



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

October 27, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost/The Festival of St. Luke the Evangelist

First Lesson: [Acts 1:1-3](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 78

Second Lesson: [2 Timothy 4:5-11](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 1:1-4; 24:44-53](#)

### The Need for Followership Followers of Christ Have a Firm Foundation A FOUNDATION OF FACTS

1. How do you know what is \_\_\_\_\_?
2. A world of \_\_\_\_\_ says: \_\_\_\_\_ only this or there is no \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Your faith is founded in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus bring \_\_\_\_\_ to your life.

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

I want you to consider some of the most popular TV shows and some that have run the longest time. I think of Law and Order. It's a show that has been on 30, almost 40 years. Now all of Thursday is Law and Order. Think about some of these other shows or movies, like the famous Sherlock Holmes. Think about old shows like Perry Mason. Think of some of the more fun shows, like Monk. That was a favorite one, as well as Matlock and Columbo. These shows were really popular and I think one of the reasons that these types of shows are popular is because they are usually about detectives and cases and trying to find out the truth. There is something in us that loves to find out the truth. One of the places where we see that the most is in crime cases with either investigators or lawyers and judges, so these shows and movies are so popular to us because seeking the truth is part of us. I always think about Columbo, where he was famous when he was asking questions and he would say, "Just the facts, ma'am." Some of you might remember that show. The younger kids are like "Who is Columbo? What is that?" You should watch it sometime.

As we look at our faith and our foundation, we see that our **foundation** is one **of facts**. That is what Luke really wrote about. He tells us that as he introduces his book and says

that he investigated everything. He wanted Theophilus to know that everything he wrote, everything he was sharing, everything that was true about Jesus, he could be certain of because it was facts. But in our world today, where everything is about misinformation and everyone wants to put the question of whether there is even truth out there, we have to ask *how do you know what is truth*? What is true in our world? That's a hard thing to find.

There are people that want to censor things that are out there because "That's not true. And we can't let people share things that aren't true." But it's become so hard in our world to find truth. Why is that? I think there are many reasons for this but it's the idea that we live in this post-modern world, it's been for a long time, but I think it's even harder because of the general world that we live in today. I would call it a world of bias. Would you agree with that?

*A world of bias says: trust only this or there is no truth.* That's kind of ironic. But I find it extremely hard to just find facts. If there is an event that happens in the news, can you find an article or a video that shares just the facts? What is it now? It's all opinion and the opinion really is the article and the news instead of the facts. We live in this world of bias where everyone is trying to convince you of something and to persuade you to believe something. It's extremely hard. When I look at the news, I try to look at one side and look at the other and compare the news stories and you see the same thing and you see completely different views, so what's true?

When we look at these opposing things of "trust only this" or "don't believe that because there is no truth," I think first when it comes to trusting only one person, people convince us of this in a couple ways. I think (1) people will say something over and over again and if they say it over and over again, it must be true. Have you seen this? In politics and news articles, it's something that you are pretty sure is not a real or true thing but "Hey, if I say it enough, it's true." And that can be on both sides. You have to look at the things and really ask, "Just because you say it, that doesn't make it true."

One of the clearest ones in our world today of the things that are repeated over and over again is about abortion. "Abortion is health care." Is that true? If you really look at what it is, is it that? There are all these things where "If I just say it long enough, then it's true," but what is really at the heart of it? "What are the facts of this thing?" That's what we have to ask. So people say things over and over again and try to convince you.

The other thought is (2) "If the majority of people believe it, then it's also true." Have you felt that in our world today? It happens a lot where "You are in the minority, so you must be wrong. The truth: well, everyone says it's this way, so that must be the truth. That must be right because the majority believes it." We know from history that is not true. Just because many, many people believe something, the facts come out that they were wrong. There are all these things where people lead us to believe one thing and to

trust only them and to disagree with the other side. You have to understand, though, and check your bias. Where are you biased and not seeing maybe the failings of the things that you believe and understand that you have a bias as well? What are the facts? This is also extra hard because even though we live in this world that talks about "trust only this," we are in this world that says "there is no truth"—the second part of this biased world. That makes it hard because everyone in this post-modern world says "You have your truth and I have my truth, and who are you to say that YOU are right and I'm wrong?" This is what it means to be post-modern and the idea that "there is no objective God." This takes away the idea of objective truth and objective God when someone writes something or history happens and "we must interpret it based on who we are and what we've experienced." So everything is based off of each individual person and each person has their own truth and really, then there is no objective truth and it goes on and on and on. This is where we struggle because then where is the truth? Can you find a truth?

Today we are here to say that you can. The truth, as we are going to talk about, is what we can find in the Bible, but there is truth all around you. Either something happens or it doesn't. Either you're in church this morning or you're not. Either your car started to get you here or it didn't. We live in a world of truth and we have to understand that and believe that, otherwise you're really not going to function well in this world.

So as we live in this world of truth, Luke, who was a doctor, sought to find out what was the truth. He said these things: ***Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*** Luke didn't come in with a bias. He went in and he researched. He talked to all the people. He wanted to have the complete picture and to share it so that Theophilus could know the truth about Christ; to know that what he had heard of and all these amazing things about Jesus were true. It was not just for Theophilus. Theophilus means "lover of God/a God lover," so who could that describe as well? You and me, someone who wants to know and love God. So the same thing applies to you and me. *Your faith is founded in facts, investigation and history.* It's not based off of just a feeling or an idea but these things really happened. Why is it important that these things really happened? You might say "That's not a big deal" or "Of course, I know that," but it's important when it comes into the grand scheme of religion and what people believe in this world.

