Luke’s gospel is a testimony of a transformation, a transformation in the life of a physician and historian called Luke. Luke reported to and was paid for writing a history, by Theophilus.

Luke wrote both the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel According to Luke. What is interesting is that as an historian, Luke starts as just a reporter; but in chapters 16, 17 and 18 of the Book of Acts, the verbiage changes. Rather than the historian talking about the “they,” the historian refers to “We.” A transformation in Luke’s life has happened. He was an historical observer and writer. Now, Luke is a believer and he wants the world to know what it’s like to be touched by God; and he says it over and over in his gospel. Luke says, This One called Jesus transforms lives. Luke is giving witness that his life has been transformed.

**GOD IS A GOD OF NEW BEGINNINGS**

A transformation happens in our lives when we are turned inside out, and all of a sudden, our perspectives are changed and we see all of life with a new array of images. Our commitments are changed. Our loyalties are changed. Luke is saying a transformation has happened in his life and he invites a similar transformation in the lives of his readers. Have you experienced transformations in your life during this Advent? Here are some symptoms:

1. A tendency to almost act spontaneously rather than acting on our own fears from past experiences.

2. A loss of interest in judging others
3. A loss of the ability to worry

4. Frequent attacks of smiling.

5. An increased desire to let things happen by God's timetable rather than thinking we're in control.

6. An ability to let God Be God -- Victory is God's!

7. An increased susceptibility to accept the love extended by others and an uncontrollable urge to extend LOVE by our actions.

Luke wants us to move beyond being just observers and become participants!

In the late 1940s, Glen Adsett was a minister and missionary in China. At that time, missionaries were often persecuted and were put under house arrest. He was put under house arrest, along with his wife and two children. They were finally given permission to leave China and were told, "You can only take two hundred pounds."

The family went home and began packing, and they thought about whether to take typewriters, or clothing, or particular items they thought they could take with them. When they got to the border they met the communist border guards and were asked if they were ready. The Adsett family said, "We are. We have exactly 200 pounds."

The border guard said, "Did you weigh everything?" They answered affirmatively. Then the soldiers asked, "Did you weigh the children?" Suddenly, the typewriters and vases and furniture were left at the feet of the guards. They picked up their children and hugged them and walked across the border to freedom.
Luke wants us to pick up the children, not the stuff. Too often the stuff of life holds us in bondage. Luke invites us to experience the transformation from being a spectator to being a participant. We drop the “stuff” and pick up the children. We drop the unimportant and pick up the essential. We forget all the minor things of life and begin to look at what is really major. Our lives have been transformed; we see life from a new perspective. We drop the “stuff” and pick up the children and go across the border to the freedom that can only be known through Crist.

GOD IN CHRIST REVEALS OUR BELOVEDNESS

Luke, as a physician, writes his gospel with a constant reminder of God’s tender love toward all creation. Every individual is beloved and special to God.

Only in Luke are we told of the ten lepers and the one who returns, a foreigner, a Samaritan, who touches Jesus in gratitude.

Only in Luke’s gospel do we hear the story of Zacchaeus, a little man with an inferiority complex. But Jesus said, “Today you will eat with me Zacchaeus; you, too, are beloved of God.”

Only in Luke’s gospel do we read the story of the older prodigal son and the younger prodigal son, both who are received home and invited to a party. Both of the sons are beloved and special to the father. Luke wants all of us to know that we are beloved by God and God has set a feast and a party where we’re invited. And God will continue to tell us that we are loved children.

Only in Luke’s gospel do we hear of the Pharisee praying publicly and the man praying in the corner, “Father forgive me, a sinner.” In Luke’s gospel, over and over we are reminded, it’s not the external appearance but it is the motivation of the heart. There is a beauty in Luke’s writing as he gives witness to what it means to be Christian.
In a book by Brennan Manning entitled, *Abba’s Child*, he says the following:

But then the night is bad and my nerves are shattered and Infinity speaks, when God Almighty shares through His Son the depth of His feelings for me, when His love flashes into my soul and when I am overtaken by Mystery, it is *kairos* the decisive in-break of God in this saving moment of my personal history. No one can speak for me. Alone, I face a momentous decision. Shivering in the rags of my fifty-nine years, either I escape into skepticism and intellectualism or with radical amazement I surrender in faith to the truth of my BELOVEDNESS.

CHRISTMAS REVEALS A GOD OF HOPE

Donald J. Shelby, a pastor, tells a glorious Christmas story. In the midst of World War II, soldiers were in London where they were experiencing the bombings and death. The soldiers were on sentry duty, and after their duty one of them said, “Let’s go together and find someplace where we can worship.”

It was Christmas morning and they had always worshiped on Christmas morning. As the soldiers walked through London they came upon an old grey stone building. Over the entrance were carved the words Queen Ann’s Orphanage. They decided to knock and went inside. A matron came and explained that the children were war orphans whose parents had been killed in the bombings of London.

The soldiers went inside as the children were tumbling out of their beds. At the orphanage there was no Christmas tree, no presents. The soldiers moved around the room wishing the kids, “Merry Christmas.”

The soldiers gave the kids gifts, just common things out of their pockets: A life saver, a nickel, a dime, a pencil, a pocket knife or some kind of good luck charm. Then this one soldier who organized the group looked over and saw a little boy standing alone in the corner. He walked over and said, “What do you want for Christmas?”
The little boy looked up at the soldier and said, “Will you hug me?”

Luke’s gospel talks about a transformation: How we are beloved and how we are held in the arms of God.

Luke’s gospel speaks of the intimacy of family love. Only in Luke do we meet Anna and Simeon, the prophetess and prophet, waiting for the Child’s birth. Only in Luke do we read about Elizabeth and Zachariah, the parents of John the Baptist. Only in Luke do we read about shepherds, a holy family and a mother giving birth to a Child in a “manger-garage.” And only in Luke do we see the beloved Child wrapped in swaddling clothes. It’s in Luke that we are reminded that we are beloved and that we are wrapped in the arms of God.

I appreciate a letter by David Steele as he imagines Joseph writing to his parents:

Dear Mom and Dad,

I ran into Benjamin here in Bethlehem at the market; he’s leaving in the morning for home and will carry this letter. I trust this finds you well.

It’s a boy! Mary had his name all picked out. Your new grandson is Jesus. He is incredibly handsome, has all his fingers and toes, eats with gusto, exercises his lungs often, and sleeps . . . like a baby.

I am so proud of Mary and so in love with her. The trip was difficult; we had trouble finding a place to stay. Her labor pains were on us before we were ready. The midwife barely arrived in time. But all is well, and we thank God for permitting us to share this miracle.

Mom, Dad, I love you. I know you have not felt comfortable with our marriage and feel I have let you down these last few months. I don’t plan ahead very well or think things through as clearly as you do. But now I am clear about what I must do. I will protect and care for my family. Mary and Jesus are safe with me.

I think I have finally begun to grow up. You would be proud of me.

Shalom,

your son,

Joseph
CLOSING

So today, on this Christmas Sunday 2016, we too are being transformed. We too are reminded of our belovedness. We too are wrapped in swaddling cloth and held in the arms of God. We are people held by the living God. Transformed, beloved, and held in the arms of God. These are the gifts we as Christians celebrate. Born … to you … a Savior. Merry Christmas!

BEHOLD THE CHILD, AND OUR WORLD IS CHANGED FOREVER.