

Luke Overview

Differences between Liturgical Year B (Gospels of Mark and John) and Liturgical Year C, which primarily uses Luke as a source.

As we move from the street theatre feel of Mark and the high Christology of John into the perspective of a theological historian who is by almost any account was a literary artist the feel, tone, and tenor of the gospel changes for all who are really listening.

Luke's primary expansion of the Markan narrative is that there is a much greater focus on movement and Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem. What takes up little more than one chapter of Mark (10) is a full 19 chapters in Luke (9:51-19:27)

There are 3 additional miracles stories and 13 additional parables. The famous parables of the Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son only appear in Luke.

One special interest is the fact that Luke includes more stories concerning women than the other gospels. There is also a greater emphasis on prayer and action in Luke.

Some Themes of the Gospel of Luke

Spirituality

Jesus is portrayed as a model of faithfulness to God
Jesus as a model of spiritual practice
Followers imitate Jesus' faithfulness

Practicing the religious tradition of your ancestors – reading scripture, worshiping

"When he came from Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue as was his custom" Luke 4:16

Praying, relying on God as a source of strength

"Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove." Luke 3:22-23

Repentance and Forgiveness

"Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Luke 5:8

"Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven, hence she has shown great love." Luke 7:36-50

Establishment of Justice

“He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.” Luke 1:46-55

“Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” Luke 13:10-17

Courage

“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.” Luke 22:39-53

“Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” Luke 23:43

Easter at Emmaus

Luke 24:13-35

Where did Luke come from?

Using the Two Source hypothesis (Mark and Q) one can derive the following rough outline of Luke’s use of his sources.

Luke 1:1–2:52	Luke
Luke 3:1–6:19	Mark (Q for material about John the Baptist and Temptations)
Luke 6:20–8:3	Q and L
Luke 8:4–9:50	Mark
Luke 9:51–18:14	Q and L
Luke 18:15–24:11	Mark and L
Luke 24:12–24:53	L

LUKE 3:7-16, John's Preaching

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

18 So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Prophetic Speech

Prophets tend to come along when established powers have run their course, when the present reality is so divorced from God's intention for Creation that it demands a new voice. And usually those new voices proclaim the unthinkable to those in power. Prophets don't play well with others.

When the king asked the prophet Jeremiah, "Any word from the LORD?" You know he isn't going to like what he hears.

Daniel ends up in a lion's den, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are found praising YHWH in King Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace – and they were the lucky ones. We all know things don't end well for John the Baptist.

Prophets proclaim justice, not my justice, or your justice, or even the church's justice, they proclaim God's justice.

One thing all prophets do is they speak truth to power on behalf of their communities.

Prophets say hard things and they say them because they are true.

Structure of this Passage

Luke gives us the most complete account of John's preaching in the NT. Luke's account of John's preaching is organized into three groups of sayings, each with its own theme:

- Warnings of the coming judgment (vv. 7-9)
- A call for ethical reforms (vv. 10-14)
- An announcement of the coming Messiah (vv. 15-17).⁴¹
- Verse 18 is the evangelist's summary of John's preaching ministry.

Dialectic of Fire

- Spirit and Fire
- Lightening in the darkness
- Flames surrounded by smoke
- Furnaces of fire that don't consume
- Fiery light in the clouds

All are signals to the Israelites, that in the coming Messiah **God will be present.**

Spirit and Fire - It is a continuation of a **dialectic of fire**¹ (as the 20th c theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote), that begins in the Garden with the flaming sword of the Cherub and finds its resolution in the cross and the eschaton. Prophets throughout biblical history have found their symbolic legitimacy in fire. Isaiah's tongue touched with a burning coal, Jeremiah's bones burning with fire, Moses following a pillar of fire in the wilderness and of course Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego praising YHWH in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace.

Anointed by fire in baptism, this Messiah the people seek signals the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God. That is very good news.

John / Jesus Parallels

John the Baptist plays a very specific role in all the gospels but especially in Luke's version his story is contrasted with that of Jesus. Think of how Luke unfolds:

- John's birth is prophesized by Gabriel to Zachariah

¹ Von Balthasar, Hans Urs. **The Glory of the Lord.** Ignatius Press, 1991, pp. 47-50.

