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## EYEWITNESS TO JESUS

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### Part 1 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 1:1-4 | September 20, 2009

## INTRODUCTION

Big, big, big week, Mars Hill. We open Mars Hill Albuquerque this week, our first out-of-state campus, with Pastor Dave Bruskas. It's in a great theatre, the oldest theatre on Route 66. The balcony is separated from the main floor because it was built during a racist era when people were not allowed to be together, and by God's grace, we're launching this week with a full tribal-rights Native American pastor, a bilingual Cuban, a couple of Hispanics, and a bilingual Greek guy, in that same theatre, and so God is always having the last laugh.

Additionally, we are starting this week Mars Hill Federal Way, with Pastor Samuel Choi. We're also starting a new service in the University District and also adding another service Downtown. So we are at present 9 campuses, 26 services on Sundays, meeting in 10 locations, and much much much more to come.

And today we start "Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God." It will take about three years to go through this book of the Bible. If you're new, my name is Mark, we've got a lot to be excited about and praying for, and we'll start with prayer. If you've got a Bible, go to Luke 1:1-4, Luke's introduction to his biography of Jesus, and that's where we will be together.

Father God, we begin by thanking you, that Jesus came, that Jesus lived, that Jesus died, that Jesus rose, and that Luke faithfully investigated the man who is God and he faithfully recorded the facts of exactly who Jesus is, what he said, what he did, who he is. And so, Holy Spirit we invite you to take the Scriptures, which you have inspired to be written, to illuminate our understanding, and to transform our lives, in Jesus' good name, Amen.

We'll just kick right in, here it is, Luke 1:1-4: "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative 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, 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." One huge sentence, that's what we'll explore today.

## BOOK

Let me start by introducing you to the Gospel of Luke. There are in fact four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each is a biographical sketch of Jesus, all true, emphasizing different aspects and facts of Jesus' person and work. Matthew is written to those who are Jewish in background, Mark to those who are Romans, John to those who are Greek, and Luke to those who are Gentile, or not privy to a Jewish background of reading the Bible, going to synagogue, Temple, and the like. They do tell the same story of Jesus. And what we see in Luke's Gospel is that it is the longest of all the Gospels. It is 1,151 verses, 568 of those verses are simply the words of Jesus. So, if you want to know what Jesus said, just read Luke's Gospel. Roughly half of Luke's Gospel, which is the longest Gospel, is just quoting verbatim exactly what Jesus said.

The next longest Gospel is Matthew, and then John, and then Mark. To read Luke, and I want you to read Luke, that's the big idea-read Luke for yourself. To read Luke takes the average person, silently reading, about two hours. So if you carve out two hours, you can sit down and read Luke. And that means practically that if you take 15 to 20 minutes a day, you can read Luke in its entirety every week for the whole sermon series, you can knock it out about 150 times. It'll be great. And you all laugh, and you shouldn't, 150 times is not a big deal. It's just not. I met a guy this week, I was over at the installation of Pastor Judah Smith at the City Church, a friend of mine, and I met this older pastor, 86 years of age, this guy was carrying a Bible-I mean, it not only talked about Noah, it looked like it was Noah's Bible. This was a very old Bible. And I asked that guy, "How many times have you read that Bible?" And he said, "I'm finishing up my 358th reading of the whole Bible." You gotta read something, might as well be that.

And so what I would say is, it's good to set that kind of ambitious goal for your life, and for the short-term, to get you going, plan on reading Luke at least once a week for the next three years. Get to know it well. Make notes, highlight it, mark it up, make it a friend, get to know Luke's Gospel.

Additionally, if you do not have a Bible, you can pick one up for free on the way out, and if you want to know which translation we use, we use the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, the New Testament in Greek and bits and pieces in Aramaic. Our English translations include many good translations, we don't want to be snobbish about it and not enjoy all the good ones, but I believe, we believe, that the ESV is a really good literal translation to study from, and so we would commend it to you, and if you don't have a good Bible, get or ask someone for Christmas or your birthday, to buy you a copy of the ESV Study Bible. It's amazing. It has introduction, overview, maps, it'll help give you commentary, and if you have a hard time understanding the Bible, this will really help you to understand it. All of the scholars who are right

agree with me [laughter] that it's the best one ever written. It is my favorite.

## LUKE THE AUTHOR

Now, that being said, that is Luke, now let me introduce you to Luke the author. As we read his introductory words, you might notice that he doesn't tell us his name. As you read many books of the New Testament, the author tells us his name; so many of Paul's letters, he says, "My name is Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus." Luke doesn't tell us, "Hi, my name is Luke," so how do we know that Luke wrote the book of Luke? I'll give you a couple of reasons.

Number one, both Luke and Acts are written by the same author, they are a prequel and a sequel without Jar- Jar Binks, [laughter] so the sequel is also very good, and that is the book of Acts. And they are both historical biographies, Luke telling the biography of Jesus, and Acts telling the biography of Jesus' people, the early church. They are both written to the same man, Theophilus, you'll find that in the opening of both books, and the Greek is the same, showing a very educated and articulate man, and so whoever wrote Luke also wrote Acts. What we see in the book of Acts is that Luke is clearly the author of Acts; he is a traveling companion and close friend and associate of the apostle Paul, and there are occasions in Acts where he says, we went here, we went there, we did this, we said that, we saw this, and so he is saying, I was there with Paul. So he wrote Acts and the same person who wrote Acts wrote Luke. They work together as one historical compendium.

Additionally, all of the early church fathers, in the second and third centuries, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, all agreed and all said that Luke wrote the book of Luke and he wrote the book of Acts. And I believe he wrote Luke around 62 AD, and wrote the book of Acts around 63 AD. This is about 30 years after Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, some of the eyewitnesses are dead, some of the eyewitnesses to those events are alive, but the historical window of opportunity for interviewing them and getting eyewitness testimony is closing, and so Luke is taking this historically strategic opportunity to do his investigation and to write his books of the Bible.

And taken together, Luke and Acts provide for us the largest contribution to the New Testament. If you've been through the New Testament, there are 13 or 14 books that the apostle Paul wrote—we're not certain who wrote Hebrews, and so that accounts for the discrepancy; he wrote at least 13, if he wrote Hebrews that would be 14—and so Paul contributes the most books, but some of them are very short letters. By way of sentences and verses and words, Luke is the primary contributor to the New Testament. He gives us more of the New Testament than anyone else. He is very verbose, he uses lots of words, he has a lot to say, he takes his time, and I love him. I love that. He doesn't just give us the short Cliff's Notes version, he gives us lots of historical details. And so if you omit Luke from the New Testament, you omit the largest contributor to the New Testament Scriptures.

