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WORDS FOR LIVING MINISTRIES

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Dear ones,

What can be said in a time like this? Marty is in Heaven and we miss her so.

I was with her, taking care of her, for the last 3 1/2 months. Jeff was with her as long as he could stay-- then had to return to Honduras. Melissa, Susan and Sally did their best to juggle their already difficult schedules so that one of them could be with me at all times; for only a few days I was alone. It was a joint effort of love.

We had to drain the fluid that accumulated in her pleural cavity so that she could breathe, and she paid for it--in pain and expended strength--each time.

She was "the same Marty" until the end--in charge. She knew all of her numerous meds and each time, with her so-thin forefinger, she would slowly sort and count them; and if we didn't get it right, she corrected us immediately. Because she was so miserable, and so desperately weak, her patience was in short supply; and, when we needed to be corrected, she would bark at us like a drill instructor. We understood, immediately obeyed, and loved her.

We caressed her arms, rubbed her back and aching legs, brushed her hair and combed it with our fingers--things that she loved--always telling her that we loved her.

She never once complained.

Before she was no longer able to do it, we got her into her chair one morning and, like always before, she sat up at her desk and took care of some of her business matters. She lasted longer than I thought she could, and we put her back on the sofa; it was her very last time to sit upright, doing what she had done so many times before. It is a beautiful memory.

In the final days she slept most of the time and had stopped trying to speak--she was just too weak and couldn't get enough air to try. Yet one afternoon I walked into the room and she opened her eyes widely, looked at me, smiled sweetly and said, clearly, "I love you"--then closed her eyes. Those were her last words.

Day and night we were with her, and she was bathed in love. At the end, all four of us were with her, taking turns for brief periods of sleep.

Early on the last morning, when she slipped away into Heaven, I was kneeling beside her trying to count respirations and looking at my watch. Sally was beside me holding her hand. Suddenly Sally said, "I can't get a pulse!" I grabbed Marty's other wrist and I also couldn't get a pulse. I looked at my watch and it was between 6:35 and 6:40.

Sally and I watched her die and she died so peacefully, so sweetly, that I could not possibly say just when she took her last breath.

Melissa and Susan jumped up, rushed in already crying, and we all put our arms around her, and around one another, telling her we loved her until we could cry and speak no more.

I have watched brave men die; but I have never seen anyone die so peacefully.

Epilogue:

As Marty lay dying Jeff was desperately trying to claw his way through the bureaucracy and get out of Honduras. He arrived two days later, in time for the visitation and funeral, where he and the girls spoke briefly and beautifully, and Ron Beaton sang Marty's favorite, as he had so many times in the Retreat days, "It Is Finished." --Tom

Food for Thought from Sally: Joseph, Foster Father of Jesus

Earlier this summer, we celebrated Father's Day, and when we look at Joseph (of Nazareth), we learn what sort of things God valued in a father. God Himself was Jesus's father, yet he still chose Joseph to serve as Jesus's earthly father. What sort of person did God choose for this momentous job? When we meet him in Luke's gospel, Joseph is in the process of making a decision of mercy. We meet him when he has learned that his fiancé is pregnant (and not by him), and he is thinking about what to do. A proud man or even just a hurt and disappointed man could've had Mary publicly dishonored or even stoned. Joseph, however, was planning to put her away privately, sparing her any further humiliation than she was already assuredly undergoing. So we see that he was a man with a heart of mercy.

When Joseph married Mary, furthermore, we see perhaps his greatest quality—self-sacrifice. He knew that his marrying her would make everyone believe that the child was his and think that he had been philandering with Mary (even though he was not that sort of man at all). When he married her, he took it on the chin for Mary (and for Jesus), allowing his reputation to suffer for their sake. Joseph was self-sacrificial. Jesus would be as well.

Joseph was also a man who recognized God's voice when He spoke to him—first when he was told to marry Mary and that the child was of the Holy Spirit and again later when God told him to take Mary and Jesus and flee from Bethlehem because King Herod would hunt the child down. On both occasions, Joseph recognized the voice of God. He also acted upon God's instructions immediately.

