

The Gospel of Luke

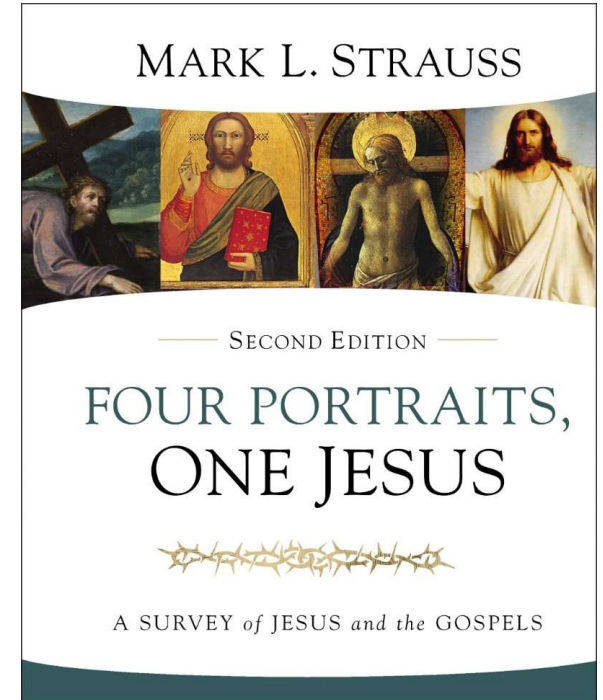
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**What do you remember from
the class on Mark?**

Matthew?

**What comes to mind when you
think of the Gospel of Luke?**



Discipleship is walking beside Jesus

This evening, I will present an overview of the Gospel of Luke



Background




**Literary
characteristics**




**Overview and
application**

Let's look at the Gospel of Luke

Who is the author?  ^(most likely) **Luke, a physician and companion of Paul**

When was it written?  ^(most likely) **AD 60 – 80**

Who was it written to?  **Theophilus, a Gentile Christian audience**

What is the book's main purpose? 

- **To give an orderly, researched account of Jesus' life**
- **To show that Jesus brings salvation for all people**
- **To highlight the role of the Holy Spirit, prayer, and joy in God's plan**

Let's start by discussing the author – external evidence

Every ancient source that names the author says it's Luke—and they do so independently and across different regions of the early church.

- **The Muratorian Canon (AD 170-190)**
 - Explicitly attributes the Gospel to Luke, the physician and companion of Paul
- **Irenaeus (AD 180)**
 - “Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him.” (*Against Heresies* 3.1.1)
- **Tertullian (AD 200)**
- **Origen (AD 200-250)**

Let's start by discussing the author – internal evidence

- **Most scholars agree that the author of Luke and Acts is the same person (same style, vocabulary, theology)**
- **The “We” sections in Acts (16:10-17, 20:5-15, 21:1-18, 27:1-28:16) imply the author was a traveling companion of Paul**
- **There is a lot of medical language that is consistent with a physician**
 - Vocabulary about fevers uses more technical Greek than Mark
 - There are detailed diagnoses of conditions (Acts 3:7, Luke 14:2)
 - There are precise descriptions of injuries (Acts 20:9-10) and shipwreck health details (Acts 27)
- **It is written with a sophisticated Greek style (the best in the New Testament), indicating a very educated author**

What do we know about Luke?

He was a physician

- Col 4:14 ¹⁴ Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.
- This implies he was very well educated.

He was a close companion of Paul (mentioned in three letters)

- Philemon 24 , 2 Timothy 4:11, Colossians 4:14

He was almost certainly a Gentile

- In Colossians 4:10–14, Paul divides greetings into two groups: Jewish co-workers and others. Luke is not listed in the first group.
- Luke's Gospel has a remarkably Gentile orientation.
- His Greek is more polished and classical than other NT writers.
- He shows deep familiarity with Gentile geography and customs.

Here is some trivia about the book.

It is the longest book in the New Testament and together with Acts it comprises the largest amount of material by a NT author (about 27% of the NT).

**It is written in the best/most polished Greek, indicating a highly educated author.
Luke can switch styles:**

- Polished Greek in narratives
- Septuagint style Greek in the birth narratives

Luke names more historical officials (emperors, governors, tetrarchs, local officials, etc.) than any other Gospel.

Luke is the most geographically detailed Gospel.

