

Theophilus: Patron of Gospel Publishing
Summer Sermon Series “God Uses People Like Me”
Kenwood Baptist Church
Pastor David Palmer
July 16, 2017

TEXT: Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-5

It is a joy to be together in the Lord's house this morning, and we continue our summer series that *God Uses People Just Like You and Me*. The purpose of this series has been to look at the



minor characters of the New Testament. Oftentimes we give our attention to major figures in the New Testament like Peter, John, Paul, Mary, and Timothy, and yet the New Testament is filled with the names of other people who are much more like you and like me, who are called to play a part in God's Kingdom by His gracious and sovereign plan. We have seen throughout the

summer that God uses very ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. Your calling to be part of the Kingdom of God means that God intends for the Kingdom to advance through you and through me and that it is His gracious purpose to do that. He is the one who gives gifts, and He intends for those gifts to be used. This morning, we turn our attention to another minor character mentioned just twice in the New Testament—a certain man named Theophilus, who becomes a patron of Gospel publishing, and we want to look at his story. It has surprising application for us all together. I want to begin with a question and ask you, “Do you read the preface of a book?” We seem to have a split audience, and it's split inside our house. My wife begins reading a book by reading the conclusion and decides from the fruits of the book if it's worth reading. I always read the preface with great care, because I want to know the person into whose hands I'm committing myself at the very beginning of reading something. When you read the preface of a book, you find out there's always a story behind the production of that work. Isn't that true? When you read the preface of PhD dissertations, they always have the same plot line. It is something like this: “I almost died while trying to finish this project. I had to eat terrible food quality; someone prayed for me, helped me watch my kids; somehow I made it; and then, glory to God—here's the book.” Others who are more experienced in writing give in their preface, the more refined types, give a list of all the people who have helped to make that happen. Then, the real scholarly types say something at the end like: “God forgive me if I have omitted mention of anyone's name.” But, the reality is that any book that you hold has a story behind it, and that story involves the support, help, and encouragement of others. This is

what we find when we look at the preface of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

Let's look quickly at the preface, and parents with kids, keep the Bible open in front of your children and asked them to help spot the one surprising element that is unique in both of these passages. The preface of Luke, Luke 1:1-4, is actually a single sentence in the original. Luke says:

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

When we look at the preface of Acts, there it is again in the very first sentence, in Acts 1:1:

"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,"

Presumably, if the first book was about all that Jesus began to do and teach, the second book is about all that Jesus continued to do and teach through the lives of people just like you and me. Right at the center of both of these prefaces there is the mention of this single name, Theophilus, who is our subject this morning. The name Theophilus means *beloved of God*. Last Sunday, we had a Theophilus in our midst, as Aaron and Valerie Osterbrock were here with their son, Theophilus. Theophilus was about three feet tall and has a great future in God's Kingdom. He has very godly parents, and they were here seeking mission support to go to Asia so that God's Word can be spread throughout the region of Malaysia. The name Theophilus is actually a pagan name. We have inscriptions, papyrus, and personal documents from the third century BC that mention the name Theophilus as someone who is beloved of God.

The name Theophilus is used also among Israelites in the first and second century BC. There are about 600 occurrences of the name Theophilus attested in letters and inscriptions, so it was a fairly common name at the time. In Luke's preface, the name Theophilus is given an adjective at the very beginning. In Luke 1:3, Theophilus is addressed directly, and the ESV renders this as: *"most excellent Theophilus."* This man is identified with this adjective, and this is a clue for us, giving us a little bit more about him. The adjective, which is translated *most excellent*, appears several other times in the New Testament, and in each of those other passages you will notice that this adjective is linked to someone who holds an official position in society. The first example is in Acts 23:26 where the Roman commander, Claudius Lucius, had arrested the apostle Paul and was preparing to send him to the Roman governor, Felix, and wrote him a letter which begins like this: "Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency the Governor Felix." This is the same term. In Acts 24, when the apostle Paul stands on trial, again appearing before Felix, the Jerusalem leadership sends a lawyer to accuse Paul, a certain man named Tertullus, skilled in

rhetoric, prepared to accuse Paul. He starts his public accusation of Paul with these words addressed to the governor, Felix. He says in Acts 24:2:

“Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, . . .”

