

Dr. David Mathewson, New Testament Literature,

Session 10: Luke

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Welcome back, everybody, to another deep dive. This time, we're really going deep into the gospel of Luke. Really deep.

We're not just skimming the surface. Yeah, we're going to be uncovering some really fascinating insights. Yeah.

With help from Dr. Mathewson's New Testament literature lecture. It's like, you know, you think, you know, Luke, you've read it a bunch of times. Right.

But there's so much more going on under the surface. Oh, absolutely. And actually, one of the things that I was struck by right away is that Luke's Gospel was originally written as one work with the Book of Acts.

That's right. Yeah, it was intended to be one big work. And then they were kind of separated when they got included in the New Testament for better semantic grouping.

But Luke and Acts were supposed to be one. So it's like we're only getting half the story if we just read Luke. We need Acts to really get the full picture.

Absolutely. OK, that's fascinating. And so what else is there? Like, what makes Luke so unique compared to the other gospels? Well, one thing is the way he goes about writing it right from the first four verses.

Luke tells us that he's relying on eyewitness accounts, OK, and that he's aiming for an orderly presentation of Jesus's life and ministry. So he's not just throwing together stories randomly. Right.

He's carefully piecing together this narrative based on, you know, trustworthy sources. And he's trying to present it in a way that makes sense and has a flow to it. So it's not like just chronological.

Not necessarily chronological, but it is arranged in a way that is deliberate. Let's say that. OK, deliberate.

So there's a structure. There is. And one of the things Dr. Mathewson talks about is a chiastic structure.

OK, now, chiastic structure. That sounds a little intimidating. What exactly is that? It's actually pretty simple.

It's a literary technique where you have elements that mirror each other across the text. OK, so, for example, in the overall structure of Luke-Acts, you have this pattern where it starts.

Luke starts kind of in the context of the Roman world, but it kind of focuses more and more on Jerusalem.

And then Acts begins in Jerusalem and ends with the gospel reaching the Roman world. Oh, so it's like this movement out from Jerusalem to the world and then back, like, in a circle. Yeah, like a mirror reflecting the gospel's journey outward.

OK, that's really interesting. So Luke is very intentional about the structure and the sources he's using. Yeah.

But one of the things that really strikes me about Luke is how he portrays Jesus. Yeah. Especially his interactions with people who are considered outcasts in society.

Absolutely. And he starts that right away. I mean, you know, it's not the wealthy or the elite who first visit baby Jesus.

It's shepherds. These guys, they were considered kind of rough around the edges, you know, not the most reputable profession. Right, right.

They're out in the fields with the animals, you know. Exactly. So right away, Luke is setting the stage for a different kind of Messiah, one who doesn't shy away from the margins of society.

One who embraces the outcasts. Yeah. And that continues throughout the gospel.

You see Jesus interacting with tax collectors, with lepers, with Samaritans even. Oh, yeah. And that's another thing that's so striking.

The way Luke uses the Samaritans, I mean, for his audience, that would have been shocking. Yeah. The Samaritans were considered enemies, like totally the other.

Right. And yet Jesus makes a Samaritan the hero in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Yeah.

I mean, just to remind our listeners what that parable is about. A man is robbed and left for dead. Right.

And two religious leaders pass by. But a Samaritan, this supposed enemy, he's the one who stops and helps. And Jesus holds him up as the example to follow.

It's like Luke is saying, you know, true compassion transcends these religious and social boundaries. It does. It does.

And it challenges us. You know, it challenges us to look at our own hearts and see where we might be drawing lines, where we might be excluding people. And it's not just about Samaritans.

No, no. This theme of reaching out to the outcast runs through the whole gospel, like the story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector. Yeah.

These guys were despised, seen as collaborators with the Romans. And often dishonest. Right.

And yet Jesus goes to his house for dinner. I can't imagine what people must have thought. Oh, I'm sure there was a lot of gossip going around.

