

Gospel P3

Luke E3: Good News for the Poor

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Good News for the Poor

Jon: We've been talking through the Gospel of Luke. In this episode, we're going to dig deep into the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel chapters 1 through 6. We're going to talking about the birth stories of Jesus and John the Baptist. We're going to see how these intimate stories were meant to show you that Jesus is connected to the hope of the Old Testament prophets.

Tim: Instead of just saying, Jesus fulfills the prophetic predictions of the Old Testament, Luke tells these stories that just ooze with Old Testament echoes and resonance to show that the story of Jesus fulfilling the essence of this story of the Old Testament.

Jon: We talk about how Luke is preparing you, the reader to see how Jesus' mission is not what you think it would be.

Tim: Luke is trying to help us see in this no-name teenage girl from Nazareth becoming the mother of the Messianic King, the essence of the whole thing. That when God's mercy shows up, nobody gets exalted to a place of honor. That's a part of the pattern of how God has been working throughout Israel story is the upside-downness of the kingdom.

Jon: Then we talk about what happens when Jesus begins his ministry, announcing God's coming reign.

Tim: That the kingdom of God is this reversal of values. And that Jesus creating this new space for the rich and the poor, but especially the poor because they usually on the out to be welcomed into God's mercy.

Jon: We'll talk about what Jesus means when he says he's bringing freedom to the poor, how that's connected to the Jubilee, and we'll dig into why religious institutions of the day didn't like him. I'm glad you're listening in. Here we go.

We've done the fly-by overview of Luke. Let's jump into each section. The first section in Luke is chapters 1 and 2. You call it the introduction This is Jesus' birth story.

Tim: Luke begins his story with this very detailed personal portrait of an elderly priestly couple serving in Jerusalem; they've never been able to have kids. This old Jewish couple, they are righteous, they are faithful, and have never been able to—

Jon: There should remind you of—

Tim: Yeah, totally. It just echoes every significant couple in the book of Genesis. It's very intentional.

Jon: So it's intentionally making you recall Abraham.

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Tim: The story of Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebecca.

Jon: They were unable to have kids?

Tim: Yeah, she was not able to have kids until a certain point in the story. And then Jacob and Rachel. So he ties you already into this very Jewish story. It's great. Then Zachariah goes to serve in the Jerusalem temple. And he's offering incense and he has this encounter with a majestic, angelic being who says, "You're going to have a kid." And he's like, "What? No, it's impossible." Precisely like Abraham and Sarah's response in this in the book of Genesis.

He goes mute, and he can't talk until the child's born. This is the famous part of the story. Luke chapters 1 and 2 are like a musical. It's amazing. When John is born, he's filled with the Holy Spirit and he sings this poem that is just about five different passages from Isaiah and three different Psalms put in a blender.

Luke uses Zachariah song to show that these events are not just replaying moments in Israel's history. They're bringing the whole story of the old testament to its culmination. So he says, "Praise the Lord God of Israel, he's come to his people, he's redeemed them." That's from the song of the scene in Exodus after the exodus through the scene. "He's raised up a horn of salvation for us." That's Psalm 148.

"In the house of his servant David as he said through His holy prophets long ago, salvation from our enemies, from the hands of those who hate us to show mercy to our ancestors, to remember His covenant he swore to Abraham." So we're thinking, "Genesis, all this."

"To rescue us from our enemies." This is Isaiah and Ezekiel. "To enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness for all our days." Then he says about John. "You'll be the Prophet of the Most High. You'll go on to prepare the way of the Lord." That's right from the book Malachi.

"To give his people knowledge of salvation for the forgiveness of their sins." Jeremiah 31. "Before the tender mercy of God by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven." That's Malachi chapter 4. "To shine on those living in darkness in the shadow of death." That's Isaiah chapter 9. "And to guide our feet into the path of peace." It's amazing. I mean, I was happy when my son was born.

Jon: You weren't spontaneously just quoting Old Testament Hebrew poetry in a string of...

[crosstalk 00:05:21]

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Tim: It's incredible. When Mary finds out that she's pregnant with the Messianic King, she has her own song. Here, her song has all of these quotations from the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2, where she couldn't get pregnant and then she goes to pray in the famous story. She goes to pray in the temple.

Her song is really interesting. It's called The Magnificat. That's how it begins in Latin. She says, "My soul glorifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior." And we go, "Yeah, it's very personal. It's remarkable event." "He's been mindful of the humble state." Literature says, the poor state of the servant.

Jon: The words poor?

Tim: The humiliated state.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: She's economically poor, they live under the thumb of the Romans. That kind of thing. "From now on, all generations of call me blessed." So this is reversal. She's this nobody who is now going to be the mother of the Messianic King. "The Mighty One has done great thing for me, holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation." So she's tying her experience of God's mercy into the story of her people.

Then she goes, "He's performed mighty deeds with his arm; he scatters those who are proud in their innermost thoughts." And we're thinking, "Oh, well, suppose that's true, what does that have to do with you being pregnant?"