You take Buddhism. I remember this conversation very clearly. I was sitting at my kitchen table in China and was talking to one of the people who was the strongest practicing Buddhist that I've ever met, so I had all these questions to ask. She answered a ton of them and it was fantastic, but a fascinating thing she said was "Buddhism

doesn't need Buddha. You take Buddha out of Buddhism and you still have Buddhism." What? How does that work? It doesn't really matter if Buddha is real and what he did because it's all about a teaching and a way of life. It's all about you reaching nirvana, so you learn all these different ideas. If Buddha is real or not; if these things are true or not; if he really said it or not; or whoever taught these things doesn't matter. It's just about you reaching and becoming something new and putting down suffering so you can reach nirvana and become one with the Universe.

Think of Islam. If you take out Muhammad, it doesn't matter. If Muhammad isn't there, he was just a prophet. So many religions are not based on "if this thing was true" because what they teach is how to be a good person. They teach you how to live. So it doesn't matter if it's based on facts or truth or history. It's just about self-improvement and a hope that you can be good enough to get into heaven.

Well, how does that work? How do you feel in something like that when you don't even know if these things are fact or not?

But how then is Christianity different? We see that Luke wrote about Christ and Jesus then explains what He did in the end of the Book of Luke. ***"This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."*** Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ***"This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."*** What is different? Everything was prophesied and fulfilled in Christ. Christ speaks about how He had to come to live and to die and to rise again, and it REALLY happened. That means something. It says that ***repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached***. You are forgiven! You have peace with God, not because of what you've done but because of what Jesus has done. So *the facts of Jesus bring truth to your life*.

Isn't it amazing to think that what Christ has done matters! It's not based off of a feeling; to think of whether or not God loves you. Sometimes we think about that statement of "God loves you" as a nice feeling. But think about it as being rooted in facts and history. Jesus came and He lived and died and went to the cross for you and me. So if you're struggling and if you're struggling with your sins or struggling to understand God, you can look and see real history and say "God loved me so much to send Jesus to die for me." So do you have any question to doubt if God loves you? He DID something for you and the facts are there. You don't have to doubt that God gives you this love and peace and forgiveness.

But what is interesting is that knowing the facts doesn't always equal faith. We see tons of people who study the Bible, who know the facts. I showed in Catechism a video with

tons of people being asked who they think Jesus is. Tons and tons of people think Jesus is real. A lot of times they say he was a cool guy. "He was a good guy. He made great change." So people know that He is real, but that doesn't equal faith. Then there are people who are presented with the evidence of Jesus and God and they refuse to believe.

There is a famous atheist whose name is Thomas Nagel. He says this: "I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers? It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that." He knows there is evidence and many of his smart friends are Christians, but he says, "I don't want that."

We can look down on atheists, but I think the point for us to look at is we know the facts. We know that God has died for us, that Jesus loved us so much, but are there times when we still doubt it? Not only doubt it, but we take the facts of who Jesus is and His forgiveness and we run from it. We know it's true, but "I want nothing to do with it because I want to do this sin. I want to say 'I can drink as much as I want because that's what makes me feel good.' Or I can go to those places on the internet" (that you know you're not supposed to). You know the facts—what God says is good and right—but you want nothing to do with Him. Or the truth of calling out a brother or sister in the faith, but we run from the truth because we are afraid of how it might hurt our relationship. There are times when we know the truth, we know the facts of God and His love and His forgiveness, but we love a sin or love ourselves and our reputations too much. That's when we know that we've doubted and fallen short, too. That's why we need this perfect Savior to come.

But then we also see what He did with His disciples. It said that He opened up the Scriptures to them. We can present the facts but what is the biggest blessing that gives us the most hope? It's the work of that Holy Spirit; the work that takes the Bible/this truth that you can trust. That is the most historically accurate book from generations and generations. It's not just that, but it's that it does something. It is powerful. It is active. And the Holy Spirit works to help you to believe, to help you to repent, to know of your fallings and shortcomings, and to cling to Christ; to cling to His love, because He truly does love you. He truly did come to die for you. And we see that throughout the Book of Luke. We see that in his writings in so many of the amazing things that he shares.

My encouragement for you tonight and the next couple of weeks is to look through the Book of Luke. Look at all the ways and all the stories that Luke wrote that tell you how much Jesus loves you. Think about the Good Samaritan. Jesus is our Good Samaritan. When no one else cares for us, when we don't care for those that we should, Jesus sacrificed everything for you. Or the Lost Son, the Prodigal Son, and the love of the

father—when the son goes away, wastes all his money, goes off and sins, and he comes home to ask for forgiveness and the father comes and wraps his arms around him and says “You are part of the family. You are my loved son.”

Over and over again, the truth of Christ fills your life today with peace and forgiveness. To know that it means something for you now, to give you hope in your everyday life, to help you to forgive one another, to forgive yourself for the things you struggle with, but to know there is peace and eternity forever. A loving Father, who sent His Son, Jesus, to live perfectly for you, to die and to rise again so you know that no fear has power over you. Amen.

***And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.