Luke highlights women more than any other Gospel.

Luke is distinct from Matthew and Mark in several ways

It is the third Gospel and is volume one of a two-volume work (Luke-Acts)

Unlike Mark (urgency/Son of God) and Matthew (fulfillment), Luke emphasizes

- Universality
- Compassion
- Prayer
- The Holy Spirit

Luke writes as a careful historian and researcher, not as an eyewitness.

Luke doesn't contradict Matthew or Mark – he helps complete the picture.

Part 1 of 2

Luke



Part 2 of 2

Luke



There are several key themes in the book of Luke



**Jesus as the Savior
of all people**



**Prayers and
the Holy Spirit**



**Luke becomes a
travel narrative**

One of Luke's major themes is salvation for the outsiders/all people

1. Luke announces salvation for outsiders at the very beginning

- Simeon (Luke 2:30–32) - “My eyes have seen your salvation...a light for revelation to the **Gentiles**, and for glory to your people Israel.”

2. Luke deliberately broadens Jesus' genealogy in Luke 3:23-38

- Matthew traces Jesus back to Abraham (Israel-focused).
- Luke traces Jesus back to Adam (Jesus belongs to all humanity).

3. Jesus' first sermon emphasizes outsiders—and provokes outrage

- Luke 4:16–30 (Nazareth synagogue) Jesus recalls:
 - Elijah helping a widow in Zarephath (a Gentile)
 - Elisha cleansing Naaman the Syrian
- All the people in the synagogue were furious and tried to throw him off a cliff.

One of Luke's major themes is salvation for the outsiders/all people

4. Luke repeatedly highlights outsiders as positive examples

- Samaritans
 - The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37): the true neighbor is a hated outsider
 - The grateful leper (Luke 17:11–19): only the Samaritan returns to give thanks
- Gentiles
 - Centurion of great faith (Luke 7:1–10): Jesus praises a Gentile's faith
 - Naaman allusion (Luke 4:27)
- Sinners and social outcasts
 - Tax collectors: Levi (5:27–32), Zacchaeus (19:1–10)
 - A sinful woman forgiven (7:36–50)
 - The criminal on the cross (23:39–43)

One of Luke's major themes is salvation for the outsiders/all people

5. Luke includes many parables that *exist only in his Gospel* that have this theme

- Luke 15 (Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Prodigal Son)
 - God actively seeks the lost
 - Heaven rejoices over one sinner who repents
- The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31)
 - Social reversal after death
 - Warning to privileged insiders who ignore the poor
- Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14)
 - The religious insider is rejected
 - The despised outsider is justified

One of Luke's major themes is salvation for the outsiders/all people

6. Luke highlights women as theological insiders (In the ancient world, women were often social outsiders) – Luke includes:

- More women than any other Gospel
 - Elizabeth, Mary the mother of Jesus, Anna, women supporters such as Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna, the sinful woman who anoints Jesus with oil, Martha and Mary
- Many parables featured women (lost coin, persistent widow, leavening dough)
- Many healings featured women (Peter's mother-in-law, the Widow of Nain (son healed), the woman hemorrhaging, Jarius's daughter, woman with a disabling spirit, Mary Magdalene)
- Women as models of faith, generosity, and devotion
- Women were at the cross
- Women as the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection

One of Luke's major themes is salvation for the outsiders/all people

7. Luke does not end this theme with the Gospel

- Luke → Jesus welcomes outsiders
- Acts → the Spirit sends salvation to:
 - Samaritans
 - Gentiles
 - God-fearers
 - the ends of the earth

Luke consistently presents salvation as God's gracious pursuit of **outsiders**—Gentiles, sinners, the poor, women, Samaritans, and the socially excluded.

Luke shows that God's mercy crosses every boundary and that the "lost" are often the first to respond.

Why do you think Luke gives so much attention to outsiders?

Who are the "outsiders" today?

Luke emphasizes prayer more than any other Gospel

Examples:

- Jesus prays at key moments (baptism, choosing the Twelve, transfiguration).
- Unique parables on prayer (persistent widow, friend at midnight).
- The Spirit is active from beginning to end.

