
The Holy Spirit at Work

DARRELL DELANEY

Have you ever felt like an outsider? Like the story of Jesus was meant for someone else? Maybe you felt it was for someone more qualified, more spiritual, or more in the know. What if I told you that one of the gospel writers, Luke, felt this same way, and wrote his account to people just like us. In today's episode of *Groundwork*, we dive into the Gospel of Luke, where we will uncover the surprising ways Luke draws us in, shows us who Jesus really is, and highlights a main character that is often overlooked: the Holy Spirit. Get ready to see Jesus' story with fresh eyes and discover your place in it, next on *Groundwork*.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Indeed; it is going to be a lot of fun, actually. Luke is such a rich gospel. We are doing six programs. We could do twenty programs, and we wouldn't do much more than scratch the surface, but we will do what we can here; and let's just go right to the beginning, and we want to spend a little time, Darrell, in this first segment wondering who Luke is...why he wrote. So, here is Luke 1:1-4: 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.

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There is something quite beautiful about that, Scott, and quite pastoral; because Luke isn't writing just a biography, he is offering certainty to someone who has already heard the story. Most excellent Theophilus is a believer, and he wants to make sure that Theophilus has an accurate account; and it is really powerful to see that you can actually grow up hearing stories and be familiar with Jesus, and heard these things when you were growing up, perhaps in Sunday school or in children's church; but then, if they deeply root you into the truth of who Jesus is, it is always good to be reminded and have an accurate account.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and just to remind ourselves, too, that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all wrote, not just a history...they weren't writing a daybook of accounting of Jesus' life; they weren't even writing a biography. They were writing gospels. And gospels are written with an explicit purpose, to give you faith. I mean, John was very upfront about that. At the end of his gospel, he said: I could have written down lots of things, but I selected these so that you may believe...

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That Jesus is the Son of God, right? So, this is for Luke. You know, we are not one hundred percent sure if Matthew wrote Matthew and Mark wrote Mark, and so forth, but we are pretty sure about Luke, though, because he also wrote the book of Acts, and there are some references to himself in the book of Acts, so we are pretty sure that Luke and Acts were written by Luke; and who was Luke? Well, Darrell, by tradition, he

was not one of the twelve disciples. He came to know Jesus later. Tradition says he was a physician.

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Yes; he was understood to be a Gentile physician, which is why he usually goes into great detail about different leprosy...skin diseases...and things like that, because as a physician he would be someone by trade who would be taking care of people who had different kinds of ailments; and so, you notice more detail in his gospel about these different things than you do in the other gospels; and you said earlier he usually has, in the book of Acts, been a companion to Paul on his missionary journeys. You will see that in the book of Acts as well; so, by the way, Luke and Acts...he wrote them both...and they are the majority of the New Testament; they add up to more than the thirteen letters that Paul the Apostle wrote. We recently did a series on the missionary journeys of Paul. We also see that Luke's Greek writing is elegant and educated and orderly, and someone had to take great care to put the details in like that; and you said earlier that he was not one of the original Twelve. I don't think he actually met Jesus, but he did do a lot of research to make sure that all the information about Jesus was in place.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; he obviously...I think, in his research...he obviously interviewed some people, and one thing we are pretty sure about is that we think he must have interviewed Mary. He must have interviewed Jesus' mother, because he has stuff in...mostly in Luke, a little bit in Acts...but it is mostly in Luke...he has material that only Mary would have known, including most of what you find in the first chapter of Luke...that huge, huge chapter, that we will look at eventually; but we are pretty sure that Luke did his homework. He did his research; he conducted interviews and took notes, and now is writing an orderly account; and both Luke and Acts are addressed to the most excellent Theophilus. Is that a real person, Darrell? It could be, right? Theophilus literally means: Lover of God. So, it could have been a symbolic name for anybody reading this gospel, or maybe it really was someone with that name that also happens to have the advantage of extending to all of us who also love God.