Joseph is a humble man. He is (as is Mary) a descendent of King David, yet he lives the life of an ordinary man (as will Jesus, the King of Kings). He

does not speak of his royal blood, neither in pride nor in self-pity (he could've brooded upon the fact that he was of royal blood but had no throne and lived in an era in which Israel was a conquered and occupied land). Joseph is also an honest and skilled worker and teaches Jesus to do the same as the lad grows.

Joseph is also willing to make changes. After the birth of Jesus, Joseph seems to have successfully made a new life for his young family, staying on in Bethlehem. Then he later bravely makes an even greater change—travelling to and settling in a foreign country (Egypt) to protect the young Jesus—revealing that he is willing to make changes and face long journeys and the challenges that go with living in a place far from the culture he has known and been comfortable in.

So...what does God look for in a father? A person who is merciful, who is self-sacrificial of his own reputation when he has to choose between his reputation and doing what is right, someone who is sensitive to recognize God when He speaks, and quick to obey Him, someone who is humble, an honest and hard worker, and who is willing to make changes. If God chose a man with these traits to serve as the foster father of Jesus, it tells us that these traits are of great value in God's eyes and ones He'd like to develop in all of us.

--Sally Mahoney (nee McKenney)

Additional Food for Thought pieces go out monthly to our email list. If you are not on our email list and would like to be, write Sally at sumacsally@gmail.com.

Selections from Tom's Bible Study Guide

We thought you might enjoy the Introduction to Luke's Gospel from Tom's Study Guide to the Entire Bible.

The Gospel According to Saint Luke

Luke's gospel is the third of the four gospel accounts, and is the last of the three "synoptic" gospels. Like the other two, although it tells the same basic story, it has distinctive characteristics.

Approach and Style. Luke's writing style is that of a careful scholar, and his gospel is noteworthy for the elegance and eloquence of its Greek

expression. He also set out to record the story of Christ thoroughly and completely; thus Luke is the longest of the four gospels. **More than half of the content of Luke's gospel is unique**--i.e. not found in the other three gospels. Among these are: the account of Gabriel's visit to Zacharias, Elisabeth's supernatural conception and the birth of John the Baptist; the account of Mary's miraculous conception and her prenatal visit to Elisabeth; the account of the shepherds at the birth of Jesus; the dedication of the Christ Child in the Temple with the prophecies of Simeon and Anna; and the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Lost Sheep, and the Prodigal Son.

Jesus the Perfect Man. Although Luke mightily declares the divinity of Jesus, he also emphasizes, much more than the other three gospel writers, the humanity of Jesus. He presents Jesus as the Perfect Man. "Son of Man" is Luke's hallmark phrase in referring to Jesus, and Luke 19:10 may be taken as the hallmark verse: "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Beauty of Expression. Of all the gospels, Luke is distinctive for its beauty of expression. It contains some beautiful passages not found in the other gospels--some so dear to the Church that they have for many centuries been part of classical liturgies. These are: Elisabeth's *Beatitude* (1:41-45); Mary's *Magnificat* (1:46-55); Zacharias's *Benedictus* (1:67-79); the angels' *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* (2:13-14); and Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis* (2:28-32).

Luke the Historian. Sir William Ramsay, Oxford professor and eminent scholar of the 19th and early 20th Centuries, is considered by many to have been the greatest archeologist of all time. He was an intellectual product of the prevailing German (Tubingen) school of skepticism which denied the value of the Bible as history. Basically hostile to the idea of validity of the Scriptures as history, he was especially critical of Luke and Acts because they contain so many names of officials, dates, place names and other details, of which there was no other record in ancient literature¹. Ramsay went to the Mediterranean to prove them wrong; and he was amazed to discover that his archeological findings proved just the opposite--that the records in Luke and Acts were accurate. He declared: "Great historians are the rarest of writers...Luke is a

historian of the first rank...this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."

