

January 6, 2013

## Lesson 20: John Baptizes Crowds

### Luke 3:1-22

*In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,*

*'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:*

*"Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.*

*Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."*

*John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'*

*And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.'*

*As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'*

*So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, added to them all by shutting up John in prison.*

*Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'*



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# John Baptizes Crowds

Luke 3:1-22

**The Big Story Truth:** John helped the people get ready to meet Jesus. He reminds us of how much we are stuck in sin and need a Savior. Most of all, when we hear John's story we remember that we are baptized in Jesus' name and that because of that gift of baptism we have been forgiven and named children of God forever!

## About the Scripture Passage:

John, like the prophets of the Old Testament who came before him, pointed out to the people their need for repentance...

turning back to God and away from sin. Baptism by John was a physical act that people could do as a sign of this repentance.

In this passage though something strange happens.

John starts talking about the coming of one who is greater than he is, one who will baptize in a different way.

John can only baptize with water... but he talks about someone coming who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

The someone he is talking about is Jesus who happens to be standing right there. At the end of today's passage, Jesus himself is baptized. Why was Jesus baptized even though he never sinned if the big thing about baptism by John was repentance? What Jesus does in the Jordan River by being baptized is a little glimpse of what we will see later on the cross. Jesus takes the humbling position of repentance now even as he will take on the humbling death of a sinner later.

## For Your Reflection

What do you remember (or have you been told) about your own baptism?

How does the promise God made to you in baptism make a difference in your daily life?

What questions do you have about baptism?  
What opportunities is God opening up for your faith to be deepened in this week's study?



## Great Big Word: Baptism

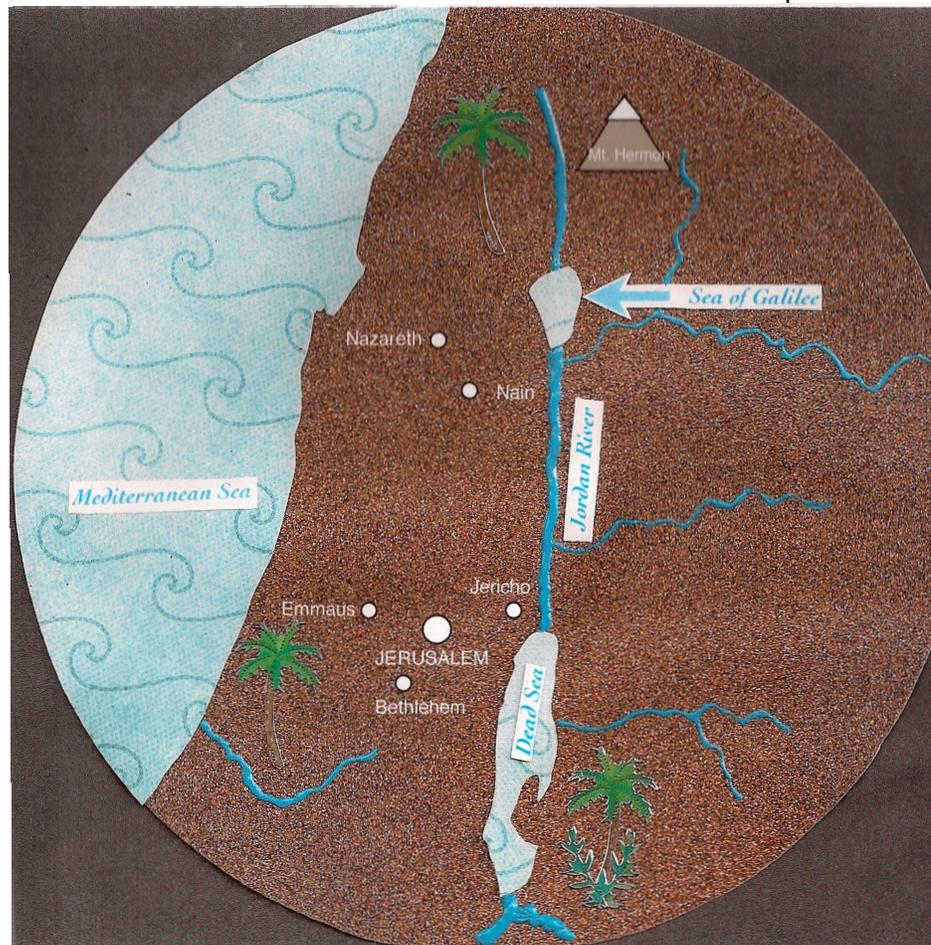
Water and God's Word  
pouring the Holy Spirit  
into our hearts.

