



CAPITOL COMMISSION

The Wisdom and Power of God (Luke 8:1-3)

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Jeff Whitebread / 484-680-4260 / Jeff.Whitebread@capitolcom.org

As Luke's account unfolds, we find him building upon the foundational aspects of this gospel in order to communicate his intended message. He has already articulated the purpose of this correspondence by stating his desire for Theophilus to have a certainty concerning the things he had been taught through the writing of an orderly account (Luke 1:3-4). While not specifically mentioning what had been taught, the extent of this instruction will become clear through the unfolding of his gospel narrative. This is one of the blessings of examining the Scriptures in an orderly and detailed manner because as themes are repeated and words are emphasized one begins to catch a glimpse of what was important to the author, and the Spirit who guided its composition. So with this in mind, one should ask, "What were the things taught which Luke seeks to highlight for the purpose of helping Theophilus develop this certainty? In each account this should be considered; however, in this short passage terminology is employed by the author that speaks to the underpinnings of Jesus' ministry which will help us address this concern with some clarity and better understand Jesus' interactions with those he encountered.

In Luke's gospel, Jesus' ministry is linked to Isaiah 61:1-2 in both its origin and definition. In reading the words of Isaiah in which good news is told to the poor, and liberty is proclaimed to the captives, Jesus declares this passage fulfilled in the hearing of those in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-21). Everything that precedes this announcement is done in terms of validating Jesus as the Messiah. It begins with the miraculous birth of John into the high priest's family as the forerunner to the Christ and ends with Jesus' passing a wilderness test which Israel failed. Without question Jesus is presented as the long promised Christ, the one on whom the hopes of Israel are resting, and the one who is able to perfectly obey God. Into this setting Jesus' announcement of this prophetic fulfillment must be understood, and this is the paradigm through which his ministry must be viewed. All that Jesus did and all that he taught was done purposefully to accomplish the bringing of good news to the poor, liberty to those oppressed, and the year of the Lord's favor. This passage echoes the focus of proclaiming good news to the poor and liberty to the captives which reverberates through the future narrative accounts. What is witnessed in Jesus' ministry is the proclamation of good news where the message is preached, those in need are restored, and the lives of those ministering with him are transformed by a relationship with their master which called them to a complete trust in him.

Luke 8:1-3 - (1) Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, (2) and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, (3) and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE GOSPEL

Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages - This section of Scripture is transitioning the reader from the generosity of the sinful woman who stands as the example of one impacted by the gospel, to a section of Scripture where Jesus' ministry will continue to be revealed. At some point after this encounter Jesus picks up his journey through the various towns and villages in Galilee. Luke's language conveys the idea of a continuing wandering ministry, rather than a journey from point to point. This type of ministry is seen as Jesus travelled from Capernaum to Nain and encountered the woman whose son had recently died. In seeing her heartbreak he stops and raises him from the dead. Jesus now leaves Nain and resumes his travels through the various towns and villages meeting the needs of those that come across his path. This allowed his emphasis to be upon those to whom he sought to bring the message of the good news. So whether it was addressing the questions brought by John's disciples, teaching the crowds about the kingdom, or dining at the home of Simon the Pharisee, Jesus had the opportunity to minister to those in need. In each place God has placed one who belongs to him. They are called to minister to the needs of those whom God has placed in their path. One must never be too busy with their own agenda to be aware of the opportunity to serve those in need.

Proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God - The statement that Luke uses to define what will take place in the future narrative accounts is also a recurring theme in his gospel. As we have seen, Jesus has established that his ministry is to proclaim good news to the poor and liberty to the captives. After claiming the fulfillment of this prophecy we find Jesus in Capernaum teaching on the Sabbath, driving out demons, and healing Simon's mother-in-law along with others brought to Simon's home. As the people sought after Jesus, he tells them that he must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns as well. This was his purpose and the reason he was sent (Luke 4:43). In saying that he must preach the good news to other towns as well, Jesus is showing that the ministry that has just taken place must be viewed as fulfilling this purpose. The entirety of what Luke records in these preceding accounts is the way in which Jesus practically proclaimed the good news of the kingdom. Of first importance was the proclamation of the message, on the Sabbath his teaching had such authority that those who heard were astonished by his message. Yet, the proclaiming and bringing of the good news did not stop at didactic communication; instead, it demonstrated a willingness to engage people in the midst of their needs, visit Simon's home, and minister to those with infirmities. For Jesus, the bringing of the good news was a message that engaged the person as a whole. As its priority, the gospel sought to address

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an individual's relationship with God, their maladies, and call higher those who followed him.