## LUKE THE MAN

That being said, I'll tell you a little bit about Luke the man. He's probably not a Jew, didn't grow up going to Temple and Sabbath-keeping and going to synagogue and reading the Old Testament and waiting for Messiah. His name is Gentile, which means he's non-Jewish by background and heritage. Luke or Lucas is a Gentile name. So like many of you, he didn't grow up going to church and meeting with God's people and reading God's Word; he grew up in some other sort of home.

He's mentioned expressly three times in the New Testament. And he is referred to in an amazing way. He's paid one of the highest compliments in the New Testament; Paul says on one occasion, everybody's gone—and Paul was always getting into trouble, starting riots, they tried to murder him, he's off to prison again—and eventually, sort of the fanfare around Paul kind of ebbs and flows. And what he says at one point is, everyone is gone, has abandoned me, I'm on my own, except for Luke. What a great insight. Everyone else gives up, Luke's still there. Everyone went home, Luke's still there. Luke's going to the prison, "Paul, how're you doing?" He's traveling with Paul.

Let me say this, this will be very important. What I love about Luke is that he's humble and that he's a servant and that he's faithful. Let me tell you a secret. There are two kinds of people who rise up, in the world, in history, in ministry: those whom God puts his hand on and he just calls them forth, and those who are humble, trustworthy servants and assistants to those whom God is rising up. Paul is a man whom God literally just put his hand on, if you don't believe in election, Paul's story should convince you. He's going to murder Christians, Jesus comes down from heaven, blinds him, converts him, and tells him to go be a preacher. If anyone was elect, it would be Paul. He didn't even like Christians, let alone pastoring them; he preferred murdering them. He was chosen to go preach to people that he hated about the love of Jesus for them. So Paul was a man whom God placed his hand on, God called forth, God raised up, and what Luke decided was, I'm not gonna fight with Paul, argue with Paul, I'm not gonna use Paul to pad my resume, I'm not gonna try to be Paul 2.0, I'm not gonna try to supersede Paul, I'm gonna serve Paul. I'm gonna help Paul. I'm gonna be his traveling companion, his friend, his researcher, his helper, his personal physician—Luke was a doctor—and he's the one who faithfully served Paul. Some of you, God's gonna call to be like Paul; some of you, most of you, God's gonna call to be like Luke. Just to come alongside and serve those who are serving others. So few people have that humility and that Luke had it I think is exemplary. He's mentioned three times in the New Testament. Paul pays him this high compliment: everyone's abandoned me except for Luke.

And Luke was a doctor. We read this in Colossians 4:14. He was a medical doctor. And I know some of you are wondering, what is the role of science and medicine in Christian faith? Luke is a great example. But sometimes, goofy Christians will say weird things like, "You don't need to go to the doctor. You don't need medical insurance. All you need to do is pray and have faith and trust God and he'll heal you." And then they'll go to places like Luke and say, "See, Jesus healed people," and they'll go to Acts, "See, the Holy Spirit does miracles," and they forget to recognize that those two books were written by a doctor. Bizarre oversight. The doctor's point was not that you don't need a doctor. The doctor's point is that Jesus is the Great Physician, and sometimes he just does miraculously heal, and other times he works through other physicians.

And so Luke was a man who studied medicine and science and was formally educated. And we would say at Mars Hill Church that absolutely, that's what Christians need to do. Love Jesus and be involved in the sciences and medicine and using general revelation, common grace, the mind that God gave them to do good for all people. How cool would it be to have a man like Luke as your doctor? He addresses your physical problem and prays for you. I've got a doctor like that. It's a great gift. I'm recovering from a stress-related intestinal ulcer, and my appointments with my Christian doctor are great: "How's your life, how's your family, how's your time in Scripture, what's Jesus teaching you, how's your diet, how's your exercise, how are you feeling, how are you recovering, how're your vitamins, how're your supplements?" And then at the end he lays hands and prays over me for a really long time. That's great. For those of you who say, "Well, I feel that God's calling me into medicine, I need to go to med school or be a doctor or a nurse or an anesthesiologist," we would say, praise God. Luke is a wonderful example for people like that. Wonderful example. There are not enough people that have a doctor who prays for them. If God calls you to be one of those, praise God.

And what generally happens, you know how it goes, you go to med school and rack up massive debt, equal to some small countries [laughter], and your whole goal is to graduate, get a really good job, pay that off, and live a very affluent life. And Luke had accomplished that. He had graduated, he had finished his studies, he was officially a physician. We can tell that he's very well educated, his Greek is impeccable, he's a great historian. This is a learned, educated man in a day when maybe only 10 percent of men, particularly in the rural areas, were educated, so to be educated and literate was very unusual, to be educated at that level was very unusual. Some of you have wondered, "Should I study hard and finish college?" You should. I've heard some silly people say, "I don't think I'll finish school, I'm gonna serve Jesus." Finish school and serve him well. And have the education to help prepare you for that. And that's what Luke did. He walked away from much of his private practice of medicine to travel with Paul, to do investigative research, to write books of the Bible, and so he used his education and his intellect for the cause of Jesus. And that's where I would encourage you all, don't just think about how you can make as much money as possible, but how to use your education to help you be a good servant of Jesus. If you want to be a doctor, great, praise God. Then find a way to serve others and to use it for the cause of Christ. If God's given you a great mind and you're academically capable, you're intellectually gifted, praise God, then use that for the cause of Jesus. Luke is a great example in all of these ways.

## ANCIENT BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF LUKE

Now, we don't know a lot about Luke because Luke doesn't talk a lot about himself. Isn't that great? He didn't write three books of the Bible, one about Jesus, one about the church, and one about him. He wrote one about Jesus, one about the church, and then he was done. Luke is not a man who even mentions himself in the opening of his book of the Bible. I don't know if any of us really have this kind of humility. He doesn't care if we know all about him. He wants us to know all about Jesus and the church: Luke and Acts. And he's following Jesus' exhortation to love God and people.

There is, however, one historical fragment that was penned about a hundred years after Luke, and it is an ancient commentary on Luke. I'll share it with you. It's outside of Scripture, but it gives us some of the only information that we have beyond the scant details regarding this man. It says this: "Indeed Luke was an Antiochene Syrian," now what this means is, he lived in Antioch, that was the town he was from, it's mentioned in the book of Acts, "a doctor by profession," a medical doctor. We don't know, possibly even personal assistant and physician to Paul. I mean, Paul was beaten and shipwrecked and homeless and left for dead and adrift on the open sea, and Luke's with him, attending physician.

