

Suggested Reading

A Recommended Reading

Luke 4:14 - 9:50

B Read Carefully

Luke 4:16-30	Jesus at Nazareth.
Luke 5:1-11	Catch of Fish.
Luke 7:11-17	Widow of Nain
Luke 7:36-50	Woman who was a sinner
Luke 8:1-3	Women accompanying Jesus.
Luke 7:18-35	John the Baptist
Luke 9:28-36	The Transfiguration

C Compare this section with:

Luke 6:20-49	= Matthew 5:1-7:27 <i>The Sermon on the Plain.</i>
Luke 4:14-30	= Isaiah 61:1-2.58:6

Prayer

O God, who by the pages of both Testaments
Instruct and prepare us to celebrate the Paschal Mystery,
Grant that we may comprehend your mercy,
So that the gifts we receive from you this night
may confirm our hope of the gifts to come.
Through Christ our Lord Amen.
(From the Easter Vigil)

PFP v7/2026

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Henley on Thames



The Birth of Jesus according to Luke

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Luke 1:1 - 4:13



At the beginning of his Gospel, Luke describes his intention: (*Lk 1:1 - 4*) He is concerned to present an 'ordered account for you, Theophilus' (an ambiguous figure or patron). He identifies two groups: 'eyewitnesses' and 'servants of the word'. He seems to identify himself with this latter category. While Luke does not call this account a 'Gospel' and presents his narrative in a historical style, we would be mistaken if we did not comprehend that Luke's account is the 'good news' of Jesus and seeks to present a theological understanding of the events of Jesus Christ. It most certainly is a Gospel.

The Nativity Story act not only as an excellent introduction to the Gospel and Evangelist, but also as a summary of the Gospel. Each Evangelist seeks to reveal to the reader, just who Jesus is. This is a divine annunciation by the message of angel, which reveals that Jesus is the Son of God, and the embodiment of Israel's history.

The Infancy Narrative serves as an important bridge between the time of the promise (the Old Testament) and the time of the ministry of Jesus. Luke establishes this link, by transposing figures from one age, into the life of the next. We understand John the Baptist, Zachariah, Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna in these terms. Luke uses the Old Testament in a different way than Matthew. While Matthew stressed how the Old Testament was fulfilled in the life of Jesus, using direct quotations; Luke uses images and language which are shaped by parallels with the Old Testament. This is another method of establishing a link between these two periods of time.

Luke begins his Infancy Narrative with the annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist. He begins in the Temple with two figures, Zachariah and Elizabeth, who could be contrasted with other childless couples: e.g. Elkanah and Hannah, the parents of Samuel. Luke draws parallels with Abraham and Sarah, as well as Gabriel's appearance to Daniel.

Luke's Infancy Narrative has become the basis for the larger part of the Church's liturgy at Christmastime. Luke focuses upon the person of Mary, the role of Shepherds, the Census, the Presentation, and the finding in the Temple. While these traditions may be independent of Matthew's nativity, the message behind them is consistent.

Both Evangelists have much in common: 1. Jesus' birth is related to the days of Herod the Great. 2. Mary is a virgin espoused to Joseph, but they have not yet come to live together. 3. Joseph is from the house of David. 4. An Angel from heaven pronounces the coming birth of Jesus. 5. Jesus himself is said to be the Son of David. 6. Jesus' conception will take place through the action of Holy Spirit. 7. Joseph is not involved in Jesus' conception. 8. The name 'Jesus' is given by the Angel before Jesus' birth. 9. The angel says that Jesus is 'Saviour.' 10. Jesus is born after Mary and Joseph begin to live together. 11. Jesus is born in Bethlehem. 12. Jesus settles, along with Mary and Joseph, in Nazareth in Galilee.

The Annunciation to Mary, narrates the central message of Jesus birth, as did the Annunciation to Joseph. Jesus is the Son of God, and the Son of David. Mary will conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit. This passage is primarily and centrally about the birth of Jesus. Mary is understood to be the model follower of Christ.

