

Josh Mangelson 00:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Karin Peter 00:33

Welcome to New Brew, the Project Zion series that's taking us through the New Testament through explanation, exploration and by experiencing the text. Now, our guides through the New Testament are Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith. I'm your host, Karin Peter. If you are new listeners, welcome. If you have, uh, listened already to He Brew and are now listening to New Brew, we're glad you're back with us. Before we, uh, begin with Tony and Charmaine, I want to remind listeners that you can view the He Brew and New Brew episodes and see Tony and Charmaine and all of their marvelous slides which include timelines, which, if you're a Bible geek, these are important. You can view this on the Latter-day Seeker Ministries YouTube channel. So, today's episode, as I understand it, will be the Gospel of Luke. And I'm kind of excited about this because it's my favorite gospel to preach. But one of the reasons is because it's in the Gospel of Luke in chapter 10 where Jesus sends out the Seventy. So, that's one that those of us who serve in the priesthood office of Seventy like to point to as the, uh, uh, beginning of this priesthood office, which really isn't, it has nothing to do with it, but it sounds good. And, so, we really like to point to that. So, for our listeners, go ahead and check out chapter 10 where the Seventy are described as people who are willing to go do what Jesus says because the really smart people wouldn't go. So, that's my interpretation of Luke chapter 10. And on that note, Tony and Charmaine, why don't you give us some actual scripture, uh, help, instead of my more flippant reminders.

Tony Chvala-Smith 02:17

I'm kind of liking this? Maybe we should do a stand up New Brew? (Yes. That'd be good.) And, and we should say, as we get started, we're going to make a correction. I think maybe it was in our previous New Brew podcast we talked about doing Luke and Acts together. But, uh, subsequent conversation after that, uh, we decided, nah, Acts needs to have a slot of its own in this series. So, today, we're focusing on Luke. And then our next one will be on the Gospel of John and then after John we'll do, we'll do Acts. We'll kind of be following the canonical order there at that point. So,

Karin Peter 02:52

Alright. Do you want to say a little bit about why you were tempted to do Luke and Acts together so people understand it?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:58

Sure. Um, Luke and Acts were written by the same person. And together, they make up a huge chunk of the New Testament. And so it's, we wanted, if we, um, we wanted to hear that voice, and hear it clearly. But we'll remind people as we come to Acts that this is the same author and I think we'll find a lot of, if you've listened to Luke, you'll, you'll get that Acts is, there's a lot of themes piling up there. Um, but the reason we decided not to do it is because each one, um, you know, Luke is one of those portraits of Jesus. And if we try to shorten that up so that we can do a fair job of Acts, which is, how

does the Spirit help the church become the church, um, we're shorting both of them. So, (Okay.) I think, we think we'll be able to draw some of those themes through in ways that you'll be able to tell it's the same author with the same trajectory of what is it God is about in Jesus and then in the church. So, we, (Okay.) we're looking forward to, to giving Acts its own stage.

Tony Chvala-Smith 04:09

And for those who are interested in such thing as numbers, um, if you take Luke and Acts together and count Greek lines, about 25% of the whole New Testament is, is there. So, if, they really do deserve, uh, each deserves time (. . .) there so, so much space devoted to them. So, but we're going to focus on Luke, right, (. . .). The third, third in canonical order, not necessarily third written. We, the only thing we know about the, the order of which the gospels were written is that Mark was clearly first and John was clearly last. Uh, who's got second and third, you know, who, who's got second and third in there? We don't know. But Matthew and Luke are kind of close together in terms of time, so,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 04:52

So, we give both of them the, the date range of 80 to 90. (. . .) It's one of those places where scholars like to argue about, you know, really which of them was first and, but they're, they're coming from different parts of the Roman Empire and they're written by and addressed to different groups. So, it's probably a, a place to begin. You know, Luke is a Gentile writer, um, writing to Gentiles in the Roman Empire who have become part of this strange new religion that is rooted and has, up to this point, uh, been living within Judaism to some extent. Uh, we see, we, we don't, it's not until about 85 that Christianity gets pushed out of the synagogues. And, but this is a, an author who's not as concerned about that as Matthew was or that John will be as we come up, because he's, he's Gentile. You know, they're gonna' survive (. . .) empire one way or the other. And, and he's writing to Gentiles who weren't worried about that, who, who have some security in where they are. Um, so,

Tony Chvala-Smith 05:09

And one of the ways you can tell the author is a Gentile is that when he describes Judaism and Jewish practices, he, he des, he describes them as if, like a well informed tourist, right, as somebody who's, who's who's got the, you know, the, the (. . .) guide to Judaism. And, you know, he's got a, like, a, a, a dictionary understanding or an encyclopedia understanding of it, but they're little things that he will mess up. So,

Tony Chvala-Smith 06:26

He's been on the bus tour.

Tony Chvala-Smith 06:34

Right. Right. Right. So, you, you can tell that, that, uh, how, however, this, this is an author who's highly, highly sympathetic to Judaism. And when you take the trajectory of both books, one of the things he's trying to show is that Christianity is not really a new religion. It's just a development of the old religion. That's part of, that's part of the author's, uh, rhetorical strategy. He wants to show Gentiles that they're not really, uh, entering something weird and new, but they're entering something that's really quite old and venerable and that all this was planned all along. So, it's, but I would call that a rhetorical stance on the part of the author.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 07:12

And that is one of those places where we might see evidence that the author of Luke is trying to convince any Roman officials who might be aware of his writing, that this is not a brand new religion. This is still deeply rooted in Judaism and that shouldn't be seen as this new and suspicious thing. So, there's some of that in Luke, but he's not as, um, emotionally reactive as either Matthew or John to this, uh, the Christians being, being out on their own now.

Tony Chvala-Smith 07:49

And a little cultural moment here. In Roman antiquity, uh, Romans, Romans valued ancient things. They trusted ancient things. And were more skeptical of contemporary things. So, I don't know if you want to translate that into our own time and space. Uh, maybe you, may, maybe we wouldn't want to translate that, but

Karin Peter 08:09

That will send us on some tangents we've (Yeah.) gone on before (. . .)

Tony Chvala-Smith 08:14

Rabbit holes there. But, but, so, the idea of trying to demonstrate that this, this religion is actually ancient, uh, isn't, is really an attempt to appeal to Roman sensibilities, that, Hey, you don't need to be afraid of this. It's old and venerable. It's, it's, it's connected to Judaism and as old as, as old as Moses. And so don't be afraid, don't be alarmed. And, by the way, this religion is actually older than your Roman religion. So, it's kind of a, you know, who's, who's, who's, who's on first here.

Karin Peter 08:44

So, it's Luke's, uh, take on being grandfather cloused in? (Yeah.) Right? (That's a great.) Because there was some protection there if they, if they continued to be associated with Judaism, so, (Right.) political protection.

