

Know Jesus With Certainty

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Bible Text: Luke 1:1-25
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Our special focus this morning are going to be the opening verses of Luke's gospel. I'm going to read those with you again and invite you to keep the word of God also open as we hear his word proclaimed to us.

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

This is the word of God.

Beloved in Christ our Lord, I want to begin this morning by asking you a personal question which thankfully you don't need to answer, but perhaps you can think about it as you hear God's word proclaimed this morning. The question is this: how is your faith? If I were to ask you to rank your faith on a scale of 1 to 10, I wonder what number would you choose? Do you ever struggle, in particular do you ever struggle with doubt or with lack of assurance? Someone once described doubt with regard to faith like a mosquito, a mosquito which is annoying and buzzes around the edges and irritates us but seems so persistent we can't quite get rid of it. I imagine that everyone here this morning can picture that metaphor.

Doubt in some ways attacks the edges of our faith. It's persistent. It's annoying. And we just so much rather get rid of it. Does that describe you? Are you bothered by the mosquitoes? Well, I have good news for you this morning, literally good news. The gospel of Luke was written for people just like you and me. Luke's main aim in writing his gospel is to deal with questions of doubt and lack of assurance. He makes that absolutely clear in his opening verses, which we have before us this morning. I have to confess that when I first preached this series of sermons in the gospel of Luke, that I almost skipped the prologue. It was just after Christmas and I decided to do a series in the gospel of Luke and so I was just going to continue after the Christmas narrative and begin

the series there. But then I sat down to read the gospel of Luke and realized when it came across this prologue, these opening verses, that this is exactly the place we need to begin, that Luke sets out here for us exactly what he wants us to do as we read his gospel and how he wants us to look at the events and the teachings of Jesus that he's going to convey to us. You see, Luke's gospel or sorry, the prologue sets the stage for what follows in Luke's gospel. You have to remember that when Luke wrote his gospel down for the first time, he didn't use books like we're used to, he was writing on a scroll. And if you can picture a scroll, I imagine some of the kids here this morning have tried to make a scroll at some point. You take a piece of paper and you roll the insides to the middle. Now if you picture a scroll, well, it's very difficult to put a title page on a scroll. It's very difficult to put a blurb on the back cover because there is none and there's no flyleaf that you can open and see, well, what's this book all about? How should I read this book? And so these opening sentences were so important for establishing what was the purpose of this writing and so it's very good for us as we consider God's word this morning, to pay attention to how Luke wants us to read his gospel. And so this prologue sets the scene not just for the sermon this morning, but for the entirety of Luke's gospel, "Know Jesus With Certainty." And I encourage you to read through Luke's gospel through this lens after we're done here this morning.

Luke starts with an interesting word, doesn't he? He starts with the word "Inasmuch." That tells us something right off the bat. I would be willing to guess that there is no one here this morning who has used the word "inasmuch" in 2022. In fact, perhaps none of you has ever used the word "inasmuch" in your lifetime. It tells us something. Now, of course, Luke is writing Greek, he's not writing English, but the scholarly English word reflects well the Greek that Luke is giving us. Luke's a scholar. Luke is a scholar. We're told by the Apostle Paul in Colossians that he's actually a doctor. He's trained. He's educated. And so he's going to give us a particular kind of writing. We can expect Luke to give us something that is scholarly and academic. He's a historian.

He doesn't begin, "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away." Then we might expect an entirely different story, and then we might have different expectations of it as well. Instead, Luke writes this, he says, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us," and so on and so forth. And that's all very good if you're an academic but you might be wondering, "Well, Luke, what exactly are you saying here?" He's saying that people have been writing stories, have been writing narratives, historical accounts of the things that have been happening in recent days. And he uses a particular word there, it's an Old Testament word, really, "the things that have been accomplished among us." That alerts us to the fact that Luke's not just giving us interesting stories, he's not just concerned to give us some kind of historical account. He wants us to focus on what God is doing and what God has been doing in the past years, what God's story is all about. And so he wants us to see history, also the history that he's going to tell us about as the unfolding of what God is doing in history, what God is doing in his plan and with his purposes.

And so he says many people have been writing these stories down, these narratives down. Why is he telling us this? If we skip down to verse 3, he makes it clear. We'll get back to

verse 2 a little later. He says, "it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus." Luke says, "I'm going to give you my own account. I'm going to write things down as well, not because these other ones are no good," he probably has read Mark's gospel already, but because he himself has his own perspective on things. He's been following things closely for some time past, he says, and he's going to give his own special account.