- Mary is told by the angel of Jesus birth and special nature
- John's birth and naming take place, later he retreats to the wilderness where he receives his call.
- Jesus' birth and naming take place, later his parents find him in the Temple.

The message from John to the crowd, to the tax collector, and to the soldier has its parallel in Jesus' interactions with those three aspects of society. **Whereas John tells the people how to act, Jesus shows them what acting like that looks like by bringing nourishment, healing, and peace.**

Crowds

Luke 3:10-11 John the Baptist

10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise."

Luke 4:40-41 Jesus

40 As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them. 41 Demons also came out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah.

Tax Collectors

Luke 3:12-13 John the Baptist

12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you."

Luke 5:27-32 Jesus

27 After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." 28 And he got up, left everything, and followed him.

29 Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; 32 I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Soldiers

Luke 3:14 John the Baptist

14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation,² and be satisfied with your wages.”

Luke 7:2-10 Jesus

2 A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. 3 When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. 4 When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy of having you do this for him, 5 for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.” 6 And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; 7 therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. 8 For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it.” 9 When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” 10 When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

² The verb used here for “to accuse falsely” (*συκοφαντεω* *sykophanteo*) is a colorful one meaning literally “to make figs visible.” It refers to those in Athens who informed against anyone exporting figs from Attica. Such informers were “fig showers,” from which we get the English word sycophant— in this context, a swindler or extortionist. **New Interpreter’s Bible**, *Commentary on Luke*. Alan R Culpepper, p. 85.

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 - Baptism

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

What do you think was the message for 1st century Jesus followers?

Where do you find yourself in this story?

What is the message for us?

Moments to Notice in Luke

Luke 7:1-10, Healing the Centurion's Slave³ (Gentile, Slave)

The story of the centurion's faith is a brilliant moment especially when read in a Gentile-Christian context. Because the centurion never actually meets Jesus or speaks with him, in contrast to the Matthean and Johannine parallels, his request is like a prayer mediated to Jesus by others. The story implicitly promises that the Lord hears the prayers of faithful Gentiles and encourages us to believe that when we turn to the Lord in need our requests will be heard also.

The centurion serves as a role model for Gentile believers. He is concerned about the well-being of those around him, even his slave. His generosity has extended to the Jewish community as well—he built a synagogue. Although he has not met Jesus, because of what he has heard about Jesus from others he has faith that Jesus can help, and he turns to Jesus with his request. The centurion, therefore, is a model of compassion for weaker persons, goodwill in the midst of divisive tensions between ethnic groups, and faith in Jesus as a result of the testimony of others. He has respect for Jewish sensitivities about entering a Gentile's house, and although he is a man of position and power, he does not want Jesus to be troubled by his problems. Seen in

³ All information in this section from: **New Interpreter's Bible**, vol. 5. *Commentary on Luke*. Alan R. Culpepper.

this light, the centurion is one of the unsung and unnoticed heroes of faith in the Gospels.

Luke 7:36-50, Responses of a Pharisee and a Woman (Women, Outcast, Forgiveness)

Unless we see something of ourselves in the character of Simon the Pharisee, we are so blind to our own need that we have failed to hear the story. The soft underbelly of hypocrisy is always vulnerable to the truth, and we are most vulnerable when we are blind to our own faults. Simon thought he was blameless. He “knew” the woman was a sinner, and he assumed she had defiled Jesus. Jesus then exposed the contrast between Simon’s distant hospitality and the woman’s sincere affection. The contrast was clear, and it left Simon doubly exposed and embarrassed. First a shameful display of affection from a sinful woman occurred in his house. Second, a guest had called attention to the host’s lack of hospitality. In the Middle East the importance of honor and shame and the family name can hardly be overestimated.

Does love lead to forgiveness, or is the ability to love the result of being forgiven?