"He's brought down rulers from their thrones, he lifts up the humble. He's filled the hungry with good things; he sent the rich away empty. He's helped to serve in Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever just as He promised."

So here, she's echoing Hannah's prayer, also Psalm 113. Luke is trying to help us see this no-name teenage girl from Nazareth becoming the mother of the Messianic King, Luke wants to see in this the essence of the whole thing. That when God's mercy shows up, nobody gets exalted to a place of honor. And that's a part of the pattern of how God has been working throughout Israel story is the upside-downness of the kingdom.

David was a nobody on the field, he gets exalted as king. Then Saul, the big guy, he gets brought low. And that's just the pattern that the childless couple becomes the family of Israel.

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So Luke's very interesting. Instead of just saying Jesus fulfills the prophetic predictions of the Old Testament, Luke tells the stories that just like ooze with Old Testament echoes and resonance to show that the story of Jesus, even before he was an adult, was already fulfilling the essence of the story of the Old Testament. It's just beautiful. It's epic.

This upside-downness, this reversal of bringing rulers down but lifting up the humble, that's going to be the essence of what Luke highlights of Jesus' kingdom of God announcement of this reversal of values, and reversal of status, and Jesus exalting the poor. So he setting the ground for that already in the first chapters.

Jon: It's cool.

Tim: It's a very personal, intimate stories that he begins with about this questioning of this couple, who've never been able to - sad - have kids, and Mary's going to be this misunderstood teenager and her son's going to go on to become this controversial figure.

It's what the angel tells her. Later when Mary brings Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and he's dedicated, there are these two old prophets there who see him, and they sing their own songs about Jesus. But then, Simeon the Prophet, he says, "This child is destined to cause the rising and falling of many." That's what her song was about. The proud, fall and the humble are exalted.

So this child is going to cause a great reversal and upset in Israel and he will be a sign that will be spoken against so that the thoughts of many hearts are revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too. I mean, if you've got this promise about your own child, I don't know how I'd feel. You yourself are going to be torn in half by what your child becomes.

Jon: He's talking to her, "Sword will pierce your own soul too."

Tim: Yeah. This child is going to caused great upset in Israel. People are going to speak against him. It's going to reveal what's really inside of people's hearts when they encounter your son, and you yourself are going to be conflicted about who your son is, and what he's all about.

Jon: Ominous.

Tim: Yeah, it's really powerful. So this is how Jesus is introduced to us. We already can feel the conflict coming just in his arrival. That's the introduction. So we walk away from the introduction going, "John's the Malachi, Isaiah predicted for runner of the

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Messianic King and Jesus, he's going to fulfill the promises to Abraham. He's going to rescue the people so that they can serve God without fear, is what Zachariah says.

Now, also as a literary design, these songs that the character sing in the opening, then set you up to expect Jesus and John to do these things.

[00:11:40]

Jon: That was Luke chapters 1 and 2. Now, let's talk about Luke chapter 3.

Tim: All of a sudden, you turn the page to Luke 3 and they are grown up. Our two key characters, John and Jesus, are grown men. The way Luke order things is really intentional.

There's the baptism story. John goes to the place of Israel's roots, the Jordan river - It's where they cross enter the land. And he's having the people pass through the waters once again to renew their commitment to the God of Israel.

So the symbolism is all loaded, that he's kick starting the new covenant people. It's like a new entry into the promised land. That's surely what John was intending you to do by choosing that spot.

Jon: And was baptizing...? Where did this come from?

Tim: Well, immersion, this kind of ritual immersion was a temple practice already from Leviticus. It was a symbolic way.

Jon: For purification?

Tim: Yeah. It was marking your transition from the state of ritual impurity to ritual purity.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: In this period, it was also adopted into people's daily lives, not just whether or not you can go in and out of the temple. But people would do it before they would pray.

Jon: They would immerse themselves in water.

Tim: Then the Pharisees, this is a debate they have with Jesus, they would immerse their hands before eating every meal. So, they took a practice from the temple and brought it into their homes too. But then John seems to have taken this existing practice and added a layer of meaning to the symbol by taking the baptism, not in

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these little pools, especially sacred pools in different places around the temple, but he goes down to the Jordan River where the nation entered into the promised land.

Jon: Which would be quite a hike.

Tim: Yes. Oh, yeah. It's 20 miles and thousands of feet to get down to Jordan river.

Jon: Who's following John? I mean, who are these people who are going to go take this 20-mile hike down this massive ravine to dunk themselves in the Jordan River for some sort of spiritual exercise?

Tim: The gospel authors in Luke just says that there were crowds coming to him. And then made up in those crowds are Pharisees, religious leaders, tax collectors, Jewish soldiers from Jerusalem.

Again, this is a culture tuned, that's raised on these prophetic promises. So you have a figure going down who give sermons every day that's just quoting from the prophets. He starts attracting attention, a movement renewal movement down by the Jordan River. So people start going down to see him.