"[A] disciple of the apostles," and he tells us that he was not an eyewitness, but he was trained by those who were. So he knew Peter and James and Jude and John and Matthew and he knew Paul very well, so he was one who was not a direct follower of Jesus, but a follower of the followers of Jesus. So he was a convert to Christianity later in life, sometime after Jesus' disciples started preaching and teaching and the news got out to the Gentiles.

"Later however he followed Paul until his martyrdom," isn't that great? How many friends do you have that are devoted to you for your whole life? How many friends did you think you had, and they're already gone? Luke was a devoted, faithful friend to Paul until Paul was dead. That tells us a lot about this man. I'm sure after he wrote books of the Bible and he was well known and respected, he could have gone on and done some other things. But he stayed loyal and faithful to Paul, again, that humble, faithful number two, helping Paul to be a great number one, a leader.

"[S]erving the Lord blamelessly." May God say that of all of us. "He never had a wife," now, if that's true, that's a major sacrifice. I love my wife with all my heart. For Luke to not take a wife would be like Jesus-foregoing a great blessing for the cause of being freed up to travel, serve, be in prison, beaten, suffer, maybe be martyred and murdered as needed, for the cause of Jesus. Do you think if Luke, if he wanted to, may have been able to find a wife? "Hi, my name's Luke... I don't know if you've read the Bible, I've got a book in there, and I'm almost done with the sequel. Did I mention I'm a doctor?" [laughter] My guess would be that there would be a nice lady who loved Jesus and would say, well, that seems like a nice man to spend your life with. And he was willing to forego marriage for the cause of Jesus.

It also says, this historical snapshot, that "he never fathered children." I've got five kids, love them with all my heart, Luke never got to be a dad, children are a blessing, it's a great honor. And he was willing to forego the income from a regular medical practice to be a pastor, willing to forego the pleasures and presence of a wife, and willing to forego the blessing of children. Why? So he could travel with Paul, that he could live like Jesus, that he could give his money and his time and his life to the cause of Christ. And isn't it amazing, we live in a day when people will say, "But you need to achieve your potential!" And Luke said, "No, I need to serve my savior."

And I love this, "and died at the age of eighty-four," if that's true, that's a really long time. In that day, that's probably twice the average man's life expectancy. I mean, today, eighty-four is still good. And some of you would say, "Well, was he a good doctor?" Obviously! He lived to eighty-four! [laughter] He's a good physician. And I love this line, and I pray it would be true for each of us: "full of the Holy Spirit." What a great line. Oh that God would allow us to live in such a way that long after we're gone, the record of our life is: they served the Lord blamelessly, they died at a good old age, full of the Holy Spirit. What a great line!

And Luke is a man who loves the Holy Spirit. We love the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity. As we study Luke, you're gonna learn a lot about the Holy Spirit. Some have actually called the Gospel of Luke the "Gospel of the Holy Spirit" because it talks about the Holy Spirit so much. We see that Jesus is baptized, and that the Holy Spirit descends on him empowering and enabling him for a life of ministry. And then we see in the sequel, in the book of Acts, that the Holy Spirit descends on the early church, empowering and enabling them and us for Jesus' work and ministry. And so we see that the Holy Spirit is the one who is working out all of history for the purpose of Jesus and the church. And so I think it is most fitting that the biographical sketch of Luke would be that he died full of the Holy Spirit. My hope and goal and prayer as we're together in worship and prayer and study of Scripture is that God would fill us individually and collectively with the Holy Spirit.

And I took a tour this summer, a few weeks ago, I was in the city of Ephesus. It's being archeologically excavated and about 15 percent of the city has been uncovered, and I'll show you what I found there: Luke's tomb. This is where brother Luke, at least physically, is buried. Now, his soul is with Jesus, but his body, what remains of it, is here. This is Luke's tomb. Some of you wonder, "Is the Bible true, is this all myth and fairytale?" No, Luke really lived, he really ministered, he really died, he's really buried right here, and if perchance you get to take a trip to Turkey and you're there on the day of Jesus' second coming, the day of resurrection, you'll find Luke coming up right there. [laughter] That's where he will be, he'll be right there. That's Luke's tomb.

## GENEROUS THEOPHILUS

Now that being said, let's go back to the text. I told you a little bit about the book and the author, what about the recipient, who's getting this book of the Bible? If you look near the end: "Most excellent Theophilus." He is the recipient of both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Let me tell you about Theophilus. First of all, I just think it's stunning and wonderful that the longest book of the New Testament is written to one person. Does God love the world? Yes. Does God love all the nations? Yes. Does God love all the cities? Yes. Does he love individuals? Yes, he does. That he would go to such great lengths to actually have one book of the Bible given to one person is an indication that God is very loving and he knows us all and doesn't deal with us as a herd but he deals with us individually as his image-bearers. That's a great comfort to me, I hope it is to you. And this man Theophilus received these two books of the Bible.

Now, I think that he's probably a governmental official; when he's called "most excellent Theophilus," that is a state title. At the end of the book of Acts, that title "most excellent" is used three times to speak of a Roman governor, a political leader. So that indicates to us that this man Theophilus is wealthy, educated, and part of the Roman government. He's also a Gentile like Luke. The name Theophilus or "Theo" is not a Jewish name, it's a Gentile name. He didn't grow up reading the Scriptures and praying and worshiping with God's people. And do you know what the name means? A few boys have been born in this church over the years named Theo, and it means "one who loves God" or "lover of God." And so Luke is writing to Theophilus, the lover of God. And I think that he is the original intended recipient, and secondly, the book of Luke is for anyone else who loves God. Ambrose, the fourth-century church father, says it this way, "So the Gospel was written to Theophilus, that is, to him whom God loves. If you love God, it was written to you."<sup>2</sup> So it is for him and all who love God and it goes out in an effort to encourage others to be lovers of God.

