

The Patio Pulpit For, December 16, 2020
“A Little Christmas Theology and Inspiration”
(from the gospel according to Luke)
“...it seemed fitting for me...”

When you hear someone say that something is “inspiring” or that something “inspired them,” what comes to mind? I would guess that most of you would think about things like a song or a good book or maybe a great view of the mountain valleys we have all seen from an overlook on a mountain road or parkway. What I think about more often than not, is a song or a painting that some artist put on paper or canvas after he or she had an experience that touched their heart. I have read books that inspired me just like I’ve heard songs that I found inspiring.

I think about brilliant artists like Michelangelo and his statue of David and Da Vinci and his painting of the Mona Lisa or Monet with his beautiful paintings inspired by the landscape around his home in Giverny, France.

Or, more down to earth, in my early years as a drummer I was inspired by drummers like Gene Krupa and the unbelievable Buddy Rich and Bobby Columbi and John Bonham, the amazing drummer with Led Zeppelin. And I couldn’t tell you his name and most people from that era couldn’t either, but the drummer with the Safaris when they recorded their hit song, “Wipe Out.” That was the song that did it for me. I wanted to play the drums. I wanted to be able to show off my drumming skills by playing Wipe Out in front of crowds of my adoring fans, especially the young ladies. And it happened. After playing Wipe Out a hundred times or so, I got sick of it. When someone in a nightclub we were playing in yelled out, “Play Wipe Out,” I started yelling back at them, “Get Out!” Seriously.

If you have your Bible out, turn to Luke’s gospel and chapter 1, Luke 1 and v.1. My Christmas series this year is nothing like I have preached in the past, but it has been from a viewpoint that I never considered up until this year. I would compare it to the odd way the movie “Miracle on 34th Street” approached the story of Santa. Or maybe even the Will Ferrell movie “Elf” did it. No one saw that coming.

*Luke 1:1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word **it seemed fitting for me** as well having investigated everything carefully from the beginning **to write it out for you in consecutive order most excellent Theophilus so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught**³ it seemed fitting for me as well.*

For a man who was about to sit down and give the longest account of the gospel of the four, Luke didn't seem to realize what he was doing or why he was doing it. He simply said, "After many others wrote down their accounts of what has happened, it seemed fitting for me to do so as well. After vetting everything that has been reported about Jesus, why shouldn't I write it all down so you can be convinced about what you have heard. It's all true, Theophilus."

I would guess that many of you just flipped through the four gospels and saw that Luke only has 24 chapters while Matthew has 28. What you may not know is that there are more words in Luke's gospel than in Matthew's. And, the chapter's in Luke's gospel tend to be really long. And, besides all that, the original manuscripts of the gospels had no chapter divisions or headings or verse numbers or any kind of punctuation. By chapter, the book of Matthew is the longest of the Gospels, consisting of 28 chapters but only 22,642 words (according to the NIV). The Gospel of Luke in comparison only 24 chapters but comprised of 24,186 words (NIV) proves to be the longest of the Gospels.

That is "the" definition of inspiration. All forty Biblical authors, from Moses to the apostles Paul and John and James and Jude and Peter wrote under the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit. These Spirit-filled men of God, those who did the writing, not necessarily the one's who's names are on the books bearing their names, may or may not have known that what they were recording was going to be incorporated into Holy Scripture. They were all, without exception, led by the Spirit even

when they were not aware of exactly what it was they were writing. “*It seemed fitting.*” That was all Luke knew. It just seemed like the right thing to do.

Being inspired literally means to breathe in or to mentally and emotionally absorb some scene or musical piece or idea that comes from seeing or hearing something. The word inspired itself means “breath,” or “of the spirit,” the Greek word *pneuma* and the Latin *inspirare* both mean “air, wind, spirit, breath.” To be inspired is to have a spiritual experience whether it is a religious experience or not.

And it does feel like you’re breathing in or absorbing the thing that inspires. It’s a breath-taking moment. It’s when we see what others are doing and we’re inspired to emulate them. It’s when we come upon an overlook on a winding mountain road and we’re mesmerized by the beauty of God’s creation. And what do we do then? We take a picture.

But when it comes to the Bible, inspiration was a totally different experience. It is all of God. **2 Timothy 3:16** *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; (2 Tim. 3:16 NAU)* Literally, “all Scripture is God-breathed.” **θεόπνευστος**

And this is how Peter said the same thing that Paul said, ²⁰ *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,*

²¹ *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men **moved by the Holy Spirit** spoke from God. (2 Pet. 1:20-21 NAU)*

I like that comparison between Paul’s wording of inspiration and Peter’s. They said the same thing just in different ways.

The Bible is the God-breathed word of God, or it would not be the word of God. Duh. **θεόπνευστος** I want us to grasp the importance of that Greek word, **θεόπνευστος**. The words in the Bible are unlike anything we read in any other and every other book we might read. They’re the same words, they aren’t magic or special, but the inspiration behind them and the truths behind them are from a cosmically different source. The great novels and literature of man may be wonderful and

awe inspiring and I love reading them, but there is a world of difference between them and the written word of God.

John 6:63 *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." (Jn. 6:63 NAU)* That is **θεόπνευστος**. Only **θεόπνευστος** words are spirit and life.

Keep that in mind, beloved, it begins with the Spirit giving us life when we hear the gospel of our salvation. At that moment, our flesh gave way to the Spirit of God and our inner man was born of the Spirit, "born again," "born from above." Our flesh, the sinful part of us, can't benefit us at all when the matter of life and death is hanging in the balance. And neither can our flesh stand in the way of God's grace and mercy and love and election. Death itself can't stand in the way of God's grace and mercy and love and calling. *"It is the Spirit who gives life."*

⁴ ***But God***, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (Eph. 2:1-5 NAU)

Now back to our text, Luke 1:1-4.

having investigated everything carefully from the beginning to write it out for you in consecutive order

"In consecutive order." There is a historical and chronological and logical and grammatical flow of thought in every book of the Bible that's not always easy to see. But it's there. For instance, if you go through the Genesis account of the first 5 days of creation carefully and deliberately, you can see how logical the creation of each consecutive item is. That's why those who preach and teach the word of God are commanded to be diligent in rightly dividing the word of truth and then rightly preaching it (2 Tim. 2:15; 4:1-2). We have the monumental task of digging into what is written in order to discover what the authors meant and what the original audiences knew them to be saying. In a sense, sermon preparation and delivery is more difficult for the man of God than Scripture writing was for the men of God who wrote it. And that explains the innumerable number of commentaries and language

helps and other books that fill our seminary libraries and our pastors' libraries.

I'm going to close with this. Over the course of thousands of years, God raised up forty men to write down precisely what He wanted written down in order to pass His word of reconciliation on to everyone. The climax of all that came in a Person and not in another prophet or sign or wonder. The climax of all that we have now in the 66 books of the Bible. The climax of all that was in the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh, on all who would call upon the name of the child born in Bethlehem.

Hebrews 1:1 *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,*

² *in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*

³ *And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (Heb. 1:1-3 NAU)*

And the climax of all that is when the God-called pastor and teacher preaches the finished word of God as he is led by the Spirit. In as much as God has called many to preach His word, it seemed fitting to me that I should do the same.

In Jesus' name, amen.