

THE GOSPEL OF SAINT LUKE

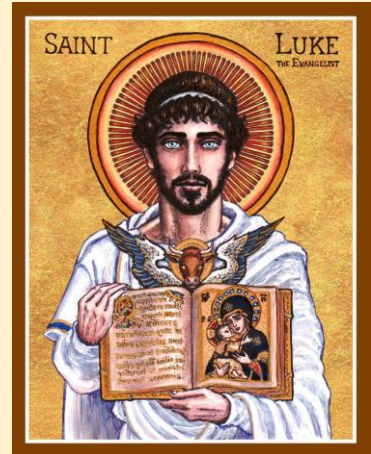
The Anglican Parishes of Whittington,
Weeford and Hints

*What the Lord requires of you is to do justice and to love mercy and to walk
humbly with your God*

The Gospel of Saint Luke An Introduction to this sacred text

The Purpose

The Gospel according to Luke is the first part of a two-volume work that continues the biblical history of God's dealings with humanity found in the Old Testament, showing how God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus and how the salvation



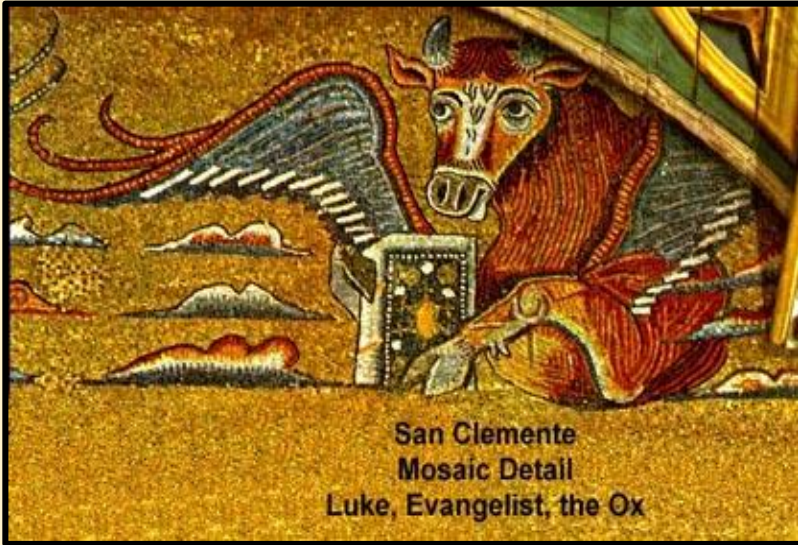
promised to Israel and accomplished by Jesus has been extended to the Gentiles. The stated purpose of the two volumes is to provide Theophilus and others like him with certainty—assurance—about earlier instruction they have received (Lk 1:4). To accomplish his purpose, Luke shows that the preaching and teaching of the representatives of the early church are grounded in the preaching and teaching of Jesus, who during his historical ministry (Acts 1:21–22) prepared his specially chosen followers and commissioned them to be witnesses to his resurrection and to all else that he did (Acts 10:37–42). This continuity between the historical ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the apostles is Luke's way of guaranteeing the fidelity of the Church's teaching to the teaching of Jesus.

The Salvation of Humanity Focus

Luke's story of Jesus and the church is dominated by a historical perspective. This history is first of all salvation history. God's divine plan for human salvation was accomplished during the period of Jesus, who through the events of his life (Lk 22:22) fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies (Lk 4:21; 18:31; 22:37; 24:26–27, 44), and this salvation is now extended to all humanity in the period of the church (Acts 4:12). This salvation history, moreover, is a part of human history. Luke relates the story of Jesus and the church to events in contemporary Palestinian (Lk 1:5; 3:1–2; Acts 4:6) and Roman (Lk 2:1–2; 3:1; Acts 11:28; 18:2, 12) history for, as Paul says in Acts 26:26, “this was not done in a corner.”

Finally, Luke relates the story of Jesus and the church to contemporaneous church history. Luke is concerned with presenting Christianity as a legitimate form of worship in the Roman world, a religion that is capable of meeting the spiritual needs of a world empire like that of Rome. To this end, Luke depicts the Roman governor Pilate declaring Jesus innocent of any wrongdoing three times (Lk 23:4, 14, 22). At the same time Luke argues in Acts that Christianity is the logical development and of Judaism and is therefore deserving of the same

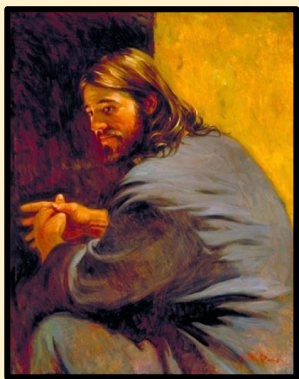
toleration and freedom traditionally accorded
Judaism by Rome (Acts 13:16–41; 23:6–
9; 24:10–21; 26:2–23).