Jon: It's like the same reason why people go to like Tony Robbin's retreats.

Tim: It's an equivalent. I'm thinking in terms of American culture; this would be like somebody going back to the worst harbor in Boston.

Jon: Oh, the Tea Party?

Tim: The Tea Party, yes. it would be like that. Somebody's going back to that harbor and dumping all these tea bags back in and say, "We're starting over guys. If you want to join me if you want to recapture the dream of the real American hope, come down."

Jon: Got it. So, there's a political aspect to this?

Tim: It's all mixed together. Political, religion, it's all mixed.

Jon: Because American politics doesn't have as much religion stuff into it. A little bit?

Tim: Well, it depends on your interpretation of American history.

Jon: It'll be someone going there and being like, "We're going to reboot this and make this a real Christian nation."

Tim: Correct? That would be it.

Jon: "So come dedicate your life back to God and to America. Let's make this happen."

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Tim: Yeah. And you go back to an iconic symbolic location that brings back the memory of our roots as a people. That's what John the Baptist is doing.

Jon: And people are like, "Yeah, I'm fed up with Rome."

Tim: "I'm fed up with Rome, with those compromised leaders in Jerusalem who keep striking deals with Rome. They let soldiers go into the temple courts. People are eating pork in Jerusalem. There's a lot of Jews who don't even obey the Sabbath anymore."

Jon: "And so there's a guy down the Jordan River and he's starting to movement, and I want to go check it out." When you get there, you're like, "Yeah, I'm in. I'm in on this. Going in to the Jordan."

Tim: "And I repent. I immersed myself and I repent for Israel's faithlessness and all the compromise to the covenant and the failures that we keep making and that our people are making. I want to join the new Israel that God's going to form when He shows up like he said He would." That's Isaiah 40 and Malachi.

That's how Malachi 4 ends. That's how the prophets ends. I'm going to send a messenger who will turn the hearts of the people back before the great coming Day of the Lord. And so, John says, "Yeah, the day is coming."

Jon: So, John saying that day is coming, the Lord's coming, I'm preparing you," that's what he meant 'I'm preparing the way for the Lord?'

Tim: Yeah. Then the narrative clearly is then presenting Jesus as the one who is the arrival of the Lord. It's written in the book of Isaiah. It's what Luke quotes from the book of Isaiah from chapter 40. "A voice, calling the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord the God of Israel. Every valley will be filled in." This is all from Isaiah 40. We don't have time we go there

Then Luke 3:6. "All people will see God's salvation." The Hebrew word for salvation is yeshua. It's Jesus' name right there in Isaiah 40. All people will see God's yeshua. And then John announces this message and then lo and behold.

Jon: Wait. Jesus' name is salvation?

Tim: Yes, it is. It's the standard Hebrew word for Yahweh saves. Yahweh brings salvation.

Jon: Is yeshua? Common Hebrew name for blokes?

Tim: Yeah.

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Jon: Wow. And that's what Joshua means too?

Tim: Yeah. Joshua is a lengthened version. And then the condensed version is yeshua.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So Jesus comes up and he comes — it's fascinating — he just identifies himself with John's new Israel movement. Then he's marked out by the events of the baptism, which is the cloud descends, which is what happened on Mount Sinai. This is what happened when God's presence came over the temple.

And then the Holy Spirit comes and hovers over him in the form of a bird, which we've talked about in Holy Spirit that's Genesis 1 imagery.

You have God communicating his love to the son. "This is my son, whom I love. With you, I'm well pleased." And then the Spirit is the one communicating this message of love from Father to son. So God does show up.

Again, think Luke, he's got the book of Acts in mind. He's writing to Christians who believe that the God of Israel, consists of God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit - three in one vision of God. It's introduced right here at the beginning of that story. It doesn't say, Trinity. He didn't have that word yet, but he's got the full three in one deal right there.

Matthew places the genealogy of Jesus at the beginning, the first. Luke places that right after the baptism. It's this long genealogy with 77 generations traced, and the last human figure is Adam, who's called the Son of God, which is precisely what Jesus was just announced at the baptism. So it's kind of like he pushes pause on the story and gives you Jesus lineage. Like, "I made a claim right here, let's just pause. This is legit." It goes all the way back and then he turns the story back on. It's really interesting.

So there's more going on in Luke. Jesus goes into the wilderness. Amazing.

Jon: Now, in the other gospels, this wilderness scene—

Tim: Comes right after the baptism right in the same location.

Jon: But the significance of it seems to be closely related to Exodus?

Tim: For sure. You can tell that Luke's put the genealogy there because he interrupts the sequence of the baptism and Jesus' testing in the wilderness. Whereas Matthew and Mark, those are tightly linked story is with no interruption.

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And it's Exodus imagery, because the passage through the water, and then the going into the wilderness for 40 days for Jesus, years for Israel. And there in the wilderness, Jesus is tested, which is precisely what happens to Israel in the wilderness. But Jesus passes the test.

