

Greetings to you!

Today we give thanks for Luke the Evangelist; a faithful companion of Paul and the writer of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Luke is not one of the disciples nor an eyewitness to the events of the Gospel. He was a Physician (Col. 4:4) a close friend of Paul and converted through his ministry. The gospel of Luke and the Acts of Apostles together make up about 25% of the New Testament. He is the only Gentile writer of the New Testament. Luke is writing to Theophilus who was possibly Luke's patron in writing the gospel.

Luke being a physician is very careful in examining the reports of other people and then coming to his own conclusion and writing about it. He knows that many people had written about the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus Christ and the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost. Luke was writing these things which were handed down by those who from the beginning were eyewitness and had been with Jesus and his disciples. These traditions were credible because they were eye-witnesses. The Apostles gave eyewitness accounts to all that they had witnessed when they were with Jesus. The disciples themselves were called to be with him and to be his witnesses (Mark 3:13-15). These disciples would bear witness to the person and work of Jesus with whom they walked and talked for three years. Luke is not an apostolic witness. He was from the second generation who was carefully investigating the oral traditions that were handed to him and was now putting it together in an orderly manner for Theophilus.

The reason why Luke is writing an orderly account to Theophilus is that he 'will know the full truth about everything which that had been taught.' Luke is writing to Theophilus of what he has been persuaded to believe is the truth after his careful investigation. The name Theophilus means "Loved by God" or "Dear to God". He was presumably a convert receiving instruction in the faith. He had heard many things about Jesus and believed in him, but needed to be certain about the things he had been taught. Luke was interested that Theophilus knew the truth about the events that have been accomplished namely the birth, life, death, resurrection and the giving of the gifts of Spirit. The gospels were written so that we may know the truth.

What can we learn from Luke's life? First and foremost as a physician he was very careful to examine and investigate things before he came to any conclusion. We too are called to investigate and examine the gospel for ourselves. Luke's investigation endorses the truth of Jesus as savior. Jesus inaugurated his public ministry at a synagogue in Nazareth where he declared; "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoner and recovery of the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." Luke wrote to show how Jesus fulfilled those words in his gospel. He shows Jesus proclaiming good news to the poor. In Acts, he describes how the church continued that proclamation and confirmed the good news of salvation.

These books were intended to enable people who had never seen Jesus to realize that salvation is for them and to embrace it. Salvation in Luke is essentially healing. It can include physical healing, but it must include the deeper and more pervasive healing that is the forgiveness of sin. This morning we give thanks to God for Luke the Evangelist who has clearly spelt for us the truth about Jesus Christ and the healing he can bring into our lives both physically and spiritually by the forgiveness of sins. May we be assured of the forgiveness of our sins as we come to our Lord's Table and remember what Christ has done for us on the cross. Let us also give thanks for the truth that has been preserved and handed down to us through Luke the evangelist.