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I love God as well. So, it definitely is addressed to people who love God, and are called to be his children. I think we can zoom back out, too, and talk about some major overarching themes of the gospel; but Luke understood in his time that the early Church was rapidly expanding to include Gentiles, to include women, to include people who were along the margins. So, this gospel actually goes out of its way to make sure that women, the poor, the outcast, all have a prominent and important place in Luke's narrative; and he does that intentionally.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

He does; and in our next episode, in the second episode of this series, we are going to be looking at a major theme about economic justice, and how Luke was always bringing into the center people who, as you just said, Darrell, often were on the periphery, who were marginalized one way or the other; and so, one of the real themes in Luke is a reversal; that God flips the world's expectations upside down; and again, in the next episode, we are going to see that in Mary's opening song of the *Magnificat*. We will look at that in detail in the next program; but God is going to bring the people who are afar off near; and that is why it leads to another theme, Darrell: Joy.

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Yes; so, from the announcement of the angels to John the Baptist's birth, and the rejoicing over the sinner who repents in Luke 15, this gospel is filled with celebration because salvation is something to be celebrated—something to be celebrated because those who are lost are now found, those who are, like you said, far, are brought near; and God, who loves them, is opening his arms and welcoming people to come back home to him. So, that is something to rejoice about, and he continues to make that clear.

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No; Luke is very much sort of the writer in the New Testament who more than any other writer... I mean, the Holy Spirit is all over the New Testament, of course. Paul writes about it...Peter, John, everything; but Luke really brings us the Spirit. He is going to bring us the story of Pentecost in Acts, right? We remember that, but what you don't want to miss is that although the Holy Spirit is just omnipresent in the book of Acts, that is true in the gospel, too. The Spirit...and we are going to look at that in just a minute in the next part of this program...because that is a major, major theme in Luke, that it is the Holy Spirit who is going to do *all* of the necessary work to bring the gospel...to bring the good news...to the *whole* world...not just, as you said earlier...not just to the Jewish world, but to the Gentile world, too; and Theophilus, we think, was a Greek; and so, that too is the work of the Holy Spirit.

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Yes; so, why does this matter, Scott? I think one of the reasons why this matters is because Luke is inviting us right now to step into this story with confidence, because it is not just about the facts of Jesus alone, but it is him showing that Jesus is the Savior of the world. It is the good news, and it is the gospel, and it is the foundation of our hope, source of joy, and the power to live differently; but coming up next, we want to highlight the works of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' ministry that Luke brings out, and how it can guide us today. So, stay tuned.

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Segment 2

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And Darrell, we have now been introduced to Luke the writer, to Theophilus, his intended audience for whom he wrote the gospel, and then we talked about how the Holy Spirit is central to the ministry of Jesus. Luke is often called the gospel of the Holy Spirit, and Darrell, for good reason.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; because from the beginning, the Holy Spirit is present, active, and central to the unfolding of God's redemptive plan; and Luke goes out of his way to show that the Spirit is not just some mysterious force, or a theological concept, but the Holy Spirit is God's empowering presence, and the one who prepares, confirms, and propels the mission of Jesus, from conception all the way to his resurrection; and even to today.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

And it really begins already in Luke's first chapter, the first story that Luke tells; again, one he probably investigated and maybe interviewed John the Baptist's parents, and so forth...Elizabeth and Zechariah. We are told in Luke 1:15 that when John is born...John the Baptist, this is...he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and of course, interestingly, also in Luke 1, when the archangel Gabriel does the annunciation, tells Mary that she is going to become pregnant, it will be by the power of the Holy Spirit, not through the normal way of conceiving a child; and then Elizabeth gets visited by Mary, and then this is interesting: the very first person in the whole Bible who is said to be filled with the Holy Spirit is Elizabeth. When Elizabeth sees Mary and the child within her leaps in the womb, we are told that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit; and again, for a woman to be the first person to be filled, that is what we talked about in the first part. Here is another person from the periphery of society—because women were marginalized in patriarchal societies—she is the first one to be filled with the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

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And Luke makes sure that that is made known. I do believe in his gospel narrative when he does the genealogy, he goes and he goes through the women in his genealogy as well. So, he wants to make sure that the ones who are on the periphery and on the fringes are brought to the forefront. So, it is really important that Luke wants to make sure that that point is not missed, Scott.

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verse ²¹When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²²and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased."