### **Making the Connection:**

Jesus' baptism was one of the first things that he did as he got ready to start his ministry. For many of the kids in your class, their baptisms may have been when they were too young to remember. This lesson gives an opportunity to talk with kids of all age groups about what God did for them when they were baptized. It is also an opportunity to find out if anyone in your class hasn't been baptized. If you find out that someone in your group has not been baptized, tell your pastor so that a follow up contact can be made with the parents.

### **Where in the World Are We?**

Review with your class some of the areas that you have talked about on the big wall map in earlier stories. Remind the kids that the land of Canaan was promised to Abraham and was later settled by the 12 tribes of Israel. Show the map of the divided kingdom and remind kids how the land was divided in two and the people carried off into exile. A long time later some of the people got to come home again. They built a new temple. And now, in the new testament, generations later, this same area is where Jesus lived. Our story today is about John preaching in the wilderness and baptizing in the Jordan River. With your class, find the Jordan River on the map. Stick the magnets of John the Baptist and Jesus up somewhere along the Jordan.





# Preschool

## **Materials List:**

- Bible Bookshelf poster
- Two large sheets of posterboard or newsprint paper
- Images for each of the Sunday School stories leading up to today
- Tape/glue
- Spark Story Bible
- Dishwashing detergent
- Bowl for each student
- Water
- Food coloring
- 1 sheet white paper or card stock per child (printed with the word "Joy")
- 1 straw for each child and teacher
- Newspaper or table cloth for protecting the table
- Look ahead and decide on any "additional activity" ideas you may want to use as some of them will require other materials and preparation

## **Before the Children Arrive:**

Prepare two large sheets of poster board or newsprint paper. One should say "Old Testament" and one "New Testament." (If you want to be very creative you could even make the Old Testament one look more distressed or aged than the New Testament poster). Pour 1/4 cup dishwashing detergent into each bowl along with a little bit of water and food coloring. (If you would rather have the students pick the color they will be using you can hold off on adding the food coloring until you are ready to do the activity with the class.)

## **Experiencing the Story:**

As children enter the room, have them gather around the Bible bookshelf poster. (If you have already set up the table for the activity, it may be best to have the kids sit on the floor.) Point to the poster and tell the kids that the Bible is divided up into two parts. One half of the Bible is called the Old Testament and other is called the New Testament. (Point on the poster to the Old Testament and New Testament sides of the poster.) Tell the kids that today as a class you are going to make your own big picture of the two parts of the Bible: The Old Testament and the New Testament. Get out the two large poster boards you have prepared and tell them that you are going to put pictures on each one to show what happened

in the Old Testament of the Bible and what happened in the New Testament of the Bible.

Tell the kids that most of the stories that they have learned so far in Sunday School this year came from the Old Testament. Show the kids the pictures representing each of the lessons that we have learned so far and help them to put the pictures up on the Old Testament poster. When you get to Jesus stop. Tell the kids that this is where the New Testament starts. The New Testament is all about Jesus. So you can put the Christmas picture up on the New Testament poster. Tell the kids that for the rest of this year, the stories that they are going to learn about in Sunday School are going to be from the New Testament part of the Bible because the New Testament has all the stories about Jesus in it!

