



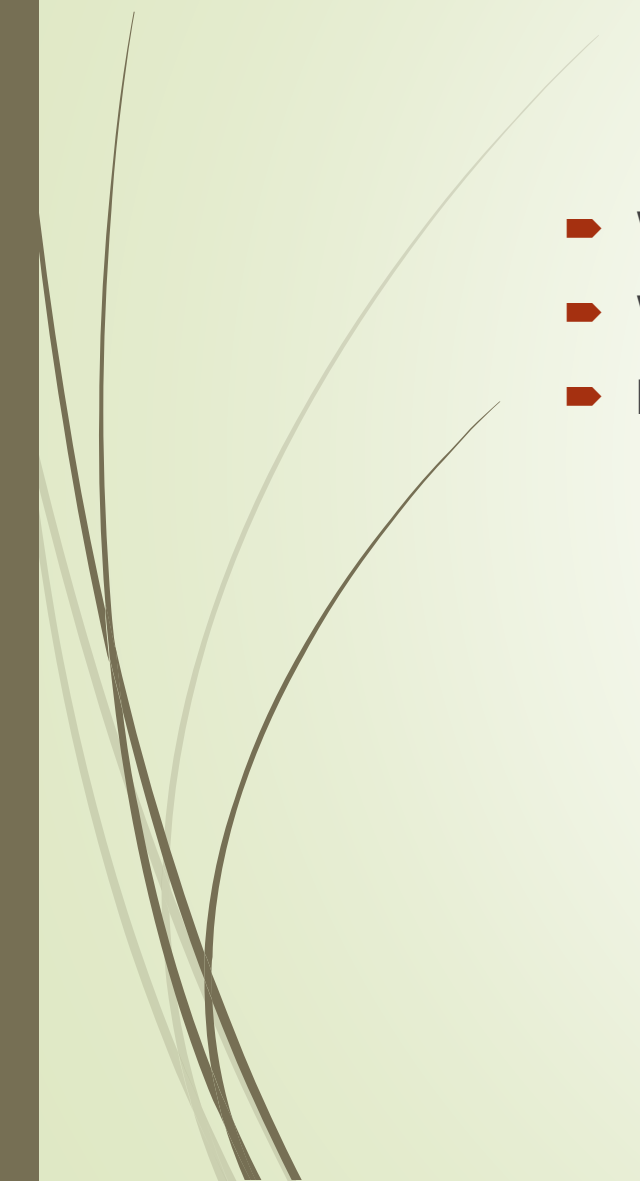
Introduction to the Gospel of Luke

25th November 2021

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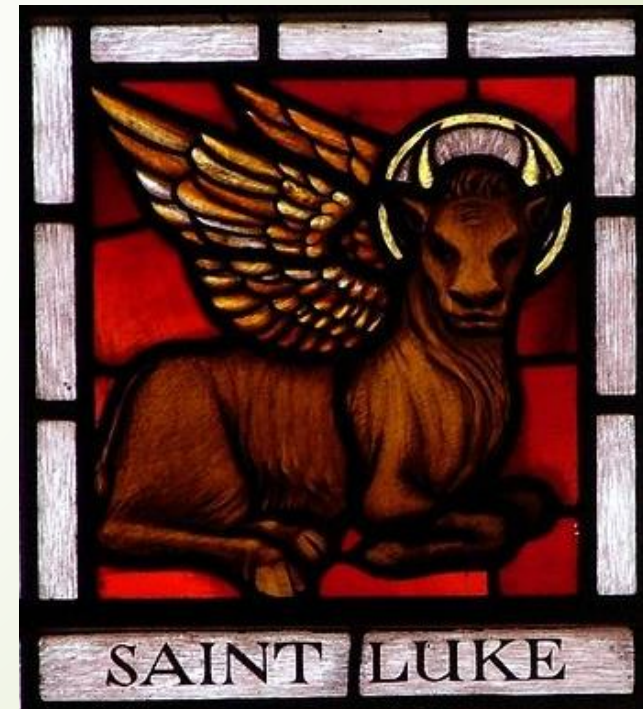


Structure of the evening

- ▶ What? – the theology of the writer of the third gospel
 - ▶ Why? – Revised Common Lectionary Year C is imminent
 - ▶ How? – talk and discussion
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A. Who was Luke?

- ▶ A doctor? – 'beloved physician' (Colossians 4.14)
 - ▶ A person of compassion
 - ▶ A companion of Paul
- ▶ A Gentile? (so Eusebius and Jerome)
 - ▶ Certainly a good writer of Greek
- ▶ An Ox?!