The prominence given to the period of the church in the story has important consequences for Luke's interpretation of the teachings of Jesus. By presenting the time of the church as a distinct phase of salvation history, Luke accordingly shifts the early Christian emphasis away from the expectation of an **imminent** second coming to earth of Jesus (Parousia) to the day-to-day concerns of the Christian community in the world. He does this in

the gospel by regularly emphasizing the words “each day” (Lk 9:23; cf. Mk 8:34; Lk 11:3; 16:19; 19:47) in the sayings of Jesus.

Although Luke still believes the second coming of Jesus to be a reality that will come unexpectedly (Lk 12:38, 45–46), he is more concerned with presenting the words and deeds of Jesus as guides for the conduct of Christian disciples in the interim period between the ascension and the parousia and with presenting Jesus himself as the model of Christian life and piety.



Throughout the gospel, Luke calls upon the Christian disciple to identify with the master Jesus, who is caring and tender toward the poor and lowly, the outcast, the sinner, and the afflicted, toward all those who recognize their dependence on God (Lk 4:18; 6:20–23 ; 7:36–50; 14:12–14; 15:1–32; 16:19–31; 18:9–14; 19:1–10; 21:1–4), but who is severe toward the proud and self-righteous, and particularly toward those who place their material wealth before the service of God and his people (Lk 6:24–26; 12:13–21; 16:13–15, 19–31; 18:9–14, 15–25)

No gospel writer is more concerned than Luke with the mercy and compassion of Jesus (Lk 7:41–43; 10:29–37; 13:6–9; 15:11–32). No gospel writer is more concerned with the role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus and the Christian disciple (Lk 1:35, 41; 2:25–27; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; 11:13; 24:49), with the importance of prayer (Lk 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:28; 11:1–13; 18:1–8), or with Jesus' concern for women (Lk 7:11–17, 36–50; 8:2–3; 10:38–42).



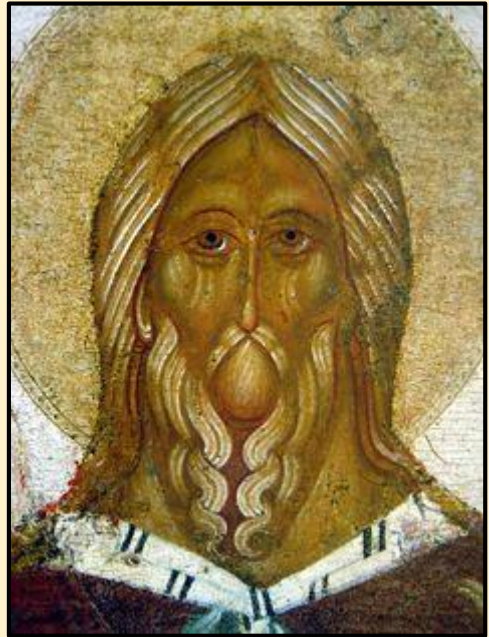
While Jesus calls all humanity to repent (Lk 5:32; 10:13; 11:32; 13:1–5; 15:7–10; 16:30; 17:3–4; 24:47), he is particularly demanding of those who would be his disciples. Of them he demands absolute and total detachment from family and material possessions (Lk 9:57–62; 12:32–34; 14:25–35). To all who respond in faith and repentance to the word Jesus preaches, he brings salvation (Lk 2:30–32; 3:6; 7:50; 8:48, 50; 17:19; 19:9) and peace (Lk 2:14; 7:50; 8:48; 19:38, 42) and life (Lk 10:25–28; 18:26–30).

Who was Saint Luke?

Early Christian tradition, from the late second century on, identifies the author of this gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles as Luke, a Syrian from Antioch, who is mentioned in the New Testament in Col 4:14, Phlm 24 and 2 Tm 4:11. The prologue of the gospel makes it clear that Luke is not part of the first generation of Christian disciples but is himself dependent upon the traditions he received from

those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (Lk 1:2). His two-volume work marks him as someone who was highly literate both in the Old Testament traditions according to the Greek versions and in Hellenistic Greek writings. Among the likely sources for the composition of this gospel (Lk 1:3) were the Gospel of Mark, a

written collection of sayings of Jesus known also to the author of the Gospel of Matthew and other



special traditions that were used by Luke alone among the gospel writers. Some hold that Luke used Mark only as a complementary source for rounding out the material he took from other traditions.

Because of its dependence on the Gospel of Mark and because details in Luke's Gospel (Lk 13:35a; 19:43–44; 21:20; 23:28–31) imply that the author was acquainted with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, the Gospel of Luke is dated by most scholars after that date; many propose A.D. 80–90 as the time of composition.

