

Luke Overview

- a. **Author**
- b. **Audience**
- c. **Date**
- d. **Purpose**

The Portrait of Jesus in Luke

1. A _____ **View of Jesus**

<u>Mark</u>	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Luke</u>
Superhero	Son of David	Son of the _____
Irritant	King of the Jews	_____
Revealer	Son of Man	Son of _____
Miracle Worker	Son of God	_____
Prophet	Messiah	
Savior		

2. **Images of Jesus** (Borchert, pp 55-62)

- a. _____ **Focus**
- b. **Came for** _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____ **Warrior**

3. Questions for Reflection (Borchert, p 62)

- a. How do Luke's unique stories carry powerful messages concerning our responsibility for those who are among the marginalized of our society?
- b. How comfortable is your church with communicating this Lucan portrait of Jesus?
- c. How can we better impact our faith communities with a holistic presentation of the gospel? What might be the cost? What might be the possible results—both positive and negative?
- d. What does Jerusalem mean to you as a communicator of the gospel? How ready are you to commit to such a symbolic place as Jesus did?

Homework

1. Read Acts at least once and in one-sitting, if possible.
2. Read Borchert chapter 4, pp 62-82.
3. Think about your response to the *Questions for Reflection* on p 82.
 - a. What stories in the book of Acts are the most gripping for you? Why? What about them gives you a sense of empowerment?
 - b. Do you ever feel helpless in this era of increasing biblical illiteracy? When? Why? How can the dynamic of the Living Jesus be rekindled in our day? Is such a dynamic possible today? If so, what is the source? Would we recognize it? Would we try to turn it into some kind of church program?
 - c. How does reading the book of Acts challenge you as a communicator of the gospel?
 - d. How can you help others in your faith community discover the power of the Living Jesus today?

Portraits of Jesus

A Portrait of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke

A. Luke Overview

1. Author

- a. Internal evidence – Author was not an eyewitness of Jesus (1:2) but was well-educated, maybe a doctor (cf., Col 4:14), and most likely a Gentile (e.g., avoided Semitic words and conflicts).
- b. Church tradition – Early church tradition is unanimous in Luke as author.
- c. “We” sections of Acts – The author indicates he was a travelling companion of Paul in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21,18; 27:1-28:16. While there are several possibilities of who this companion might be (cf., Col 4:10-14; Phil 24; 2 Tim 4:11), the most commonly attributed is Luke.

2. Audience

- a. Theophilus, whose name means “friend of God,” is mentioned as the recipient in Luke 1:3 and Acts 1:1. This name may be a pseudonym or a real but unknown Roman official, perhaps even the one who would hear Paul’s case. However, Theophilus may have been a Gentile Christian, or this term may address Gentile Christians in general.
- b. The audience is Gentile in background based on internal evidence (e.g., avoidance of Semitic expressions (e.g., 6:14, 8:54, 22:43, 23:45), explanation of Jewish customs (e.g., 22:1,7), and extension of Jesus’ genealogy to Adam among other indicators).

3. Date

- a. Earliest possible date would be immediately after the events of Acts 28—the arrest and two-year stay of Paul in Rome. This would have been in the early CE 60s.
- b. It appears that Luke utilized the Gospel of Mark as a source which would suggest a date of CE 70-90.

4. Purpose

- a. Luke-Acts must be treated as a unit to obtain the complete picture/purpose of the author.
- b. Luke focuses on persuading Gentiles/Greeks to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- c. A major purpose was to assure readers of the truthfulness of what they had been taught about Jesus’ life and teachings (1:3-4).

B. The Portrait of Jesus in Luke

1. A Synoptic View of Jesus

- a. **Mark:** Superhero, Irritant, Revealer, Miracle Worker, Prophet, Savior
- b. **Matthew:** Son of David, King of the Jews, Son of Man, Son of God, Messiah
- c. **Luke:**
 - 1) “The Christology of Luke-Acts is rich and varied. Numerous titles and attributes are given Jesus, and these are not to be isolated from one another. Jesus is Prophet, Christ/Messiah, Son of God/Son, Lord, Son of Man, Servant (Acts 3:13,26; 4:30), King of the Jews, Son of David, Holy and/or Righteous One, author of Life (Acts 3:15), Leader (Acts 3:15:5:31), Savior, and Judge (Acts 10:42; 17:31) Since all these titles apply to Jesus, it is not surprising that they are at times used interchangeably. We can note Luke 2:11 (Savior-Christ-Lord)” (Robert H. Stein, *Luke* in New American Commentary, 48-49).