Luke the myth

- ▶ Patron saint of doctors and surgeons
 - ▶ and, by extension, of butchers and bookbinders!
 - ▶ and artists
- ▶ Relics claimed by Constantinople and Padua
- ▶ Feast Day 18th October





Author of *two* books

- ▶ Word-for-word, Luke was responsible for more material in the New Testament than any other writer – yet as a theologian he is often overshadowed by Paul and John.
- ▶ ⁶They [Paul and Timothy] went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; ⁸so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ ¹⁰When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

Acts 16.6-10



Luke as Evangelist

- ¹Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

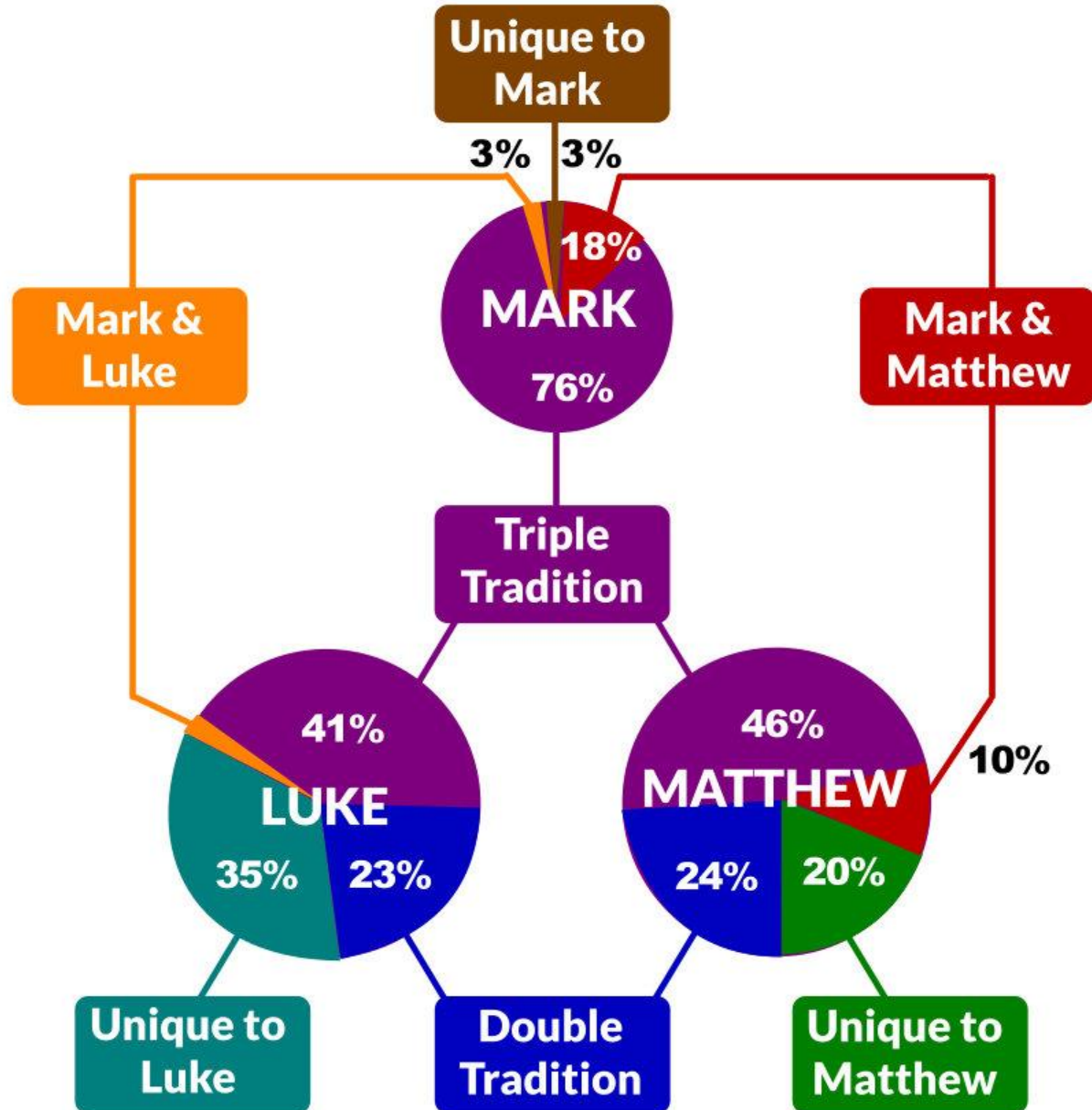
Luke 1.1-4



Luke as Evangelist

- ▶ Luke 1.1-4
 - ▶ Sets the scene: the opening of an ancient book performed the role of a modern book jacket, title page, and contents all rolled into one
 - ▶ Excellent Greek – single sentence
 - ▶ To ‘Theophilus’ (v3)
 - ▶ Implicitly Christian already
 - ▶ Gospel as
 - ▶ biography (so Richard Burridge)?
 - ▶ history? [‘orderly account’] *diēgēsis* - διηγησις
 - ▶ Christian interpretation/proclamation? (cf. Acts 2.14f)
 - ▶ Its own genre?