Hang the Bible bookshelf poster back up on the wall and put the two new posters up next to each other right underneath the Bible bookshelf poster so that the Old Testament/New Testament division is right above each other in both the Bookshelf poster and the two poster boards.

Tell the kids that you have a story to read to them today from the New Testament (Point to the New Testament side of the posters) about Jesus being baptized. Ask the kids if they have ever seen a baptism. What happens in a baptism? (Affirm their answers about the pastor putting water on a baby's head, etc.). Tell the kids that they are right that some people are baptized when they are babies. But Jesus was baptized when he was an adult and it wasn't even in a church. Jesus was baptized in a river! Let's read about it!

Read "Jesus' Baptism" (Spark Story Bible pages 242-245)

Ask the kids if any of them remember when they were baptized. Listen to their stories. Tell the kids that just like God told Jesus when he was baptized that God loved him and that Jesus was the great joy of God's life, that when each of them were baptized they were also marked by God's love and that they are the joy of God's life too.

When you were baptized God said that he forgives you for ALL your sins (the stuff that you do wrong.) And God said that there is nothing that will ever be able to make God stop loving you. God loves you SOOOOOO MUCH! (Have

the kids practice spreading their arms wide and repeating that God loves each of us SOOOO MUCH!)

The activity for today is a reminder of how much God loves us. Before doing the activity, though, ask for a volunteer to help you put the picture representing today's story up on the Bible chart. Ask the class to help the volunteer decide where to put the picture. Does it go in the Old Testament side or the New Testament side? (Provide whatever direction is necessary to make sure the picture winds up in the New Testament side.)

### **Activity:**

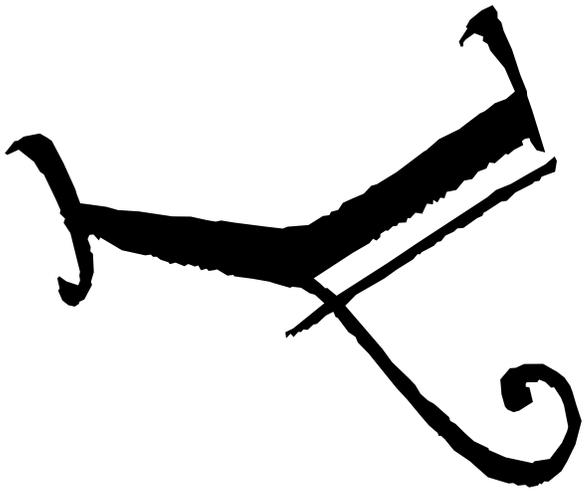
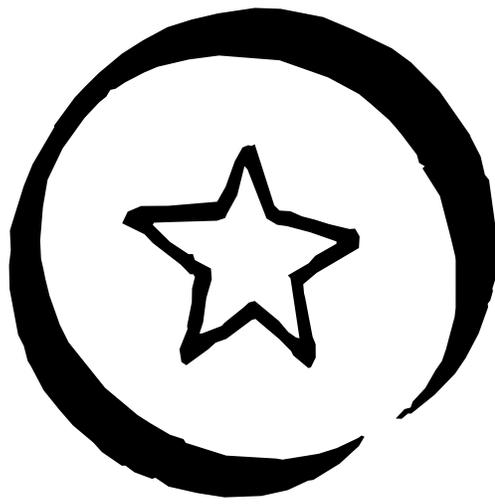
Get out one of the bowls prepared with the dishwashing detergent, water, and food coloring. Tell the kids that every time we see water it can be a reminder of our baptism. In baptism, God sends his Holy Spirit. Another word for the Spirit is breath. Today's activity is going to use this water and our breath to make a reminder of the joy of baptism. Have the kids practice with you taking a deep breath and blowing it out through their mouths. Have them hold their hand up in front of their mouth and feel their breath. Then take a deep breath and blow through the straw and feel the air. Then take a deep breath and blow through the straw into the water. Watch as the water bubbles up! Take a piece of the prepared cardstock paper and press it lightly on top of the bubbles so that it makes a design on the paper. Help kids do the same with their own bowls, straws, and pieces of paper. Be sure to tell the kids only to blow out through the straw and not suck up the water!!! Lay the papers out of the way to dry.