They marveled that Jesus dared to pronounce sins forgiven. Only God could forgive sins. No priest, prophet, or rabbi would dare to claim that prerogative. The irony is that Jesus’ readiness to forgive the humble and the sinful was one of the clearest evidences that Jesus was more than a prophet. More than any of his miracles or mighty works, Jesus’ ability to forgive revealed that he shared the heart and character of God.

Luke 10:29-37, The Good Samaritan (Gentile, Samaritan, Purity, Generosity)

The lawyer had initially asked what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus has now answered the question by telling a story about a Samaritan who kept a beaten man from dying. Jesus had steered the lawyer to quote the commandments to love God and love one’s neighbor. The first round of the contest between Jesus and the lawyer ended with Jesus’ injunction “Do this, and you will live” (v. 28). The second round ends with a similar command: “Go and do likewise” (v. 37). But this time no promise is attached to the command. The duty of neighborliness is an expression of love of God and love of others, and those who show mercy show that they belong among the heirs of the kingdom, but the duty of neighborliness transcends any calculation of reward. The Samaritan could not have expected any reward or repayment for what he did for the beaten man. One who shows mercy in order to gain a reward would, therefore, not truly be doing “likewise.”

Jesus’ parable, therefore, shatters the stereotypes of social boundaries and class division and renders void any system of religious quid pro quo. Neighbors do not recognize social class. Neither is mercy the conduct of a calculating heart, nor eternal life the reward for doing prescribed duties. Eternal life—the life of the age to come—is that quality of life characterized by showing mercy for those in need,

regardless of their race, religion, or region—and with no thought of reward. Mercy sees only need and responds with compassion.

The story of the good Samaritan, therefore, gives new meaning to Jesus' blessing on the disciples who had gone out preaching and caring for the sick: "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see!" (10:23). (See Reflections at 10:38-42.)

Luke 21:1-4, The Widow's Offering (Women, Poor)

Jesus' praise of the widow issues a challenge for those who would be his disciples (see 20:45). The most obvious challenge is to give with the complete devotion and selflessness that marked the widow's gift. Seek first the kingdom and do not be anxious (cf. 12:22-31). Beyond the obvious, however, Jesus' example teaches his disciples that part of seeking the kingdom requires vindicating the poor, the widows, and the orphans. Jesus recognized their inherent worth and called on the community to care for the weakest and neediest in their midst. He recognized that those who were often sustained by the gifts of others could themselves give gifts of great value. Without knowing it, the widow gave others a timeless example of selfless devotion to God.

This brief scene exposes for self-examination the private side of all our acts of religious devotion. Why do we do what we do for others and for God? By what measures do we calculate our actions? By what standards do we judge ourselves and others?

Small gifts are easily overlooked. Who stops to notice the secretary who puts out mints on the desk for those who pass through the office? Who appreciates the thoughtfulness of a coworker who sends colleagues notes on their birthdays? Does it matter that some adults regularly work in the nursery so that others can participate in the worship service? Does it make any difference that some teachers stay after school to work with children who are having difficulty in class? The first observation that might be made about this scene is that Jesus noticed one of the neglected. He recognized the importance of the small gift that might so easily be overlooked.

By singling out the widow as exemplary, Jesus also rejected the insidious presumption that those who gave the great gifts were more important or better than the one whose gift was small because her means were limited. In a society in which wealth is the measure of success and happiness, the wealthy are esteemed and given special treatment, while the poor are judged as failures who could have done better if they had tried. A person's value or worth as a human being is, therefore, measured by the evidence of his or her prosperity. Just as in the parables, Jesus' pronouncement reverses the norms and standards by which we are accustomed to living. He turns our world's standards on their head. A widow or a homeless person's gift to God or to others may be more important than the gifts of the wealthy.

Luke 24:13-35, The Appearance on the Road to Emmaus (Companionship, Grief)

It is at once more than we can comprehend and so familiar that we constantly search for a new angle of vision. We may well find ourselves in the position of the travelers at the opening of the story, discussing these things as we walk, trying to discern the meaning of what has happened in the Gospel story and in our own experience. Is there any persuasive reason to believe that Jesus really was raised from the dead or that God is present in the turbulence of our lives?