SYNOPTIC GOSPELS COMMON/UNIQUE MATERIAL



- Markan priority assumed
- Luke dated to 80s AD
- Luke's treatment of his sources and his unique material will be of particular interest in drawing out his priorities.



B. Action of God in History - Present

- ▶ Luke sees his narrative as something played out against the backdrop of real world events
 - ▶ 2¹ In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. *Luke 2.1-2*
- ▶ Luke sees his narrative as offering political comment on these events:
 - ▶ **Good news** for the world began on the day Augustus was born (Priene inscription) – contrast the message of the angels, ‘good news of great joy for all people’
 - ▶ Altar to **Pax** Romana (Rome) – contrast ‘on earth peace’
 - ▶ Augustus as **Saviour** and god (Halicarnassus inscription) – contrast ‘Saviour who is Christ the Lord’



B. Action of God in History - Present

- ▶ Some accepted: Mary's 'let it be'
- ▶ Not all accepted: Luke records opposition from political, religious and even demonic forces.
 - ▶ “And all the people who heard this [Jesus talking about John the Baptist], including the tax-collectors, acknowledged the justice of God, because they had been baptized with John's baptism. But by refusing to be baptized by him, the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves.” *Luke 7.29-30*
- ▶ There may be a religious supersessionism in Luke which runs parallel to the contrast between the baby Jesus and Augustus
 - ▶ Contrast Zechariah (Luke 1) and Jesus (Luke 24)



B. Action of God in History - Past

- ▶ God's plan in Jesus was against a backdrop of **past events**, culture and expectation (1.1 “the events that have been fulfilled [plērophoreō - πληροφωρεω] among us”)
 - ▶ i.e. the Hebrew Scriptures
 - ▶ Luke has fewer direct quotations than Matthew but this does not mean the Scriptures are unimportant
 - ▶ They occupy significant locations in the gospel – e.g. Isaiah quoted in 4.18-19
 - ▶ He has many allusions to the OT



B. Action of God in History - Future

- ▶ God's plan in Jesus was not the end: it looked to the **future**
 - ▶ Luke-Acts is *hinged* at the Ascension, not completed in the Resurrection
 - ▶ Acts as a text of missionary action – concentric circles
 - ▶ “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1.8)
 - ▶ Luke of course also knew the story did not complete at the end of Acts (c.63AD) but fed into the ongoing life of the Church in his own day and beyond – so his writing is an invitation to join in – ongoing concentric circles

B. Action of God in History - Future

- ▶ Emphasis on **Holy Spirit** through Luke – the One who enables people to discern, embrace and serve the purposes of God
 - ▶ E.g. HS overshadowing Mary
 - ▶ E.g.

Matthew 7.7 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find...¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Luke 11.9 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find...¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

- ▶ Pentecost (Acts 2 – anticipated at very end of the Gospel – 24.49 – “And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

C. Salvation and Social Justice

- ▶ Luke downplays the idea that Jesus' death is a substitutionary atonement:

Mark 10⁴³...But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

Luke 22²⁶... But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

- ▶ By contrast, Luke puts more emphasis on the way that the resurrection and ascension overturn the way things work – **salvation as status-reversal**, undercutting prevailing authorities
 - ▶ Acts 5.³⁰ [Peter said to the High Priest] “The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, so that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

C. Salvation and Social Justice

- ▶ Jesus' mission in Luke is therefore wrapped up with an agenda of radical reversal: cf. the programmatic statement of intent which Luke positions right at the start of Jesus' public ministry (contrast Mark 6). This is the first thing Jesus says in public in Luke:
 - ▶ 4¹⁷ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:
¹⁸ 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'
²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'
Luke 4.16-21
 - ▶ Emphasis on 'release' and de-emphasis on divine vengeance, when compared with the original in Isaiah 61.



C. Salvation and Social Justice

- ▶ Flowing from the above Luke is shot through with an emphasis on social justice and a concern for:
 - ▶ The poor – e.g. the shepherds; Lazarus and Dives
 - ▶ Women – e.g. Mary, the widow of Nain, Mary and Martha
 - ▶ The outsider
 - ▶ The politically unacceptable – e.g. Zacchaeus
 - ▶ The power of table fellowship
 - ▶ The socially/religiously impure - e.g. the ten lepers
 - ▶ Miracles as status reversal
 - ▶ The foreigner – e.g. Good Samaritan

C. Salvation and Social Justice

- ▶ Radical edge to aspects of Luke – e.g. the Magnificat
 - ▶ Magnificat was banned in British India, 1980s Guatemala and 1970s Argentina
- ▶ Mary Coleridge (British poet)

MOTHER of God! no lady thou:
Common woman of common earth
Our Lady ladies call thee now,
But Christ was never of gentle birth;
A common man of the common earth.