The Visitation develops Luke's theme of joy and praise: The angel's message '*rejoice full of grace!* (Lk 1:28) '*the child in my womb leapt for joy*' (Lk 1:44) and Mary praises God. (Lk 1:46-55) The Visitation stresses Mary's importance primarily as a disciple and secondly as the physical mother of Jesus. '*Blessed is she who believed that what*

Next Week

Jesus in Galilee

We will study the Galilean ministry of Jesus in Luke's Gospel. We shall concentrate upon those passages which are unique to Luke. We will begin by studying the preaching of Jesus in Nazareth, which begins his ministry. This is the beginning of a new age for Luke. '*Today*' the message of Isaiah is fulfilled. You may wish to study the text from Isaiah in context.

The great catch of fish is a passage unique to Luke. What image of Jesus and the disciples does it give to us? You might wish to compare Luke's 'Sermon on the Plain' with Matthew's 'Sermon on the Mount.' How might the differences between each account help us to understand the concerns of each Evangelist.

Finally, you may wish to study a cycle of miracle stories (Lk 7:1-8:3) which reflect Luke's concern for Women throughout the Gospel.

The Importance of Geography in Luke's Gospel



The Gospel begins and ends in the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Journey of Jesus to Jerusalem (9:51 – 19:27) is the largest section within the Gospel.

Was said to her from the Lord would be fulfilled.' (Lk 1:45) (Compare this with Lk 8:19-21). Mary is the model believer.

The Magnificat has many Old Testament parallels, especially the Song of Hannah. (*1 Samuel 2:1-11*) It is the first of four hymns of praise (*Magnificat, Benedictus, Nunc Dimittus, Gloria*) which are widely used in the Church's liturgy.

Luke begins the narrative of the birth of Jesus by contrasting Caesar Augustus, (who was revered as the author of peace, after 100 years of civil war in the Roman Empire) with Jesus the saviour and bringer of Peace. However, for Luke, peace is greater than an absence of war, it is a wholeness which may be linked with the forgiveness and the love of enemies which Jesus inaugurates.

Jesus is born in Bethlehem the town of David. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes, a sign for the shepherds and a statement of humility. The shepherds accord with Luke's theme of poverty and may echo David's humble origins as a shepherd. They receive the message of Jesus' birth by the divine revelation of the angels. The mangy, smelly, shepherds are in their ritual uncleanness, an encouragement for all who lack religious status. Their message leads all to astonishment, except Mary who ponders all these things in her heart.

The presentation in the Temple once again echoes the Old Testament images of Hannah and Elkanah presenting Samuel to Eli. (*1 Sam 1-2*) This passage demonstrates that the parents of Jesus are obedient to all the demands of the Mosaic Law; just as they had fulfilled the demands of the Roman Law by obeying the Census. The journey to the Temple reminds us of the importance of Jerusalem and the Temple for Luke. Although Simeon is not a priest, both he and Anna embody the heart of the Temple cult: service of God. By this Jesus is united the centre of Jewish spirituality.

The prophecy of Simeon casts a shadow over the Infancy Narrative, which reminds us that there will be opposition to Jesus which will affect the lives of those who follow him. This links the Infancy Narrative to the rest of the Gospel and especially the Passion Narrative.

The *Nunc Dimittus* proclaims the universality of Luke's message. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, whose message was accepted by the Gentiles. For Luke, Jesus is '*the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations, a light to enlighten the Gentiles and give glory to your people Israel.*' (Lk 2:30-32)

This universality of salvation is emphasised by Luke's genealogy which traces Jesus' ancestry back to Adam, Son of God and father of mankind, rather than Abraham, the father of Israel.

The Gospel of St Luke.

Outline of the Gospel.