In other words: “You are so wonderful, listen to me. This guy is causing havoc.” The adjective is there again, *most excellent*. Paul himself uses this term when he addresses the later governor, Festus, when he was on trial before King Agrippa and the Roman governor Festus. Paul began to explain the gospel in this very public way. This moment will always be more vivid for me because last November a group of us at Kenwood stood in the room in Israel where Paul gave the speech. In that room, Paul explained his hope in Jesus Christ, and the Roman governor listened; the king of Judea listened. Finally, after Paul said that Jesus had to suffer and be raised from the dead and proclaim light to our people and to all nations, Festus broke him off and he said in Acts 23:24:

“Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.”

Paul turned to him and said in Acts 23:25:

“I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words.”

The same term. What I want you to see in that is that Theophilus is credited with the title, an adjective that identifies him as a person of status, a person of leadership, maybe someone who holds an official position. This adjective is usually given to people who were of the equestrian order in Roman society, that is the class of the knights, which is one level below the senators. He is an upper-class person; he is a person of means. Because we have lost sight of the context, occasionally in modern times you'll hear some readers of Luke and Acts say that Theophilus is just a figurative word. Sometimes people say that *Theophilus* just means *lover of God* and it's just a generic mode of address, so Luke is addressing his gospel to anyone out there in the world who loves and seeks God. We hear this occasionally, but I don't think this is right. I think Theophilus is a real person. He is a person of status, means, maybe of nobility, and the key thing for us this morning is to notice that both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts are dedicated to him. This is a very common practice that identifies Theophilus as the literary patron of these works. Theophilus has a role to play in giving financial support, in giving emotional support, and probably has a role to play in stirring Luke that this actually needs to be done, and so it is done, with his help.

There are many, many examples that could be given for the function and reality of literary patronage. We live in a different model in our world today where people often write books, and they often write books, popular books, to make money, because that is our world. We often do

things to make money, and we hope that our books will be sold and great dollars will be made. When you meet with authors, though, you find that the authors, especially Christian writers, write their books because they feel that God has given them a vision or burden to do something. I remember when Eric Metaxas was here at Kenwood a couple of years ago, and we shared a private lunch with him after all of the events. We were talking about his book *Bonhoeffer*, which is a *New York Times* bestseller, translated into dozens of languages. He was sharing with us the reality that he didn't really make very much money off of that book. He said the publisher really made money, and he said more and more in our time publishing and creative work is happening with patronage again. Perhaps you've noticed that sometimes people don't pay for music. Sometimes people don't pay for books that they are reading. They borrow them, photocopy them, and it's hard to control. Increasingly, artists and writers are going back to this system of patronage saying that people of means can support creative types to do what they are uniquely called to do so that they're not thinking: "I have to write this just so it will sell many copies." So, this is actually an older vision.

I chose one example of literally dozens just to document that Luke is not alone in this. Another very, very significant first century writer, important for the Christian faith indirectly, is the



writer Josephus. Josephus was born four years after Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried. This is a marble bust of Josephus that was found and set up for him in Rome in honor of his literary works. Josephus wrote *The Jewish War*, seven volumes, and gives for us the most vivid, contemporary picture of the New Testament world. After the *Jewish War*, Josephus spent the last part of his life living in Rome, writing. During that season of his life, he wrote three major works. The first of these works, *Antiquities*, is 20 volumes. He wrote this work of 20 volumes in an attempt to retell the entire story of the Bible and what happened in Israel from the end of the time of Malachi, all the way up to the present time. It was in a project to narrate the history of God's dealings with His people over thousands of years. He says with

great understatement in the preface to the *Antiquities*: "It was a large subject, and it was difficult to do." But, in *Antiquities 1.8*, he tells us how he was able to do it. He says:

"Some persons there were who desired to know our history, and so exhorted me to go on with it; . . ."