Emmaus was a little-noted town. Luke doesn't say why the two disciples were going there. They may have been going home, going there on business, or just going there to get away from the terrible things they had witnessed in Jerusalem. Frederick Buechner interprets Emmaus as the place we go to in order to escape—a bar, a movie, wherever it is we throw up our hands and say, "Let the whole damned thing go hang. It makes no difference anyway." . . . Emmaus may be buying a new suit or a new car or smoking more cigarettes than you really want, or reading a second-rate novel or even writing one. Emmaus may be going to church on Sunday. Emmaus is whatever we do or wherever we go to make ourselves forget that the world holds nothing sacred: that even the wisest and bravest and loveliest decay and die; that even the noblest ideas that men have had—ideas about love and freedom and justice—have always in time been twisted out of shape by selfish men for selfish ends.

The risen Lord meets us on the road to our Emmauses (sic), in the ordinary places and experiences of our lives, and in the places to which we retreat when life is too much for us. The story warns us, however, that the Lord may come to us in unfamiliar guises, when we least expect him.

Cleopas and his companion discovered at the table that their traveling companion was the Lord himself. They had not planned it as a sacred moment, but in the act of sharing their bread with a stranger they recognized the risen Lord in the fellow traveler. In a fascinating way, the Emmaus story is the counterpart to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In that parable, the rich man feasts daily but never notices the beggar at his gate or shares his bread with him.

One of the tantalizing elements of the story is the report that as soon as the two disciples recognized the risen Lord he disappeared from their sight. God's presence is always elusive, fleeting, dancing at the edge of our awareness and perception. If we are honest, we must confess that it is never constant, steady, or predictable.

For this reason, we learn to treasure religious experiences in retrospect. The two in Emmaus exclaim, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" Like Moses, we usually see only the back side of God as God passes by us (Exod 33:23). With Job we confess, "Look, he passes by me, and I do not see him;/ he moves on, but I do not perceive him" (Job 9:11 NRSV). One of the secrets of a vigorous spirituality and a confident faith, therefore, is learning to appreciate the importance of meeting God in the past

as well as in the present. Luke guides us in this spiritual discipline: “Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee. . . . Then they remembered his words” (24:6, 8).

The experience of the presence of God is not a private gift. It is never for us alone. Neither in the discovery of the empty tomb nor in the discovery of the identity of the fellow traveler is there the familiar command to go and tell that is typical of other resurrection appearance scenes.

Easter is not over at sundown Easter Sunday. It stretches into the rest of our lives. The women could not call back the angels, and the two disciples might never meet the stranger again, but it would not matter. Life would never again be the same. Luke’s Gospel sparkles with theological insight when it stretches Easter day into the series of experiences that happened thereafter. All the rest of the story will be an extension of the Easter reality: The Lord is risen and he comes back to meet us on the road to Emmaus. Through the study of Scripture, we find our hearts “strangely warmed,”³³⁰ and we recognize him in “the breaking of the bread.” How can we not go and tell?

Class 2

Inclusio – Bracketing, organizing idea

Mark:

The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the Good News Mark 1:15

Matthew:

All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:
'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel',
which means, 'God is with us.' Matthew 1:22-23

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' Matthew 28:19-20

Luke:

...and he (Jesus) said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed *to all nations*, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." Luke 24:46-48

John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. John 1:1-5;14

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Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Sanhedrin

All begin with a basic set of beliefs:

One God (YHWH) the creator of all things

Revealed through the Hebrew scriptures

Israel was chosen by this God

Yahweh committed to protecting Israel in exchange for their devotion to him.

Scribes

The literate elite. They could read and study the sacred scriptures and, one presumes, teach others.

Pharisees (separated ones)

A Jewish sect that seems to have originated during the Maccabean period (2nd century BCE) that emphasized strict adherence to the purity laws set forth in TORAH (Mishnah and Talmud today). They arose in reaction to the Hellenization of the Ancient Near East (ANE). They appear to have been a somewhat closed society that did not eat with common people for fear of violating an oral or written purity law. In the best sense they were not legalistic, only concerned with obedience to what Yahweh asked all Jews to do. Believed in resurrection and angels.