Jon: Is that Luke's point of bringing this up?

Tim: Yeah. The wilderness story for sure. Because the first question that the devil ask Jesus is, "Now, if you are the Son of God..." So it's this red thread. "Here's my son, whom I love, here's the genealogy to prove he's the son of God." Then Jesus goes into the wilderness and the claim on the examination table is "Now if you really are the Son of God..."

That's precisely what Israel was called before the Exodus. In Exodus chapter 4, Israel's called God's firstborn son. In the Exodus story, they go through the waters which vindicates them as God's special son, so to speak, they go into the wilderness and they rebel and fail the test as God's Son.

Jon: So Luke is using this motif twice?

Tim: Yeah, the gospel authors don't seem to have this overarching thing of mappings every story on the certain details in the Exodus. It's rather that the Exodus story provided them with this vocabulary of images and ideas that they will pull on and use the language at different points in the story.

One of my favorite New Testament scholars named Richard Hays has devoted years in number of books to how the gospel stories reference and connect Jesus to the Old Testament. This is in his book "Reading Backwards." He has a whole chapter on Luke, where he talks about Luke's most common way of linking Jesus to the Old Testament is what he calls implicit correspondence.

So instead of explicit prediction fulfillment like Matthew, here's what he says. "Luke's language and imagery, repeatedly evoke fragmentary Old Testament passages and connect them to the story of Jesus." He has a cool analogy.

He says, "You might picture Luke's narrative technique in this way. It's as though the primary action of Jesus and that his story is on center stage in front of the spotlight. But on a screen at the back of the stage, there's a kaleidoscopic series of sepia tone images that flash and move across the screen. And these are stories and phrases from Israel scriptures.

The images can flash by sometimes almost unnoticed. It's just a word or two. However, if the viewer could freeze the story, and pay careful attention, there are

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moments where the words and gestures of the characters on the main stage mirror what's happening on the shifting backdrop. And at these moments, the viewer experiences a flash of insight as the live action connects to a scene from a much older story. It's not Luke style to develop these in sustained sequences."

Notice how we talked earlier about how the exodus motif appears here on the mountain, and then he goes here, but then the Exodus motif also appears in the baptism and then going into the desert for 40?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So Luke style rather is that almost as soon as we recognize one correspondence with an Old Testament story, the moment is passed, and then a new Old Testament references on the backdrop of the next story.

Jon: So it's constantly creating illusions?

Tim: Yes. The story keeps moving, and it leaves us with a powerful sense of analogy between what God did in the past for Israel and what He's doing right now in the story of Jesus. That's just a great description of the technique.

Jon: That's cool.

Tim: If you don't catch it, you won't see it. But if you do, it deepens your appreciation of the story.

Jon: You were just watching the play, what the spotlight was showing, and it might have been you would enjoy it. But then if you start watching the play while watching that backdrop sequence of images, it's funny how a sepia tone—

Tim: I don't know why I said sepia. In the baptism story, it's got the people passing through the Jordan to go into the promised land, the Genesis 1 story of the Spirit over the waters, the Exodus story through the Red Sea into the wilderness for 40. And we are like, "Oh, wow."

[00:26:21]

Tim: Then the next thing Jesus does in Luke's portrait of his mission in Galilee is his inaugural sermon in Luke chapter 4. Mark, it was just a short summary: Jesus went into Galilee saying, "Repent, the kingdom of God is here." In Matthew, basically the same: Repent, the kingdom of heaven is here. But Luke has taken a story and kind of put it in front position as if it's the first sermon that Jesus gave. Whether it actually is, we don't know.

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So here's the story in Luke chapter 4 is just worth reading. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit." Luke mentioned Jesus empowerment by Spirit more than any other gospel author, which of course, look at volume two. "News about him spread throughout the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, everybody praised him."

So it's just a week in the life of Jesus going about. He went to Nazareth, his hometown, where he'd been brought up. On the Sabbath, he went to the synagogue like his custom was and he stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written — and he quotes from Isaiah 61, though he sprinkles a little Isaiah 58 in there too. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me." "Anoint," Hebrew words "mashach," it's the verb from which the noun mashiycha comes, which is the word Messiah - Anointed One.

Jon: He Messiad me.

Tim: He Messiad me to proclaim basar - good news. This is the word that becomes euaggelion in Greek - gospel. To proclaim gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

You rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendance and sat down. Everybody is staring at him. Literally, the eyes of everyone are fastened on him. And he started by saying, "Today the scriptures fulfilled in your hearing."

Jon: That's not a normal synagogue situation.

Tim: No. Normally you'd be like, "This is what we're hoping for. When will this figure come?" And Jesus says, "It's happening."

This is what he says, "All spoke well of him. People were amazed, stunned at the gracious words coming out of his mouth." But then they asked, "Wait, isn't this Joseph's son?"

Jon: "We know you."