Luke's consistent substitution of Greek names for the Aramaic or Hebrew names occurring in his sources (e.g., Lk 23:33; Mk 15:22; Lk 18:41; Mk 10:51), his omission from the gospel of specifically

Jewish Christian concerns found in his sources (e.g., Mk 7:1–23), his interest in Gentile Christians (Lk 2:30–32; 3:6, 38; 4:16–30; 13:28–30; 14:15–24; 17:11–19; 24:47–48), and his incomplete



knowledge of Palestinian geography, customs, and practices are among the characteristics of this gospel that suggest that Luke was a non-Palestinian writing to a non-Palestinian audience that was largely made up of Gentile Christians.

The principal divisions of the Gospel according to Luke are the following:

The Prologue (1:1–4)

The Infancy Narrative (1:5–2:52)

The Preparation for the Public Ministry (3:1–4:13)

The Ministry in Galilee (4:14–9:50)

The Journey to Jerusalem: Luke's Travel Narrative (9:51–19:27)

The Teaching Ministry in Jerusalem (19:28–21:38)

The Passion Narrative (22:1–23:56)

The Resurrection Narrative (24:1–53)



Some studies on the women in Saint Luke's Gospel

Study 1: Mary, the Mother of Jesus – Luke 1:26-56

1. Who is Mary?

What does this story tell us about her?

- from Nazareth (an insignificant village) in Galilee rural, peasant, artisan
- virgin (see Isaiah 7:14)
- engaged to Joseph 1 (of the house of David)
- relative of Elizabeth

(in comparison to Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary has no outstanding credentials: education, social standing, family connections, education)

2. What do notice about the visit of the angel and Mary's response?

What are Mary's questions? (vs. 29, 34)

What do you imagine she might be thinking?

- (Why me? Stigma of pregnancy, Joseph's response)

How do you understand the angel's message to Mary?

- (power of the Most High, Holy Spirit, Son of God)

Compare Mary's experience with the angel with that of Zechariah and Elizabeth. (Luke 1:5-24)

What else do we learn about Mary in the next chapter of Luke?

In the rest of Luke's Gospel?

Note: After Luke 2, Mary the mother of Jesus is mentioned only one other place in Luke, in 8:19-21, with parallels in Matt. 12:45-50, Mark 3:31-35) For references in other Gospels, see Matt 1:16-2:21, 13:55 (parallel Mark 6:3), John 2:1-12, 19:25-27, and possibly Mark 15:40, 47 (mother of Jesus)

3. Read Mary's song (vs. 46-55) aloud.

What does this song tell you about Mary?

How does she describe herself in verses 47-49?

About who God is? And what God is doing?

About Luke's message about Jesus?

- justice, fulfilment of God's promise, upside-down kingdom

You might want to compare Mary's story/ song with Hannah's story/song in 1 Samuel 1- 2:1-10.

What other Bible stories of women and unusual births can you identify? (Abraham and Sarah, Genesis 17)

4. What new insights did you gain from this study?

What questions does this passage raise for you?

How might you explore further?



Study 2: The woman who anointed Jesus' feet – Luke 7:36-50

1. Who is this woman? (How is she described? What does she do?)

- woman of the city—probably a prostitute (sinner, social outcast, unclean)
- uninvited
- silent
- foot-washing, hospitality (social custom of the day for hosts)

Note: this story has some similarities with stories in other gospels about women anointing Jesus, but is also unique. See Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, John 12:1-8 and note differences. (Different hosts, place, type of anointing, name of woman, placement of story in relation to Jesus' death.)

2. Who is Simon?

- Pharisee

Who are Pharisees? righteous, law-abiding, religious:

see 5:17-26 scribes and Pharisees question Jesus

6:1-11 Sabbath conflicts

7:30 Pharisees reject God's purposes

11:37-54 Jesus denounces Pharisees

12:1-3 warning against hypocrisy

18:9-14 parable of Pharisee and tax collector

Note that this is first of three means Jesus takes in home of Pharisee: (also 11:37-54, 14:1-24)

3. What is Jesus' message to Simon? (vs. 40-47) "Do you see this woman?"

In what way does this story reinforce Jesus' teachings about mercy and forgiveness in the "sermon on the plain"? (6:17-49)

4. What is Jesus' message to the woman?

5. What does this story tell us about Jesus' attitude toward sinners? Social boundaries? (see 7:34, 15:1-2, 19:2)

Who are tax collectors?

- (employees of Roman oppressors, often extortionists, hated by common people)

6. What does this story tell us about God's forgiveness?

7. What does this story tell us about qualifications of followers of Jesus?



Arguably Jesus sees this woman as a model disciple.² Note Luke 8:1-3 re: women with Jesus.