You would not have works like Handel's *Messiah*; you would never have literary productions like the Gospel of Luke and Acts, or like Josephus' *Antiquities*; you would never have these works without people behind the scenes going: "You can do it. Keep going. You need food? We

will bring food.” Josephus continues:

“and, above all the rest, Epaphroditus, a man who is a lover of all kinds of learning, but is principally delighted with the knowledge of history.”

This is not the Epaphroditus that was in our series, though I wish it were. Epaphroditus stood behind him to make it happen, and at the end of the 20 volumes, he had just a little bit left in the tank, and he wrote a short, one-volume work about his own life. At the end of his book *Life*, Epaphroditus shows up again. At the end of the *Life*, he says:

“But to you, O Epaphroditus, you most excellent of men! do I dedicate all this treatise of our Antiquities; and so, for the present, I here conclude the whole.”

Epaphroditus, “who helped me, supported me, financially backed me, you most excellent of men.” This is the same terminology. His last work that he published before he died towards the end of the first century was an apologetic work. A man named Apion had published a work full of slander, hatred and vitriolic criticism, just ridiculing biblical faith. Josephus replied to this with a two-volume work called *Against Apion*. Many of the church fathers have used this as a treasure trove of apologetics. When he gets to the end of *Against Apion*, volume 2, he says:

“Let this and the foregoing book be dedicated to you, Epaphroditus, who is so great a lover of truth, and by your means to those who have been in like manner desirous to be acquainted with the affairs of our nation.”

You see, Epaphroditus backed up the project with funds and support. Otherwise we wouldn't have it. This is the function that Theophilus plays in our text this morning.

When we return to Luke's preface, the preface to the Gospel of Luke, the preface to Acts, we discover the nature of the project and the need for Theophilus' encouragement and support. Keep your Bible open to this opening sentence. It's a beautiful sentence. Luke 1:1-4 is a very elegant sentence, and as it is common practice in the preface of literary works to give a flare or flash of your style, Luke does this. Josephus' opening sentence has, I think, 168 words. It's a flowery, long sentence. Luke's is shorter, but it is also just one sentence. We discover the need for the support and the nature of the project when we look at this closely. It is so important, the role that Theophilus plays. Luke begins with the word *in as much*. This word occurs only one time in the entire Greek Bible. It's a word that often signals a literary task. In other words, Luke is signaling from the very opening word that this is a great project; this is an important project. We will find out that he intends from the beginning that it would be a two-volume set. That's the vision that the Lord gave to Luke, and yet he needed support. People all around you, your children, your grandchildren, have visions from the Lord of things they want to do, and they need your support; they need you to identify the gifts and call them forth. Luke signals this project, and then he says that many have undertaken it. Literally, the text says that *many have*

set their hand to the task. What's he referring to? Many have set their hands to compile a narrative. Luke probably at this moment is acquainted with the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark. He knows that there are other narratives about the life of Christ. Many have set their hand to put together a narrative. The word *narrative* is very important for us as Christians, because the Gospels do not present to us the teachings of Jesus as isolated statements. Several years ago there was a movement called the *Jesus Seminar* which tried to deconstruct the gospel narratives and say that Jesus just walked around saying things and that there is no real story. The gospel is good news because it is a story. Jesus is not a teacher that just goes around speaking proverbial words. The gospels do not just give us good moral advice; the gospels don't just give us proverbs. The gospels tell us about Jesus' birth, Jesus' baptism, Jesus' public ministry and teaching, His miracles, and the gospels tell us that the most important events are His passion week where He was crucified and He gave His life for your sins and mine and that He was raised from the dead and that He commissioned you and me to extend this good news of the Kingdom to all the earth. That is a narrative. That has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Luke tells us that not only does this narrative have a shape—oh, this is so good!—he says that people have put a narrative together. The ESV renders this last phrase as *that of the things that have been accomplished among us*. A more literal translation in the NRSV says: *of the events that have been fulfilled among us*. You don't open the newspaper to read about events that have been fulfilled. You don't read *Time* magazine or the *Wall Street Journal* for events that have been fulfilled. You read the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, for events that have happened and maybe a little commentary on them. What does this mean, that the subject of this narrative is events that have been fulfilled? Luke is signaling for us that the story, the narrative of the gospel, comes again to our sight because of God's promises of old. The gospel message does not appear *de novo*. It is not something that just happened to have happened. The gospel of Jesus Christ is something that was promised to happen, that would happen in Israel, that would be fulfilled in the events of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. I did a casual study of just Luke 1, and there are over 60 promises coming to fulfillment. The gospel of Jesus Christ is about God's eternal purpose of old that is now before your eyes. It is a narrative that has a past in God's saving purpose. It has a shape, and ultimately we will see that it has a future that continues through you and me.