Luke 1:1 - 1:4	Preface. <i>Intention of the Evangelist</i>
Luke 1:5- 2:52	The Infancy Narrative <i>The Birth of Jesus</i>
Luke 3:1 - 4:13	Preparation for the Public Ministry <i>John the Baptist. Baptism and Temptation.</i>
Luke 4:14 - 9:50	The Ministry in Galilee <i>Jesus Galilean Ministry.</i>
Luke 9:51 - 19:27	The Journey to Jerusalem <i>The Central Journey of Jesus.</i>
Luke 19:28 - 21:38	First part of Holy Week: <i>Jesus enters Jerusalem: teaching in the Temple.</i>
Luke 22:1 - 23:56	Second part of Holy Week: <i>The Passion and Death of Jesus</i>
Luke 24:1 - 24:53	Appearances after the Resurrection <i>The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus</i>

There is a very strong tradition which has identified St Luke the Evangelist as '*Luke the physician, the friend of St Paul*'. (Col 4:14; Phlm vs.24; Tim 4:11) In Acts 16:10 we notice that the pronoun changes from 'they' to 'we' after Paul's vision at Troas. Evidently Luke met Paul at Troas and went with him to preach in Europe.

The Gospel of Luke is commonly understood to have been written in a Gentile environment. The place of origin is unknown, although Antioch has the strongest claim. The Gospel is dated approximately 75 – 80 AD. Scholars agree that Luke presupposes the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk 21:5-38 of 70AD) but does not reflect knowledge of the bitter persecution of Christians which began 81 AD, or the break with the Synagogue in 80 AD.

Luke's Gospel is dependent upon Mark's Gospel. It is his principal source. Luke has other material which he shares in common with Matthew This other source called *Q* by biblical scholars, derives from the German word *Quelle* = meaning *source*.

Luke has a considerable amount of his own material. This material is interwoven with his other sources. It can be clearly seen in Luke's Infancy Narratives and Resurrection Appearances. There are also several parables which are unique to Luke. This means that while half of Matthew comes from Mark, a quarter from Q and a quarter unique to Matthew; Luke's Gospel is different. 29% comes from Mark, 13 % from Q while 43% is material unique to Luke and another 15% a mixture of sources.

Luke is understood to be the author of two books: the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Both are addressed to Theophilus; written in the same style, many words and phrases are the same, the ideas and outlook are the same, and Acts continues where the Gospel ends.

As we study the Gospel of Luke, we should endeavour to remember the close connection between the Gospel and Acts. (*We shall not study Acts here, but it will influence our examination of the Gospel.*) It would be helpful to remember that the concepts which Luke develops in the Gospel influence Acts and vice versa, e.g., Luke's emphasis upon the Holy Spirit. Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit occurs in Acts and is a driving force in that book but has an important place in the Gospel as well.

This connection has influenced **Luke's understanding of time** and the history of salvation. Luke does not share Matthew's two-fold division of salvation. Matthew is concerned with the '*Old and the New*'; the relationship between the Old Testament and the teaching of Jesus; the old Israel and the new Israel.

Luke has a three-fold division of the history of Salvation. For Luke the first period of time is *the Old Testament*. This is a time of promise. Luke often refers to the images of the Old Testament and the scriptures, but in a different way from Matthew.

Luke's second period of time is *the Gospel*. This is *the life of Jesus*. This begins with the ministry of Jesus, beginning with the sermon at Nazareth '*Today this passage is fulfilled.*' (Lk 4:21) Luke stresses the '*today*' of the Gospel. This begins with the Baptism and concludes with the Ascension.

Luke's third period of time is *the book of Acts*. This is *the time of the Church*. This begins with Pentecost and concludes until the message reaches the ends of the earth. (*Acts 1:8*)

Chapters One & Two of the Gospel and Chapters One & Two of Acts form the bridge between these times. Luke likes to transpose figures from one age into the life of the next forming continuity: Gospel = John the Baptist, Zachariah & Elizabeth. Acts = the twelve disciples particularly Peter.

Features of Luke:

Luke is understood to be a master of Greek. His skill at describing a scene or passage has only emphasised his skill as a painter. His portrait of Jesus displays a mastery of classical and common Greek.

Geography within Luke's Gospel. We have already noted the importance of Geography for the evangelist. Mark contrasted Jesus' ministry in Galilee with his death in Jerusalem. The fiercest opposition came from the capital. He also used his geographical setting to contrast the mission to the Gentiles and the Jews. Geography was not as vital for Matthew. He follows Mark's itinerary, while stressing Jesus ministry to the lost sheep of Israel. Geography is vital for a complete understanding of Luke's Gospel.