Tony Chvala-Smith 08:57

Right. Right. The, the Romans, the Ro, the Romans, uh, gave Judaism the status of a religio legita, a, a, a licit religion, a legal religion, not because they liked Judaism, but because it was old. And it had, it predated them. And, so, in, in their minds. And, so, that was a way that they allowed, uh, practicing Jews to be exempt from, uh, all kinds of imperial worship practices that celebrated different gods and ultimately that, that deified the emperor and so on. So, so in Luke, Luke really in his narrative about Jesus, and then his narrative about church, he's wanting to claim that status for Christianity. (Okay.) So, uh, some things, I mean, just to further get started here, some things about, uh, context, authorship, genre and date, our usual kind of starting point, and, and, so, you, you can, you can discern the setting behind the gospel Luke, uh, in three ways. First, from the prologue, the first four verses of chapter one, which we're going to look at in detail here in a minute because, because of, of all the Gospels, Luke's is the only one where the author where the author, uh, steps out behind the curtain and says, Hey, I'm an author. This is what I'm doing. This is what I'm about. And that's, that's really helpful. So, we'll re, look at the prologue briefly. And then, um, we'll, we'll say a little bit, you know, Luke relies on sources. He relies on Mark, for example, as one of the sources. And, so, when you're reading Luke, how, how Luke

arranges his sources and how he makes changes to Mark also gives you clues about his context in his readership. And then finally, uh, since the trajectory goes from Luke one to Acts 28, when you get to Acts, you, when you read Acts, you can also figure out some things about Luke's context as he was writing the gospel, kind of, uh, retroactively. So, those are ways you can figure out Luke's context and, and i, it helped, we're, we're able to, to, you know, put this gospel in the last quarter of the first century quite easily. You know, sometime after Mark and before, before Acts. So, that's typically our way of how, saying 80 to 90 is pretty good ballpark, probably before that, not really, after 90, probably not. Uh, so, so that's, that's how we ge, how we get, get to all of that. And, so, the next thing we're gonna' do is take a look at the prologue. So,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 11:21

So, and it answers the, we're trying to answer the question, So, why was Luke written? You know, it's like, Mark was already around. It's circulating obviously. Luke has had access to it. Um, probably the authors of Luke and Matthew are far enough away from each other and they're not aware that each other is also doing, uh, an, a biography of Jesus. But, um, so, why, why is it that this author feels the need to write a biography of Jesus. And,

Tony Chvala-Smith 11:58

And, so, here we have the prologue. And the word prologue is, uh, an English word borrowed from Greek. Prologos in Greek means a fore word. So, this is the foreword to, to Luke. And, uh, it's quite, in, in Greek, it's very, very elegant, long sentence. And it reads, Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too, decided after investigating everything carefully, from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theopolis, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. So, long enough sentence in English. Uh, it's, it's, uh, quite elegant in Greek. So,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 12:56

So, within this, you know, we might hear kind of blah, blah, blah, blah, scripture. Yep, yep. Um, but this is actually a, uh, a goldmine of information. And so we're going to take it verse by verse and unpack each one to see what is actually being said, and also to, uh, to get kind of a little bit of a look into the author of, of Luke, their, their workshop, and how they're going about doing this. So, we start with, Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us. Okay, so, already, this author knows that there are others who have done this as well, who have tried to do this, to write down an orderly account. So, this author is not convinced it's there orderly enough, but we'll get to that. An orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us. And, so, he's placing himself squarely within the Christian church, what's been fulfilled, um, here a reference to Christ's presence and probably what's been fulfilled as far as this forming of, uh, what will be called Christianity. So, that's some pieces there already. Um, he knows there's other people and he's about to do what they've done.

Tony Chvala-Smith 14:35

And the word orderly account in Greek is (. . .), which means a, a narrative that's in decent chronological order. So, that's, that's, and he's going to use it again and this is what he's trying to do.

He wants to create a narrative about Jesus that works from beginning to end, uh, as well as possible. Then his next line, line two, verse two, Now, now we can begin to say, ah, what can we detect about where the author is just as those events were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, the message, right? Well, notice that he's not including himself among the eyewitnesses. And, so, he is the recipient of tradition. That's the phrase to hand on. In, in Greek, it literally means to pass, pass over, uh, stuff, tradition. So, these orderly accounts, whatever he's got, whatever tradition he's got, he knows that they come from an, from an earlier period of the church's life. And that's what he's going to use. And he has some kind of reasonable trust in them.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 15:41

Yeah, I think that is just, you begin to look at his table. And you're seeing that he has before him different manuscripts that others have written and that have been handed on to his generation and that he's going to be using those and that he trusts that they came, at least, um, whether directly or perhaps, um, in a dictated form, uh, from eyewitnesses, but he's not claiming himself as an eyewitness at all. He's, he's looking to a whole previous generation of people who were eyewitnesses to Christ, um, and servants of the word. They were ministers of Christ. So, he's already placing himself in, um, in order in at least a second generation order, which is pretty cool 'cause, you know, when we would do an exam and we would ask students to name the apostles and they would do Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, uh, because they hadn't actually done the reading. Um, so, but we know now that, that this Luke, or whomever this author is, he's already told us I wasn't there. I'm, I'm much later to the story than those who are eyewitnesses and the first servants of the word.

Tony Chvala-Smith 17:05

And I, I have actually heard someone from a pulpit before, say, uh, on the gospel of Luke, Luke was there. He was an eyewitness. He, he was there. And I thought, Hmm, you're, you're the undergraduate student who didn't read the introduction to the book which was required reading and you went right into later chapters. I'm serious.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 17:23

Because the author is telling us, I wasn't there.

Tony Chvala-Smith 17:25

Then for three, this is an intro, this is, this is, we, we, we teach, we say, we try to reinforce biblical books are authored by people who chose to write and here's a perfect example of that, I too decided. I made a decision right, after investigating everything carefully from the very first to write an orderly account for you. Now we'll get to Theophilus in a minute. But, but this, this is a sign that this is an author who has control over material, who made decisions, who did research, who did his digging, and then crafted a narrative. When we say that scripture is humanly written, uh, these, these are writings that come from human beings. They're not, they're not Instagram posts from God. This is what we mean, that authors decided in particular contexts to write something for particular reasons. And we will misunderstand the Bible if we don't start with that assumption.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 18:23

And, you know, I think here again, as Tony is saying, people often think somebody just, you know, started writing what God told them to say. Uh, they're being commanded to write and God's just going to tell them what to say. Here in this one verse, you already have at least two witnesses, uh, from the author himself that say otherwise. I, too, decided. I decided, but then after investigating, he's doing study. He's checking it out. He's looking at the sources. He's looking at, um, probably differing versions of stories, investigating what he thinks is probably the most accurate or perhaps the most helpful for the way he wants to tell the story, which I think is, is a really honest way to look at what these authors did with the sources they had.

Tony Chvala-Smith 19:16

Now here, finally, we get, we get an addressee. Right? So, uh, to write an orderly account for you most excellent Theophilus. And in narratives of this type in the Greco Roman world, when someone is named like this at the start of a, a, a written, a written piece, most commonly it's because that person was the patron of the work. That is, Theophilus, uh, is someone who asked for more information about Jesus about what he was getting into and so on. And then simply, we could say hired, hired a, a person with, with great literary skills to do the work and the writing. When he's addressed his most excellent, Luke is not just being polite. This is, this is a social status marker. In the Roman Empire, when you address somebody like that, it means that they're your social superior. So, Theophilus, Theophilus is not, uh, a run of the mill dude. He's a higher status dude in the Roman Empire. Uh, by the way, there's a, a, a tradition you hear, it goes back to Origen of Alexandria, that Theophilus is actually a symbol since the, the name, the name in Greek means friend of God, or beloved of God, or something like that. And, so, some people said, Well, he's not really writing to an individual. He's writing to anybody who wants to love God. And that's not really considered plausible anymore because, first of all, Theophilus is a very common name in the Greco Roman world. And, secondly, when you compare this to other narratives, uh, you know, uh, Greek narratives, Roman narratives, Jewish narratives from the period, it's almost always clear that somebody, somebody who's being addressed had, uh, a stake in what was being written. So, that, in other words, this, this piece of literature is addressed to somebody who's highly literate, is trained and highly literate, which will make sense of a certain fact, feature of Luke, is that Luke of all, of all four gospels, Luke is the most stylistically rich and complicated and, and, uh, you know, if you, if you studied Greek with me for one year, we could start reading John. John's very simple, but you're going to need three years to really start working through getting Luke. It's a little more, it's a more complicated Greek text to read. So,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:36