And let me tell you this about this man. He is probably a new convert to Christianity. So here's a wealthy, prominent, affluent, significant man who becomes a Christian. And what he's wondering is, "Is it really true? Is Jesus really God? Did he do what I've heard he's done? Walk on water, cast out demons, multiply fishes and loaves, command nature to obey him, die and rise. Did he really say he was God, can he really forgive sin, is he really God become a man to reconcile us back to God? Is this all true or not?" See, and he has a lot to lose in publicly declaring himself to be a Christian. Because in that day, Caesar was lord. And as a Christian, Theophilus would declare, "Not anymore, Jesus is Lord." And in that day, he would say, "My highest allegiance is to my nation," and upon meeting Jesus he would have to say, "No, my highest allegiance is to Jesus' kingdom." And as a governor he would need to say, "All religions are welcome, the worship of all gods is equal," but as a Christian he would have to say, "No, Jesus alone is God and savior." This would get him in great trouble with his boss, Caesar. This could get him fired, this could get him in lots of legal trouble, maybe even imprisoned. This could cost him his income, his job, his prominence and preeminence. And so he is this man wrestling, perhaps as some of you are, with his faith: "Do I really believe in Jesus? Do I love Jesus? Do I belong to Jesus? Am I willing to go public? Am I willing to go to my Facebook page and click 'Christian' and just sort of let that be known? Am I gonna blog my testimony? When Larry King calls, am I gonna say, 'Jesus is Lord, Caesar is not'?" There's a lot at stake. And so he contracts out, hires, funds, supports Luke. Fellow Gentile, not a Jew who was looking for Messiah, not predisposed, an educated and articulate man who has access to the apostles and the eyewitnesses and the disciples. And he says, "Luke, I need you to go find the truth. Go get the facts. Go find out exactly what happened around this man Jesus and give me a full report."

Now here's what's amazing. That was very expensive. This is a classic ancient way that someone who had been funded would acknowledge their benefactor. They would dedicate their play, their poetry, their book, to their donor. They would acknowledge them. That's what this is. So here's what you're supposed to understand, Theophilus paid for two books of the Bible to get written. He would have allowed Luke to take years off of work, I'm sure Luke kicked in his own money as well, and to go do all the eyewitness investigation. Now think about this. Two thousand years later, had it not been for Theophilus' generosity, we would be lacking the largest contribution to the entire New Testament.

## ARE YOU A GIVER OR A TAKER?

I'll tell you, one of the weaknesses at Mars Hill, actually, one of the sins at Mars Hill, is that this is a church that has not excelled in generosity. Now God's been very generous to us, that's for sure. But we've not been very generous. And in saying that, some of you will be like, "Oh, this is where he wants to take my money." It's not your money, it's his, you're a steward, and if it bothers you, you're an idolater. We'll just keep it simple. Because you either worship your money, your status, possessions, and wealth, or you worship with your money, your status, possessions, and wealth. It's very

simple. Theophilus was a man who gave generously for Luke to do his ministry.

And some of you would come in here and you would say, "Yeah, I've read Luke-" and I love this too-a lot of the liberation theologians and the really hard-core liberals, they'll read Luke and they'll say, "Well, that Gospel talks about the poor more than any other Gospel. It shows that Jesus was poor and Jesus loved the poor and Jesus included the poor and Jesus is all about the poor!" and they forget that the only reason we know that is that the rich guy paid for the book that tells them that Jesus loves the poor. See, Christianity is not like the class warfare that you have been brainwashed in since infancy over here on the Left Coast. Rich people can love Jesus, and they're supposed to give generously, and poor people can love Jesus, and they're supposed to give generously, and sometimes it is rich people who pay for things so that poor people can know that Jesus loves them. And that's good. And Theophilus is that guy. I hope some of you earn a lot of money and are very, very, very generous. That's what I want. See, it's not about how much you make, it's about what you do with it. Now, what Theophilus didn't decide to do was to get a new camel with rims [laughter] and, you know, get another vacation home and redo his kitchen and have the couch he always wanted. What he decided was, "I need to find out the facts about Jesus. And I need to find an educated, objective, scholarly, academic historian, and I need to just make an enormous financial sacrifice and let him go out and give me the facts." And we got two books of the Bible out of it. That's wonderful, isn't it? That two thousand years later, a few billion of us on the earth claim to worship Jesus Christ as God and so much of what we know about him and how we function as a church comes from the books of Acts, about the church, and Luke, about Jesus. Amazing.

I want you to share in Theophilus' joy. I want us to be, I want you to be generous. Because there are those who are like Theophilus, and then there are those who are just thieves. There are givers and there are takers. And I can assure you of this: Theophilus today, standing before the Lord Jesus, doesn't regret helping get the news of Jesus out to the world. What else are you gonna do with your money? What else are you gonna do with your intellect? I love that Luke gave his intellect and time and energy and Theophilus gave his money, and together to this very day we are still served by both of these men and I just want to lift them up as great examples. And I want us to not just commend them, but imitate them.

Pray for our church. Things are going well, God's been very generous. What could bring us down is this lack of generosity. And it's really not about the money, it's about people knowing about Jesus. And so it would be very selfish of us to say, "Well, Luke, thank you for all your work, and Theophilus, thank you for all of your money, I now receive all of this truth and I won't give anything to pass it on." That would be a very greedy, Judas-like reaction; a taker and not a giver.

## LUKE'S INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTS

What about the investigation? What is he investigating? He says, "the things that have been accomplished among us." See, Theophilus is wondering, "Did a virgin have a baby? We gotta go check that. We gotta double check that. That's an unusual fact. Did he walk on water? Really? Did he take a little boy's Lunchable and feed a stadium? Did he do that? Did that really happen? Did he yell at nature and it obeyed him? Did he cast demons out of people? Did that really happen? Did he die, crucified? And then he came back? Seriously? That happened? Five hundred people saw it? We need to check the facts." Because Christianity is not a philosophical system, it's a historical reality. It's all built on this man, Jesus, his life, death, burial, and resurrection. And so what he says is, "We're trying to figure out exactly what happened." It's all fact. Now some of you come here and you say, "I don't believe the Bible, I don't think it's true." Really? On what grounds would you reject this kind of investigation? "I went to community college." Well, that's nice. That's great, you learned how to make pots and disregard the New Testament and do calisthenics and, great. It's just amazing sometimes how it is perceived that Christianity is for the simpletons and once you're educated you're beyond that sort of naïveté. Look, Luke is very well educated, better than nearly if not all of us, his intellect and IQ are very high, he's not naturally predisposed to believe things, he's a medical doctor always investigating all the facts. He's funded by a Roman governor, so if he gets it wrong he's in serious trouble, and he's just looking for the truth. And if you follow the truth wherever it leads, you end up with Jesus.

And he tells us how he collects his data. He says that he was not an eyewitness. So he wasn't there for Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection, like you. And I've heard this from some people, they say, "Well, yeah, but you know, some people weren't objective like I am." Well, Luke was objective like we are. He wasn't predisposed to believe in Jesus. He converted later in life, was well educated and articulate. And he says that he gained his information about Jesus that came together as the Gospel of Luke from three sources: "many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us," so he's talking about written documents, "just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses," he interviews the eyewitnesses, "and ministers of the word have delivered them to us," that's oral tradition. So there are three ways that he gathers his information. So this is massive amounts of work.