To understand Luke's geography we have to keep in mind the Acts of the Apostles. Both volumes have a consistent geography. Luke portrays the ministry of the Church in Acts as a continuation of the ministry of Jesus in the Gospel. He is concerned to show how Jesus ministry began in Galilee, progressed to Jerusalem, where he died and rose again, and after the Ascension and Pentecost the Church continued this ministry to the very ends of the earth.

Within the Gospel the central place is **Jerusalem**. The Gospel begins and ends in the Temple. The largest section within the Gospel is **the Journey to Jerusalem**. (*Luke 9:51 - 19:27*) Significantly, it is during this journey that the major part of Jesus' teaching occurs within Luke's Gospel.

Luke is concerned to show the **universal character of the Gospel**. There is no barrier of race or class. Hence, Luke's genealogy begins with Adam, the father of mankind rather than Abraham, the father of Judaism. Luke is concerned to show that Christ's call is open to all.

This is why there is a special emphasis upon, **the poor, the outcasts, and the lost**. They have a special place amongst the followers of Jesus. Luke expands the Old Testament conception of God's special consideration for the widow, stranger and orphan, to consider all those who are lost, outcasts, or poor. For this reason Luke stresses the **danger of riches** and the proper use of wealth.

Luke has a **special consideration for Women**. Luke stresses Jesus' sympathy and courtesy towards women. Mary is called 13 times by name. Luke's special consideration for women may be linked to his concern for those on the fringes of society. Jesus is concerned for women who were despised.

YEAR C: YEAR OF LUKE

journey is not geographical or chronological. Rather it is seen as a journey for the whole Church and for the individual christian, a journey towards suffering and glory. Each Gospel passage should mean a great deal more to preacher and reader when it is seen in the context of the whole programme of readings for Year C.

Unit V	The 'Gospel within the Gospel': the message of pardon and reconciliation – the parables of God's mercy	Sunday 24
SUNDAY 24	*The lost coin, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son	Lk 15:1-32
Unit VI	The second part of the 'Travel Narrative': the obstacles facing those who follow Jesus	Sundays 25-31
SUNDAY 25	*The unjust steward	Lk 16:1-13
SUNDAY 26	*The rich man and Lazarus	Lk 16:19-31
SUNDAY 27	*A lesson on faith and dedication	Lk 17:5-10
SUNDAY 28	*The ten lepers	Lk 17:11-19
SUNDAY 29	*The unjust judge	Lk 18:1-8
SUNDAY 30	*The Pharisee and the tax collector	Lk 18:9-14
SUNDAY 31	*Zacchaeus	Lk 19:1-10
Unit VII	The ministry in Jerusalem	Sundays 32-33
SUNDAY 32	The resurrection debated	Lk 20:27-38
SUNDAY 33	The signs announcing the end	Lk 21:5-19
Unit VIII	Christ the King: reconciliation	Sunday 34
SUNDAY 34	*The repentant thief	Lk 23:35-43

Note: Passages marked with an asterisk are found only in the Gospel of Luke.

Luke's Spirituality

is an important feature throughout the Gospel. He has a strong emphasis upon prayer, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and there is a sense of joy and praise which pervades the Gospel.

Luke's Jesus is a man of **prayer**. The Gospel begins and ends with prayer in the temple. Jesus is continually found at prayer throughout the Gospel. Luke alone tells us that Jesus has prayed for Peter. Many of the parables unique to Luke concern prayer. (e.g. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector.) Luke's Canticles, the Benedictus, the Magnificat and the *Nunc Dimittus*, have become a daily part of the prayer of the Church.

The presence of the **Holy Spirit** pervades the Gospel and Acts. Luke refers to the Spirit eighteen times in the Gospel; fifty-seven times in Acts, while Matthew has twelve references and Mark six. The Holy Spirit initiates each section of the Gospel.