- **World of the Text** – Not the power brokers.
- **World behind the Text** -- After the Jewish Wars and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE they become powerful politically because the Roman rulers gave them authority.
- **World in front of the Text** – We tend to read Pharisee and think enemy or hypocrites since Jesus comes in conflict with them because he did not think strict adherence to TORAH was at the heart of Jews relationship with YAHWEH. .

Sadducees

A Jewish party associated with the Temple Cult and the Priests who ran it, comprising principally the Jewish aristocracy in Judea. The party leader, the High Priest (in Acts Ananias) served as the highest ranking local official and chief liaison to the Roman governor. It appears that TORAH (5 books of Moses) was the only authoritative scripture for this group. Did not accept the oral tradition of the Pharisees and focused on sacrifice in the Temple. Denied the existence of resurrection and possibly angels and spirit.⁴ Their view of the afterlife was probably consistent with non-Jews of the ANE (The soul either perished with the body or went to some netherworld).

- **World of the Text** – The real power brokers in the time of Jesus as well as the time of Paul. They appear to have cooperated with the Roman governors. Jesus' prediction that God would destroy the Temple, in part, brought them to present him to Pilate for execution (and to oppose with vigor any one supporting Jesus' vision of the world remade).
- **World behind the Text** – very limited and discredited authority after the destruction of the Temple.
- **World in front of the Text** – The “evil” Jews who turned Jesus over for execution.

Sanhedrin

The Sanhedrin was a council of Jewish leaders headed by the High Priest, which played an advisory role in religious and civil policy. Controlled by the Sadducees.

- **World of the Text** – a civil body that decided internal (Jewish) issues
- **World behind the Text** – Probably less authority and possibly dominated by Pharisees (or at least controlled by Pharisees)
- **World in front of the Text** -- the “jury” that sentenced Jesus to death

It is important to note that most Jews in the 1st century CE did not belong to any of these groups.

⁴ There is disagreement over their denial of angels and spirit. Since both are mentioned in the TORAH and they were strict TORAH observers, I have a hard time understanding why that would be portrayed this way unless it was to contrast them in higher relief with the Pharisees.

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Belonging and the Gentile Audience:⁵

The Gospel of Luke is written as a story of belonging especially to the gentile believers.

Luke uses specific passages to:

- Draw readers into the story (Luke 1:1-4)
- Position them in the saving history of God (Luke 2:29-35)
- Account for the response of Jews to Jesus (Luke 4:16-30)
- Validate their presence in the church (Luke 10:1-20)

Prologue: Luke 1:1-4

By addressing his listeners/readers as “Most excellent Theophilus” i.e. “Lovers of God” he creates a sense of spiritual belonging. Remember his audience has already been instructed in the faith, Luke is respecting their catechesis and taking them deeper.

Prophecy Luke 2:28-35 Simeon

²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ ‘Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.’

³³ And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, ‘This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.’

We naturally focus on the blessing and foreshadowing for Mary, but a gentile listener would have focused on Simeon’s prophecy, “a light for the revelation to the Gentiles.”

⁵ The notes in the section on belonging come from Frederick Schmidt’s **Conversations with Scripture: The Gospel of Luke (Anglican Association of Biblical Scholars Study Series)**, pp. 27-38.

Jesus' First Sermon Luke 4:16-30

Jesus stands and reads from the prophet Isaiah that

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,

And proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Nothing out of the ordinary there until he follows Isaiah by saying:

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

What follows is a rejection of Jesus by his own people.

"Isn't this Joseph's son?" In other words, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

"...no prophet is accepted in his hometown."

After Jesus mentions times in history when the Jewish people failed to heed God's word, Jesus switches gears to the salvation of the Gentiles: Luke 4:25-27

²⁵But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; ²⁶yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. ²⁷There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.'