### **Additional Activities:**

**SNACK IDEA:** Blue jello in clear plastic cups can look like water. (You can even add gummy fish mixed in for effect!) As you eat the snack, ask the kids if they remember the name of the river where Jesus was baptized. Find the Jordan River on your class map.

**COLORING:** Invite the class to work together to color the pictures put up on the Old and New Testament posters.

ALTERNATIVE CRAFT IDEA: Collect a baby food or other small glass jar for each student to make a snow globe style craft. Have the kids help put a couple of tablespoons of baby oil in each jar and fill it with water. Glitter could also be added. These can be reminder of baptism globes. (For a fun twist if you have time to do advance preparation, cut around a picture of each child in your class and laminate it. Stand it up on lid of the jar and glue it there before class. Then after the jars are filled, screw on the lid and flip it so the picture of the child is right side up. Each child will be inside their own globe! See [www.ourbestbites.com/2011/12/how-to-make-a-homemade-snow-globe/](http://www.ourbestbites.com/2011/12/how-to-make-a-homemade-snow-globe/) for inspiration.)





# Lower Elementary

## **Materials List:**

- Bible Bookshelf Poster
- Spark Story Bible
- One set of Bible Books sunflower pattern pieces for each student (these will be used throughout the spring.)
- Gallon sized zip top plastic bag for each student
- Smash Books
- Optional: Bible Book Playing Cards

## **Experiencing the Story:**

As students enter the classroom, gather around the Bible Bookshelf poster. Remind the kids that this poster shows how the Bible is full of lots of smaller books. There is an Old Testament side and a New Testament side because the Bible is divided up into those two parts. Use the list below to review with kids the lessons that we learned this fall. Invite the kids to help you point to the book of the Bible on the poster that each of the stories comes from.

God Creates the World, Adam and Eve Sin (Genesis)

God Promises Abraham Descendants (Genesis)

God Uses Joseph for Good (Genesis)

Passover (Exodus)

Moses Intercedes for God's Unfaithful People (Exodus)

Hannah Praises God for Samuel (1 Samuel)

God Promises David's Kingdom Will Endure (2 Samuel)

Solomon Builds the Temple (1 Kings)

Elijah Cares for a Widow (1 Kings)

God Sends Jonah to Nineveh (Jonah)

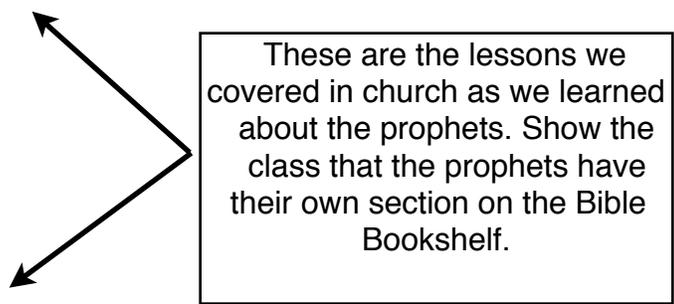
God Calls Isaiah (Isaiah)

Jeremiah Writes a Scroll (Jeremiah)

Daniel in the Lions' Den (Daniel)

Return to the Lord Your God (Joel)

Isaiah Announces Liberty (Isaiah)



These are the lessons we covered in church as we learned about the prophets. Show the class that the prophets have their own section on the Bible Bookshelf.