### 1. ORAL TRADITION

First, there's oral tradition. In a day when many were illiterate-in the rural areas, perhaps only 5 to 10 percent of men were literate, and most of the women were illiterate-things were passed on and carried on through oral tradition. Someone would be designated as the leader and sort of the curator of the place or the person or the facts and the data, they were the historian or the educator, and it was their job to keep the story straight. So he would go and interview, sit down with, those who were keepers of particular aspects of Jesus' ministry through oral tradition.

### 2. WRITTEN DOCUMENTS

Secondly, he says that other things are written down. By this point, the Gospel of Matthew has been written, the Gospel of Mark has been written, Paul has written some of the letters of the New Testament that are ascribed to him, there are others who probably had someone transcribe, if they were illiterate, or write down themselves their testimony: Jesus healed me, Jesus cast a demon out of me, I saw him risen from death, I was there for the miracle, it's all true, it's fact, it happened.

### 3. EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

Luke compiles all of this and he meets with the eyewitnesses. So you gotta understand that he's going to the eyewitnesses, "Hey Peter, you were there, what was it like?" Going to Jesus' brothers, James and Jude, "Everyone says he never sinned, you were there, is that true? I mean, if anyone would know, you would know." He went to Mary, who by then would have been an older woman, you gotta see this in your mind, "Mary, what was it like when the angels showed up and you were a junior high kid, and he said that as a virgin you would give birth to God? Seriously, was your first reaction the song? Did you freak out at all? What was Joseph's initial reaction? Tell me how that went down: 'I'm your pregnant virgin girlfriend,' seriously?" [laughter] "When you were bathing Jesus and changing his diaper, did it seem weird that he was God? How was that for you, Mary?" He hears, oh, Jesus cast a demon out of a woman, go find that woman, "Tell me your story, can anyone corroborate it? What were you like before and after? Can I meet your physician? Did he diagnose you?" "Oh, someone says they were healed by Jesus? Let me go, were there eyewitnesses, is there corroborating evidence, can I meet with your doctor? Can I check your medical records? I'm a physician, I want to double check these healings that are ascribed to Jesus to see if they're fact."

This is years, this is massive amounts of money, this is him going from town to town, "Oh, there were shepherds in the field, hey, where are those shepherds?" He's doing so at a historically significant moment when the window of opportunity is closing, about thirty years after Jesus returned to heaven, and the eyewitnesses are dying and if he doesn't capture this information it's gone forever. This is amazing. You think of him as part crime scene investigator, part detective, part investigative reporter, part Indiana Jones. That's Luke. He's a historian. That's why I get frustrated when people say, "Uh, I don't believe it." Really? Did you talk to Mary? Did you spend years of your life going to Nazareth and Capernaum and Bethlehem and the Sea of Galilee and interviewing the former demoniac and the healed woman and Jesus' family and his disciples and the crowds who witnessed his resurrection? If not, you shouldn't just in a cavalier way dismiss Jesus. You gotta do a little homework like Luke did. At least to follow the truth to wherever it leads.

Famed archaeologist William Ramsay says it this way: "Luke is a historian of the first rank. . . . This author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians." Amazing. And what Luke tells us is, "Yeah, some other people have written some things, like Matthew and Mark and maybe some other non-Scriptural, non-inspired, imperfect but somewhat helpful narratives about their experience with Jesus," and what he says is, "it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account," he says, "I've been investigating Jesus for a lot of years."

And I get this. I've not done as much as Luke did, but I was a freshman in college about twenty years ago at this time, and I wasn't a Christian, but I was interested in Jesus, everybody was talking about him in all my classes, and I decided to do my own investigation. I started reading the Bible, other religious books, philosophers, historians, and somewhere in the first semester of my freshman year, God saved me, right around this time, twenty years ago. I've been on an investigation to get to know this man, the man who is God, Jesus Christ, for twenty years. I've got four to five thousand books in my personal library, I've got roughly the same number of books on my Logos software on my laptop, I've been studying for years, traveling and meeting with scholars and academics and pastors and Bible teachers. Luke says, "You know, I've done this investigation, I've been taking the written documents, the oral tradition, the eyewitness testimony, and I decided it's time to write it all down." And what he's saying is, "Though there are other Gospels like Matthew and Mark, I feel like I have something to contribute," so let me tell you what he contributes.

### LUKE'S UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS

As I told you at the beginning of the sermon, there are four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke have 60 percent of their material in common, they are known as the Synoptic Gospels. When you watch the nightly news, it's like that, the local ABC, NBC, and CBS affiliates. Pretty much the same nightly news, a little different order, a little different emphases, but pretty much the same idea-60 percent of the content. John is like the BBC, it's just on it's own. Ninety percent of John's Gospel is unique to John.

But there are some portions of Luke and some aspects of Luke that make Luke a very valuable contribution, one of which is that Luke is almost entirely chronological. So, if you're a historian and sequential data matters to you, some of the other Gospels are arranged theologically, Luke's is arranged chronologically. So it's almost in order, there are a few minor exceptions.

And there are forty-one parts of Luke that are not in any other Gospel, and had Luke not investigated it and written it down, had Theophilus not funded it and commissioned it, we wouldn't know any of these forty-one things about Jesus. So there's some treasure in here that you can't mine anywhere else. If you want a full accounting of those, we do have a free introductory book-we love to give stuff away-"Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God," it's about 1,600 words, about thirty pages long, you can download it for free at [www.marshillchurch.org](http://www.marshillchurch.org) in PDF format. And it lists each of the forty-one things in Luke's Gospel that are not found anywhere else, if you're just curious or you want to double-check them. And at the end there are commentaries recommended, from simple to technical, there are Bible studies for individuals, groups, and families that are recommended, there are lots of good resources recommended in it. This is an introduction and overview of the book. We're gonna be in it for three years. I really want you to know it, pray through it, study it, make it a friend, and for this to really take root in your heart and life.

It's like a stool with three legs: personal Bible reading, church participation (being under the preaching and teaching of God's word and worshiping with God's people), and being involved in a community group. Jesus started with his disciples, a small group; Christianity met in the temple courts, large areas early on, groups that were very large, hundreds of thousands, they met from house to house in smaller groups-we call those community groups. Ours meet throughout the region, there are hundreds of them, they're now out of the region into other states.