Well, I think there's something else that we can see here because you could say, Well, you know, Theophilus just hired, you know, a good Greek person, and he might just happen to be Christian, to write this. But we actually see a lot more than that about the author, though he's using the proper terms for someone of a higher status. He is not, he is, he is himself the more experienced and authoritative within Christianity. And the ways that we will see that as we go, is that he is not writing just for Theophilus' ear or approval. Um, if Theophilus is the patron, the one providing the money so that this author can do this, he's not beholden to him because this is the gospel that most frequently and consistently talks about the dangers of wealth. And, so, he's, he is not in any way, um, muting the

message of Christ so that it'll be more comfortable for this person of status and wealth who's obviously wealthy enough to have this project done.

Tony Chvala-Smith 23:02

And if we go to verse four, we find out another thing about Theophilus that's really important. Uh, Theophilus so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. And the Greek word instruct here is the verb (. . .) from, from which we get later, the word catechism. And this, this implies that Theophilus is not just some curious Gentile, but that he's, he's already kind of in and he's been instructed about basic Christian doctrine or faith. But he wants to know more about where it came from. And, and probably he wants to know, how is it connected to Judaism? And am I joining, am I joining a new thing or an old thing? And, you know, there's a variety of questions he must want to know. But he has been instructed. And we can treat him as a new convert, a new high status, high, high social status convert. The word truth here, by the way, um, is not the typical Greek word for truth. It's a word that more commonly means something like, uh, security. How, how can I, how can I be assured, uh, either that the stuff that I'm, I've been instructed in is reasonably accurate or whatever. Something like that. (Yeah.) So, we just did a lot of work on four verses there, but it does give us

Karin Peter 24:18

(. . .) for Episode One on Luke. There we go.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:23

Now, you see why we couldn't put Acts in.

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:25

Yeah. So, one of the things that, that we can tell there, Luke had sources. And the source, the source theory that is most common among scholars that goes back to the 1860s is sometimes called the two or four source theory. We talked about it with Matthew and with Luke, it's similar. Luke has in front of him a copy of Mark in Greek. He has a copy most likely of a collection of Jesus' sayings called Q. And then he has, whether written or oral, what we call L, his own unique stuff. And, so, this is, this is, it, and then when we get into Acts, you can see that he's probably, he's probably going around, he's probably done some, some, in fact, this has probably been research with travel, with a travel site, then, and he's, he very, may very well have asked people who were connected to the earliest church for stuff. But he has sources, he has, he has control of his sources. He's an author. He's going to put the sources together in a way that will speak to Theophilus and other Gentiles who are new converts to Christianity. So, that, that's a lot, we can figure out a lot about where this gospel is going right from those four verses. So,

Karin Peter 25:31

And we do that today when we write, uh, in the church, if we're writing for a particular group of people, I mean, even when we talk here on Project Zion, we know that we're speaking to two audiences. We're talking to Community of Christ people, but we're also talking to a lot of people who've come from the Latter-day Saint tradition. And, so, we (. . .) share things in a way that both those audiences can hear us and that's real similar to what's happening here.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 25:57

Yes. Yes. And, you know, as we said, um, Luke is not muting this at all for Theophilus. He, he wants him to be a good follower of Christ and follower of Christ, is really a big theme for Luke. It's about following Jesus' example. And we'll see that a little bit here and how he portrays who Jesus is. Jesus is followable. The things he does are doable. And, so, for someone who's been very shaped by Roman culture and privilege and having money, um, Theophilus has got some things to learn. And, so, Luke is gonna', gonna' help him keep wanting him to see what this is really about. What does it mean to be a follower of this Jesus guy?

Tony Chvala-Smith 26:51

I like that Jesus is fallible. You might have trouble keeping up, but he's, it's kinda' like, kinda' like when Charmaine and I go for walks. She's taller and has longer legs. That means often I'm like, I'm like Gimli, following along behind. She's followable, but, you know, you, you can. You, you can keep up.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 27:08

Just needs a little encouragement, that's all.

Tony Chvala-Smith 27:12

So, one of the thing, Luke, uh, the Gospel, Luke is a, Luke is a stylistic genius. So, I'll give you an example from the whole, from the gospel. That prologue, first four verses, it's written in elegant, classical style. So, the author lives in the first century. We're way beyond classical period, but he, he imitates classical style. And then, chapter one, verse five, when he starts narrating then, the nativity story that's set in, that's set in, uh, in Judea in the first century, he swings into a style, that sounds like the Septuagint, like the Greek Old Testament that, that, uh, Greek speaking Jews use. So, it has a, it had, we'll say, it has a biblical sound to it. And then when he gets, when he gets to Jesus in his ministry in chapter four, he then swings into a more, a more commonly spoken Greek style, uh, you know, I won't call it street Greek because it's not vulgar, but it's, it's the, it's the everyday speech of the Roman Empire. Right? And so he's got, he's got three styles going on,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 28:16

Which is saying something about who Jesus is and his ministry (Um hmm.) that he's your every man, you know, he's very, very much brings up the humanity of Christ throughout.

Tony Chvala-Smith 28:28

And it says something to Theophilus who's high status, very literate, very wealthy, that you, you, you're, you've been instructed, you're joining in with this group. And now let's look at wha, let's look at who Jesus hangs out with 'cause it's gonna' require some changes on your part. So, you know, there's a lot of features of Luke's gospel that are very familiar to people. Like the nativity story. This is the longest of the nativity stories. And, by the way, the Magi are not in this one. They're in Matthew. But this, this nativity story focuses a lot on Elizabeth and Mary which is really important. Uh, so, they have, they have star roles at the start of this gospel.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 29:10

As does John the Baptist. Um, it's the pre-story of John the Baptist with his father Zachariah and his mom, Elizabeth, that, that begin this story. Um, helping to set again this, this whole story within Judaism. The story begins with Zechariah in the temple, uh, in Luke. The story in Luke ends with, after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, his disciples in the temple. And, so, ahh, he just, he's an artist when it comes to creating these messages throughout. It's also in this gospel that has the, um, when Jesus is taken to the temple when he's a few days old. There's Simeon and Anna. Uh, Simeon, a religious person. Anna, a prophetess who recognized who he is and proclaim that to the people around. Again, within Judi, within Judaism. These are recognizers within Judaism of what is happening. Um, so, lots of, lots of new details that you wouldn't get from any of the other Gospels about who is Jesus? And who is the one even who'll point to Jesus. So, John the Baptist. Who is John the Baptist and what is his message? So, it's a, it's lovely, it's lovely. It takes again deep dives into the, the pre-story of who is Jesus.