But for Zacchaeus, it was a life-changing encounter. It was. He repented.

He gave away half his wealth. He promised to repay anyone she cheated. It's a radical transformation.

And it's all because Jesus saw him not as a tax collector, but as a human being. Exactly. Someone worthy of love and forgiveness.

So this theme of transformation is really central to Luke's gospel. It is. And it leads us right into one of his most famous parables, the story of the prodigal son.

Yes. Such a powerful story. We always focus on the son who returns home, but Luke is actually raising questions about the people who stayed behind.

Right. The older brother. He stayed home.

He worked hard. He was faithful. But he can't understand why his father throws this big party for his younger brother who wasted all his money.

So he's struggling with this idea of grace. He is. He's stuck in this mindset of earning and deserving.

And that's something we can all relate to. Right. Oh, absolutely.

We all struggle with that at times. So the parable is not just about the prodigal son, but about all of us who are watching, who are judging. It's a challenge to examine our own hearts.

To see if we're truly open to God's grace and forgiveness. Wow. You know, we've only scratched the surface here, but it's already clear that Luke's gospel is packed with unique insights.

And the fact that over half of it isn't found in the other gospels is just mind-blowing. It is. We're dealing with a treasure trove of material here.

So let's dive in and see what else we can uncover. Sounds good to me. It really is remarkable how much is packed into Luke's gospel.

I know. It's incredible how Luke kind of pushes back on those, you know, traditional ideas of who is and who isn't worthy of God's love. That's right.

And, you know, we were talking about the Pharisees earlier, right? Right. And it might be helpful for our listeners to understand, you know, who they were and why they clashed with Jesus so often. Yeah, because they seem to be kind of like the villains in the story sometimes.

They were. They were the religious leaders of the time, very focused on following the rules, maintaining their purity. Okay.

So, rule followers. Rule followers, for sure. Yeah.

And they saw Jesus as a threat because he was constantly challenging their interpretation of the law, especially when it came to showing compassion for the outcasts of society. Ah. So it wasn't just about Jesus being rebellious for the sake of it.

No, not at all. He was pointing out the hypocrisy of their system. Okay.

But how do we actually live that out? Yeah. You know, it's one thing to say we should be more compassionate. Yeah.

But putting it into practice is a whole other challenge. That's where Luke's emphasis on prayer and praise comes in. You know, it's not just about asking for things.

It's about aligning our hearts with God's heart. When we spend time in prayer, we begin to see the world through God's eyes. And that changes everything.

So it's about cultivating a posture of humility and openness to God's leading. Exactly. Rather than relying on our own limited understanding.

It's about recognizing our dependence on God's grace, you know, just like the prodigal son did when he finally came to his senses. That's a great point. Yeah.

Yeah. And when we experience that grace, it naturally overflows into praise and gratitude. So it's like a cycle.

Grace leads to praise, which in turn opens us up to receive even more grace. Precisely. And as we become more attuned to God's grace, we become more like Jesus, more compassionate, more forgiving, more willing to embrace those who are different from us.

This makes me think about that story of the lepers. Oh, yeah. Ten lepers.

Yeah. Jesus healed them, and only one came back to thank him. Right.

And that one was a Samaritan. Yeah. Someone who was considered an outsider.

It makes you wonder, you know, what was going through the minds of those other nine. I know. Right.

Maybe they were just overwhelmed, you know, or maybe ashamed to be seen with Jesus. It's possible. But it raises a question for us, you know.

How do we respond to God's blessings? Do we take him for granted, or do we acknowledge them with a grateful heart? Yeah, that's a good question. You know, one of the other things that I find so interesting about Luke is how he weaves the theme of Jesus fulfilling Old Testament prophecy throughout his gospel. Yes.

We touched on this earlier with the idea of Jesus being descended from King David. Right. But there's so much more to it than that.