Luke tells us that this narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, things that we learned about it in Luke 1:2, we learned about it through eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word who handed these things to us, delivered them over to us. How do we know the facts? How do we know what Jesus actually said and did? I praise God that Christianity stands on eye-witness testimony. You see, we when we trust Jesus Christ, we are not trusting a figment of someone else's imagination. We are not trusting something that we hope is true. The Apostle Peter says it like this in 2 Peter 1:16:

“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”

They saw it. What did he see as an eyewitness of Jesus’ majesty? Peter was on the mountain of Transfiguration when Jesus was transfigured before him with the radiant glory of Almighty God, and he heard the voice of Almighty God speak audibly with majestic glory and say: “This one is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.” You’ll die for that. You’ll die saying, “That’s who Jesus really is.” That’s no story. That’s no man-made myth. That’s not something someone dug up in their backyard and tried to spread. That’s an eyewitness testimony to the reality of Jesus Christ. John similarly says in 1 John 1:1:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life-- that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you.”

The accounts of who Jesus is, was, what He taught, and what He did, were transmitted by eyewitness testimony, and these eyewitnesses then became servants of the Word of God, and they transmitted to us the truth of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. We wouldn’t know it without their testimony, and we wouldn’t know the shape of the story without writers like Luke.

I had an amazing experience this week on Wednesday morning. I had the opportunity to stand in front of a camera. I don’t know if any of you have had this opportunity, but seems to be something that happens more and more. Sometimes people stand in front of their own camera with a stick to take a selfie. But this was a different kind of camera moment. I stood in front of a camera, which in of itself is not exceptional, but behind the camera, the audience of the camera were young Muslims with no exposure to Christianity. The intention was that thousands, millions of them would see this video. I had 11 minutes to go through the gospel narrative and the meaning of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That’s humbling. Could you explain who Jesus is in 11 minutes? Originally, they told me I had only five, but I couldn’t get it in less than eleven. Luke tells us in Luke 1:3:

“It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,”

Even though there are other narratives, like Matthew and Mark, Luke says: “It seemed good to me, I had this vision from Christ, to write an orderly account, an account that was arranged with a certain structure, that had a systematic presentation, and it was in my heart to write it for you, most excellent Theophilus.” There he is, Theophilus, the literary patron, but we also recognize in Theophilus the type of person that Luke is addressing, and you see the type of person that Theophilus is. Theophilus is a person of standing within the Greco-Roman world. He

is a personal status and means. He is obviously a person of education from the literary style of it. We discovered that of all these things, Theophilus has been taught about Jesus and that he has become a Christian. Luke says in Luke 1:4 that he wanted to write Theophilus:

“. . .that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”

Luke desires for Theophilus, and all those like him, to know the truth, to have assurance and certainty.

