

Everyone has their favorite Christmas movie. Some have seen *It's a Wonderful Life*, or *Elf*, dozens of times. Our family favorites are *A Christmas Carol* and *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Each time we watch it, we see something new that we missed. I hope that today, you hear something fresh and meaningful in today's story.

Each year we have a Christmas theme. This year's theme is Savior. We are looking at the various Gospel accounts of Jesus' birth. God had each of these gospel writers share from their unique perspectives the truth of Jesus.

The four gospel writers chose to start their story of Jesus' life and ministry in a way that supported their goal.

- We started with John's Savior. John's Savior is the Son of God Himself who became flesh, the creator who entered creation. Key word = Believe. John wrote so that his readers would believe. John
- Last week Pastor Kevin spoke on Matthew's Savior. Matthew's Savior is the fulfillment of Jewish expectation and prophecy. Key word = fulfilled. For example, Matthew highlight's Jesus' royal birth with Joseph's genealogy, the Magi's worship, and Herod's anger.
- Mark does not mention Jesus' birth.

Today we examine Luke's account how of Jesus' life began. Let's look at **Luke's Savior**

- Luke gives us the most detailed account of Jesus' birth. Luke's Jesus is savior. Key word = know. Luke wrote so that they would have confidence in what they had been taught. He wants to give us the facts of Jesus' birth.



Let's start with a quick over review of Luke's Savior.

1. Luke's Savior.

Luke's biography begins with an important introduction: 'Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the

first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught (Lk 1:1-4 NIV).'

Luke's Introduction ...

- Many wrote to preserve Jesus' story. The first generation of Christians were passing away and they wanted to make sure the Good News was passed onto another generation.
- Luke interviewed the eyewitnesses. Luke was a careful historian and theologian.
- His 'orderly account' is theological not chronological.
- His purpose is for knowledge, that they would have confidence.
 - 'know' = over four hundred times in Luke / Acts
 - 'evidence' = twice in Luke / Acts

It is wonderful that we have four written witnesses to Jesus' life. Each of their perspectives helps us see Jesus. John & Lukes especially help us see Jesus as Savior:

1. John will nuance Jesus' divinity = because only God can save.
 - See his glory (Jn 1:14); it is the Father's likeness (1:17-18).
 - 'I am the light (Jn 8:12).'
 - The 'I AM' statement (Jn 8:58-59).
2. Luke will nuance Jesus' humanity = because mankind must be fully restored.
 - A detailed account of a human birth (Lk 1:26-38; 2:1-20).
 - A genealogy back to Adam (Lk 3:23-37).
 - Jesus' dependence on prayer (Lk 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 18:1).
 - An emphasis on the Holy Spirit's anointing.

But Luke primarily sees Jesus as savior. There are several verses, but here are three:

- 'My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior (Lk1:46-47 NIV).' - Mary's song of praise
- 'Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord (Lk 2:11 NIV).' – Angel to the shepherds
- 'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Lk 18:39 NIV).' – Jesus to Zacchaeus

Let's jump into Luke's Savior.

2. Act One - Two Special Announcements.

Every good story starts with a context, a situation. Luke begins with 400 years of prophetic silence.

- God's voice was no longer heard through the prophets.
- They did not even know what to do with stones from the defiled Temple. 'Let's put them aside "until there should come a prophet to (us) what to do with them."'¹

Luke is a master storyteller and here in the first act, he has three character pairings: Elizabeth & Mary, John the Baptist & Jesus, and Zechariah & Joseph.

He begins with Zechariah and Elizabeth being devout but childless. Zechariah is chosen to burn incense before the Lord in the Temple. An angel appeared to him and prophesied. God's voice was again heard.

- The angel said, 'Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John ... ¹⁵ he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born (Lk 1:13, 15 NIV).' He doubted that it could happen because they were old, so the angel took away Zechariah's voice.
- In contrast, Joseph is barely mentioned in Luke's story because Joseph simply believes and obediently takes care of Mary.

Luke's contrast of Mary and Elizabeth is more detailed.

An angel appears to Mary, again breaking the prophetic silence. 'Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High (Lk 1:30-32 NIV).' Unlike Zechariah who doubted, Mary asks 'how?' The angel responds, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age ... ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail (Lk 1:35-37 NIV).'

The story quickly jumps between these two stories ...

John's birth foretold, Lk 1:5-25.

Jesus birth foretold, Lk 1:26-38.

Confirmation of the angel's prophecy, Lk 1:39-45.

Mary's song, Lk 1:46-56.

John's birth, Lk 1:57-66.

Zechariah's song, Lk 1:67-80.

Jesus' birth, Lk 2:1-7.

¹ 1 Maccabees 4:46.

Confirmation by the angels, Lk 2:8-20.

I don't have time to unpack these contrasts in detail, but I must do one more:

John will 'go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah (Lk 1:17 NIV).' He will be 'A prophet ... for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation (vv. 76-77).'

Jesus 'will be called the Son of the Most High (Lk 1:32 NIV).'

The first act is the announcement of two special births, the second act is the actual births.

3. Acts Two - Two Births.

Luke is such a good storyteller that there is rising anticipation as it moves along.

Mary confirms that her cousin Elizabeth is pregnant, even at her old age. But something wonderful happened. Elizabeth's baby leaps for joy in the presence of Mary's baby.