Tony Chvala-Smith 30:55

And, and think about you're, you're starting this, this story of Jesus, who as, who, when he's born is declared by the angels, Lord, Christ and Son of God. But the key figures in this, in the first part of the story, are women. Uh, low, lower status in the Roman, in Roman social world. So, that, that tells us something already about how Luke sees the gospel as a, as, as elevating. And then Mary's song, the, the one that's called the Magnificat, uh, he has exalt, God, He, God has exalted those of low degree, right, and put down the mighty from their thrones. So, this, this gospel has immediate political, political, social overtones if you, if you read it trying to pay attention to who's, who's, who's got what status in the Roman Empire and who's talking here?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 31:44

Well, and who are the first people that, besides the family, know about this birth? Shepherds. Shepherds. Stinky people, who you, you know, you moved a little further away from when they came into town. Um, and it, and yet they're the chosen audience of the angels. Not, not kings. Not people of high status. Not religious people of high status. Everyday people.

Karin Peter 32:17

Not even people in town.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:19

Ahaha. Good. Good.

Karin Peter 32:21

I mean, like, Elizabeth and (. . .) she's in the hills. She is as rural as you get and the shepherds as well.

Tony Chvala-Smith 32:27

Yeah. So, so there's, there's all, all kinds of signs in the narrative right from the start, that Jesus is going to, Jesus already upsets the social balance. And that, that ought to make a lot of contemporary readers uncomfortable, uh, if we would just stop proof texting the darn thing and read it as a narrative, you

know, and, and, and pay attention. So, there's, there's a lot of other cool features in the Gospel, like, for example, this gospel has a number of stories and parables that are so widely quoted, like the Good Samaritan and the prodigal son. (And are the only place that they're found.) Um hmm. Which then if you think about the sources, that's L. That's Luke's unique, Luke's unique sources there. Um, this gospel, Luke, Luke, more than any other gospel writer, connects the rise of Christianity. He puts it in an imperial framework, right? He mentions Tiberius. Uh, he mentions Caesar Augustus. And when the narrative starts in Judea, but when you get to the end of Volume Two, we're in Rome, and (Meaning Acts.) Acts, yeah, Volume Two, Acts. Thanks. So, so, Luke is trying to show that this religion has implications for the whole empire. It's not just some little local backwater, uh, sideshow cult, right? It, it, it has a univ, it has a universal appeal. And that's a quite an important thing that's going on here. Um,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:56

And we've already, um, suggested it, but we'll be specific about it. Jesus is very in Luke, is very interested in and intentional about connecting with women, with those in the lower classes, with those who are marginalized, those who are rejected within Judaism. Um, the number of women who, who show up in those very first chapters, um, is just marvelous. And they're named women. They're not just, you know, this woman or that woman, but they're named women. Uh, and you will see that throughout. So, very intentional. Tax collectors who are seen as traitors and they, they show up in and are affirmed by Jesus in ways that would have been shocking to good religious people of the day.

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:55

And here's another feature of the gospel that, uh, lots of contemporary readers who are socially comfortable, uh, maybe either neglect, skip over or balk at. And that's that Jesus is more critical of the wealthy and wealth in this gospel than any other. This is the gospel, uh, where Jesus, Jesus gives, uh, the Sermon on the Plain here instead of the Sermon on the Mount and it's much shorter in Luke. But in this version of it, Jesus says, Blessed are the poor,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 35:31

not poor in Spirit, like in Matthew,

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:33

Blessed are the poor. And, Woe to you who are rich, speaking like a Prophet from the Hebrew Bible. And there are a number of stories in the gospel, or parables and, and scenes, in which it's quite clear that the message of Jesus, uh, has a critique in it about the acquisition of wealth, the a, the abuse of the poor by the wealthy, and, uh, the dangers of wealth.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 35:59

And a good example is, uh, the, the rich man and Lazarus, which is a parable. And again, look at those named. Who is named? Uh, the rich man doesn't have a name. People over time have given, uh, a name to, to him. But in the actual text, Lazarus, this homeless person living on the streets outside of the rich man's door, whose, whose sores are being licked by the dogs, um, and whom the rich man is not caring for. Um, it's, it's the homeless man who's named, not the rich man. And then to look at the whole dynamic of what happens in that parable is wonderful. But, again, very intentionally saying, no, no, no, no, you're not seeing people as God sees people. And it's coming through over and over again. Jesus

is, is pointing to how does God see that person who's next to you, your neighbor, your enemy, um, the person you look down on.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:15

So, I mean, there's, there's just so many cool features here. And I, one, one more that's worth, worth mentioning, is that in, in Mark's gospel, Jesus' trip from Galilee to Jerusalem takes one chapter. Luke takes that one chapter and ex, expands it into about 10 chapters which scholars have named the travelogue, which is a, it's been, it's a weird term for it. It's, it's kind of, I mean that sounds like a TV program or something, but

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 37:38

(. . .) sounds like Jesus on a cruise, you know?

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:40

That's right. But, but, you know, at the end of chapter nine, Jesus sets, sets his face for Jerusalem and then from the end of nine until 19, he's, he's on the road, heading towards, he does most of his teaching while on the way. Interestingly, Luke is the one who refers to the Christian movement as The Way. Now don't confuse it with John's Gospel where Jesus is called The Way there. In Luke's gospel, this, this Christian path is literally a path. It's a, it's a journey. And, so, it's, it's, it's acted out at the very end of the story with the, uh, on Easter, Easter Sunday, the, the, the walk to Emmaus where two disciples, two discip, two disciples, perhaps former disciples who are now disillusioned, are heading back home. And the risen Jesus appears to them kind of incognito, uh, on the way and as, as they're walking and talking, uh, Jesus is unfolding the scriptures to them and, you know, and so then, then they invite Jesus in and he in the breaking of bread, it becomes clear that, Wait a second. This is Jesus. And the, and then he disappears. And then they head all the way back to Jerusalem. So, travel, Christian, Christianity as a road trip is, I think, an important theme that Luke tries to, uh, convey just with the way he lays the narrative out.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 39:00

If you think of road trip as, uh, a walking road trip, (Right.) got to get the dust in there, got to get that feel. So, another aspect, and this is a theme that will run throughout, is, uh, Jesus as the man of prayer. And I did just a little, uh, research as far as pray and prayer and praying. And Luke has the highest number of references to all three of those words, to pray, prayer and praying, and, uh, in often, twice as much as some of the other gospels. Um, well, actually, John doesn't use those words much at all. So, but even with Matthew, uh, about twice as much. So, and, and here, these are praying off by yourself kinds of times. It's not about, you know, doing a eloquent, you know, public prayer. This is Jesus off just needing to connect with, with the source and, um, needing to clear his head and tap time away and, and prepare for what's coming next. So, prayer is really, really, uh, elemental to who Jesus is. But it also is something that the author is wanting to say, This is a way in which you can follow Jesus. And the other way that, that the author makes that explicit is that Jesus is so accessible to His disciples in Luke, that they see what he's doing in prayer and they ask him to teach them. You don't ask someone who you think is, you know, too far away that, that you couldn't, you couldn't do what they're doing. They believe that, that what Jesus is doing is what they should be doing, too. And they ask for help in learning how to pray. Um, so, it's, that's a, a cool piece of it. And, also, we'll come up with this again

and again, is that Jesus is accessible. That's the biggest, one of the biggest themes in Luke. Um, Jesus is, is just the guy next door. He's somebody you can talk to. He's someone that you wouldn't mind, you know, brushing shoulders with in the crowd. And, you know, you wouldn't feel intimidated or anything like that. If, he's somebody who intend, he, he does that. He breaks down those walls of class and, um, ethnicity and gender. He's the one who's touching people, he probably shouldn't, uh, conventionally. Um, he's breaking down those, um, hesitations between people.