And I'll tell you what, if you aren't doing well spiritually, it's because one of those three legs is missing, or shorter than the others: personal Bible reading, participation in church, joining a community group. If you don't know what that is, it's Christians, non-Christians, married, single, young, old,

everybody's welcome. You're not gonna talk about the sermons, you'll talk about the Bible and what Luke says. You can ask questions, disagree, articulate, kick it around, people can pray for you, you'll do a meal together, you don't need to come in as some scholar or some person who has it all together, just find one near you on a night that works, in a condo, dorm, apartment, or house, and just show up and give it a shot. If it doesn't work, find another group, there's enough, eventually you'll find one. If you can't find one, then you tell us that you're ready to lead your own, and we'll give you a bunch of people who are just as difficult as you and you can have them. [laughter] Just however it works for you is fine.

But that being said, as we're investigating Luke's investigation, we want to put in your hand tools to do your digging and your study and your investigation.

And as you read Luke, you will find these forty-one things that are not found in any other Gospel. I'll give you some of them, and the rest are in that introductory booklet that I have provided for you.

If you're young, junior high, high school, maybe even elementary school age, you'll really love Luke because it is basically the only information that we really have about Jesus as a young boy and a young man. Additionally, if you're a woman you're gonna love Luke because Luke speaks frequently and very graciously about women.

He elevates the status of women in a way that other ancient religious writers simply do not. And he shows that Jesus had loving friendship, like sisters, with many women, they supported him, they served him, they funded his ministry, he loved and served them in an appropriate and respectable way. And you'll really get to know some amazing women in Luke's Gospel, two of which are pretty legendary. How many of you ladies love Mary and Martha? If it weren't for Luke, we would not know about them. That is their exclusive cameo appearance in all of the New Testament, Luke's Gospel.

If you're short, you'll love Luke because Zacchaeus is in Luke. The only Gospel that Zacchaeus is in. Remember the short guy who climbed a tree? If you're a short guy who loves trees, you'll love Luke. [Laughter] Because it's the only place that Zacchaeus shows up.

Are you one of those classic Mars Hillians that loves the parables because they're arty and poetic and cool, because you play guitar and have a tattoo and smoke American Spirit cigarettes and you'd never win a spelling bee but you can paint. [Laughter] If you're one of those Mars Hillians, and you are the majority, you're gonna love Luke because he includes two-thirds of all Jesus' known parables. And there are a few parables that he includes that no one else has, like the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.

Additionally, if you are poor, you'll love Luke because he talks a lot about the poor. He shows that Jesus was poor, that Jesus loved the poor, that Jesus had a heart for the poor, and again, this was all paid for by the rich guy. And if you love miracles and the supernatural and the power of Jesus, you'll love Luke. He includes four miracles out of these forty-one pieces that are not found elsewhere. He is a physician going to double check the miracles and the healings and he verifies it historically and there are four of them that are unique and exclusive to Luke's Gospel.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT DURING "LUKE'S GOSPEL: INVESTIGATING THE MAN WHO IS GOD"**

Now let me tell you about the series. It's gonna take about three years to go through Luke. I'll preach 75 percent of the book, the campus pastors and other Mars Hill elders will preach about 25 percent. On the weeks that I am out, they will just continue in Luke. We're just gonna keep on going, the community groups are gonna keep on going. Throughout the course of the series we will have a few special guests coming to preach, among them my dear friend Dr. John Piper.

Additionally, the project: what we decided was-and I've always wanted to do Luke but Luke doesn't make any sense for a church of our size that's growing and expanding. The rule of thumb is, just do short series, 4, 6, 8 weeks, keep adding campuses and services, lots of turnover, don't take on a project the size of Luke, it's just too big. But we're Mars Hill. So what we decided was, and I've been wanting to do Luke for years, and I asked the Executive Elders, who I submit my preaching to, "Can I do Luke?" They said, "Yeah, it's a book of the Bible, feel free." I said, "It's gonna take three years. The previous longest book we did was Genesis-that was one year. Three years. John Calvin never even went all the way through Luke. Recent preachers who have tried have taken between one hundred and three hundred sermons to get through it." They said, "That's okay. We're Mars Hill, we're just gonna open the Bible, we're gonna study Jesus for three years, and if that means the sophomores are graduating by the time we're done, and the people in the pre-marrieds class are holding their second baby by the time we're done, then that's how it's gonna go down." So that's what we're doing.

And what we decided to do is, since Luke went to all these places-Bethlehem, Capernaum, Nazareth-he went to all these places to investigate the man who is God, the Lord Jesus Christ, we got this crazy idea: wouldn't it be cool to do what Luke did? To just go there, and see it, and investigate it, and check it out. So we did. And this summer I took my family to Greece, went to Athens, preached live on Mars Hill, it was pretty fun, and we did a tour of the Greek isles, we jumped over to Turkey and visited Patmos where John was in exile and Jesus showed up and he wrote Revelation. We went to that cave. And we went to the archaeological dig in Turkey at Ephesus and we then went over to Israel. And we went to Tiberius, we went to the Sea of Galilee, we went to all these places and we went as a family and we brought a film crew from Mars Hill Church. A film and audio crew. And we brought something that's called the RED cameras.

Now, the RED cameras around here are a big deal. I think they're the best cameras for projection and capturing in the history of the world-they're digital. Others would disagree with that, and these are the best cameras in the history of the world. [laughter] To capture the best high-definition footage. If you liked the movie District 9, it was shot on the RED cameras. Very few television stations own them, we got a couple. And we hauled them with us to Israel. And we did so to get Jesus off the flannel graph. [laughter] Right? Most of you who grew up in church, you're like, "Well, Jesus was very

thin and sticky.” And that’s your Jesus. We wanted to get Jesus off the flannel graph and get him actually on the dust of the earth just like he was. We want to take you to the places where he was, so you can see it and see it as historical reality, to investigate “the things that have been accomplished among us.” And so that’s what we did.

## THE PLACES FROM LUKE’S GOSPEL

I’ll tell you the places we went; you’ll love it. You’re gonna meet these places and see these facts in the next few weeks. We went to the Western Wall where the Temple used to stand, you’ll see that. We went to Nazareth. In the days of Jesus it was a small town of fifty to a hundred people. There was one freshwater well where he and Mary would have gone to draw water. We got into it and shot it for you, we’ll show you. We went to Bethlehem, the place where Jesus was born, we passed through the suicide bomber wall into the Palestinian quarters, and we got down into the cave where Jesus was born. We’ll show you that.