It's interesting, he characterized it as an orderly account. He's the good doctor and he is the academic, and so he's going to give us something that is particularly orderly, and I wonder if you know the gospel of Luke, that he follows through on this very well. Just think of the words we read earlier before beginning the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth. He gives us the background. He says, "In the days of Herod," this is verse 5, "king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. He had a wife from the daughters of Aaron and her name was Elizabeth." It's all very orderly. Or just think of the Christmas account. I suspect that many of you could recite it with me. "In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus. It was the first decree when Quirinius was governor of Syria," and so on and so forth.

But Luke doesn't just mean he's going to give us all sorts of extra details to help us nail down the dates and the times that he's speaking of, he also means he's going to give us the right perspective on events. He orders things in just the right way so that we understand not just the things that happen, but the meaning of them. Why is he telling us these things? He's concerned that it is with accuracy, that we have a right understanding. And we learn that too from the way he describes he went about writing this narrative. This is verse 2. He speaks of those who were from the beginning, who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, who delivered them over to him. We have to imagine that Luke then has sources, well, he tells us he has sources. He's got eyewitnesses. And so we have to imagine then Luke sitting down with people as he goes to verify the accounts that he's been told. So perhaps when he wanted to write this story down of Zechariah and Elizabeth, that he went to visit them in their hometown. He sat down and had coffee with them, whatever they happened to be drinking in those times, and he asked them, "Well, tell me how this came about. Tell me the story." And then he diligently took notes so that when he wrote down his account, it would be a faithful account of what had happened.

But he also mentions a specific group of people, these eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. These were the apostles. Luke says, "I sat down with the apostles," with the disciples who had followed Jesus around the city of Jerusalem, around the towns of Galilee, and he sat down with them and they passed on the teachings that they had received. They weren't just witnesses, Luke says, they were ministers of the word. That phrase is probably familiar to you, "ministers of the word." We use that quite frequently. In fact, most of you will know that my dad is a pastor, and sometimes when he signs off an e-mail, he has this acronym VDM, it's Latin, it means Verbi Dei Minister, minister of the divine word, minister of the word of God. That's the phrase that's being used here, but minister actually means something like servant. We've lost that a little bit, I think, because it's become a common word. It means servant, that is, a minister, your pastor, his

function here is to be a servant of the word. That's what the apostles prided themselves on, not being people who stood over the word, not being the people whose authority drove the word forward, but people who submitted to the word and sat under the word.

And so as they come to Luke, he's going to write this gospel down, they are being stewards of what they've seen. They're being stewards of what they've been taught. And Luke says he interviewed these people, he spoke with these ministers of the word, and he did so for this most excellent Theophilus. Most excellent Theophilus. He was probably a wealthy nobleman, probably a believer, but we don't know much more beyond that. But Luke, of course, didn't just write these things down for Theophilus. I'm going to test your Greek skills this morning and ask you if you know what the name Theophilus means. Perhaps you recognize the part philus, Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. And Theos is the word for God. That is, Theophilus is one who loved God or was beloved of God. Now I do think Luke had this man in mind when he was writing, a specific man in the first century, but I think there's also something mysterious here going on, that is Luke isn't just writing for this man 2,000 years ago, he's writing for all those who love God. He's writing for all those who are beloved of God.

And so when we read Luke's gospel, we ought not to forget that it is God's word to us, those who have been loved by God and continue to be loved by God. But what's Luke's purpose with this all? Here's really where we get down to the most important part of his prologue and the theme of the book and the theme of the series and the theme of the sermon this morning. Luke says, "it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write this orderly account for you most excellent Theophilus," and here it comes, he says, "that you may have certainty concerning the things that you have been taught." That you may have certainty, and in the original Greek that's the very last word in the opening sentence. You can do that in Greek. You can save things to the very end to make sure that everybody knows that's the most important thing. We could do it in English. I suppose too, that concerning the things you have been taught, you may have certainty.

