

Dear partners in Christ,

Looking ahead through the coming year, we'll be hearing a lot from the Gospel of Luke. This is "Year C" in our three-year lectionary, which means our Sunday Gospel readings will be taken, for the most part, from Luke (with a little detour into the Gospel of John through the Easter season). I thought it might be useful, then, to explore the Gospel of Luke with you in order to help you appreciate what is distinctive about how Luke tells the story of Jesus.

Luke is our source for some of the most well-loved stories about Jesus, such as his birth in a stable and the visit by shepherds. Luke is also where we hear some of Jesus' most vivid and memorable parables—the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan. But Luke wants to be recognized as more than just a storyteller. He writes as a historian, employing the typical conventions of his day for reporting history. He tells how he has conducted extensive research because he wants his readers to have confidence in what they have heard about Jesus. However, Luke's objective is much greater than simply writing a biography of Jesus. He wants his readers to have faith in Jesus as the final and complete revelation of God's love for the human family.

As we work our way through Luke's story of Jesus, we'll come across a number of themes that are close to Luke's heart. Among them are:

- **Wealth and Poverty**—Perhaps more than any other gospel, Luke emphasizes Jesus' mission as "good news for the poor." Luke wants wealthy Christians to use their wealth to care for the poor, and to recognize that hoarding their wealth is spiritually dangerous.
- **Gender and Inclusion**—Luke is concerned with equality between men and women in the church. He tells of women disciples who traveled with Jesus and supported his ministry, as well as Jesus' special friendships with Mary and Martha. There is a balance in the stories Luke selects; after telling about Jesus healing a man, he then tells of healing a woman. Luke also tells stories of Jesus' compassion for children, for foreigners and social outcasts.
- **Politics**—Luke is a politically aware storyteller who wants to make his case before the Roman authorities that Christianity is not a dangerous religious sect. Instead, Christians contribute to the stability of society.
- **Spirit**—Just as the Spirit of God filled Jesus' life and work, so Luke wants Christians to realize that the Spirit is at work in their lives too.
- **Following Jesus**—Simply "believing" in Jesus isn't enough for Luke, who wants Christians to follow Jesus in his way of loving God and loving neighbors. Luke emphasizes that Jesus' way of life includes compassion for the needy and justice for the poor, love and forgiveness of enemies, and welcome for all people.

I hope you find your journey through Luke's gospel this year to be both nurturing and stimulating.



Pastor Aaron