Tim: "We know this kid. What?" And then he starts to get into it with them because then they start rejecting him. And like, "What, who are you? You're just hometown kid." There's a lot going on in the story.

Jon: Which chapter is this?

Tim: Chapter 4.

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Jon: Chapter 4.

Tim: So think, baptism, genealogy, testing in the desert—

Jon: This is it.

Tim: This is it.

Jon: This is how he kind of launches his ministry.

Tim: This is how he launches his ministry. It's a really important poem from Isaiah 62, but he sprinkled in a little phrase from Isaiah 58. We don't have time to talk about that, but it's really cool. But the key repeated words are highlighted here, are freedom is repeated twice, and the poor. Because he's announcing good news for the poor specifically.

So when Luke wants you to think of Jesus, he wants you to think of a messianic figure hoped for by the prophets, he's bringing good news and freedom for the poor.

Jon: The poor would be people who knew in that town and other towns that just didn't have a lot of cash?

Tim: This is fascinating. The word "poor" in the Hebrew Bible refers more to difficult circumstances, which could be economic, but also being dishonored, state of dishonor, or shamed or being a social outsider.

Jon: Like if you have leprosy or something.

Tim: Yeah, leprosy. What Luke's doing here is he's setting the stage for all of the people Jesus is going to go reach out to in the stories to follow. Think of all the famous stories of the people, Jesus did that. So blind people, lepers, women, who had issues with their body that made them ritually impure unable to go up into the temple, sick people, children. But then a tax collector, Levi, he's not poor, he's killing it. But in terms of his standing in relationship to the community, he's shun.

Jon: He's an outcast.

Tim: He's an outcast. Prostitutes.

Jon: So would a better word be outcasts than poor?

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Tim: I've come back and forth. I don't know. The Greek word *ptōchos* renders the Hebrew word *`ani*. This is Joel Green. He is one of my favorite commentaries in the Gospel of Luke. He thinks this is key for Luke's depiction of Jesus' mission.

He says, "Jesus mission is directed to the poor. Luke chapter 4. In the holistic sense of those who are for any number of reasons relegated to positions outside the boundaries of God's people, Jesus refuses to recognize those socially determined boundaries and asserts instead, that these outsiders can now belong to God's family." That's what he draws out of this.

So the poor is a big category that refers more to someone status in their culture than just how much money they have. Jesus is saying that's who his mission is directed to.

Jon: Because that's not how we use the word in English.

Tim: No.

Jon: We use it to refer to specifically you're just income and your assets.

Tim: Yeah, it's economic.

Jon: Because you could be a poor outcast, you could be a rich outcast.

Tim: Yeah. You can be a rich-poor person in Luke. Levi and then Zacchaeus later on in the book is another example of wealthy-poor person.

Jon: It's interesting.

Tim: It is interesting.

Jon: So in the Sermon on the Mount, when he says, "Blessed are the poor," and then in another spot it says, "Poor in spirit"...

Tim: Well, actually, it's an important difference. In Matthew, Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit." In Luke, he says, "Blessed are the poor," which again, fits into Luke's theme. When Jesus gives that teaching in Luke, he's already announced that his mission is to the poor.

Jon: So blessed are the outcasts.

Tim: Blessed are those who have been on the outside margin of acceptable society because God's grace and mercy and bringing the kingdom is coming to you first. It's

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just the principle that people who are in economic or social difficulty are more aware of their need for help than people who are wealthy. If you have a lot of money—

Jon: Money, but also if you're in the club. If you're like socially accepted, even if you have a lot of cash.

Tim: If you're in the club, you're way less likely to care about a prophet coming through town saying God's going to bring us deliverance." You're like, "I don't know. Be delivered from what? I'm doing great."

But if you're blind in one eye, and you can't work anymore and you don't know what to do, and then prophet comes to town and he's teaching about trusting God for provision, don't worry about tomorrow, you have a new group of people to hang out with, they invite you to dinner and everybody shares everything in the name of Jesus...

Jon: You feel accepted. He gives you hope.

Tim: These are the communities that Jesus would leave behind in these towns when he would visit them. They are people who are discovering what it means to live in God's kingdom.

Jon: And he saw that as the kingdom of God?

Tim: He said, "The kingdom of God is arriving. If you follow me and live by my teachings, you are living in a way that's appropriate to how God rules the world." So Jesus' mission to the poor, really important part of Luke's portrayal. And it's connected to what for the poor. Good news and freedom is what happens in most of our English translations. And that word "freedom," here you can see it, he repeats it.

It sometimes gets translated "release" for the prisoners. Here it is. Release. Or in some translations, its freedom for the prisoners. And this is really interesting. It's from the Greek word [unintelligible 00:34:58] literally means to physically release.

But in the passage he's quoting from Isaiah 61, is the Hebrew word that refers to the release of slaves and the release of people from their debts in the Jubilee cycle. Which was every 49 years, all debts would be canceled, all slaves freed, all land that was lost due to just bad fortune, and the family had to sell it, it goes back to the original owners. So the Jubilee was this reenactment of the Exodus story in Israel's economic system.