What does Luke want with our reading of the gospel? What does Luke want as we go through his gospel and read of Christ Jesus, read of his work, read of his teachings? He wants us to know Christ with certainty. He wants us to know of the things that he's telling us. He wants us to grow in the assurance of faith. It is faith as we confess in Lord's Day 7 is a sure knowledge and a firm confidence. This is sure knowledge, we need to know things, things that Luke tells us. So we need to know, for example, that the gospel is true, of course. That Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit. These mysterious things that are beyond our human minds, that they are true and certain. That he wasn't just the son of Mary, but that he was the Son of God, came into the world to save sinners. We need to know that he died on the cross. We need to know that he was raised from the dead. We need to know that he ascended into heaven, that he sits at the Father's right hand. We need to know that he is real. But even as we are gathered here together, we gather together before an open heaven that Christ with his physical body is in the presence of God interceding for us even as we sit here this morning. We need to know these things with certainty, that they really happened. Now these are historical

facts, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15, he says if the resurrection didn't happen, if it's not a historical fact, then our faith is empty and futile, then we are wasting our time. If the resurrection isn't true, then you should have gone fishing this morning or slept in and had a late breakfast and what we're doing here week in and week out is a waste of time. Luke says we need to know that the resurrection is true. We need to know that the virgin birth is true. We need to know that all these things that are essential for our salvation are true historical facts.

Back when I prepared this sermon for the first time, I was in Langley, where I was serving as pastor, and I remember vividly being very much in the text and thinking about it, and then I had to come down for dinner. It's always a difficult time when you've got to leave the work behind and enter into the family space. But I picked up a book that Gabriel, our oldest son, had received from somebody in the congregation, a book on apologetics, that is, a book aimed at defending the Christian faith. And so I picked it up thinking of Luke as I was doing so, and the first chapter I turned to providentially was a chapter defending the gospel of Luke. There was one account in particular that struck my attention because scholars, these authors told us, scholars love to poke holes at Luke's writings. In fact, if you go to a critical scholar today, they consider the Acts of the Apostles, which is also written by Luke, to be an unfaithful and unhelpful account of the early church. And so they pointed to the Acts of the Apostles where Paul calls these figures or Luke calls these officials, city officials, politarchs in Thessalonica. You don't need to remember that word. But he called them politarchs and scholars had never seen that word before and so they pointed to Luke's writings and said, "Well, Luke is mistaken. There's no such thing as a politarc in Thessalonica during this time period." And they said, "Well, see, if you can't trust him here, well then you can't trust him there or you can't trust him anywhere." Well, since then, more than a dozen inscriptions have been discovered in that very area that testify to the reality that there were these city officials called politarchs in the first century and so Luke's accuracy was vindicated.

It reminds me of what Luke calls the apostles here, right, ministers of the word, that is, people who place themselves under the word. Then, too often, scholars love to place themselves over the word. And not just scholars, of course. Perhaps you had conversations with people who love to point out what they see as inconsistencies in the word of God, take great delight in pointing out what they think are errors or contradictions in the word of God. But perhaps that's where you are this morning yourself. Let me say very carefully and kindly, there is an arrogance to that approach to scripture. It is what we do in those moments as we elevate ourselves to the position of being the arbiters of truth, as the ones who can say, "Yes, this is true, this is factual," that is, we place ourselves over the word of God rather than submitting ourselves to the word of God. Now, one of the things we can do in response to that, of course, is to defend Luke's accuracy. That's the work of apologetics. That's important work. In fact, this coming year at the seminary, the students are going to take a whole course in apologetics, learning how to defend the gospel against attacks of the Christian faith. But ultimately it isn't a problem, not a head problem, but a heart problem. That is, we refuse to submit ourselves to the word of God. At the heart of it is an issue of pride. We need to humble ourselves before the word of God.

But it would be a mistake if I gave you the impression when Luke's talking about certainty, that his main concern is that we would know that he gets his facts straight, that his main concern is really to establish that he's a good historian. It's not even that we know all the facts. What does he want you to be certain about? He wants you to be certain about what all this means as he wants you to be struck as you read his gospel, that these are not just events that took place 2,000 years ago that are far removed from your reality, but that these things that happened in space and time 2,000 years ago affect your life today, that they're, in fact, the single most important events in the history of the universe, that when you come to faith in Christ Jesus, his life and death become your life and death, your life to God and your death to sin. The events he describes and the teachings that he gives, that they change your life forever and I mean that forever. Not just here and now, but eternally.