The Gospel of Luke begins with '*glad tidings*' (Lk 2:10) and ends with '*great joy*.' (Lk 24:52) Throughout the Gospel there is a sense of **joy and praise** which cannot be found in the same depth in Matthew or Mark. This sense of joy and praise is apparent at the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus. The Canticles are songs of joy and praise of God. This joy is shared by the disciples of Jesus. The seventy-two disciples return '*with joy*' (Lk 10:17) which in turn causes Jesus to '*rejoice in the Holy Spirit*.' (Lk 10:21 only in Luke)

Luke's image of Jesus

is therefore complex and profound. Each of these characteristics is found in Jesus. Luke stresses Jesus' humanity. Not by stressing his many emotions, anger, pity, sadness or apprehension as Mark has. Luke unites Jesus' humanity with his humility. Jesus comes from a lowly background. His identity is questioned on numerous occasions.

Luke portrays Jesus as a **prophet**. No other evangelist has placed such emphasis on the prophetic word of Jesus. No other is so optimistic over the favourable response it is destined to receive. In Luke the crowd listen favourably to Jesus.

Jesus is the **Saviour**. Luke is the only Evangelist who uses this title. Jesus has come to '*save*' those who were lost. Jesus tells Zacchaeus, '*Today salvation has come to this house*.' (19:9). This title has replaced 'Christ' in Luke.

Jesus is **Lord**. Only Luke refers to Jesus in this way. In the scriptures, Lord is a term applied to God (the Father) In Luke this title is applied to Jesus. This is a title of the 'Risen Lord' which reflects the glory of the resurrection back into Jesus' life.

Table III ORDER FOR GOSPEL READING FOR SUNDAYS IN ORDINARY TIME

Luke's Gospel represents Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem – a journey which is completed in the Acts of the Apostles by the journey of the Church from Jerusalem 'to the ends of the earth'. The Lectionary in the year of Luke represents faithfully his 'Travel Narrative' (chapters 9-19) – Jesus' journey to death, to resurrection and his return to the Father (see Sundays 13-31). Luke's vision of the

Unit I	The figure of Jesus the Messiah	Sundays 1-2
SUNDAY 1	The baptism of Jesus	Lk 3:15-16. 21-22
SUNDAY 2	The marriage feast at Cana	Jn 2:1-12
Unit II	Luke's programme for Jesus' ministry	Sundays 3-4
SUNDAY 3	Prologue. The visit to Nazareth (1)	Lk 1:1-4; 4:14-21
SUNDAY 4	The visit to Nazareth (2)	Lk 4:21-30
Unit III	The Galilean Ministry	Sundays 5-12
SUNDAY 5	*The call of the first apostles	Lk 5:1-11
SUNDAY 6	The sermon on the plain (1)	Lk 6:17. 20-26
SUNDAY 7	The sermon on the plain (2)	Lk 6:27-38
SUNDAY 8	The sermon on the plain (3)	Lk 6:39-45
SUNDAY 9	The cure of the centurion's servant	Lk 7:1-10
SUNDAY 10	*The Widow of Naim	Lk 7:11-17
SUNDAY 11	*Jesus' feet anointed: the sinful woman	Lk 7:36-8:3
SUNDAY 12	Peter's confession of faith	Lk 9:18-24
Unit IV	The first part of the "Travel Narrative": The qualities Jesus demands of those who follow him	Sundays 13-23
SUNDAY 13	*The journey to Jerusalem begins	Lk 9:51-62
SUNDAY 14	*The mission of the seventy-two	Lk 10:1-12. 17-20
SUNDAY 15	*The Good Samaritan	Lk 10:25-37
SUNDAY 16	*Martha and Mary	Lk 10:38-42
SUNDAY 17	*The importunate friend	Lk 11:1-13
SUNDAY 18	*The parable of the rich fool	Lk 12:13-21
SUNDAY 19	The need for vigilance	Lk 12:32-48
SUNDAY 20	'Not peace but division'	Lk 12:49-53
SUNDAY 21	Few will be saved	Lk 13:22-30
SUNDAY 22	True humility	Lk 14:1. 7-14
SUNDAY 23	The cost of discipleship	Lk 14:25-33