorist attack.

And I am not surprised anymore.

Because this is the world we live in.

These are uncertain days.

The world is filled with doubt.

Everyone doubts that anything is true.

Every religion seems valid and people just want to believe whatever works.

But, our faith can be strengthened.

And we can have certainty in an uncertain age.

We can have faith in an age of doubt.

We can know that this is true, even when the whole world tells us we are crazy.

Ultimately, the message of Luke is about Jesus.

The message we hold to.

Is not just these stories.

It is the idea that God Himself came down to be born as a human.

God took on flesh in the incarnation.

In order to die on the cross in our place.

And He was resurrected again.

We believe He did these things that we might be saved.

He did these things because He loves us.

He did these things to redeem us and make us new.

This is a fact.

And believing this to be true can and will change everything.

The virgin birth of Christ is a (historical fact) (1:1-2).

The (historical fact) of Christ's birth should (encourage) our faith (1:3-4).

As we celebrate this Christmas season.

As we gather with family, open presents, and share great meals.

Remember why we do all of these things.

We don't do them just for a tradition or because someone did it once long ago.

We celebrate and we gather because Jesus Christ was born for us.

And because he was, we can have hope.