We went to Capernaum, where Peter lived. You may have seen this clip online already. We show you the remains of Peter’s house where a church was ultimately planted and where Jesus stayed many times enjoying Peter’s company. You’ve heard about the Sea of Galilee, we’ll show it to you. We took a lot of footage of it. They actually unearthed a 2,000-year-old fishing boat from the days of Jesus and Peter the fisherman. We’ll show that to you as well. We went to the Mount of Olives. We’ll show you where the demoniac was. This is amazing, this is the freakiest dude in the history of freakiest dudes. He is a guy, the Bible says, and we’ll get to it in Luke later, he lived naked in a graveyard possessed by a legion of demons. If that’s on your resume, there is no cage fight you cannot win, if you’re that guy. “And in this corner, we have naked, homeless, demon-possessed, living-in-a-graveyard guy,” “And in this corner, we have a grown man in the fetal position wearing a diaper.”

I mean, there’s just no way you’re gonna take that guy. And Jesus showed up, cast a legion of demons out of him, he wanted to follow Jesus and Jesus said, no, stay here and preach. And he did, and we’ll show you where Jesus cast the demons out of the guy, we’ll show you the ruins of the church that he planted, and we’ll show you that they outgrew it and started a bigger one next door. It’s the demon-possessed church planter. It’s the best footage of all time. [laughter]

We’ll take you to the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus shone forth in glory and Moses and Elijah came down to be with him. It’s along a range of Mount Hermon, which is about six thousand feet up. We drove up, and then we hiked up to this high point where it is believed that Jesus transfigured, just over the Temple of Pan, an ancient god. We were about a mile from the Syrian border, within sniper fire range, with their helicopters overhead. It was awesome. And the guys hauled the cameras up-40 or 50 pounds-one of them was a volunteer from the University of Washington track team. And so we love the UW track team because they’re incredible sherpas for Jesus, and we rejoice in that. [laughter]

And it was hot, I mean, it was 100 degrees with 100 percent humidity, and when you go to the holy sites you have to wear jeans. I don’t know why, but you have to wear jeans. And so these guys worked super hard.

I’ll tell you where else we went. You may have heard of the Kidron Valley, we’ll show you that. The Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus, in Luke’s Gospel, goes to pray alone, sweating drops of blood, ultimately betrayed by Judas, before his crucifixion. They led us down into where the tourists don’t get to go and we shot footage next to 2,000-year-old trees that date back to the days of Jesus.

We also went to the jail cell where Jesus was held before he was transferred to the High Priest’s house. We’ll show you where Jesus was held before his crucifixion. As well, we’ll take you to Barabbas’ Arch, it was the place where they allowed the crowd to decide between Jesus and Barabbas, which one will live, which one will die. They said, “Give us Barabbas.” That arch is still there, from the days of Jesus. We will take you as well and show you the footage we shot of the Via Dolorosa, where Jesus walked carrying his cross to his execution.

We’ll take you to Golgotha. This was amazing. Golgotha is the Place of the Skull; it’s where Jesus was crucified. There’s a mosque to the right, there’s a graveyard on top, there is Golgotha, but you can’t really see it or get a clear view of it because there is a bus transfer station, a bus depot, that blocks the view of Golgotha. And there’s a big building in the way. And on the top of the building is a Muslim bank. And so Christians have been trying-we were told by our tour guide-for twenty years to get on the roof of the bank to get a clear, unobstructed view of Golgotha. And so we Christians asked our Jewish tour guide to work up through four levels of Muslim bank management to get us on the roof to shoot the crucifixion scene of Jesus next to the mosque. And God opened his heart, and we got the only access. And we got clear, uninterrupted footage, in video and also in film, of the place where Jesus was crucified, and we’ll show you all that and we’re gonna give it all away, because I have not seen this kind of footage anywhere, ever. And by God’s grace we got it. We also went to the empty tomb where Jesus rose from death and we went to the place of his ascension where he returned to heaven. Amazing.

## THANK-YOU’S

And I’ll say this, I’ve had some people ask-it’s amazing, when you’re a megachurch pastor-I had one person ask, “Oh, so we paid for your vacation?” “Uh, no.” In fact, it wasn’t much of a vacation, as you can imagine, we shot a lot of footage. What happened was, years ago, there was a tour company director that came to Mars Hill for many years, loved Jesus, loved this church, he has since moved out of state for his company. And he said, “I really want to bring Mark, you and your family, and I want to bring the cameras and I want to get this done because I love Mars Hill and I want everybody to learn more about Jesus.” So he played the role of Theophilus. He paid for my whole family, so we went for free, and paid for six of the crew members, so you guys, Mars Hill, didn’t pay for this, and two of the volunteers paid their own way. And this was a gift to Mars Hill. And we’ll put it online to give it away. So, like Theophilus, we want to be generous and we want to give. And I want to just acknowledge that this was a great gift given to us.

And I also want to publicly thank my wife and kids, because my wife, my high-school sweetheart, ever since I met her has wanted to go, and when we



got there, it was obvious from the heat and the humidity and the rough scheduling and the crowds and the walking that I couldn't do all my filming and be with my family, and so I had to leave my family. Something I'd never do. But it was one of those lose-lose scenarios where it was, we had hauled the cameras around the world, are we gonna get the RED camera footage or not? And so I got a separate tour guide, separate bus, and I sent my family on their way to go see the sites and I went and did my job and by God's grace we got all the footage, but I didn't get to go to any of those places and teach my kids, which is one of the great regrets of my life, so I gotta go back and I gotta take them back. And I just want to publicly thank Grace and the kids because in that moment, they decided to let me get up early in the morning, before they were awake, work hard all day, grinding out an intestinal ulcer and trying to get this done, along with these other guys who sacrificed a lot and worked really hard, and then come home late at night after the day was done, and they were willing to make that sacrifice for the church. And I think sometimes, people don't understand the cost that comes to a family for the cause of the Gospel, and I'm not a guy who likes to say no to his family, but this was one of those horrible dilemmas, and Grace and the kids allowed that decision to be made so that we could capture all of this for you. And so publicly, I just want to thank them for their generosity, being a bit of Theophilus in their heart as well.

Last few things, along the trip, we shot a lot of footage and had a lot of people ask a couple things. One was, "what's the funniest thing you saw?" And, you're friends and I just got back from vacation, so I just gotta show you a photo. I'll show you the funniest thing that I saw. [Shows photo of a sign that reads, "Genuine Fake Watches."] [Laughter] That's amazing. "I would like to buy a watch, but it seems fake." "Yes, but it's a genuine fake watch."

## **SPECIAL LIVE-ON-LOCATION SERMONS**

I'll give you the last few details as well. Here are some places where we shot live sermons. A few hundred people came along for the trip, so we just set up the RED cameras and I, boom, just preached, it was fun. So when we get to these sermons you're gonna see these shot live on location, these are specials. "Jesus and the Temple" in Luke 2 we shot on the southern steps, the actual steps where Jesus walked, during Ramadan in front of a mosque with hecklers dropping explosive fireworks behind me to get me to leave, to no avail. I knew it just made the shots more epic and so I praise God for all of it [laughter and applause]. My theme was how evil religion is. It's gonna be great, if I live through it.