... And still for men to come she sings,
Nor shall her singing pass away.
'He hath fillèd the hungry with good things'—
O listen, lords and ladies gay!—
'And the rich He hath sent empty away.'

D. Daily Discipleship

- ▶ Connected to his social message, Luke was focussed on Christian living in the present. He reduced some of the eschatological edge seen sometimes in the other gospels.
 - ▶ Jesus alongside us on the journey (Emmaus Road)
 - ▶ E.g.

Mark 8³⁴ “He ... said to them, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’”

Luke 9²³ “Then he said to them all, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.’”

- ▶ **Give** us today our daily bread (δος – Matthew 6.11; cf. διδου – Luke 11.3)

D. Daily Discipleship

- ▶ Christians are called to embody the principles of salvation as status-reversal

Matthew 5⁴⁸ “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Luke 6³⁶ “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

- ▶ Christians are to give (and to forgive – Lord’s Prayer) without expecting a return
 - ▶ Therefore no client-patron obligations are set up
 - ▶ God will repay where people cannot
 - ▶ 14¹² He said also to the one who had invited him, ‘When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’

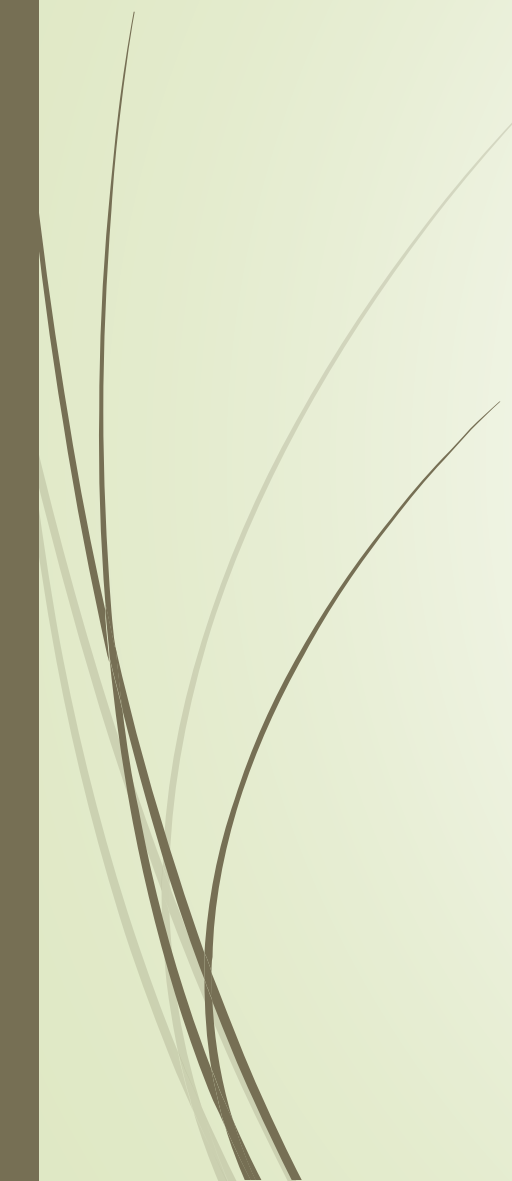


Unique to Luke – includes...

- The birth of John the Baptist (chapter 1)
- The Magnificat (1.46-55)
- The shepherds (2.8-20)
- Candlemas (2.22-40)
- Jesus the teenage tearaway (2.41-52)
- The raising of the son of the widow of Nain (7.11-17)
- Good Samaritan (10-25-37)
- Mary and Martha (10.38-42)
- The lost coin (15.8-10)



Unique to Luke – includes...

- The prodigal son (15.11-32)
 - The unjust steward (16.1-9)
 - The rich man and Lazarus (16.19-31)
 - The healing of the ten lepers (17.11-19)
 - Pharisee and tax collector in the Temple (18.9-14)
 - Zacchaeus (19.1-10)
 - Trial before Herod (23.6-12)
 - The penitent thief (23.39-43)
 - The Emmaus road (24.13-49)
- 



If time allows...

- 15⁸ ‘Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?
⁹When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.” ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.’



If time allows...

- 17¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³they called out, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' ¹⁴When he saw them, he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus asked, 'Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? ¹⁸Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' ¹⁹Then he said to him, 'Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.'