Have kids look at the top of the New Testament shelf. What do they see there? There is a manger and a cross on the top shelf. That is because the New Testament starts with the story about Jesus. There are four books of the Bible that tell us about Jesus' life. They are called the gospels. Gospel means "Good News" Jesus is really good news! Have the kids repeat the names of the 4 gospels. Tell the kids that this year in Sunday School we are going to be reading lots of stories from the gospel of Luke.

In fact, the story that we are going to be hearing today in church comes from the Gospel of Luke. This story is about Jesus' baptism. Ask kids if they have heard the story of Jesus' baptism before. What do they remember about the story?

Read "Jesus' Baptism" (Spark Story Bible pages 242-245).

Ask the kids if any of them remember the day that they were baptized. What have their parents told them about that day? What do kids remember about seeing other baptisms? Talk to the kids about the common elements of a baptism (the pastor puts water on the person's head, prayers, etc.) Tell the kids that the most important thing about baptism is that baptism is God making a promise to the person being baptized that God will love them forever. But that people also make some promises during baptism that will help them learn to love God too. When babies are baptized its the parents who make the promise for the baby. Do the kids have any idea what those promises are? Some of the promises are that the parents will teach their child about the 10 Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. (Help the kids remember that we studied the 10 commandments in class this year and how we pray the Lord's Prayer together in Sunday School in church.) Parents also promise to teach their children the creeds. Does anyone know what a creed is? A creed is what we say we believe. In church we say the Apostle's Creed each Sunday. It starts out "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth..." Do the kids remember saying the creed in church? Encourage them to pay attention in church today for when we say the creed together.

The other thing that parents promise is to help their children learn about the Bible. We've been learning a lot of stories from the Bible in Sunday School this year. One of things that we especially want to work on learning the rest of this year is being able to name the books of the Bible. So for today's activity, we are going to work on a project that will help us learn the books of the Bible.

### Activity:

Show the kids the "seeds" that you have that say "\_\_\_\_\_'s Books of the Bible." Have the kids fill in their name on their "seed." Ask them how many of them have planted seeds before. Do you plant a seed and right away you have a big flower? No, it takes a while for a seed to grow. It takes some work to grow a seed. It needs water and sun and time to grow. Well, these seeds represent something that we will be growing together as we learn about the Bible. This spring, we will work on learning the books of the Bible. Each book of the Bible is a piece of this plant that we will be growing together. We'll put our seeds up on a wall in our classroom and add a piece to it for each book of the Bible that we learn. Our goal will be by the end of the year to have a garden full of flowers and to know all the books of the Bible!



Give kids time to work at cutting out the pieces of their plant. As they work say the names of the books out loud with the kids. If you want to, play the Books of the Bible songs while they are working. (Remind the kids to be careful to keep their pieces in their own space.) When the pieces are finished being cut out, encourage the kids to put them in order and store in a plastic bag with their name on it. If they aren't able to finish today, kids can continue cutting out piece by piece later when they are ready to hang what they've memorized.

Help the kids pick an appropriate spot on the wall to put up their "seed." (You'll want the seed to be close to the ground so that there is room for it to grow as they memorize the books of the Bible.) Tell the kids that each week they come, we'll try to grow our flowers by memorizing a few more books of the Bible. Go ahead and put up the pieces for any of the books of the Bible that the kids already have memorized beginning with Genesis.

**SMASH BOOKS:** Encourage your class to start a new page in their SMASH books and label it “New Testament.” Ask them to draw, write, smash into their books things that remind them of the stories that they already know are part of the New Testament (Jesus’ birth and baptism).

**Additional Activities:**

Playing with a deck of Bible Book playing cards can help with memorizing the books of the Bible. If you have extra time today, or need a break from cutting, pick a game to play with a set of these cards or give a few to each student and have them work at coloring a classroom set for use another day.