Then they tried to throw him off a cliff

Inaugural Ministry Luke 10:1-20

Luke draws his Gentile listeners into salvation history by recounting the sending of the seventy out into the world to minister to the people. The naming of Gentile cities Tyre and Sidon that will be saved because of their faith begins to tell a larger story about salvation.

These few examples of belonging continue to play out in the gospel narrative and:

- Following Jesus was a communal act and it meant isolation from nonbelievers in the ANE (defacto not dejure).
- Religious belonging was not optional
- To believe in one god in the polytheistic ANE would have been isolating.
- Gentile Christians would have been risking belonging in family groups, villages, and ethnic groups who worshiped differently.

Luke and Parables:

Parables play an important part in the teachings of Jesus, and a unique role in the Gospel of Luke. To really understand the saying of Jesus it's important to understand the use of parables.

What is a Parable?

Parables are wisdom sayings that point toward deep and profound truth.

The *mashal* and the parable together with the wisdom sayings of Lao Tzu and the Zen koan in the Far East represent this type of communication. These traditions share common themes, are oftentimes misunderstood and used by those in power for the opposite purpose for which they may have originally been intended, and are living documents in that their wisdom and truth continues to teach us today about how to think and live in society.

The Hebrew *mashal* and the Greek *parabole* (parable) do not refer to specific literary genres, rather different but related literary forms. As such, the definition of a *mashal* is somewhat elusive, but for the purposes of this presentation the

common association in the Hebrew Bible with the Book of Proverbs will be used. In the Book of Proverbs, sayings, admonitions, and wisdom of the Israelites are gathered together in an instructional form which represents the complexity of life.⁶

Out of this tradition comes the parable form with which we are most familiar in the sayings of Jesus. A parable employs narrative fiction to reference a symbol or transcendent truth. **What make parables unique is that Jesus uses them to press and push against social norms and conventions. The use of this form of teaching is a distinctive aspect of Jesus' ministry. By taking a scene that would be common to his listeners' everyday lives, Jesus was able to use common symbols and relationships to shift their perspectives and constructs of reality.** Once the perspective of the listener is changed a reordering of an individual or communities construct of reality may follow. Out of that change growth occurs and wisdom is passed down. Finally, parables are relational. Taken out of context they may still convey meaning, but it is very unlikely that meaning will be the same as was originally intended.

Parable of Jesus: the parables of Jesus teach the injustice of the world in relationship to the Kingdom of God.

Luke Chapter 15 (Example of Narrative Links in Parables)

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

15Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he told them this parable: ⁴'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

⁶ *The New Interpreter's Bible*. 12 vols., Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994, vol. 5, p. 25.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

8 '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.'

The Parable of a Man Who had Two Sons

11 Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons.¹²The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them.¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs.¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.²¹Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son."²²But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

25 'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on.²⁷He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound."²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him.²⁹But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends.³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" ³¹Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." '

Luke 10: 25-37 From Jerusalem to Jericho

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 26 He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' 27 He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' 28 And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.' 29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'

30 Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' 37 He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

Luke 8: 36-50 A Forgiven Woman

36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. ³⁷And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. ³⁸She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.' ⁴⁰Jesus spoke up and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' 'Teacher,' he replied, 'speak.' ⁴¹'A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?' ⁴³Simon answered, 'I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt.' And Jesus said to him, 'You have judged rightly.' ⁴⁴Then turning towards the woman, he said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.' ⁴⁸Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' ⁴⁹But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

Resurrection Appearances: Empty Tomb, Emmaus, Jerusalem

Luke 24: 13-35 Emmaus

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' ¹⁹He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our

chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' ²⁵Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Outline⁷

I. Luke 1:1-4, The Prologue

II. Luke 1:5–2:52, The Infancy Narrative

- A. 1:5-25, The Annunciation of the Birth of John the Baptist
- B. 1:26-38, The Annunciation of the Birth of Jesus
- C. 1:39-56, Mary's Visit with Elizabeth
- D. 1:57-80, The Birth of John the Baptist
- E. 2:1-20, The Birth of Jesus
- F. 2:21-40, The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple
- G. 2:41-52, The Boy Jesus in the Temple