Was Mary His Source? Some interpreters say that Luke writes from Mary's point of view. There is a widely held tradition (and one that is probably reliable) to the effect that Luke visited Mary many times in her Jerusalem home, and that she was the source for much of his gospel account. And, if we think about this, since Luke was a careful and thorough historian, it would seem to be irrational to think that he would **not** have sought her out as a vital source of this knowledge. Since, after a supernatural conception, she delivered, nursed and reared Jesus in a completely natural way, no one else on Earth could know the human side of Him better than his mother. Only Luke tells us of the events leading up to Mary's miraculous conception, the birth of Jesus, his dedication in the Temple and the prophecies of Simeon and Anna. All these things, so important to a mother, are told in great detail. The story of the boy Jesus when He stayed behind in Jerusalem to discourse with the scholars in the Temple, found only in Luke's account, is likewise the sort of thing that a mother would remember and relate. Yes, the logical case for Mary as Luke's primary source is very strong. In fact, as already pointed out, to think otherwise would be illogical.

Jesus the Healer. Luke emphasizes the healing ministry of Jesus, which would be expected of a writer who is himself a physician. The late Dr. J. Vernon McGee, in his introductory notes on Luke, makes the interesting observation that "Luke used more medical terms [in his writings] than Hippocrates, the father of Medicine." I can't confirm or deny this, but it is an interesting thought. **A. Author.** It is almost universally agreed that the human author was Luke, a physician of Antioch in Syria, and a companion of Paul. It is likewise generally believed that he was also the author of the Acts of the Apostles, which the salutation of Acts seems to make clear.

The Muratorian Canon. The Muratorian Canon (ca 150-170 AD), also called the Muratorian Fragment because the first part is missing, is the earliest known listing of the New Testament books. This ancient Latin document identifies Luke as the author: "The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke. Luke the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, whom Paul had taken

¹ For an example of this precise, detailed recording of names, dates and places, see Lk 3:1-2.

with him as one zealous for the law, composed it in his own name, according to [the general] belief. Yet he himself had not seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to discern the events, so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John [the Baptist]²."

Luke and Paul. Luke was probably a convert of Paul, who referred to him as "Luke the beloved physician." He and Paul were both intellectuals, Luke accompanied Paul on some of his apostolic journeys, and was with him during his imprisonment and martyrdom in Rome. Colossians 4:9-14 suggests strongly that he was a gentile for, although he was with Paul, he was not listed among those "who are of the circumcision." He was probably a native of Antioch of Syria, and he is generally believed to have been the only gentile writer of a book of the Bible.

B. Place and Date. Luke's gospel was probably written ca 40-45 AD. The salutations of Luke's gospel and the book of the Acts of the Apostles make it clear that Luke was written before Acts, and the evidence strongly indicates that Acts was written prior to 50 AD³. The place of writing is unknown.

C. Occasion. As expressed in the salutations of both Luke's Gospel and Acts of the Apostles, the occasion was Luke's desire to gather the story completely, and to set it forth in an orderly, scholarly way. In both books Luke expresses this goal to someone named Theophilus, apparently a man Luke held in high regard⁴. We should be very grateful that this was Luke's occasion for writing and his goal, for we are now the beneficiaries.

D. Theme. As is the case with all four gospel accounts, the central theme is the coming and redemptive work of Jesus the Messiah, the Christ of God. But Luke emphasizes the humanity of Jesus ("Son of Man"). And, throughout, Luke's account reveals his desire to tell the **complete** story, with a

scholar's urgency to present an unassailable case for vital truth.

A FINAL WORD

Treasure and use each day as if it were your last, and never give up hope: God has a limitless supply of new beginnings, and He makes beautiful things out of broken pieces.

² For more on the Muratorian Canon return to "Introduction to the New Testament," final topic.

³ A fragment of Acts 27:38 was found among the documents in Cave Seven at Qumran, and all of the Qumran documents ("Dead Sea Scrolls") have been dated by Israeli scholars at between 50 BC and 50 AD. For more on this remarkable discovery see "New Testament Fragments in the Dead Sea Scrolls" in Part IV (Selected Topical Summaries).

⁴ The name Theophilus is Greek for "lover of God." For this reason some believe that the ~~two~~ books were addressed to all believers; but the personal nature of the salutations in both books argues strongly against this.