The term that Luke uses at the end of this preface signals to Theophilus, and to all of us, that the narrative is written so that we would know in the depths of our being who Jesus is and the significance of His life. We discover in the preface of Acts that the significance of Jesus moves forward from His death and resurrection into the explosive growth of the gospel throughout the known world. That's what's at stake this morning. We will not be faithful readers of these two prefaces if we just get information about Jesus and walk away; if you just attend church and end with the narrative of Luke and say, "Well, I learned about Jesus and I believe, great!" The greatness of Luke's project is that he intends a second volume from the beginning, and the second volume is what Jesus continues to do and teach through the believing community, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

As I was preparing for this week, I kept thinking, "Lord, how does this sermon about Theophilus end this morning? What's the ending? I found myself asking, "Is it really critical that we have Luke and Acts? What if Theophilus just didn't do his part? What if he didn't support the gospel publication and production and distribution? What if he didn't stand behind Luke and encourage him to get this done and make it available?" Where would you go to find out what's unique to Luke? There's a tool that is called a gospel synopsis. Sometimes you can see these online. It lays out for you the four gospels set in four columns, the gospels in parallel. As you look at certain sections of them, you will see many passages where each gospel writer speaks of the same event. Most times a synopsis of the gospels moves through the life of Christ, His preaching, teaching, His crucifixion and resurrection, and it moves chronologically. Each gospel is a witness. But occasionally you have sections where there is just one gospel voice and silence from the other three. When you look through that you can see the absolute unique contribution of that gospel writer. When I went through the gospels, I looked for what would we not have, what we would lack, if Theophilus hadn't played his part. Let me tell you.

- We would not know about the extraordinary circumstances of Jesus' birth and the prophecy given to Zechariah in Luke 1.
- We would not know that the birth of Jesus intersected with the reign of Caesar Augustus and his intention to give a census of the whole world. We wouldn't know it.

- We would not know in Luke 3 that Jesus' genealogy goes all the way back to Adam. In other words, there's nothing outside the scope of His descent.
- We would not know in Luke 4 how Jesus' public ministry began when the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him and He unrolled it in the synagogue at Nazareth and said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." He rolled up that scroll and gave it to be attendant and sat down. He said to all those who were seated in the synagogue: "Today the Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." We wouldn't know that.
- We would not know the content of some of Jesus' greatest parables. When a man desiring to justify himself came to Jesus and said, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus answered with the Parable of the Good Samaritan. He ended and said to the man who asked, "Which of these proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell?" And he said, "The man who showed mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same." You and I would not know that without Theophilus' patronage.
- We would not know the greatest of Jesus' parables: the Parable of the Prodigal Son—of the man with two sons and the youngest who took his share of the inheritance, humiliating his father and squandering his father's wealth and the family estate, sinning against heaven and earth, coming up with his own plan to be reconciled, to come back as a household slave. We would not know the heart of the father who seeks to save the lost and those who are not in fellowship with him, who scanned the horizon and sees the son coming from a distance and rushes to meet him and embraces him and kisses him and says, "Bring the best robe, put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, kill the fattened calf and let's eat and celebrate, for this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and he is found," and they began to celebrate. We would not know that. Luke is the only one who tells us that.
- We wouldn't know that Jesus resolutely sets His face to Jerusalem in Luke 9 and that He wept over the city when He approached it.
- We wouldn't know that Jesus was crucified between two criminals, one who insulted Jesus on the cross and the other who said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom," and Jesus answered, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." We wouldn't know that. Can you imagine the poverty of our faith without Theophilus' patronage?
- We wouldn't know Jesus' conversation with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, when they said later: "Our hearts burned within us as He opened Scripture to us."
- We wouldn't know Luke's intention from the beginning for a second volume as his gospel ends, as Jesus opens the minds of His disciples to understand the Scriptures.

What does it mean to really understand God's Word? When Jesus opens our minds to know His

Word, this is what we grasp, or maybe better, are grasped by. When we understand the Scriptures, we understand the ending of Luke is unique. In Luke 24:46-48, we read:

“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Luke's conclusion sets up the introduction for Volume 2: “You are My witnesses: the Holy Spirit will be poured out on you so that repentance and forgiveness of sins are proclaimed in the name of Christ from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.” That's what we are about.

How does this example of patronage apply to us? I thought of many applications, but I picked just the top three.