Jon: How is it related to Exodus?

Tim: Slavery in debt.

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- Jon: Oh. All the debt was canceled when they left Egypt?
- Tim: Well, oh, rather, that debt was viewed as a form of being enslaved.
- Jon: I see.
- Tim: And land the land is in a form of enslavement because it now belongs to somebody who's not its original family heritage. So, the Jubilee year, this is Leviticus 25, huge, huge theme in Luke, is that the Exodus slavery, the Egyptian slavery, and then the Jubilee echo. That's one of these things on the background that's in here.
- Jon: So, you have this understanding of this Jewish tradition where people were released from their obligations and the land that you might have lost, be brought back to you.
- Tim: The land that was assigned to your clan back when Joshua divided up the land, bad year, you didn't have enough money, you had to sell the land and now belongs to that family.
- Jon: So it's a pretty radical moment of getting back. No matter how you got there, why you're in this position, just making it right, correcting it.
- Tim: Yes. The Jubilee assumes there's an ideal, and that ideal becomes Israel's first receiving of the Promised Land. And everyone sits under their own vine and fig tree, all the families have their own piece of land to work. Nobody's indebted or and slave to another.
- Jon: So this is an ideal where everyone's will be productive.
- Tim: Free from slavery in Egypt.
- Jon: They're not slaves. They're productive on their own land. They don't owe each other debts. That's the ideal.
- Tim: Yes.
- Jon: But what eventually happens is you make mistakes, you start owing people debt, you have to give your land over—
- Tim: Or someone takes advantage of you.
- Jon: Someone take advantage of you, there's corruption, and now you don't have land, you might be in debt. You actually might be serving another family now.

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- Tim: You had to sell your kid into a form bond service into another family because you can't afford to raise them. This is what would happen. It was their culture.
- Jon: Is there evidence that this would actually happen the year of jubilee? They actually practiced it.
- Tim: Oh, that's fascinating. I actually need to do a little more homework on it. It's talked about a lot in Second Temple literature, but as far as records of it actually being enforced anywhere in the Old Testament history—
- Jon: It would take a lot to enforce it.
- Tim: It would. It doesn't mean it didn't happen. It just means the narratives that we have don't focus on it.
- Jon: There could be communities here and there that were like, "We do it." But this is every 49 years, right?
- Tim: Correct. Actually, smaller cycles of seven, it would happen debts released. But in terms of the land and everything connected to the promised land, going back to its original pristine state was the Jubilee Year.
- Jon: So Jesus out and he's saying, "I am bringing that."
- Tim: The kingdom of God is the time of Jubilee release for the poor, which means good news.
- Jon: And so, he's not talking about like, "Hey, it's the 49th year guys, it's time for Jubilee." The spirit of the Jubilee is now coming for the poor. It's a new era.
- Tim: Yes. Remember, he's quoting Isaiah 61. Isaiah was the one who connected the Messiah's coming, that it would be a Jubilee era. And Jesus is saying, "This scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. What I'm doing as I travel around Galilee inviting all the wrong people into what I'm doing." This is the Jubilee. The slaves are being free, people who know that they need help and need God's mercy and that their lives need to change, they're going to get their chance. And Jesus is the one who goes out to them.
- Jon: It's very populist message.
- Tim: It is. Yeah. One way to frame it. I mean, he opposed the existing institutions in Jerusalem. He thought they were corrupt.
- Jon: Religious iconoclast.

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Tim: The popular religious institutions of the local synagogues, it seems he got a mixed reception. Some people love him, some people ran him out of town. They thought he was crazy.

Jon: And he's talking about just accepting everyone and sharing—

Tim: Well, I mean, he calls people to repent and follow him. He's not just like, "Hey, you're cool?"

Jon: "Leave however you want."

Tim: He's calling people to a new way of life, but he's going first to the poor in that broader category, saying, "Listen, life as we know it isn't life how God intended it here for God's people." And he called people to turn and follow him.

Jon: Yeah, because he was he was calling people to a very high level of morality to in like the Sermon on the Mount.

Tim: Yeah. I mean, traditional Jewish culture is already a very traditional moral culture. That's why his teachings focus specifically on not getting retribution, forgiveness, generosity, these kinds of things. But then also including the needy, and including those of low social status.

Jon: So there was already this high moral standard in Judaism, but there became this these this underbelly of the outcasts, the people who weren't really accepted, and Jesus was like, "Look, this is where God's going to begin."

Tim: That's right. That's the specific theme Luke's focusing on. Again, as we think about the video, this is crucial. I'm thinking of if everybody can see these four different videos, one on each of the Gospels. For Mark, wit as the question who and how, and what's it going to do? It's the paradox of the crucified Messiah.