Now your reaction to the gospel of Luke will dictate your eternal future. That's why Luke wrote his gospel. He wrote his gospel to give people certainty that this was not just a man who lived and died 2,000 years ago, but that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost. It means he's writing, of course, for people who may believe that there was a man named Jesus 2,000 years ago, but see him simply as a good man or an important teacher. I have a Muslim neighbor across the street and we share many things in common in terms of our outlook on the world we live in. We can speak about the horrors of abortion, and we can speak about the LGBTQ agenda that is plaguing our society, and we can share those things, but the moment we speak of Jesus there's a great divide between us because he thinks Jesus was just a prophet and I know he was the Son of God who came into the world to save sinners.

So Luke is writing for people like that who need to see that Jesus is the only hope in a world that will face judgment and wrath, but he's also writing to people who know that Jesus is the Christ. He's writing to people who know that Jesus is the Christ, who know that he is the Son of God, but who lack assurance, who struggle with doubt, who are plagued with mosquitoes. We long for greater certainty. Let me ask you again, how is your faith and do you long for greater certainty?

He's writing for believers like you and like me because we are people who want to know Christ with greater certainty. We want to know him more deeply. We want to know him more personally. We want to know in him the promises of God more fully and completely. Too often as believers we're like Zechariah. I don't think it's for nothing that Luke includes this story immediately after he speaks of certainty. Of course it makes sense, it's the beginning of the narrative, but he didn't have to include it. We don't receive this account in the gospel of Mark, for example. So Luke gives us this man Zechariah as an example of what it looks like for someone to need more certainty. The glorious promise of God comes to Zechariah. Did you notice how Gabriel describes it in verse 19? He says, "I was sent to speak to you and to bring to you this good news. "That is, the angel comes to Zechariah and says, "I've got the gospel for you. I'm pronouncing," and remember, he's an angel sent from God. In fact, his appearance is so striking that

Zechariah is terrified and he comes with the good news. He presents the gospel to him and Zechariah can't believe. He can't believe. He sees his wife's barrenness. He thinks of the prayers that they have offered up year after year after year after year. And he can't see possibly how the promises of God could line up with the reality. He hears the wonderful promise that his son is going to be the forerunner to the Messiah, is going to make ready for the Lord a people prepared, and he can't believe.

And now if we think humanly, we can hardly blame him. It's hard to believe these promises of God. We're often not much different. We look at the circumstances in our lives and we line them up against the promises of God and we find it difficult to believe. Perhaps for some of you this morning, it's a question of being plagued with guilt. The guilt of past sins or the guilt of present sin indwelling sin, and you read the promises of God that those who confess their sins, he is faithful and just to forgive those sins and cleanse them for all unrighteousness, but you think, "Maybe for other people but not for me." That is, you look at the circumstances of your life and you line them up against the promises of God, and you lack certainty. "Could God forgive my sins?" Perhaps for others, it's a question of you've encountered hardship in this life. You look at the circumstances of your life and you've suffered so much and you go to the word of God, and God's word speaks of his goodness and his love. And you read passages like in Romans 8, "All things come together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose," and you think, "That might be true for other people, but I just don't feel it." You line up the promises of God with your circumstances and you lack assurance and you lack certainty. Too often we as believers are like the disciples to whom Jesus had to say so often, "Oh, you of little faith."

I wonder this morning, does that describe you? Perhaps today and perhaps last week somewhere in your journey of faith, how is your faith? Does it lack a certain rootedness, a certain firm foundation, a strong foundation? Do you long for greater certainty or greater assurance? Surely, each of us wants to know with greater certainty the Savior who came into this world. Are the mosquitoes bothering you? Well, I have good news for you. The gospel of Luke was written for you. You see, you can trust Luke to tell you what is absolutely true and absolutely certain not because he was such a great historian, although he was that as well, but because what Luke is writing is no ordinary history. What we have received in the gospel of Luke is the very word of God.

There's this wonderful little bit in Paul's letter to Timothy, 1 Timothy 5:18, where he quotes two scriptures. He says, "For the Scripture says," and then he gives us two quotations. "For the Scripture says," Paul writes, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and we know that's from Deuteronomy, and it's not a surprise that Paul calls that scripture that is the word of God, but then he gives a second quote. He says, "the laborer deserves his wages." That's from the gospel of Luke. Paul and Luke were friends. They traveled around the Mediterranean together. Just imagine when Luke wrote his gospel and handed it over to Paul, Paul knew exactly where it was coming from. It was from Luke, the good doctor, the historian who'd been interviewing so many people and writing things down so carefully over the past years. And what Paul realizes

in that moment is that what he has received is not just the word of Luke but the word of God.