By using the phrase "*proclaiming and bringing the good news*," Luke is calling the reader back to the purpose of Jesus' ministry, as if to remind his audience once again of this truth, what is recorded is not a random collection of teachings and miracles that take place before his death and resurrection. Jesus had a strategic ministry approach to accomplish the purpose in which the good news would be proclaimed and brought to the people. In considering what follows in Luke's gospel, what is recorded may not, at first glance, fit into the category of "proclaiming the good news." However, Luke seems to be forcing his audience to frame their understanding of the topic on this basis. The chapter continues with the parable of the soils and the lamp under the jar, which are clear teaching moments, and yet what was taught seems to fit better under the category of discipleship, instead of gospel proclamation. Then there are the accounts when the disciples are fearful in the boat, and when Jesus' mother and brothers come to take charge of him, or the woman who touched Jesus and was healed. In each of these, whether it was teaching the crowds, or a personal interaction in an intimate setting, the spread of the good news is being realized in the lives of those who have ears that hear (Luke 8:18). In these moments, Jesus is proclaiming the good news when he calls the disciples to faith when fearing in the boat, or teaching how good soil multiplies the word of God. This proclamation of good news is a message that touches the heart and transforms the life of those who seek him. Through them the good news engages the world and proclaims that the wisdom and power of God is found in a crucified king (1 Corinthians 1:21-24). What we find in Jesus is one who gave of himself completely for rebel sinners, those who deserved judgment were the ones for whom he prayed, healed, served, and died. If at the very heart of one's worldview is a man sacrificing and dying for his enemies, a change must be made so that the gospel becomes the central way in which one frames the entirety of their life.

What does it look like when a person has made the gospel the central focus one's life, in which each and every area is impacted because of following a crucified king? When a dispute arose among the disciples as to who was the greatest, Jesus proclaims the good news to them by saying, "The Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them called them benefactors. But not so with you, rather, let the greatest among you become the youngest and the leader as one who serves" (Luke 22:26-27). In this moment Jesus teaches his disciples the way of the cross. The way to impact and lead others is not in the accumulation of power and authority, but through cross-shaped service. It is the emptying of one's self for the sake of

the other; it is a substitutionary sacrifice that Christ modeled and his followers are called to follow. It neither withdraws from society, nor engages it through worldly means, but it brings the gospel of Jesus to every area of life. This is seen in the book of Jeremiah in chapter 29. The nation of Israel had been destroyed by the Babylonian Empire, and many people had been exiled to a foreign country. What was their attitude supposed to be toward this society? Were they to withdraw and keep to themselves, or seek to overthrow it through subversive tactics? In Jeremiah 29:7, God said, "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord on its behalf, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." God is saying that the route to gaining influence is not taking power. He called them to a totally different approach. They were to express a sacrificial love so that the people around them, who did not believe what they believed, could not imagine the place without them. The people of Babylon would trust them because they were not out for themselves, but because they sought the interests of a foreign people. So when this pagan nation voluntarily began to look to the Israelites and the attractiveness of their service and love, then God's people would have real influence. It will be an influence given by others, not taken from others (Keller, 146). This is the gospel of Jesus that is brought to the world and declares both the wisdom and power of our great God through the lives of those who exemplify the sacrificial love of their master.

MINISTERING WITH JESUS

And the twelve were with him, and also some women - If the proclamation of good news is seen in Jesus' most basic interaction with those he encountered, his method of bringing others with him to minister must not be overlooked. In Jesus' strategic approach the apostles and these women play a vital role in accomplishing Jesus' purpose of bringing the good news throughout the land. In chapter 9 we find the twelve being sent out with the same charge of "proclaiming the good news of the kingdom" (Luke 9:2). In the following chapter as Jesus sends out the seventy-two he speaks of the plentiful harvest but the scarcity of workers. He charges them to pray for additional workers as they minister in the towns he will be visiting on his teaching circuit (Luke 10:2). Jesus is once again modeling for his people how the gospel advances; it is not through the means of mass appeal, but the developing of devoted followers who through a commitment to Christ seek to reproduce themselves in the lives of others.

Keller, Timothy. *King's Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus* (New York, NY: Penguin Group (USA) Inc. 2011). 146