Additionally, "Baptism and Repentance" in Luke 3 where Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John, we went there, preached that live, standing in the Jordan. Baptized my son, Buddy Calvin, baptized my mom and dad, along with about seventy other people, you'll see that.

Where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, "The Beatitudes" in Luke 6, we shot it live on location with the Sea of Galilee in the background, where Jesus actually was.

When Jesus was woken up during a storm and got out from his slumber on the boat and commanded the storm to stop on the Sea of Galilee, and creation obeyed its Creator, I got to preach that standing on the shores of Galilee. You're gonna see the lake and get the great shot of that.

And when we finally get to it in a few years in Luke 24, I'll preach on the "Resurrection of Jesus" from Luke 24 from the empty tomb of Jesus.

The question is, why? Well, because just like Luke, we want to do investigation so that you can have certainty about who Jesus is and what he's done. We want you to have that personal certainty about Jesus. He's God and savior. So that you can be a Theophilus, you can be a lover of God who lives a generous life so that others would come to know Jesus.

## **FILTHY ROMAN SPONGE**

And, in closing, I got one question most frequently along the trip through the social networking sites online and from those whom I've had the pleasure of talking with, and that was, "Did you learn anything new about Jesus?" or the question is sometimes alternatively stated, "What did you learn about Jesus that was most new and compelling?" I learned a lot of new things about Jesus. See, the good thing is that there's always some- thing to learn about Jesus. Even if you've been investigating for twenty years, there's still a lot more to learn.

And I'll share with you in closing what I did learn that I found to be most interesting about Jesus. And I'll have to explain this photo because I'm sure it's not clear at first glance how this is what I learned about Jesus. On the left is Gideon Joseph, my youngest child, three years old, just started drum school. He rocks for the Lamb. He looks forward to joining a Mars Hill worship team. In this picture, he is straddling an ancient water trough that would deliver fresh water in front of where my daughter Alexie is sitting. She just started kindergarten. And she is sitting on an ancient public toilet. I said, "Honey, why don't you have a seat there?" And she said, "I won't sit on it, but I'll sit near it." "Okay."

And what would happen is, there would be about forty people, this was an ancient public restroom, and there were no stalls. You'd just sit there, and I don't know, visit or play Frisbee or I don't know what you would do. And there was no toilet paper, so they would grab water and clean themselves. And the tour guide who was with us, and I believe he was a professor of archaeology, he said something and all of a sudden a portion of the Scriptures just made sense. And here's what he said. I'll show you. He said that some of the poorest slaves realized that there was a potential income stream here, there was a way for them to make money. And so what they would do is they would take a sea sponge on a stick and they would moisten it in the fresh water and then put it into the hole where the person was sitting and scrub them after they went to the bathroom. And over time they realized that one sponge for hundreds of people caused some to get infections. So then they would cleanse the sponge with vinegar or sour wine as a disinfectant. And all of a sudden, a part of the Bible made sense. Do you remember the part? Jesus is being crucified, God comes to earth and we murder him, and as he's being crucified, he's preaching. And he just got done saying, "Father, forgive them," and to shut him up, the Bible says they took a stick and they tried to shove it in his mouth with a sponge on the end. That was the stick, and that was the sponge. Which means that that was the last taste in Jesus' mouth on the cross. That was the last smell in Jesus' nose on the cross. And then Jesus said, with those lips, covered in that filth, "It is finished." What is finished? Forgiveness, the atonement of sin, the forgiveness of the atrocity that is your life and mine. And if Jesus could forgive those people in that

moment for that act with that taste in his mouth, he could forgive anyone for everything. Amen.

I had always read that section of Scripture and thought, it was nice that they gave Jesus a bit of compassion in his moment of greatest need. And I realized, there was no compassion for Jesus. There was no love and respect and appreciation for Jesus. But there was a lot of love and respect and compassion from Jesus for people like me, who in our own ways, have just taken the sponge of our life and shoved it in his mouth. And what he says is, "I forgive you, and I have finished the work of salvation. I have paid for all of your sins, and I love you." That's our Jesus, Mars Hill. It's all about him. There'll be a lot more to learn, but that is all for now.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father God, I pray for my friends. I pray, God, that they would pick up the Gospel of Luke. And God, we want to honor this man. We don't worship him, but God, we want to thank you for him. And God, we don't want to worship Theophilus, but we want to thank you for him. And God, may we continually, day by day, pick up the Gospel of Luke. May we mark up our Bibles and pray and read and consider. God, I pray for those who don't know you, that they would come to know you. I pray for those, Lord God, who do know you, but they don't read their Bible much, they assume that they know all the facts, they've been Christians for a long time, and the story's gotten old, that God, they would read afresh, that they would investigate the man who is God, that they would do like Luke did and really dig deep, because there's always more to learn about Jesus. And God, we come in some ways today, seeing our life as a sponge on the end of a stick, shoved into the mouth of the savior. And with those lips, we hear him say, "It is finished." And so God, please allow us to experience a genuine, Holy Spirit-enabled acknowledgement of our sin and need for Jesus and to confess our sins to him and to receive his salvation and forgiveness, and to live lives of passionate pursuit to know all that we can about this man like Luke did and to give all that we can for the cause of this God-man like Theophilus did. God, I thank you that I get to teach the Bible, and I thank you that I have people who want to learn. In Jesus' good name, Amen.

## RESPONSE

I know in telling you that story I just changed the temperature in the room. I really want you to sit there and deal with your sin, pray, repent, confess, give it to Jesus, become a Christian or renew your commitment, start reading Luke today. But I don't want you to end there. See, what God works in, we have to work out, and we work it out through worship. So when you're ready, if you're a Christian or become one, you come forward for Communion to remember the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. It is finished. And I want you now to stand with me-you have to sing it out-so I want you to stand with me, and you have to sing it out. The only way to get your heart to work these things out is through song. And so Pastor Tim, if you would lead us, that would be most helpful.

[End of Audio] Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.

## NOTES

1. "Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Luke," as cited on [http://www.ccel.org/p/pearse/morefathers/anti\\_marcionite\\_prologues.htm](http://www.ccel.org/p/pearse/morefathers/anti_marcionite_prologues.htm), (accessed April 27, 2009).
2. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 1-12. Cited in Luke: Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Ed. Arthur A. Just (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 4.