8. What new insights did you gain from this study?

What questions does this passage raise for you?

How might you explore further?



Study 3 The woman who touched Jesus – Luke 8:43-48

1. Who is this woman? (Note similar stories in Matt. 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43)

- haemorrhage for 12 years: sick, unclean, outcast, alone³ (see purity laws, Lev. 11, 15:19-30)
- seeking healing/courageous
- spent all she had
- trembling/ falling down

In our society, what conditions/situations would be parallel to hers?

- (HIV/AIDS, undiagnosed/invisible illnesses)

2. Read the verses that surround this story (40-42, 49-56)

Compare and contrast this woman with Jairus' daughter.

- 12 year old, dying/dead
- father is leader of synagogue, advocate for her
- note ritual purity laws re touching a corpse (Num. 19:11-19)

3. What do you notice about Jesus in this story?

- attitude about purity laws/social barriers

- stopping to care for this woman, despite urgent request of Jairus
- power to heal

What does Jesus say to the woman?

- (notice connection between faith, healing, and peace)

What do you imagine this meant for her?

- (social implications of healing ministry)

Note: other healing stories in Luke, which will be explored in next study: 4:31-27 unclean spirit, 4:38-40 fever, 5:12-16 leper, 5:17-26 paralytic, 7:1-9 centurion's son, 7:11-17 widow's son, 8:26-39 demoniac, 9:37-43 boy with demon, 13:10-17 crippled woman, 14:1-6 man with dropsy, on Sabbath, 17:11-19 ten lepers

4. Using your imagination, write this story from the woman's perspective, in her voice, as if she is telling it to her family and friends afterwards. Then write a prayer you imagine she might pray.

5. What new insights did you gain from this study?

What questions does this passage raise for you?

How might you explore further?

Study 4: The crippled woman whom Jesus heals – Luke 13: 10-17

1. Who is this woman?

- “with a spirit that had crippled her for 18 years”
- bent over, unable to stand up straight
- noticed by Jesus

2. What does Jesus say to her? Do for her?

- frees from bondage
- practical, social implications
- spiritual implications—deliverance from oppressive spirits
- touches (lays hands on her)
- on Sabbath

Note other healing stories in Luke:

- 4:31-37 unclean spirit
- 4:38-40 fever
- 5:12-16 leper
- 5:17-26 paralytic
- 7:1-10 centurion's son
- 7:11-17 widow's son
- 8:26-39 demoniac
- 9:37-43 boy with demon
- 13: 14:1-6 man with dropsy, also on Sabbath
- 17:11-19 ten lepers



Who are these people? (social status, gender, religion, etc.)

Of what are they healed? How? (words, touch, help of others)

What is the effect?

How do they and those around them respond?

What key words do you notice?

3. Read Luke 4:14-21

What are the themes here?

What does this tell us about the mission of Jesus?

How does this connect with what we have been studying?

(Consider how the people of Nazareth responded to Jesus.)

4. How does the leader of the synagogue respond to Jesus in Luke 13:14?

What is Jesus' reply?

What does this tell us about Jesus' priorities?

What does this imply about the work of the church today?

5. What new insights did you gain from this study?

What questions does this passage raise for you?

How might you explore further?

Study 5: Martha and Mary: Friends of Jesus – Luke 10:38-42



1. What do you notice about Martha's relationship with Jesus?

Mary's relationship with Jesus?
(friends, provide him hospitality)

2. Who do you identify with in this story?

If Jesus stopped by to see you, what to you think would happen?

3. How does the story that precedes this (Good Samaritan) and what follows (teaching about prayer) affect how you view the relative values of serving and listening?

What does your congregation emphasize?

In what ways to Martha and Mary complement each other, need each other?

4. Read Luke 22: 24-27. What does this passage tell us about discipleship?

5. What does Luke tell us about the role of women as Jesus' followers and participants in the early church?

See Luke 8:2-3

Luke 23:55-56

Luke 24:22-24

Acts 9:36-39 Tabitha

Acts 16:14-15 Lydia

Acts 18:2-3,18 Priscilla

6. What new insights did you gain from this study?

What questions does this passage raise for you?

How might you explore further?



Books you may want to read

Peter John Cameron (2012) Praying with St Luke's Gospel

Laurence Farley (2011) The Gospel of Saint Luke: Good News For the Poor

Philip Gogerty (2010) Navigating the Gospels :Luke

Robert Karis (2006) Eating Your Way Through Saint Luke's Gospel

Henry Wandsborough (2002) The Gospel According to Luke

Tom Wright (2001) Luke For Everyone



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