Tony Chvala-Smith 41:50

Uh, Je, this Gospel Jesus parties with everybody. He's, he's, he is a party animal in this gospel and the Pharisees and scribes, the religious people are like, That can't be right. As they, as they are often want to say. So, Jesus is not afraid to eat, drink, have a good time with a group of people. And it becomes an occasion for him to teach about the Kingdom of God. So, now we can switch gears to explore, we've been explaining in introducing the gospel and now we can go to explore where, uh, questions, Karin, any questions you have about Luke that because we, we, we always look forward to your questions.

Karin Peter 42:35

Answer questions. So, I do (The ones we've got the answers to.) So, I, I do have, uh, I do have a, a question about how we look at, um, the Gospels. So, in Luke when, well, let's go back to Mark. When you read Mark, you don't realize when you're just reading through, as you said earlier, Charmaine, scripture, scripture, scripture, blah, blah, blah, okay. You don't notice that Mark is really snarky about the apostles. He, he gets that, the tone is very snarky. And in Luke, Jesus makes some comments at different times and it's not that same kind of snarkine, uh, snarkiness that Mark has, but it is, it does give us, I think, some insight into Jesus as not always this what you see in the movie, this super pious with the glowing eyes. Who is, is that on South Park? I forget where? Who has the glowing eyes? Is that Jesus? I don't remember. But anyway, it's not, it's not that. It's, it's he reacts to people. And it, I think it has something to do with your accessibility comment. (Yeah.) Is that my imagination or is that (. . .) built into the Gospel of Luke?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 43:48

It is and he's, I mean, he even shows frustration. So, again, very human. Um, you know, it's like, Oh, my gosh, have you not got it yet? You know, but it's not done in a way that is pushing him, pushing people away from him, but he, but he does, he does show human emotions. Um, he's, Yeah, it's not, he's not above other people in, in the ways that Matthew would have him as being this kind of more distant Moses figure, right? That's Matthew. Um, but here, he's, you know, they, they don't always know what to make of him, um, because, you know, he's not, he's not Pharisee material. Uh, you know, he's not that kind of religious. Um, yeah, yeah, I think you can, that's a, a theme that just hits, keeps hitting.

Karin Peter 44:49

It's an interactive Jesus. That's the only word that comes to mind for (Yes.) me.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:53

Yes. Yes. And, and Luke's, in some respects of all four gospels, Luke's the one who most humanizes Jesus in his portrait of him, so, you can actually almost imagine eating with this guy. Um, and then in Luke's, uh, scene in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus is praying at, you know, towards the end,

um, there is a, there's a manuscript, a text critical questionnaire, but some manuscripts of Luke have Jesus sweating great drops of blood. Now, it's not, it's not entirely clear whether that's original to the text or added by scribes, but a lot of manuscripts of Luke have that. And if it, if it was orig, original to the text and Luke's trying to show that, that Jesus, Jesus really doesn't, really struggling to go through with this

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 45:37

He's agonizing over what's before him.

Tony Chvala-Smith 45:41

And let's use the word because Luke actually use, uses the word agonia, in Greek, which is, it's, we get our word agony from it, but in, in the Greek world, agonia is the, the contest of people in the Olympics. It's, it's, (. . .) it's real sweat and blood struggle over something to succeed at something. And so

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 46:02

Yeah, so, yeah, Jesus is bringing all of his feelings here. He's not playing the part of someone who is, um, has to control all of his feelings and be better than the people around him as far as, um, his, his expression of his concern. Uh, and there's times when he corrects people. He corrects his disciples with some sharpness. Um, and there's times when he is so gentle to the people who have been most judged by his society. And, and it's like, Oh, my gosh, how could a man in that society, get away with that, of, you know, letting this woman, you know, If you knew the kind of woman that this was, who is touching your feet. Um, you know, that kind of thing. Um,

Tony Chvala-Smith 46:56

Luke chapter seven, by the way, verses 36 to 50.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 46:59

And, and that he is being gentle and kind and affirming who she is. Um, it's the whole, the whole array of an emotional person, a person with, with real life emotions that would have made him seem very, um, un, unmanly in some ways. But he's not trying to be those things. So, it is then, what is the question is, the question is, What is he trying to be? (Um hmm.) And, um, one of the things that we're going to say is that this is the gospel where Jesus is trying to be accessible. But was the purpose of saying, because God is accessible, I want you, I want to bring you into the presence of God who sees you in this way, with this kind of love, with this kind of forgiveness, and with this kind of acceptance. And, so, his accessibility is not about him to win lots of appeal. But because he's trying to say, This is what God is about. And, again, Spirit, the Holy Spirit is by far of the, of the four Gospels, the Spirit's at work everywhere. It's, it's in preparation, you know, it's at work, um, in everybody's lives. It's at work in Zacharias' life. It's at work in, uh, Elizabeth as, as John the Baptist leaps. Um, the Spirit's at work in John the Baptist. The Spirit is at work in these times of prayer with Jesus. Spirit is at work in conception. You know, it's, the Spirit is everywhere and wanting to be everywhere in the story. And that is about, so, already this author is saying to us, and will say louder and clearer in Acts, but God is with you. The Spirit is God with you. And Jesus is, is spreading the Spirit everywhere and, uh, showing people what it means to, to be touched by, healed by, forgiven by God.

Tony Chvala-Smith 49:18

So, on the one hand, Luke, you could say Luke has a, what's called a low Christology focuses on the humanity of Jesus, a, a lot. On the other hand, you could say, but in Luke's, in Luke's theology, Jesus is the giver of the Divine Spirit. That's a high thing to say. So, in other words, Luke has both things at work there. Jesus is fully human. Right? He likes to eat and party. He's also, as we would say in later language, fully divine (. . .). He's giving the thing that only God can give. He's breathing the Spirit on peoples. He's sharing the Spirit with people. And that accessibility the, my, I love the, the Zacchaeus story, uh, partly because Zacchaeus is short and I can relate, and, so, so, Zacchaeus, the tax collector, hated collaborator with the Romans is in a tree trying to see Jesus. And Jesus passes, passes under the tree and, and says, I'm having lunch at your house today. I think it's, like, Jesus is accessible and note he notices people. Right? And, and

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 50:21

He's not shy about inviting himself to their house either.

Karin Peter 50:24

No, apparently not. But I think there's also in what you talked about on, on this, on the Spirit, the lavishing the Spirit everywhere that Jesus is bringing our Spirit. This is something that I think, um, can speak to our climate of individuals who will say, I'm spiritual, but not religious. In Luke's gospel, Jesus is very spiritual, but not religious in the classic sense of fitting into the religion and the culture of the day.

Tony Chvala-Smith 50:54

Right. He's, he certainly, he certainly, uh, darkens the door of synagogues all over the place. He's not, he's not church shy, we could say, but certainly not conventionally religious. And the Spirit is the Spirit of freedom and new creation, which we'll see in the book of Acts, uh, turning a group, a couple hundred peop, less than a couple hundred people into a kind of monumental, uh, movement. So, yeah, some cool stuff here. So, um, other, dDid you have any other questions, Karin, that came up for you?

Karin Peter 51:28

Not yet, but I bet I'll have some by the time we're done.