For Luke, it's this. It's this, that the kingdom of God is this reversal of values, and that it's Jesus creating this new space for the rich and the poor, but especially the poor because they usually on the out to be welcomed into God's mercy. And that what happens in Jerusalem and the cross is just the epitome of upside down, where the exalted King becomes the poor criminal hanging from the cross.

Jon: Getting executed.

Tim: But you can see there's this link that Jesus' Kingdom announcement is hand in glove with what happens on the cross. It's the same basic idea. But here, he's just living it out on the across.

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[00:42:38]

Jon: Tell me more about then, the institutions that he would have been turning his nose up to. Because there in chapter four, he's at a synagogue, he's handed the scroll by an assistant. I mean, that's all part of the—

Tim: Yeah, it's his hometown. He's not rejecting Judaism or something, he is bringing to fulfillment what he thinks is the true calling and hope of the Jewish people. He's claiming that he is bringing the hopes of their people to their God intended fulfillment.

Jon: This is in Luke. I think it's Matthew where he just rails on the Pharisees. Does he have that in Luke?

Tim: Yeah. It doesn't get a whole chapter, but yeah, it comes near the end.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Even in this section in Galilee in chapters 3 to 9, there are multiple stories where they don't like what Jesus is doing, they don't like the people he's hanging out with. They don't like that he's having dinner parties with people who used to be prostitutes.

Jon: And why don't they like it?

Tim: Well, you have someone who's presenting themselves as a prophet, as a leader who is from the line of David, and he's hanging out with the wrong people. He's saying that someone like a Levi or a tax collector, who essentially is a compromiser, he's a traitor, he's going and sitting in a Roman tax booth exacting taxes on all these Jewish fishermen trying to go sell their fish.

And Jesus just says, "Follow me," to him one day, and the guy, he leaves that and follows Jesus. The stigma didn't stay at the tax. The same with the prostitutes and other poor people.

It's this honor-shame culture. We already have a difficult time understanding honor-shame cultures from an American point of view. Your status in society is like a pecking order. If you belong because of your life choices, family history, economics setting to the low status, it's inappropriate for Jesus to be saying, "And these are God's New Covenant family."

Jon: But they were Jews.

Tim: They were. Yes, that's right.

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Jon: They were part of God's covenant family. But for him to highlight them as like these are the...where it's going to start—

Tim: Again, I used the word upside down.

Jon: Yeah, upside down. So, like, I'm a religious leader and in my mind where it's starting, where the kingdom of God is going to come is through my care for the traditions.

Tim: It will come out of the synagogue, out of the rabbi leaders. These are where God's people meet together.

Jon: And we'll be the ones that help point us all towards where this needs to go. And when the when a ruler comes, we'll be a part of that. It'll be part of the institution.

Tim: We'll be on the same team. Yeah, interesting. Yes.

Jon: And so, here comes this guy who they don't really feel on the same team was completely because he's ignoring many of the practices they find really important.

Tim: That's right. He has a different interpretation of what it means to rest on the Sabbath.

Jon: That's huge right there. Massive.

Tim: Huge. It's a big identity marker for Jewish people.

Jon: Don't mess with that.

Tim: And it set them apart in the Roman world because people didn't get weekends in the Roman workforce. So there's that. But then Jesus does things like, "We're hungry, there's grain in this field." "All right, let's just eat here."

Jon: And that is against custom?

Tim: And that's against the traditional interpretation of "don't work on the Sabbath." Then, he has a number of healings on the Sabbath, and they say, "It wasn't life-threatening. Why couldn't this wait till another day?" But for Jesus, the Sabbath was about God's mercy and grace. So what better day for someone to...? That kind of thing.

Then Jesus differed over ritual purity things that weren't in the Torah, but they were traditions that were formed by the Pharisees about handwashing. And there Jesus would have to be like, "Listen you're trying to stamp out impurity from Israel because we live in near-sacred space and we're the holy people." But he accused

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them of cleaning up Israel in the wrong place. There's this famous saying about "you don't get impure by something you eat." Just really provocative because go read Leviticus.

Jon: You do.

Tim: You do. And he says, "No, foods don't make you impure. Not what goes into your mouth. What comes out of your mouth that renders you impure: hatred, murder."

Jon: So he's fast and loose with Sabbath traditions, he's a little fast and loose with kosher traditions, although he probably didn't break kosher. And so, that's threatening. Right off the bat, that's threatening.

I'm trying to understand. So, if I'm a religious leader, I'm looking at someone who's an outcast, who's poor. I'm supposed to take care of them, right?

Tim: That's true. And they certainly were.

Jon: And so, I'm not going to be that scandalized that Jesus would say, "Hey, God really cares about the poor." You'd be like, "Yes, of course, God cares about the poor." That doesn't seem that upside down to them.

Tim: I suppose what's upside down is that these are the kinds of people that Jesus chooses to spend most of his time with. These are the people that he notices and moves towards when he goes into a town. These are the people that he recruits as the leaders of his movement.

Jon: You just wouldn't do that. If you were building a movement, you would look for all the powerful, authoritative, wealthy—

Tim: You'd go to the Pharisees school down the street...