- 2) Many of the titles in Luke have already been applied to Jesus by Matthew and Mark. However, we will focus on four titles that find special use in Luke.
- a) **Son of the Most High** (Gk., *huios huphistou*)
 - a) This title is used twice in Gabriel’s birth announcement to Mary (Lk 1:32,35).
 - b) “Most High” is a circumlocution for “God,” and so, “Son of the Most High” is interchangeable with the title “Son of God.”
 - c) While Mark uses this title once (Mk 5:7), Luke uses it on five occasions (Lk 1:32,35,76; 6:35; Acts 7:48) to support his high Christology of Jesus.
 - b) **Lord** (Gk., *kyrios*)
 - a) This title means “lord, master, absolute owner” and was the title that Caesar applied with exclusivity to himself as a demi-god (i.e., *Caesar kyrios*).
 - b) Luke first used this title in 1:43 as Elizabeth identified Jesus, still in Mary’s womb, as “my Lord.”
 - c) “Whereas the title ‘Lord’ is used for Jesus only six times in Mark, it is used over twenty times in Luke. To these can be added the nineteen times Jesus is addressed in the vocative as Lord. . . . The use of the title ‘Lord’ indicates that Luke understood Jesus as standing on a different level from others. He, like God, is deserving of the title ‘Lord’” (Stein, 90).
 - c) **Son of Joseph**
 - a) “He was the son, *so it was thought*, of Joseph . . .” (3:23, emphasis mine).
 - b) Compare the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-37.
 - i. Matthew starts with Abraham and moves forward to Jesus establishing him as “son of Abraham” and “son of David,” which were important titles for his Jewish audience.
 - ii. Luke starts with Joseph and works back all the way to Adam, the first man and “son of God,” which was an important fact for his Gentile audience.
 - iii. However, there are differences in the names found in the two lists from David down to Joseph. Why? There have been several attempts to explain this difference, but the best one appears to be that Matthew focuses on Jesus’ human lineage not through Joseph, who was thought to be but not actually his father, but through his mother, Mary.
 - iv. Notice that both Mary’s and Joseph’s lineages trace back to King David.
 - d) **Master** (Gk., *epistates* – lit. “one standing over or above”)
 - a) This term was used only by Luke in the New Testament (cf., Lk 5:5; 8:24,45; 9:33,49; 17:13), and it was used only by Jesus’ close followers.
 - b) Luke avoided the Hebraic term Rabbi, used by the other gospel writers instead of Master. Again, this is evidence of Luke’s Gentile orientation.
 - c) In Luke, those who were not his close disciples, called Jesus by the more common term “teacher” (Gk., *didaskolos*). For example, “A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Lk 18:18)
 - d) Whether Master or Teacher, everyone recognized the uniqueness of Jesus’ teaching. “Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he taught the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority” (Lk 4:31-32; cf., Mk 1:22 and Mt 7:29).

2. Images of Jesus (Borchert, pp 55-62)

a. Temple Focus

- 1) “In the Lucan portrait of Jesus, the temple is crucial to who Jesus is and to the focus of his earthly ministry. . . . One of the great focal themes in Luke’s thinking is Jerusalem and the temple” (Borchert, 57).
- 2) Jesus’ birth of Jesus announced to Zechariah in the Holy Place of the Temple (Lk 1:13-17)
- 3) Jesus was presented in Temple as required by the Law of Moses and had prophetic encounters with both Simeon and Anna (Lk 2:22-40);
- 4) Jesus listened to the teachers in the Temple and asked questions (Lk 2:41-51). He was 12 years old, the age of *bar mitzvah* and entry into adulthood.
- 5) In Luke’s gospel, the final temptation of Jesus occurs not on a high mountain (Mt 4:7-10) but in Jerusalem on the pinnacle of the Temple (Lk 4:9-12).
- 6) As the time for the completion of his ministry drew near, Jesus set out resolutely for Jerusalem” (9:51).
- 7) Jesus cleansed the temple which “no longer correctly functions as a place of prayer and of meeting with God. Rather, it has become nothing but a den of thieves” (Borchert, 57) (19:45-48).
- 8) “In the death scene of Jesus, Luke notes the symbolic termination of the temple’s role in forgiveness . . . when the temple veil ‘was torn in two’—at the very time when Jesus breathes his last breath (23:44-47)!” (Borchert, 58).
- 9) After his resurrection, “Jesus ascended to God from the Mount of Olives, the place looking eastward across the Kidron Valley from the temple to the rising sun and the hope of human resurrection” (Borchert, 58). (Lk 24:50-51)
- 10) After the ascension, Jesus’ disciples returned to Jerusalem and worshiped in the temple while awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit (Lk 24:52-53).
- 11) Jerusalem “. . . is the place where Pentecost would occur, the new symbol of hope for the early church. Indeed, it is from Jerusalem that the gospel would spread to the entire world” (Borchert, 62).
- 12) **Reflection Question:** What does Jerusalem mean to you as a communicator of the gospel? How ready are you to commit to such a symbolic place as Jesus did?

b. Came for the Rejected

- 1) “The Lord did not come to call the so-called ‘righteous’ but sinners to repentance (5:32; cf. Mark 12:17; Matt 9:13). They were people whom the religious leaders in the time of Jesus regarded as the rejects of society . . . or worse” (Borchert, 58).
2. Jesus ministered to the *am ha’eretz*, which is Hebrew for “people of the land,” meaning those who worked with their hands; common laborers.
- 3) Note how the stories told by Luke focus on common people over the rulers and leaders of Israel.
 - a. The shepherds who heard of his birth from the angels were despised, smelly outcasts and criminals, who were dispossessed, overlooked by proper people. (Lk 2:8-20)
 - b. The *good Samaritan* (Lk 10:25-37) was considered to be a half-breed and unworthy by Jewish standards.
 - c. The prodigal son, who represents repentant sinners, was ultimately viewed more favorably than the faithful son, who represented self-righteous Jews. (Lk 15:11-32)
 - d. Jesus associated with tax collectors and even called one, Matthew, as his disciple (Lk 5:27-32).