Tony Chvala-Smith 51:30

Oh, alright. So, we, there's, there's things about this gospel that ought to make comfortable read, comfortable people uncomfortable. We kind of (All of us, probably.) Right. Right. So, remember we mentioned his critique of, of the rich and of wealth. We talked about that. And then we, this, this gospel actually rejects first century gender ideologies. Right? And, and instead, it elevates women. Now, for us, gender is a much more, it's become a much more broad and fluid. It's not just male, female. So, it's much more broad concept. But we're talking about for, for a first century text to have women as key players, women as the supporters of Jesus in chapter eight, (Wom.), um,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 52:17

Women, oh, yeah, that's right. (Yeah.) Beginning of chapter eight, if you want to know what this group of followers of Jesus looks like, it's right there. And it's men and women traveling through the

countryside who aren't married to each other. And the women are disciples just as much as the men are, maybe more, because they're also the ones who are funding this whole

Karin Peter 52:39

Financing, financing the expedition.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 52:42

And there's a reference to that near the end of Mark. But here in Luke, it is, right there. It's obvious and you get a much different picture than you get, um, from many paintings of Jesus and a little group of men wandering through the countryside and being all religious. Well, no. This is a group of men and women. And, um, it's the, it's the faithfulness of women. It's the willingness of Mary to say yes, and this is the gospel with the Magnificat in it. Mary's song of what God is doing. Uh, it's, it's, uh, it's everywhere. And, again, the prophetess, Anna, and

Tony Chvala-Smith 53:25

And, and like, if I can use some of, oh, I cut you (No.) off. I'm sorry. (No. No, you didn't.) Um, in, in the, in the, the conception scene in, in chapter one, I think we could use this language, uh, that, that this is an act of consent on Mary's part. Let it be to me according to your word. Uh, Mary's not passive in, in the offer. That is, that is made there. Um, and, so, there are, there are, you know, uh, virginal conception stories in other religions, but I don't know that women have choice in them. Right? Here, here Mary is, is saying yes to it. I think that's really important to pick up in the story. And, um, then there's, then there's that story that irritates so many people, Mary and Martha, in chapter 10. Jesus goes to the home of Mary and Martha. Martha's busy fixing food for the disciples. Mary is in with the male disciples sitting at Jesus' feet. Uh, culture point, uh, students of rabbis sat at their feet and were taught, so, Mary, Mary is aligning herself with the male disciples. And Jesus is teaching them and Jesus hasn't said anything about it. He's fine with it. Until Martha says, uh, Mar

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 54:42

Martha says, she doesn't talk to Mary, she talks to Jesus to talk to Mary (Right.) and says, uh, you know, Make her do what she should do. And Jesus says, No.

Tony Chvala-Smith 54:54

I love that. It's like, like, wha, that, that kind of stuff still goes on. The woman goes to the man to get the man to do the other woman, to, to have the other woman do something. It's like the triangulation and using the superior male, quote, authority do that and, and Jesus is like, No. Leave her alone. She chose the better thing. That has got to be one of the most wildly, uh, gender critical, gender role critical stories in ancient literature anywhere. And I know that when we use that story with, with church people and there's always (. . .) women and men who say, Oh, I don't like that story because I'm Martha. I really liked Martha. And, actually, the story is not about you. Right? It's, this is about, this is about Jesus overturning tables, right, in a metaphorical way. So, that's, that ought to make us, uh, wince because I don't think we, when it comes to gender roles and stuff, we think we got it and we haven't got it.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 55:50

Well, it's also, it challenges the, the idea that we earn our salvation somehow, you know, that somehow it's all of our doing that matters. And Jesus saying, No, it actually doesn't. That's not what matters here.

Tony Chvala-Smith 56:06

Another thing that ought to be, I think, socially, politically disturbing to, certainly to American readers of this text, is that, uh, Jesus categorically favors outsiders, aliens, uh, the other, right, throughout this gospel. And, so, that's, that's,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 56:26

Again, the Good Samaritan. Um, the tax collectors. Those who have, those who have put themselves outside, like the tax collectors. Um, and Jesus is saying, No, no, no. You're here, too. You are here, too.

Tony Chvala-Smith 56:43

And one other thing that's, that's very easy to miss because we overlay centuries of theology on it, is that if you look at Luke's crucifixion scene and lay it next to, to Mark's, which is his main source for the crucifixion scene, one of the things you will see that Luke is doing is he is muting or playing down atonement themes. You have to look closely, read the text very closely. Now, hear me. I'm not being, uh, there, there's, I think there's plenty of theological room to talk about types of atonement and so on. But if you're preaching on Luke's crucifixion scene on Good Friday, you, and you start talking about, Oh, look at Jesus dying for our sins. You're not reading Luke. Because that's not how Luke understands the crucifixion. Luke depicts the crucifixion as the fate of all prophets. And Jesus dies, uh, in, in, in Luke's, uh, way of telling the story, Jesus dies heroically because Luke's trying to give disciples something to imitate if they face execution for their faith at some point. So, it's, it's a whole different way of construing Jesus' death, uh, that you have to be careful not to overlay other theology on it. So, (Yeah.) Some, some thing, some things that could disturb readers, uh, paying close attention to Luke.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 58:10

Right. So, any other questions that come to mind yet?

Karin Peter 58:14

No, not, well, yeah. I, let's go back a minute to the crucifixion scene when we do that. And if you could just say a little bit more about how we tend to lay, um, theological themes that we've picked up over what we're reading, because I think that's a really good place to do that. Um, we have gotten, I've received emails, um, when people have listened to different Project Zion Podcasts, um, whenever we start talking about why Jesus died on the cross, and there's a lot of that happening. Um, did Jesus die on the cross to save us all from sin because God required blood, uh, sacrifice? Did Jesus die, um, on the cross because we're all so, um, horrible and sinful that's the only way we could be reconciled to God? Did Jesus die on the cross because he was a political prisoner? Did Jesus die on the cross because he spoke truth to power in a prophetic voice? Um, will, we, we have a hard time in Community of Christ navigating that as we read Scripture. So, can you talk a little bit about that?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 59:27

Well, first of all, I would say that this is one of the reasons why we feel like it's important to read each gospel by itself. Let it speak what it's speaking. The second part that I would say is that even sometimes the same author will have more than one way of understanding Jesus' death or atonement. There's often different versions of what atonement means. Atonement meaning at-one-ment. Making people at one with God. And, for some, there, uh, there is reference to Jesus dying for our sins. Um, but there's often many other things, too. So, we've come up with, uh, a whole number of, a, a long list of different ways of understanding from scripture, from scripture a, alone. And then further developments by, by theologians using those scriptures. Like nine different ways of (Oh, yeah. Yeah.) understanding, uh, you know, what is the crucifixion about? What is the resurrection about because there's, it's, they're multifaceted. They have all of these different ways. It's, in some ways, it's the mystery, both of the crucifixion and of the resurrection, that they defy, having one way of understanding what they can mean. And some of our authors, some of our, our gospel writers, eh, they rely on two or three at the same time, or none. So, what would you do?