And so as we read Luke's gospel, and of course as we read scripture as a whole, we can never forget what the Apostle Peter teaches us, that no prophecy was produced by the will of man, but man, carried along by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God. That is, when we read the gospel of Luke, what we are receiving is Luke speaking from God. That is, we are receiving Luke, inspired by the Holy Spirit, being carried along by the Holy Spirit as he conducts his interviews, as he writes, scribbles down his notes, as he compiles it all together, as he writes his opening prologue, teaching us what to think of when we come to his gospel, he is inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is the word of God. I imagine that's old news to most of you here this morning and perhaps your pastor has the same habit as I do, the same routine of saying this is the word of God after he reads the scripture. Do you ever pause and let it sink in again? That is, that the God of the universe, who called all things into being and upholds it with his powerful word, has spoken to us, that we have in our hands this morning the very word of God.

And so when you lack assurance, when you lack certainty, when you struggle with doubt, you ought to turn to the word of God because God has spoken to us, that God's word has the authority to speak into our lives, to speak into our hearts. It has the power to work certainty and assurance. Our questions and answers are given, our questions and our doubts are answered by the word of God. This is something striking in a world which says there's no such thing as truth, a world which has abandoned the reality that there is objective truth, absolute truth. You may go out and say, "I've found it." It is not true that your truth is true for you, and my truth is true for me. What we have received here is the very word of God, a God who stands outside of time, stands outside of space and gives us his view of things from above.

This is the bedrock of your faith. When I was a pastor, it was not uncommon for me to have conversations with members. We would go for coffee and talk about questions that they had about the word of God, things they struggled with, especially the young people, and I'm glad we could have those conversations. Please have those conversations. The church ought to be a place where we can openly admit the things that we are wondering about. Go to somebody you trust and speak to them about the doubts and uncertainties that you have. The question I would always ask and want to ask is this: are you taking those questions and those concerns to the word of God? Are you testing the answers that you're finding against the word of God? That is, if you can't, for example, wrap your mind around the doctrine of hell, that a good and loving God could condemn people to a place of eternal torment, where are you going for the answers to those questions? Or if you're struggling to find out how to stand in the current confusion with regard to gender and sexuality in church, where are you going to go for your answers? Are you going to the word of God?

Don't wonder about these things in your own mind, sit there and imagine for yourself what the possible answer might be. We have received truth in God's word from the Creator who made all things and upholds all things. Too often we fail to sit under the

word, and as you read it, read it together with trustworthy interpreters of the word. That is, sometimes I think given our access to the word of God, we have so many Bibles and we do these things too individually. "I will find my own interpretation, on my own time by myself." But God gives us to each other. He gives us the church, the church also of all ages and places, so we can look back in history and say, "How was this interpreted for the past 2,000 years? What might that say about the truth of God's word?"

And then ultimately become a minister of the word. Well, pastors, yes, we need those too, but all of us to be those who sit under, who are servants of the word. Submit to the word. Admit that you are limited and creaturely, that when your interpretations butt up against the truth of God's word, that you have the humility to say, "I'm weak and fallible." Of course, when we think of doubts and questions, they aren't just a head problem, are they? In fact, perhaps more often they're a heart problem. That is, we come to God's word, or we in our walk of faith our hearts are weak and they're prone to wander, as the hymn puts it so powerfully. Well, God's word has the answer to those doubts and worries and concerns and anxieties and fears as well.