- e. A poor widow received his special attention and healing on the Sabbath (Lk 13:10-17) and another his praise for her small but total gift as compared to the larger gifts of others (Lk 21:1-4).
 - f. A rich man is called to account for his sins in hell, while Lazarus, a poor beggar, is elevated to heaven (Lk 16:19-31).
- 4) Borchert concludes, “Jesus heals an insignificant crippled woman on the Sabbath and draws the ire of the synagogue leaders (Lk 13:16) – It’s about relationships not rules – “Their neat little rules allow them to [take care of their animals on the Sabbath], but they piously condemn Jesus for healing this helpless woman . . . From the perspective of Jesus, those who think they are in charge of their destinies and treat others like the scum of the earth are in for a huge surprise” (Borchert, 59-60).
- 6) **Reflection Question:** How do Luke’s unique stories carry powerful messages concerning our responsibility for those who are among the marginalized of our society?

c. **Egalitarian**

- 1) “The Lucan Jesus strikes a note for egalitarian humanity that would hardly be realized until the twentieth century and still it is not fully recognized in many places—including some churches that take the name of Jesus! . . . Luke clearly provides a portrait of Jesus as the author of a Christian’s declaration of ‘no discrimination’ for all people! . . . If you are a woman or someone who lacks status or have been regarded as a second-class by society, then please recognize that this Gospel of Luke was written especially for you” (Borchert, 59).
- 2) Borchert cites three “revolutionary” texts in Luke that reveal Jesus’ egalitarian nature.
 - a) He calls a crippled woman “daughter of Abraham” (13:16).
 - b) He seems to correct a woman who revealed traditional Jewish views about women that hearing and obeying God was more important than manmade roles (Lk 11:27-28)
 - c) He corrected Martha concerning Mary’s sitting at Jesus’ feet to learn (10:38-42). Women were typically working in the background and did not participate in men’s discussions. Jesus welcomed everyone who would learn from him.
- 3) **Reflection Question:** How comfortable is your church with communicating this Lucan portrait of Jesus?

d. **Servant**

- 1) “Luke’s Jesus is clearly portrayed as a servant who was sent to serve and who called his disciples to follow his model and become servants to others” (Borchert, 60).
- 2) Sends disciples out TWICE to serve others under his mentorship (Lk 9:1-6| 10:1-24).
- 3) Self-righteousness was a critical problem for the Jews of Jesus’ day and also for us.
 - a) The story of the rich young ruler appears in all three gospels (Lk 18:18-30).
 - b) “The man has clearly stated that he has kept the second ledger of the Decalogue, but what we learn is that he has another ‘god’—wealth—and that he does not keep the first ledger, the one about honoring the true God of Israel” (Borchert, 60).
 - c) In the story of the rich fool (Lk 12:13-21) the fool “. . . thinks he is in control of his life’s destiny. . . . He assumes that he does not have to answer to God for his life. It is a tragic mistake that many in this world still make today” (Borchert, 60).

- 4) Jesus came to serve not to be served. He calls his disciples to serve and painfully confronts those who desire to be served by others.

e. **Prayer Warrior**

- 1) Borchert did not point out this title/characteristic, but for me Jesus is presented most clearly in Luke's gospel as a prayer warrior. Jesus' praying is mentioned in the other gospels but is a particular highlight in Luke.
 - 2) Jesus went apart for long periods of prayer, especially before making important decisions like calling his closest disciples (Lk 6:12).
 - 3) Jesus prayed for his followers to gain insight into he who was (Lk 9:18).
 - 4) Jesus prayed as he faced difficult tasks, especially on the mount of transfiguration as he faced his sacrifice in Jerusalem (Lk 9:28).
 - 5) Jesus' model of praying so impacted his disciples that they asked him to teach them to pray as he did (Lk 11:1).
 - 6) Jesus "went out as usual to the Mount of Olives" to pray on the night before his crucifixion, but there was nothing usual about his prayer that night. In Gethsemane (Lk 22:39-46) Jesus was filled with "anguish" and "prayed more earnestly, and sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (v. 44). Note he did not sweat blood but profusely LIKE one who was bleeding.
 - 7) Jesus prayed for God to forgive his enemies (Lk 23:34) and for God's care (Lk 23:46) as he hung on the cross.
3. **Questions for Reflection** (Borchert, p 62)
- a. How can we better impact our faith communities with a holistic presentation of the gospel? What might be the cost? What might be the possible results—both positive and negative?
 - b. We have covered the other questions in our discussion above.
 - c. What other final observations or conclusions do you have about Luke?

C. **Homework**

1. Read Acts at least once and in one-sitting, if possible.
2. Read Borchert chapter 4, pp 62-82.
3. Think about your response to the *Questions for Reflection* on p 82.