Application number one: I want you to ask this morning how you can call forth the creative gifts of the people around you. We all are kind of narcissistic; we all tend to think of ourselves. We all, whether we admit it or not, tend to approach relationships thinking: “What can you do for me.” We all do that. We come into relationships thinking: “I've got needs and maybe you can meet them.” The gospel of Jesus Christ flips that on its head and says: “I've got resources, how can I give them to you?” Instead of approaching relationships thinking, I have needs, maybe you can meet them, what would happen if we approach relationships and think: I've got resources, how can I give them to you to make happen what God has put in your heart? How can I pray for you? What mission outreach project is on your heart that you need my support for? What gifts do you see in your children or grandchildren that really need cultivation and support? My grandfather played a key role in my life in getting me outside of the United States and exposed to the rest of the world. He was the only person in my immediate family who knew more of life on the other side of the oceans. He had served and lived in Japan, and he knew the effect of seeing other cultures and what happens to you. I had opportunities to study abroad, and he just very quietly paid for those, on one condition—that I never tell anyone. I know you're thinking to yourself right now, “Has my pastor just breached that oath right now?” Well, my grandfather has left this world, so I am considering myself released from that promise. But, he made that happen. That's application number one: How can you call forth the creative gifts of people around you, empower what God is equipped others to do, and very specifically, how or where am I called to be a patron or patroness in the lives of others?

Application number two: I want us as a community to place great value on the hard work of such endeavors. We are a reading congregation, and that's one thing that increasingly sets us apart, and I want us to be a congregation that does take a moment to read the preface. If you read the preface of the book that, by God's grace and the help of many, many people, I finished

writing a book last year, you will see that all of you are mentioned in the preface. It would not have happened without your support. Those kinds of projects take great concentration, immense resources, prayer, support, and encouragement.

Application number three: I want us to be a congregation that generously supports gospel publication and distribution. What Theophilus did was, he made it possible for Luke's gospel and Acts to be written, but his support is also the means by which the gospel could be distributed. It's expensive to the copy books and distribute them. The first century did not have the printing press; it did not have ready means for vast distribution that had to be paid for by others, and yet it was. We know that it was because we have 10,000 copies of the Bible from the early centuries. Some people like Theophilus put serious money behind it. Organizations like the Gideons, Wycliffe, and Crossway Press are making this happen in our own day. I was really moved to hear stories coming out of our high school group, coming out of our children's ministry, where support for missions and support for Bible distribution, and even earnest effort just to give Bibles away, is happening.

I want to end with a piece of Kenwood's history that is a contemporary example of what we find in Theophilus. Several years ago, a woman of our church named Mary acted in this same way. She knew that she was getting ready to go be with the Lord, and so she resolved to use her resources, her family resources, to create a trust. She took the resources, or a significant portion of the resources of her household, on December 21, 1983 to create the Mary Fox Evangelistic Outreach Fund. She gave a significant portion of money to our church. I have the document here before me, and these are Mary's stated purposes: Purpose #1: This trust is created and will be operated for the exclusive purpose of propagating the gospel and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ as commanded by the Holy Scriptures; emphasis shall be given to carrying out these functions in the greater Cincinnati, Ohio area, but may also extend to the uttermost parts of the earth. Purpose #2: The trustee will be authorized and encouraged to receive contributions, gifts, grants from any and all sources to be devoted for these purposes, knowing that she wouldn't be the only one. Lastly, purpose #3: The fund would be administered by Kenwood, with standard accounting procedures. The purpose of the trust was that the gospel of Jesus Christ would be spread. When you open a new Bible in the services, you open it because Mary Fox's trust bought them. That's why we so often say: "Take it, give it away." There is still over \$100,000 still in the trust. We try to use it faithfully.

Where is God calling you to call forth creative gifts in the lives around you? Where is He calling you to support generously the distribution of God's Word in Cincinnati and to the ends of the earth? We have lots of opportunities coming up to do that. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we honor You and praise You this morning. We thank You for the faithfulness of

people like Theophilus in the New Testament and like Mary Fox at Kenwood. We ask, Lord Jesus, that You make us a people eager for the propagation and distribution of Your Word, and I pray, Lord, that You would turn us inside out and upside down and make us a people that don't approach relationships seeking what we can get, but what we can give, so Your purposes advance in their lives and in the world around us.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.