Luke says that 'Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 41).'

There are several layers or subplots that I could use for this part of the story. For example, I could chart the ...

Songs & Poems

Mary's Song, Lk 1:46-56.

Zechariah's Song, Lk 1:67-79.

The Angels' song, Lk 2:14.

Simeon's poem / praise, Lk 2:29-32.

Anna's praise, Lk 2:38.

Or, I could examine the role of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit

The promise of John's birth, 1:15.

The overshadowing of Mary, 1:35.

In Mary's song, 1:47.

Zechariah's prophecy, 1:67

John being strong in the Spirit, 1:80.

Simeon, 2:25-27.

But we don't have time to explore subplots. I will stick with the main story.

Luke records miracles at two births.

1. First, John the Baptist. He was conceived normally: born of Zechariah and Elizabeth. The miracles were 1) having a child in their old age and 2) Zechariah being unable to speak.

- It simply says that 'She gave birth to a son (Lk 1:57 NIV).' A normal birth. At the naming ceremony on the eighth day, Zechariah wrote out on a tablet that his son would be called John, as the angel had prophesied. 'Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God (Lk 1:67 NIV).'
- Timewise, Luke ties John's birth to 'In the time of Herod king of Judea (Lk 1:5 NIV).'
- John's birth This is a significant birth, tied to a great, but terrible king of Judea. However, Luke ties Jesus' birth to 'In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world (Lk 2:1 NIV).'
- Jesus' birth Herod is a little king, Caesar is the ultimate ruler. Luke wants us to have perspective on Jesus' importance.

2. Next Jesus. While John's conception and birth was completely normal, Jesus' conception was from God. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary. God humbled himself, making himself small enough to enter her womb. This is great wonder, a miracle.

- The glorious arrival of God in human history is accented by his birth in a stable, surrounded by common animals. Ordinary shepherds are the first to hear of this special birth. You see, the ...
- But the angels are compelled to burst out their excitement to these shepherds, "I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests (Lk 2:10-14 NIV)."
- The angels will not allow this birth to be ordinary, someone has to shout out that the Creator had entered creation to save them.
- The key phrase is ... 'a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord (2:11).'

- The second act ends with excited and joyful shepherds glorifying God (2:20) contrasted with Mary, who quietly, ‘pondered them in her heart (2:19).’

Unlike the other three Gospel writers, Luke gives us a glimpse of a young Jesus.

4. Act Three – Childhood & Boyhood.

Luke wants us to see the human Jesus. Only what God becomes is fully saved. Jesus is 100% human; he is the second Adam so that we are 100% fully saved.

Jesus’ childhood & boyhood

- Presented on the eighth day, Lk 2:21-38.
- Jesus’ childhood in Nazareth, Lk 2:39-40.
- 12-year-old Jesus at the temple, Lk 2:41-51.

Compare Luke’s summaries:

- ‘And the child (John) grew and became strong in spirit (Lk 1:80 NIV).’
- ‘Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man (Lk 2:52).’

Luke then moves onto the beginning of Jesus’ adult ministry.

5. Luke’s Savior.

I would imagine that you have heard this story every year since you were born. My prayer is that today, you see something new in the story. Perhaps something in the background caught your attention.

Clearer than the subplots of songs / poems, or even the Holy Spirit, is the subplot of Jesus as savior. He uses the word save / savior more than any other writer. Jesus is the bringer of salvation.

Salvation is expressed by ...

- Healings, Lk 8:36. The man who had a legion of demons cast out him was said to have ‘been cured (Lk 8:36 NIV).’ At times the word for healing is used interchangeably with the word for salvation in Luke / Acts.
- Entrance into the Kingdom, Lk 4:38-44. Jesus healed all the people in and then wanted to move onto another town. Jesus said, ‘I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent (Lk 4:43 NIV).’ Salvation is not

just a person issue, it is the inbreaking of God's kingdom on earth: the sick are healed, justice is given, the poor and marginalized are helped.

- Forgiveness of sins, Lk 7:50. To the woman who wiped his feet with her tears he said, 'Your sins are forgiven ... your faith has saved you; go in peace (Lk 7:48, 50 NIV).'

In Luke's second volume, Acts, the Good News expanding to the non-Jews is the major theme. We see the Good News arrive at Samaria, the God-fearers in Caesarea, and then finally to the Greeks in Ephesus. Jesus is the bringer of salvation, our mission as Christ-followers is to bring salvation to those who are still lost.

Conclusion



Let me share another true story. In the movie Breakthrough, John Smith fell through the ice and was without oxygen for quite a while. Doctors knew he would not be normal if he

survived. A fireman rescued him; that he was found in the deep murky water was a miracle.

We like the idea of a savior, someone who rescues us in our time of need. But there is more to salvation than just that moment of rescue, there is life afterwards. Jesus said, 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (Jn 10:10 NIV).'

John Smith received a miracle: he survived and is now perfectly normal. He is serving as a youth pastor in the Midwest, is married, and has a child.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son (Christmas – God's part), that whoever believes in him (faith – our part) shall not perish (Salvation / rescue) but have eternal life (Jn 3:16 NIV).'

'Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord (Lk 2:11 NIV).'