Karin Peter 1:01:01

So for, so for our listeners that hear something that they perhaps does make them uncomfortable, or that they don't agree with, it's helpful to understand that there are multiple perspectives and voices in the scriptures.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:01:12

Yeah, (Yeah.) absolutely. And I think also, we have to be attentive to the way that, uh, default setting Christianity, uh, infects our minds, then, and then we, and then we, then we read the infection into, into the texts, right? So, uh, it's just so common, I mean, it's like, it's a, it's a billboard platitude. "Christ died for your sins." And, so, and then, then people listen to music, a lot of contemporary music is just filled with this imagery. And then it becomes the meaning, the meaning, when in fact, the scriptures have multiple meanings. We're, we're so afraid of multiplicity of meanings, uh, which makes me wonder, Why would we have scriptures then, because scriptures are, it's a lib, these are libraries of books that often see religious realities differently. But our, our penchant for trying to smooth everything out into something you can fit on a bumper sticker, is really, it's really disastrous for reading the Bible. So, uh, learning to read, I'm, I'm so glad Carmaine mentioned it, learning to read each gospel on its own terms, learning to be comfortable with diversity of opinion in sacred texts on something that's a profound mystery. Look, we've got a profound mystery here. The one who is God with us died. That's, let's, let's live in the mystery for a while and, and early, early Christian authors said he died for us. Uh, (. . .) in Greek, on our behalf. What does that mean? Um, and there's no single theory of it in the New Testament. There's different ways the authors work it out and try to express it. You know, uh, in a narrative way, Matthew and Mark have an exchange take place. Jesus, the innocent one, dies on, dies in place of the, the guilty one? Well, that's a, that's a clear uh, Barabbas, right? That's a clear atonement theme. But then Luke, Luke has Jesus dying heroically, uh, forgiving, forgiving to his last breath and giving his spirit to God at the end, um, so, but, but

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:03:16

To show us a way. To show us a way to be both in this world and with God. So, it's, it's a whole different, each of these authors is going to give us some different things. And I, I'm really glad you

brought that up and I, I'm trying not to take too far afield here. But I think this is one of those places where we need to ask ourselves some questions when we come either to Scripture or to theological discussion. Often, people come with the assumption that the primary goal is to reinforce what they already think, to make them feel good about what they think. And, and so then they're using what they already think as a measurement of what's being said. And if somebody's not saying the same thing as what they think, well, then it's not right. It's not trustworthy. But actually what it is, is it's not letting God be God. It's not letting God be more than what we already know or more than what we've already experienced or beyond our imagination or our ability to put some things into words. So, I just, I think that's something we keep, we all need to keep reminding ourselves of because it's a, it's a really deep human tendency is to take what you have and use it as this little measuring stick to everything else that you hear around you and determine whether it's right or wrong. But what if, if my little measuring stick is too small and so I can't recognize where God might be at work because my measuring stick is about as long as my comfort

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:04:54

Yeah, ouch.

Karin Peter 1:04:55

Thanks, Charmaine.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:04:57

I'm speaking about myself and (. . .) who else identifies with it. But, yeah, you know, it's a, just, it's a dangerous thing to do. But people do it all the time in all kinds of settings. But we have a choice about whether or not we're willing to trust (Um hmm.) God by being vulnerable to being open to things we've not heard before, but that seem to be consistent with who God is.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:05:25

And, and what, and what if the primary thing the Holy Spirit wants to do in churches with scripture is not reinforce conventional religiosity, but use scripture to explode conventional religiosity, right? What if, uh, all of the great reformations in Christian history happened when someone read scripture differently and all of a sudden said, Holy cow. We've been getting that wrong. And it created, it created a spiritual explosion in them, right. And, so, (Including our own tradition.) Including our own tradition. So, so, uh, and the, and the Jesus, the Jesus of Luke's gospel is so anti-conventional, this gospel really could lend itself well to some, some non-conventional stuff. So. So, we've kind of worked through, uh, a number of things about Luke's gospel and we've done some exploring and I think, Charmaine, we haven't actually talked yet about,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:06:21

There's so many wonderful (Yeah.) things in Luke. I mean, there's the whole scene about Jesus, uh, that this become a theme for Community of Christ, the whole idea of Jesus, what is his mission? You know, um, I come to, you know, give freedom to the, those in prison and to, to heal the, the blind and, um, to, uh, to forgive. You know, it's that passage from Isaiah, that's, that's become kind of normative in the church as far as understanding what Jesus is about. Um, so, that's there. But, again, it's making

God accessible, that, that, using that scripture to say that that's what Jesus is about, is Jesus is tied, totally rooted in the human experience, and God can meet us there in our human experience.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:07:17

Another way that Jesus makes God accessible in this, this narrative is in how, how the Kingdom of God is depicted, right? The Kingdom of God in Luke's gospel is not depicted as far off and over there. It's depicted as right here, right now. And so this is the, this is the gospel, the only gospel where Jesus says, this is in chapter 17, The Kingdom of God is among you. (. . .) in Greek. It can mean within, but it's not, it's, it's probably not intended to be like in (Personal.), an inner thing, but, like, right here. It's with, its among us right here. And how, how can you tell when it's being activated? Well, by who's, by who's coming, the blind, the oppressed, those who are struggling, those who are outside, the lost, those, those who are outside of the church's favor, right? That's, that's where the Kingdom of God is in this gospel. And, so, Jesus is making God accessible right here and right now. Um, so, is Jesus modeling constancy and prayer in this gospel. It's a way of saying, God, God is as, God is as close as your prayers. Uh, that's another way. So,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:08:28

But it's, but it's also, there's another whole part of that prayer part and that is, Jesus needed to pray. He, he wasn't floating through this life with this assurance and, and free of anxiety and knowing what, how the end was going to happen. He's, he's bowed down by the weight of it all. He needs to pray. He needs to have time to say, Oh, my God, what, what, what is it next? What do I do? How do I keep myself centered? Whatever it might, might have been, he needs it. And, uh, and he also has been, you know, representing to his followers, it's okay to need prayer. It's okay to be needy. Um, God, God will be there.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:09:18

So, this is quite a bit going on here that's of relevance immediately to, to spiritual formation (. . .) to, to growing in spirituality. Uh, that, that theme for sure about prayer. Um, and that prayer, uh, is a constant, is to be a constant practice, uh, not a one off, right. That's part of the, the narrative is teaching that. Uh, there's, there's a scene, I can't remember which chapter it's in, where it says, And the Spirit was with him to heal, which is an interesting depiction of Jesus that means Jesus, Jesus relied on the Spirit to help him. It wasn't, wasn't just, wasn't just a super, kind of Ubermensch, who could just do anything you wanted to at any time. He had to rely on the presence of the Spirit, too. (Um hmm.) And that's, I think, really important for us in times when our churches need to do some deep discerning work about their future. What to do, where should we go? What should we be engaging in? Um, we, we need to rely on the Spirit, too. And, um, I don't know, there's, there's just so much to love in this gospel, I think. Uh, and, uh, it, it, there's sections of it that take some deep pondering. Uh, lots of parts of it take some deep pondering. So, so that's kind of an introduction to Luke's gospel and maybe now it's time to experience the text.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:10:42

