

St.Luke`s Day.

Intro.

In the windows at the back of the church, we see 4 gospel writers, ordinary men inspired by God`s Holy Spirit, who viewed Jesus in different ways. They all wrote in Greek, the universal language of the time.

Matthew sees Jesus as a King come to found a kingdom.

Mark`s story, greatly dictated by Peter, sees Jesus as the suffering Servant of God who comes to serve & offer Himself as a sacrifice for all humankind. In his 1st letter, Peter sees Jesus as the spotless Lamb of God.

John sees Jesus as the glorious eternal Son of God, who brings God`s light & love & life – the alpha & omega we see in our new window.

Luke sees Jesus as the ideal human, a perfect example of life to be followed. Jesus is filled with God`s Holy Spirit & is tested in every way, subject to ordinary conflict & emotions, yet remains without sin, a sympathetic friend of sinners, & most important, was obedient to His Father up to His death & beyond.

In the whole Bible, Luke is the only Gentile author, & his books take up over a ¼ of the NT. All the OT had been translated into Greek, called the Septuagint, about 246BC by 70 Israeli elders. This was the Bible used by the Hellenised Jewish communities across the Roman Empire, so familiar to Luke who quoted from it. Luke connects the Jesus story with Roman history, Jewish history, & church history, to give us his view of salvation history. Jesus is the wonderful superman from heaven who came to save us triumphantly from eternal death & condemnation.

Let`s take an overview of Luke`s accounts.

Luke, as a good doctor, did detailed research, interviewing many witnesses to hear the story of Jesus, & of how the Christian church began & was spread. You can imagine him as a dr. with twinkling eyes cheering up his patients & seeing humour in many situations eg the blind leading the blind & both fall into the ditch – Africans laughed out loud at this - & the chap sent to sleep by Paul`s sermon who fell out of a window & was revived by Paul!

The **Gospel Story** is framed by joy & Holy Spirit praise & worship in the Temple. Luke`s unique account of the nativity starts with Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, burning incense in the Temple during the daily afternoon sacrifice, while the people outside were worshipping with praise & prayer. The Gospel ends with the apostles full of joy after the Ascension, staying in the Temple praising God.

Joy permeates Ch. 1. Zechariah is told his son will be his joy & delight & many will rejoice at his birth. Gabriel greets Mary, rejoice, you who enjoy God`s favour.....& we see she did in the Magnificat, when she met Elizabeth whose baby leapt for joy inside her! The angel tells the shepherds news of great joy for everybody, & the angelic choir praises, the shepherds praise & the elderly Anna in the Temple – all praise God - & praise & joy continue throughout this gospel. Luke`s Gentile outlook is evident at times. When he traces Jesus` genealogy, he goes back to Adam, son of God, so making all nations brothers with the Jews. Matthew`s account written for Jewish readers, goes back to Abraham, their Patriarch. John`s goes back to the divine Son before creation began. While Mark just bursts in with Isaiah`s prophecy of John the Baptist!

There is no time today to detail Luke`s record of Jesus` teaching, healing, & miracle`s ministry, but Luke observed that Jesus taught & practised prayer at all times, & his is our example to follow. Jesus had many followers as well as the 12, as we heard today. Those 72 sent out came back rejoicing v.17 & in v.21 this caused Jesus to be full of praise.

Jesus` preaching was counter-cultural & radical, with a simple message of repentance, humility, hope & healing, emphasising generosity. He praised the widow who gave all her money to God. He embodied the giving out of costly love, & attracted the sick, the outcasts, & the disenfranchised, ie women! & the news of Him spread beyond the nation – as we see in Acts. What reaches heaven & causes angels to rejoice is when they see a sinner saved, as told in the “lost” parables – the sheep, the coin, & the beloved wayward son all conclude with praise parties. Luke is the only one to record “Father forgive them” & the penitent robber at His crucifixion. There is little time to comment on Acts which details the spread of the good news of salvation by the Holy Spirit acting through individuals – the apostles headed by Peter, Jerusalem disciples, then Paul & his mates. In our reading we learn how Luke himself joined with Paul`s team at Troas on his 2nd journey. Did he have a patient there?

Crossing from Asia to Europe, they stopped a while at Philippi, glowingly described as a noble city, colonised by Roman veterans given their plot of land & army pension – like Gloucester later on in the UK! Was it Luke`s home town? He knew about the place of prayer by the river where Lydia met to worship.

So from meeting up with Paul, Luke gets to know from his companions about Paul`s journeys. Then later on he seeks out Mary & others for details about Jesus.

The book of Acts finishes in Rome, the centre of the empire, with Paul telling the Jews there that God`s salvation is also for the Gentiles. So Paul preaches about Jesus & the kingdom of God boldly to the end.

Wikipedia states that Luke died a martyr aged 84; by tradition he enjoyed painting icons.

To Conclude.

Luke tells of the greatest event in world history that was effected by a human being, indwelt by God`s Holy Spirit, Who was obedient to His Heavenly Father. He defeated the kingdom of darkness & death by a voluntary offering of His life to a cruel death by crucifixion, then rising with triumphant joy in new life for me & for you.

As Luke records, Jesus has been through all the pains & sorrows, all the joys & laughter – nothing in our lives is too small to share with Him. He is the great burden bearer who takes away sin. His Holy Spirit is available for the asking, to strengthen us & lead us on to joyful new adventures with Jesus.

Let`s Pray.

Thank you, Heavenly Father for giving us Luke & his accounts of your Son, Our Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ. We thank you that He died to take away our sins & bring us back to you.

Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. We ask you to send Him to each one of us now, that with joyful hearts we too may go out like those 72 to witness, pray, praise & worship You all our days here. till we meet Jesus face to face in glory!

We ask in Jesus` Precious Name. **Amen.**