# *Upper Elementary/Middle School*

## **Materials List:**

- Globe (or apple, or other item that could represent creation)
- Nativity set or picture (particularly the manger with baby Jesus in it)
- Copy of Jeopardy game board  
(or if you have access to a computer visit:  
<http://www.superteachertools.com/jeopardy/> to create an interactive version)
- Small rewards for game prizes
- If you are doing the optional activity you will need a large roll of paper (human body size!) or several sheets of paper taped together, tape or sticky tack

## **Before Students Arrive:**

Prepare the Bible Jeopardy game board either by writing the categories and point values up on the chalkboard or by writing on index cards so that they can be laid out on a table. If you are using index cards you might choose to write the question on the back of each card too. Before kids arrive set out the globe and nativity set on the table.

## **Experiencing the Story:**

As kids arrive have them gather around the two items that you have laid out ahead of time. Ask the kids to remember back with you to the first Sunday that we came to Sunday School this fall. Do they remember the story? Use the item that you brought as a visual aid to remember the story of creation and Adam and Eve's sin together. If you can, help them recall some of the other stories that we have learned about this year. What do they remember about the following stories?

God Creates the World, Adam and Eve Sin (Genesis)

God Promises Abraham Descendants (Genesis)

God Uses Joseph for Good (Genesis)

Passover (Exodus)

Moses Intercedes for God's Unfaithful People (Exodus)

Hannah Praises God for Samuel (1 Samuel)

God Promises David's Kingdom Will Endure (2 Samuel)

Solomon Builds the Temple (1 Kings)

Elijah Cares for a Widow (1 Kings)  
God Sends Jonah to Nineveh (Jonah)  
God Calls Isaiah (Isaiah)  
Jeremiah Writes a Scroll (Jeremiah)  
Daniel in the Lions' Den (Daniel)  
Return to the Lord Your God (Joel)  
Isaiah Announces Liberty (Isaiah)

These are the lessons we covered in church as we learned about the prophets and prepared for our Christmas program

All the stories that we have talked about so far happened in the Old Testament. But now we are starting a new part of the Bible. Turn their attention to the manger scene. This new part of the Bible is called the New Testament and it begins with the story of Jesus being born. The New Testament tells the good news about Jesus.

Get out the Bible bookshelf poster. Point to the Gospels, on the top shelf. These first four books of the New Testament tell us about Jesus life. The New Testament also has one book of history, called the book of Acts. And then there are a whole bunch of letters to people and churches in the rest of the Bible.

For now, though, we are going to be focusing on just one book of the New Testament. This year in Sunday School and church we are going to be reading stories from the book of Luke.

Can any one guess why the book would be called "Luke" if it is all about Jesus? This particular gospel is named "Luke" because the person who wrote it was named Luke.

We'll learn a little bit more about Luke as we go through the lesson today, but to start with we have a little game to play to review what we've learned so far in Sunday School and to get us ready for starting our learning about Luke and the New Testament.

### **Activity: Jeopardy!**

Divide the class into teams. Take turns having the teams choose a category and answer the questions "Jeopardy" style. (See following pages for game board and questions.)

**Optional/Additional Activity:**

Ask for a volunteer. Ask another student to trace around the volunteer on the large sheet of paper. Have students cut out the body shape. Hang the tracing on the wall with the title "Luke." Ask the class to write/illustrate labels to go around the shape to describe what they learned about Luke from playing jeopardy.

Today in church we will be hearing the story Luke wrote about the baptism of Jesus. If you have time as a class, read Luke 3:1-22. Ask kids to keep in mind what they know about Luke as a writer and to think about why Luke might have included this story in his Gospel. Why would he have used the details that he did?

For example, Luke might have especially included John saying, *"Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We are children of Abraham as our ancestor.' For I tell you God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham."* because Luke was a Gentile. He wasn't a child of Abraham. He knew that God's love was for all people!

Luke might have been sure to write down what John said about sharing with those who don't have enough and not taking money from people unfairly because he knew what it was like to be treated unfairly and unkindly.

How did Luke know to write down this story about Jesus? Who in the story does it seem like might have been telling Luke these details to write in his Gospel?