That Luke shows how Jesus fulfills the hopes and expectations of Israel's entire history. Like in the Christmas story, for example, we hear these echoes of the prophets. Yes.

Isaiah, Micah. Right. The angels announced the birth of a messiah who will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

It's like a fulfillment of that promise. It is. It is.

And even in the midst of all the joy and celebration surrounding Jesus's birth, there's a sense of foreboding, you know, a hint of the suffering that awaits him. Like Simeon, you know, when he encounters Jesus at the temple, he prophesies that a sword will pierce Mary's soul. Yeah.

It's a foreshadowing of the pain she will endure as she watches her son be crucified. It's a reminder that the path to glory often leads through suffering. It does.

And this theme of fulfillment is even more emphasized at Jesus's baptism. The Holy Spirit descends upon him, and a voice from heaven declares, " You are my son whom I love; with you I am well pleased. I am well pleased.

And those words, you know, echo the prophecy in Isaiah. Yes. Where God speaks of his chosen servant who will bring justice to the nation.

Like a powerful affirmation of Jesus's identity and mission. It is. And this theme continues throughout his ministry, healing the sick, casting out demons, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, all in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

So Luke is very intentional about showing how Jesus's life and ministry are rooted in Israel's history. Yeah, it's not a new religion. It's the culmination of God's plan for his people.

And this idea of interconnectedness is even reflected in the structure of Luke X as a whole. Yes, yes. We talked about that chiastic structure, that mirror image starting and ending in the Roman world with Jerusalem at the center.

Yeah. And that emphasis on Jerusalem as the starting point for the spread of the gospel, it reinforces this idea that Jesus's mission is a continuation of God's work in the Old Testament. Absolutely.

So it's not just about fulfilling individual prophecies. It's about fulfilling the entire story. The whole narrative arc.

Yeah. Of God's relationship with humanity. And that's what makes Luke's gospel so powerful.

It shows us how Jesus's life, death, and resurrection are not just isolated events. Right. They're the culmination of a story that began long ago.

And a story that continues to unfold today. Yes. As the message of Jesus spreads to every corner of the world.

And we're all a part of that story now. It's amazing to think about, you know, this story that started thousands of years ago still has the power to shape our lives today. I know.

And it makes you wonder how we can apply these lessons from Luke to our lives today. Right. Absolutely.

And Dr. Mathewson poses this really thought-provoking question in his lecture. He asks, what if we viewed the world through Luke's lens with radical compassion for the outcast and a willingness to celebrate God's unexpected grace? What would change? That's a really good question. It makes you think about, you know, are we living that out? Are we really seeing the world through that lens? Right.

It's easy to get caught up in our own little worlds, you know, surrounded by people who are like. Yeah, we get comfortable. We do.

But Luke challenges us to step outside of those comfort zones. To see the world through the eyes of those who are different from us. Exactly.

To embrace those who are marginalized or forgotten. It's like he's calling us to really live out the gospel, you know, not just on Sundays, but in every aspect of our lives. That's a great point.

Yeah. It's about letting that transformative power of God's grace flow out into the world through our words and actions. Not just believing the right things, but actually living them out.

Exactly. And it starts with an honest look at ourselves, you know. Yeah.

Being aware of our own biases. Right. And being willing to challenge those biases to step outside of our comfort zones and really embrace the beautiful diversity of God's creation.

I mean, it's definitely a challenge. Yes. But it's also an incredible opportunity.

Yeah. To experience a deeper, more authentic faith. A faith that's grounded in love and grace and compassion.

And that's what Luke's gospel is all about. It's a story of hope and transformation. Well, thank you so much for joining us on this deep dive into Luke.

It's been a pleasure. I hope you've all gained some new insights and maybe a fresh perspective on this amazing gospel. Yeah.

Go back and read it again. Yeah. Read it with new eyes.

Pay attention to the details and see what speaks to you. And until next time, keep exploring, keep learning, and keep seeking truth.