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So, we see Jesus' birth. The Holy Spirit overshadows Mary in the conception. We see Jesus being alighted on by a dove in a bodily form at his baptism that starts his ministry. We also see him being led to the wilderness and being brought to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. Then he goes into the synagogue in this verse in Luke 4, and he reads this word that is in the scroll that says: ¹⁸“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 prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” (Then he rolls up the scroll and he sits down and says): ^{21b}“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

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SCOTT HOEZEE

And again, in our next episode, when we look at economic justice, we are going to look at the very big significance of that scripture passage that Jesus reads there from Isaiah in the synagogue; but again, the Holy Spirit is by no means a background character. Luke foregrounds the Holy Spirit in everything that Jesus does. So, once the ministry of Jesus actually gets rolling, Jesus teaches in the Holy Spirit, he heals people by the power of the Holy Spirit, he promises his followers that they will receive that same Holy Spirit. Everything Jesus does is done with the power and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit at work.

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Yes, and so, Luke is intentionally doing that because he wants to show that he is actually doing the groundwork—no pun intended—for the work of the book of Acts because, I mean, technically, the book of Acts is the continuing acts of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit in the disciples and the growth of their early Church, but I figure that is too long a title, so they called it the Acts of the Apostles in the book of Acts; but the Spirit that is in Jesus is the same Spirit through Pentecost who fills the disciples and births the early Church. So, the ministry and mission of Christ are all connected by the Spirit, and the birth of the Church is also in that same vein.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, we have looked at the book of Acts in the past, as you mentioned earlier. We did a series on the missionary journeys of Paul that you find in Acts, and Luke appears in some of those stories in the book of Acts. So, we know that the Holy Spirit is just omnipresent. The Holy Spirit is active all over the place in the book of Acts; always going ahead of the Apostles and doing something unexpected; but again, what we don't want to miss is that the Gospel of Luke is volume 1 of Luke's two volumes, and the same is true here. The Holy Spirit is all over this gospel; and again, it is not that the Spirit is absent in Matthew, Mark or John. No; they all talk about the Holy Spirit—they all show the baptism of Jesus and the descent of that dove, which is the Holy Spirit; but in Luke, it is just much, much more overt.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, it is; and Luke wants us to know that in his two volumes that he wrote: Luke and Acts; that what Jesus began in the power of the Spirit continues through his people through that same Spirit; and so, the book isn't just ancient history, it is actually a present-day reality, because the Holy Spirit is still at work empowering us, guiding us, convicting us, and comforting us; and equipping ordinary people to do extraordinary things in the name of the gospel and for the sake of the gospel.

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He didn't just appear at Pentecost and then just sort of went back to heaven. He is still moving our hearts, our churches, our cities, our nations. He wants to move each and every one of us. So, you know, as we read the Gospel of Luke, we need to read it with open eyes and open hearts to what the Holy Spirit is doing; again, not just in the life of Jesus, but right now in you and in me today; and that is such a powerful message that we get in Acts, but also in the Gospel of Luke. So, I think, Darrell, as we conclude this program in just a minute, we are going to want to get really practical and say: How does the Spirit-empowered life translate into everyday discipleship? What are we invited into? How do we respond? Stay tuned and you will find out.

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Segment 3

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DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and Scott, we have talked about how Luke highlights the Holy Spirit's central role in Jesus' life from his inception, his birth, to the launch of his public ministry; and we talked about how Luke's message isn't just a historical one; it is profoundly personal and present because the same Spirit who empowered Jesus is now available to us; and we want to dig into what that means and how we today can live a Spirit-empowered life.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