Yeah. So, as always, as we go into looking at a passage, we remind ourselves that we see scripture as human writings. And because they're human writings, they give us, um, a chance to look into our own human experience. And though, you know, some of our listeners will have had bad experience with

scripture because it's been abused or they've been abused with it or it's been misused with them. Um, we can let ourselves, um, let our, our humanness and the author's humanness find some common ground. I think, uh, there's, that's a, a safer way of letting ourselves be vulnerable to scripture. So, in Luke, Jesus' humanness allows him to be accessible to others and, um, to be an example. Um, he also made God accessible. The Spirit is touching people all over the place, filling him, uh, not filling him just for himself, but so he can share the Spirit with others. And then this will be a clue about what his followers can expect, the gifts that he will give them after he leaves--the Spirit. Jesus is not afraid of mixing with or hanging out with those people. In fact, he, he goes the next step and he affirms that tax collectors, disreputable women, long ill people, the kind of people others have given up on, um, possessed people, even hated outsider people like the Samaritans. So, gonna', the passage we're gonna' look at is from Luke 9:51 to 56. When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up (so it's close to the end of his life) he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent his messengers ahead of him (probably those seventies, you know, because that was their job is going ahead and kind of setting things up. If that's this isn't the passage, but (It's in the next chapter.) yeah, yeah, we might insert them here.) Um, on their way, they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him. But the Samaritans, they, did not receive him because his face was set toward Jerusalem. When his disciples, James and John, saw it, they said, Lord, do you, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and to consume them? (They're kind of delighted about this.) But Jesus turned and rebuked them. And then they went on to another village. So, this story is just such, so interesting. There's lots of dynamics going on here. So, first of all, he has set his face to go to Jerusalem. So, this, this travelogue that Tony was talking about earlier, this 10 chapter travelogue he's, he's in the, he's taken, he's begun it. And he's, everybody knows he's headed toward Jerusalem. And, and most people I, the, the implication is that people are not necessarily happy about it, that they see this as, well, the Samaritans see it as him being, aligning with Jerusalem and the ha, the way things, the way God is worshipped there. But his disciples are not necessarily thrilled about it either. But they go, they're heading, so, first of all, they could go from Galilee, to Jerusalem and totally avoid Samaritan territory. And lots of people did because they just, you know, those people, you know, they might jump you along the road. Uh, what if we have to stay overnight in one of their towns? So, much animosity, so much judgment about Samaritans. And, and they are, Jesus is taking them through Samaritan territory and they're entering a village. They won't accept Jesus because they know he's headed to Jerusalem. And they, they are, they are antagonistic towards the Jews because they worship God in a different ways and in a different place.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:15:39

And they've been told by Jews that their faith is invalid. So, that doesn't make you very welcoming when people tell you that what you believe is not, doesn't count. So, so then his disciples, James and John, say, and this is, this is just, this is a reference to the Old Testament. And it, and all I can say here is that James and John, you know, they're, they're gettin' kinda', you know, feeling pretty confident about following Jesus. And there's a little cocky here. And they're saying, Oh, these people won't accept you. We remember this Old Testament story. Um, Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down and consume them? And Tony, just tell us a little bit about where that story comes from with

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:16:29

Well, there's a pair of Elijah stories where fire and consuming the other is part of the story. And, so, either of those two Elijah stories could be on their mind. And, this also implies that they, they haven't really caught who Jesus is yet. They think he's a prophet like Elijah and, therefore, he can do what Elijah did and destroy people they don't like, or that they disagree with, or who have been not hospitable to them. So, so, they're just doing a "for the Bible tells me so" thing, right? In other words, they're, they're basically saying, You know it says in the Bible, that, uh, we should consume our enemies. So, you want us to do that? Uh,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:17:06

Let's burn 'em up. And you see immediately, it is one of those places where Jesus doesn't hide his feelings. He turned and he rebuked them, and he, you know, it's like, what are you thinking?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:17:22

Rebuke is a strong word in Greek, by the way, it's, it's not, Now, now. It's more like, What? Are you crazy?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:17:31

And, so, and they went on to another village. So, it's, it's this con, uh, this, uh, contrast between how the disciples are wanting to deal with the other, and how Jesus does actually deal with them. So, this, this takes us into a place where we can begin to look at our own experience. And one of those places, you know, scripture tends to take us to places where we have to be honest about ourselves. And, so, a question to ask ourselves, Who is the other in my heart or mind? Is it someone who has, uh, marginalized me? Is it someone who I feel superior to or feel uncomfortable around? Or have fear, hate, or dis, distrust toward? So, um, think about for yourself, Who is the other in my heart or mind?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:18:48

So, now, I'm going to ask you, and if you feel, um, best with focusing by closing your eyes, I'd, I'd invite you to close your eyes at this point. If, if not, that's fine, too. I want you to take a moment to imagine Jesus being with you around your other, whoever it is that came to mind, or one of the perhaps many who came to mind as you were just, uh, thinking about who the other is in your heart and mind. So, take a moment to imagine Jesus being with you around one of those you've identified as other.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:19:38

Jesus takes your hand to walk toward them, the other. How does he look at them?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:20:02

What does he say to them? Or how does he interact with them?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:20:21

He turns to speak to you. What does he want you to know? Amen.

Karin Peter 1:20:50

Thank you, uh, Charmaine, for that. And for, uh, talking us through that for our listeners to experience that as well. The, um, synoptic gospels that we've just, uh, explored, as you have explained to us relied on each other for some of the content. Um, next week, or next month, when we, um, record, we're going to move on to John. Did you want to say anything to us about that that we can prepare for? Because that's a whole different experience. It's like going from Luke where Jesus is so human and accessible, it's wonderful, and then going into like George Lucas territory where it just doesn't, just doesn't make any sense without a lightsaber. So,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:21:45

Yeah, I, you're, I mean, you're really heading us that direction as John is all full of simile and metaphor and images and trying to capture at these whole other levels, who is Jesus, and even Jesus, what he tells people is not like the most clear cut kind of answers, um, but things that spark the heart, that spark the imagination, that spark our ability to, um, create, um, possibilities from that, uh, that, that's so different (Yeah.) from all of the others. (Okay.)

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:22:33

So, words, light, life, water, red. Uh, those words are going to become potent symbols in the Gospel of John. And the Gospel of John is going to narrate the life of Jesus in quite a different way. So, just be, be prepared for a different way of telling and receiving the story of the real historical person, Jesus, is a way to think about it.

Karin Peter 1:23:05

So, for our listeners all along, we've talked about, um, the book that you're, you have been pointing us to, um, The Introduction (Um hmm.) to the Bible by Fant. So, if you have not, um, checked that out, we encourage you to do that. You can get a little bit of preview of where we're going here and our New Testament studies. Are there any last comments you need to leave with that, leave us with about, uh, Luke other than his love for the seventies?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:23:35

Yes. Uh, Bo, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, uh, had a phrase that he used about Jesus that I think is really applicable to how Jesus is depicted in Luke's gospel. Uh, Bonhoeffer referred to Jesus as, quote, The man for others. I can't think of a better way to describe how Luke portrays, uh, Jesus of Nazareth. He truly, he truly is the man for others, especially the others who have been othered. (Hmm.)

Karin Peter 1:24:05

Alright. Well, for, um, Tony and Charmaine and I, who have been, uh, participating in He Brew and now, uh, New Brew podcast, we thank you very much for being with us. I have a closing thought today that I think goes with our conversation that we had around the crucifixion and the different ways it's depicted, etc., etc. And this, uh, quote actually is from Abraham Lincoln, which I was surprised to find, when a skeptic expressed surprise to see him with a Bible. And this is supposedly Abraham Lincoln's response, Take all that you can of this book upon reason and the balance on faith and you'll live and die a happier man. With Abraham Lincoln's comments on that, um, we'll thank you for being with us for

this episode on the Gospel of Luke. And join us again for the Gospel of John. I'm Karin Peter with Tony and Charmaine. Thanks so much for listening.

Josh Mangelson 1:25:16

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