Jon: Get them on board.

Tim: ...get the best Bible experts on board. You go get a priest too, some Levites. You say you're the Messiah, and you're bringing the kingdom of God.

Jon: You build that kind of coalition.

Tim: Right. He gets no name fisherman, tax collector—

Jon: And a bunch of women who weren't even supposed to be disciples.

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Tim: These are the people he says, "Blessed are you. The kingdom of God is yours. You're the winners." This is what he says. Jesus is very intentional about not just what he says, but how the shape of his movement and the people that he picked to be in his movement, that also communicated a message. Just like forming a basketball team out of no-name players and then taking them to the Olympics. It's like that. Saying, "Here's the real deal."

Jon: Isn't that the plot of Cool Runnings, right?

Tim: I don't know.

Jon: I guess the Jamaican Bobsled team.

Tim: But your point is, like a poor person. Like a poor beggar who's blind, he's not being neglected and spit on by the Pharisees. They take care of him.

Jon: They're not like, "Get them out. We don't like these guys."

Tim: Jesus is the only person to ever be nice to them.

Jon: You're like, "Hey, guys, these are people too."

Tim: It's not like that. It's more that there is a powerful symbol in Jesus picking recruiting, moving specifically and constantly towards...this is what he's remembered for.

Jon: It's kind of like if I wanted to run for mayor in Portland, maybe. We'll see where this goes. Normally, it's like I got to like hobnob with people with deep pockets, get some money, get to know everyone in the government and kind of build this coalition. I get in through that door to the people who are already in.

Tim: This is how you get influence around it.

Jon: This is how I'd also become like school president.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. You get to know the people who could benefit you. So you try and benefit them.

Jon: Popular kids, the people who have some sort of authority. You want to get in with that coalition. You wouldn't. I like the school. I've known nothing about local politics, but I went to high school.

So if I wanted to run for school president, that's what I wouldn't. What I would do is like go hang out with a couple dudes have played Dungeons and Dragons, and always sit by themselves and never shower.

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- Tim: People who eat lunch at the way back by the base bleachers.
- Jon: The guy who couldn't get into the drama team because he was too weird.
- Tim: But then on a more serious note, there were those kids who always have raggedy clothes, you wonder maybe they live in the van with their family.
- Jon: And then there's the girl who everyone makes fun of because she's thought of as promiscuous. I'm thinking of the outcasts.
- Tim: All these people are coming to my mind from high school.
- Jon: I'm trying to think of someone who would be like the tax collector. Like someone who no one really likes because he's always a brown nosing with the principal or something.
- Tim: He's like the hall monitor.
- Jon: Of course.
- Tim: He's like, "You'll be later for class."
- Jon: Totally. And nobody likes him.
- Tim: Traitor.
- Jon: He's a traitor.
- Tim: So yeah, that whole ragtag—
- Jon: And so, Jesus, he's just hanging out with those people, and he goes, "You know what? We're going to take this..."
- Tim: "We're going to form an after-school club."
- Jon: "...and we're going to turn the school around."
- Tim: This is what the school actually needs is this group of people.
- Jon: And we're going to live a radically different way, caring about each other.
- Tim: We will honor each other. We treat each other as more important than ourselves.
- Jon: And they're all like, "Jesus, you're going to become president of the school." And they're all excited.

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Tim: I suppose. Yeah, let's play it out. And then he would be like, "Yeah, but not in a way that you think."

Jon: "Yeah, not in the way you think." And they're like going to the pep rally yet where they think Jesus is going to give his announcement that he's running for school president, and instead he's just he gets like—

Tim: He gets jumped and beat up in the back Hall.

Jon: Totally. And sent to the hospital.

Tim: And then the clinch would be the moment where he's vindicated, whatever the equivalent is to the resurrection.

Jon: It turns out he comes back from the hospital and you learn that he is actually the son of the superintendent of the entire school.

Tim: And he's elevated as not just class president, but superintendent of the district.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Okay, you know, we're onto something here. Here's why. I think many people don't know how to connect all the events of Jesus story together as one unified thing - making one unified statement. And so we have radical revolutionary Jesus, we kind of like him, but then there's traditionally moral Jesus who is talking about sex and divorce and sounds very traditional. And then there's the Jesus who died for my sins.

I think for many people these are different Jesus' in our heads. And I like one I tend towards the other. I don't understand death on the cross. That's weird. Or it's cool, it's how Jesus loves me. But it's unifying all these as part of one statement, the upside down Kingdom of God where the reject are actually the ones of greatest honor that God shows his love for the world precisely by turning its value system upside down. And the cross is the epitome of that, the king who's executed. So powerful.

Jon: Up next with the final podcast episode, we'll finish off the Gospel of Luke. You'll see the first video that we made for this new mini-series on Luke release the week before Christmas. We're really excited about it. Then the route next year, we'll release four more. Will be five-part series going through the Gospel of Luke fully animated.

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