III. Luke 3:1–4:13, Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus

- A. 3:1-6, The Setting of John's Ministry
- B. 3:7-18, John's Preaching
- C. 3:19-20, The Imprisonment of John
- D. 3:21-22, The Baptism of Jesus
- E. 3:23-38, The Genealogy of Jesus
- F. 4:1-13, The Temptation of Jesus

IV. Luke 4:14–9:50, The Ministry in Galilee

- A. 4:14-15, Introduction to the Ministry in Galilee
- B. 4:16-30, Preaching in Nazareth
- C. 4:31-44, Teaching and Healing in Capernaum
- D. 5:1–6:16, Calling and Training Disciples
 - 5:1-11, Calling the Fishermen
 - 5:12-16, Cleansing a Leper

⁷ *The Gospel of Luke: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections*, by R. Alan Culpepper. **The New Interpreters Bible**, vol. 9, pg. 33-38.

5:17-26, Healing the Paralyzed

5:27-32, Calling Levi, Eating with Outcasts

5:33-39, Debate About Fasting

6:1-11, Debate About Sabbath

6:12-16, Choosing the Twelve

E. 6:17-49, Jesus' Instruction to His Disciples

6:17-19, The Setting for Jesus' Instruction

6:20-26, Blessings on the Poor and Woes to the Rich

6:27-36, Love Your Enemies

6:37-38, Judge Not

6:39-49, Parables on the Meaning of Discipleship

F. 7:1-50, The Messiah Greater Than a Prophet

7:1-10, Healing the Centurion's Slave

7:11-17, Raising the Widow's Son

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7:24-30, More Than a Prophet

7:31-35, Responses to John and Jesus

7:36-50, Responses of a Pharisee and a Harlot

G. 8:1-21, Hearing and Doing God's Word

8:1-3, Jesus' Followers: The Women

8:4-15, The Parable of the Seed and the Soil

8:16-18, What Is Hidden and What Is Revealed

8:19-21, Jesus' Followers: His Mother and Brothers

H. 8:22-56, The Power of God at Work in Jesus

8:22-25, Master over Storms

8:26-39, Master over Demons

8:40-56, Master over Sickness and Death

I. 9:1-50, The Messiah of God and the Son of Man

9:1-17, The Mission of the Twelve and Herod's Question

9:18-27, Peter's Confession and the Demands of Discipleship

9:28-50, Clarifying Jesus' Messiahship

9:28-36, The Transfiguration

9:37-43a, The Epileptic Boy

9:43b-45, The Second Announcement of Jesus' Death

9:46-48, Discipleship and Greatness

9:49-50, The Unauthorized Exorcist

V. Luke 9:51–19:27, The Journey to Jerusalem

A. 9:51-56, Rejection in Samaria

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C. 10:1-16, The Commissioning of the Seventy(-two)

D. 10:17-24, The Return of the Seventy(-two)

E. 10:25-42, The Love of God and Neighbor

10:25-28, The Lawyer's Question

10:29-37, The Good Samaritan

10:38-42, Mary and Martha

F. 11:1-13, Instruction on Prayer

11:1-4, The Lord's Prayer

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13:18-21, The Mustard Seed and the Yeast

13:22-30, The Narrow Door

13:31-35, Fateful Warnings for Jesus and Jerusalem

K. 14:1-24, Lessons in Kingdom Etiquette

14:1-6, The Man with Dropsy

14:7-14, Parables of Humility and Hospitality

14:15-24, The Parable of the Great Banquet

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M. 15:1-32, Parables of the Joy of Recovery and Return

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O. 17:1-10, The Demands of Forgiveness and Faith

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- J. 23:26-56, The Crucifixion, Death, and Burial of Jesus
 - 23:26-32, Simon of Cyrene and the "Daughters of Jerusalem"
 - 23:33-38, The Crucifixion and Mocking of Jesus
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 - 23:50-56, The Burial of Jesus
- K. 24:1-53, The Resurrection Narratives
 - 24:1-12, The Discovery of the Empty Tomb
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