As we close out this program, we are going to look at three different applications...takeaways, if you will, of what we have been seeing about the work of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of Luke; and the first of the three: the Holy Spirit is present from the beginning. You know, the Old Testament writers and the people of Israel, they didn't know the doctrine of the Trinity as we have developed it. They didn't realize that Yahweh, their God, was actually a God in three Persons. We now see it that way, and we retrospectively read that into the Old Testament; but you know, there were hints and whispers even in the Old Testament. It starts right away in Genesis: The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. So, God's creative power was on the move even before God created anything.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Okay; so, we see the Spirit of God...we see God the Father...and we see the Word that God speaks to create everything. So, the Trinity Elohim is there, right? So, another thing that is interesting is that the Holy Spirit confirms identity before ministry. So, we see at Jesus' baptism the Father says: You are my Son. I love you, and I am well pleased with you. This happens before Jesus does anything for God, and I think this is very important. In our culture, where we are performance oriented and results oriented, we need to remember this truth, that the Father loves us because we are his, not because of what we can do for him, because we cannot earn our salvation with that stuff anyway. We can only be affirmed by what God says to Jesus, he also says it to us.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and you know, that goes along too, that actually, you know, before Jesus appears in Luke's gospel, before Jesus is conceived in the womb of Mary in Luke's gospel, the Holy Spirit comes first. So, yes; I just said it was at the beginning of Genesis, but it is definitely in the beginning of Luke. I mean, the Holy Spirit is all over that first chapter; and you know, Jesus doesn't get born until the second chapter; so, even that way, the Spirit precedes Jesus, and again, that is our second point, that the Holy Spirit confirms identity before ministry: You are my Son, whom I love. With you I am well pleased. We just looked at that from Jesus' baptism in Luke Chapter 3, and he is told that and assured that, again, before he does anything in his ministry. He hasn't called a single disciple, but there is the Holy Spirit.

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So, even the Holy Spirit affirms in us who we are in Christ. Then the last thing that we want to think about is that the Holy Spirit empowers ordinary people for extraordinary work; and Luke continues this story, not just in his gospel, but in the book of Acts, because it is the same Spirit that Jesus carried and Jesus walked and operated in, this is the same one that fills the early Church; and he says in Acts 1:8, he says...Jesus, right before he ascends...he says: "You...(the disciples)...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses."

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It is not just for pastors like us; it is not for professors only. It is for everyday people. Luke shows fishermen, tax collectors, women, young, old, rich, poor. This is what the Spirit does. He democratizes his work and everybody is getting the power of the Spirit. It is really powerful.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

And it is one of the things that Peter quotes on the Day of Pentecost when he preaches his first sermon in the power of the Spirit, he goes back and quotes from the Old Testament: (2:17) In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on *all* people. That is exactly what you see going on already in Luke's gospel. As we said earlier, those who are on the margins are brought to the center, and when they are brought to the center, the Holy Spirit gets poured out on them; and it is not just for show, right? It is not just razzle-dazzle; it is for witness, it is for living with courage, compassion, conviction, as we preach the gospel to the whole world.

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And when the Holy Spirit empowers us to witness, we are able to tell the story of how God is a saving, redeeming, and intervening God into circumstances and situations. So, it doesn't matter if you are a student or a teacher; or a parent or a caregiver; empty nester; married or if you are single; if you are an artist or a business owner. The Holy Spirit wants to empower you to be a faithful presence in your community and be that light that he has called you to be. Romans 8:11 says it clearly.

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That resurrection power is because of the Spirit and is active in our lives today.

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So, for everyday life, what does it mean, Darrell? Well, we will just ask some questions: Are you feeling stuck; unsure of your next step? Be assured, the Spirit is already at work in you, and he is preparing that next step. The Spirit is faithful. Are you wrestling with your identity, or are you feeling insecure, as maybe a child of God—a disciple of Jesus? The Spirit is here to remind you, you are God's beloved child.

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Another question that could be asked is: Are you afraid to step out in faith? Are you afraid to share your faith? Know that the Spirit does not just call you, but he equips you. He is in the business of calling ordinary, regular people to do extraordinary things; and so, you could take some moments today and invite the Holy Spirit into your life afresh. Some of us may or may not be comfortable praying *to* the Holy Spirit, but because he is one of the Persons of the Trinity, you can worship him, you can call on him, you can invoke him; you can pray and ask him questions like... You can actually pray to him and say: Holy Spirit, would you fill me today? Would you lead me today? Remind me who I am in Christ and empower me to live for you today. This is a prayer that you can do, and you can listen, and the Spirit can whisper, he can nudge, and he can use scripture. He can use the community of faith to affirm those things in your heart and in your life.

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That is the assurance of Paul there to the young Pastor Timothy, who faced a tough crowd that he had to minister to. The Holy Spirit is going to give you power, Timothy, and the Holy Spirit is going to give you

power, Darrell, and me and to all of us so that we can, indeed, live that life of faith.

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So, we are called, by the Spirit, to live a transformed life, and we are journeying with Jesus every single day. So, we are going to continue in this Luke's gospel, and want you to keep your heart and mind open, because he is still leading today. Thanks be to God.

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