Again, the rock solid promises of God's word have the power to speak directly into those concerns. The certainty of Luke's gospel is the teachings of Jesus and the work of Christ, the truth of what Christ accomplished in his death, his resurrection, his ascension, what he's still accomplishing in his work in the church. You see, too often our response to doubts and worries and fears is to look at ourselves. That is, we wonder if we have enough faith. "Am I trusting enough?" And perhaps as I've been going on about doubts and worries and concerns, you've had that thought yourself. "Well, I wonder if I'm far enough along on this road to certainty?" And so, we wonder, "Is my faith strong enough?" Or we wonder about our spiritual performance. Perhaps as you hear the law of God week in and week out, you use it as a measuring stick to gauge your relationship with your God and you wonder, "Have I done enough? Do I measure up? When it comes to the end of the road, is my ledger in the black or is it in the red?" As we look at ourselves, whether it's our faith or our performance, and we struggle and we lack assurance because the reality is we are weak. So how do you grow in the certainty of faith? That's the pressing question, isn't it? How do we grow in the certainty of faith? Well, we stop looking at ourselves and we start looking at Jesus. That is, we stop navel gazing and we look at Christ. We read the gospel of Luke. We study the person and the work of Christ. You go to the gospel of Luke, who laid things out in such an orderly fashion, and we see there displayed for us the Savior who came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

I want to share something with you that's been deeply encouraging to me for many years now. It's a story, a true story. It takes place in the southern states. There was a Southern Presbyterian minister there, a man named Robert Lewis Dabney. He was on his deathbed in 1890 and all his life Robert Lewis Dabney had been a pillar of the church. During a time in which Presbyterianism was going liberal, he was one of those staunch defenders of the truth, preacher of the gospel. But he found himself as he was encountering and facing the possibility of the probability of death, he found himself doubting and lacking assurance, wondering, "What's going to happen the moment I close my eyes in this life?"

Well, he wrote a letter to his friend. He shared his doubts and his concern with a man named Samuel Clement Vaughan. You can still read his letter in response. It's a gem. He asked Dabney to imagine that a traveler was going along the way, and he came to a deep chasm, a canyon. He had to pass over to the other side. There was no way to go around, there was no way to go down and through, and there was a bridge over the chasm. He asked the question, "What does the traveler do to determine whether or not he should trust this bridge?" Whether or not he should have enough confidence to and trust his life to this bridge as he crosses the chasm. Well, the answer is very obvious. He looks at the bridge. He considers the bridge. He examines the bridge. He gets down on his hands and knees, and he looks at the arches and the pillars and the girders and whatever other parts of bridge there might be. What he doesn't do is stop at the bridgehead, close his eyes, and wonder to himself, "I wonder if I have enough confidence in this bridge? Do I trust this bridge enough to cross over?" No. And if his examination of the bridge gives him some measure of confidence and he wants more certainty, what does he do? Well, he returns to the bridge again, and he considers it again more carefully, and he looks at it from other angles. He keeps examining the bridge. And then Vaughan wrote this, he said, "Now, my dear old man, let your faith take care of itself for a while and you just think about what you are allowed to trust in. Think of your Master's power. Think of his love. Think of his work, what he has done. That blood of his is mightier than the blood of all the sinners who ever lived. Don't you think it will master yours?"

Do you want to grow in certainty of faith? Do you want to get rid of the mosquitoes? Don't look at yourself. Stop looking at yourself. It is not about the strength of your faith, it is about the strength of your Savior. It's not about you, it's about him. It's not about your faith, it's about the object of your faith. Ask yourself the question: is Jesus a Savior enough for me? And the answer is a resounding yes. He is enough. His blood is mightier than the sins of a thousand sinners. His blood is mightier than the sins of an infinite number of sinners. His blood is enough for you.

And if you long for greater certainty, look to Christ. Think of the bridge. Examine him. Read the gospel of Luke and consider for yourself the Son of God who came into this world to save sinners, is he Savior enough for you? He is. Receive confidence and certainty through the Spirit as you read the gospel of Luke through whom the Spirit of God was at work so many years ago and still is at work today. Receive confidence and certainty as you come into this place and hear the preaching of the gospel from week in and week out, to hear pronounced over you the promises of God that come from God himself that do not depend upon the strength of your faith to receive them. When Paul says to you inspired by the Spirit, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," believe it not because you are such a great Christian, but because you have such a great Savior. And pray. Pray. Pray for the Spirit to give you this certainty. God has said he will always answer the prayer for grace and the Holy Spirit to those who ask of him. So pray. Pray as you come into this place the Spirit of God would open your heart. Pray as your pastor is busy in his office week in and week out preparing the sermons that the Spirit of God would be at work there as well. Pray for your eyes to be opened and your heart to be opened as you come into his presence each day. And pray this prayer to your

Savior, Jesus, who knows what it is to live in this world, to be tempted as we are in every way but without sin. "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief." Amen.

We're going to stand together and sing in response to God's word, hymn 55.