Important connection:

- Luke → Acts – Spirit-guided mission

A key theme in Luke is that the coming of the Spirit heralds the dawn of a new age

1. Luke opens with Spirit language

- John the Baptist is “filled with the Holy Spirit” from the womb
- Elizabeth, Zechariah, Simeon all speak by the Spirit

2. John the Baptist explicitly connects the Spirit with the coming age

- Luke 3:16 - “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

3. Luke emphasizes the Spirit’s role in Jesus’ life more than any other Gospel:

- Conceived by the Spirit (1:35)
- Anointed by the Spirit at baptism (3:22)
- Led by the Spirit into the wilderness (4:1)
- Begins ministry “in the power of the Spirit” (4:14)
- Luke 4:16-21 Jesus reads from Isaiah “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ...” and then declares “Today the scripture has been fulfilled ...”

4. The Book of Acts is a continuation of the working of the Spirit

Luke delays the Spirit's full outpouring until after Jesus' ascension

This is different from John's Gospel

John 20:22 - And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." **(I will discuss this more in Lesson 6)**

In Luke:

- **Jesus promises the Spirit (Luke 24:49)**
- **He tells the disciples to wait**
- **The Spirit comes at Pentecost (Acts 2)**

This delay is theological, not accidental.

- **Luke wants to show that the new age truly begins after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.**
- **The Spirit's coming is not just empowerment—it is historical transition.**

Luke presents a journey with Jesus, that is, a travel narrative

Luke 9:51 – “Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

From here:

- This verse marks a major structural shift in Luke
- Luke becomes a journey Gospel (about 1/3 of the Gospel occurs during this journey)
- Teaching, parables, and encounters happen along the way, such as
 - Good Samaritan
 - Prodigal Son
 - Rich Man and Lazarus
- **Discipleship is portrayed as walking with Jesus, learning gradually**

How does the idea of discipleship as a journey help you think differently about following Jesus?

Luke is shaped as a journey toward Jerusalem

- I. Prologue & Infancy Narratives
(1:1 – 2:52)**
- II. Preparation and Galilean Ministry
(3:1 – 9:50)**
- III. The Journey to Jerusalem
(9:51 – 19:27)**
- IV. Ministry in Jerusalem
(19:28 – 21:38)**
- V. Passion and Resurrection
(22:1 – 24:53)**

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I. Prologue & Infancy Narratives
(1:1 – 2:52)



God's plan begins

II. Preparation and Galilean Ministry
(3:1 – 9:50)

III. The Journey to Jerusalem
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**Spirit-anointed
Savior is revealed**

III. The Journey to Jerusalem
(9:51 – 19:27)

IV. Ministry in Jerusalem
(19:28 – 21:38)

V. Passion and Resurrection
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- Travel narrative
 - Teaching
 - Parables

IV. Ministry in Jerusalem
(19:28 – 21:38)

V. Passion and Resurrection
(22:1 – 24:53)

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**IV. Ministry in Jerusalem
(19:28 – 21:38)**



- **Conflict**
- **Teaching**
- **Last supper**

**V. Passion and Resurrection
(22:1 – 24:53)**

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**V. Passion and Resurrection
(22:1 – 24:53)**



- **Passion**
- **Vindication**
- **Joy**

How do we live the message of Luke today?

See Jesus as the Savior for all people.

- Let Luke stretch your vision of who belongs in God's kingdom.

Practice compassionate discipleship.

- Love your neighbor actively, not abstractly (Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son, Zacchaeus).

Live a life shaped by prayer and the Holy Spirit.

- Depend on the Spirit's guidance, power, and direction in daily life just as Jesus did.

Reorder your priorities to reflect God's priorities.

- The humble are lifted up; the proud are brought low (Luke 1 and 6), so examine how you view wealth, status, and power.

Practice joyful obedience.

- Let obedience to Jesus overflow in worship and generosity.

Follow Jesus on the road.

- Luke is a journey Gospel—discipleship unfolds as we walk with Jesus. Stay open to transformation along the way, even when it's uncomfortable.

Discussion questions

Earlier, I asked you, “Who are the outsiders today”?

The outsiders today are the people our culture, and sometimes even our churches, tend to overlook, avoid, or quietly judge. Luke challenges us to see them as people God seeks, welcomes, and often uses as examples of faith.

How do you think Eastside would respond if we suddenly started attracting “outsiders”? Why?

Luke 15:11-32 – The Prodigal Son (unique to Luke)

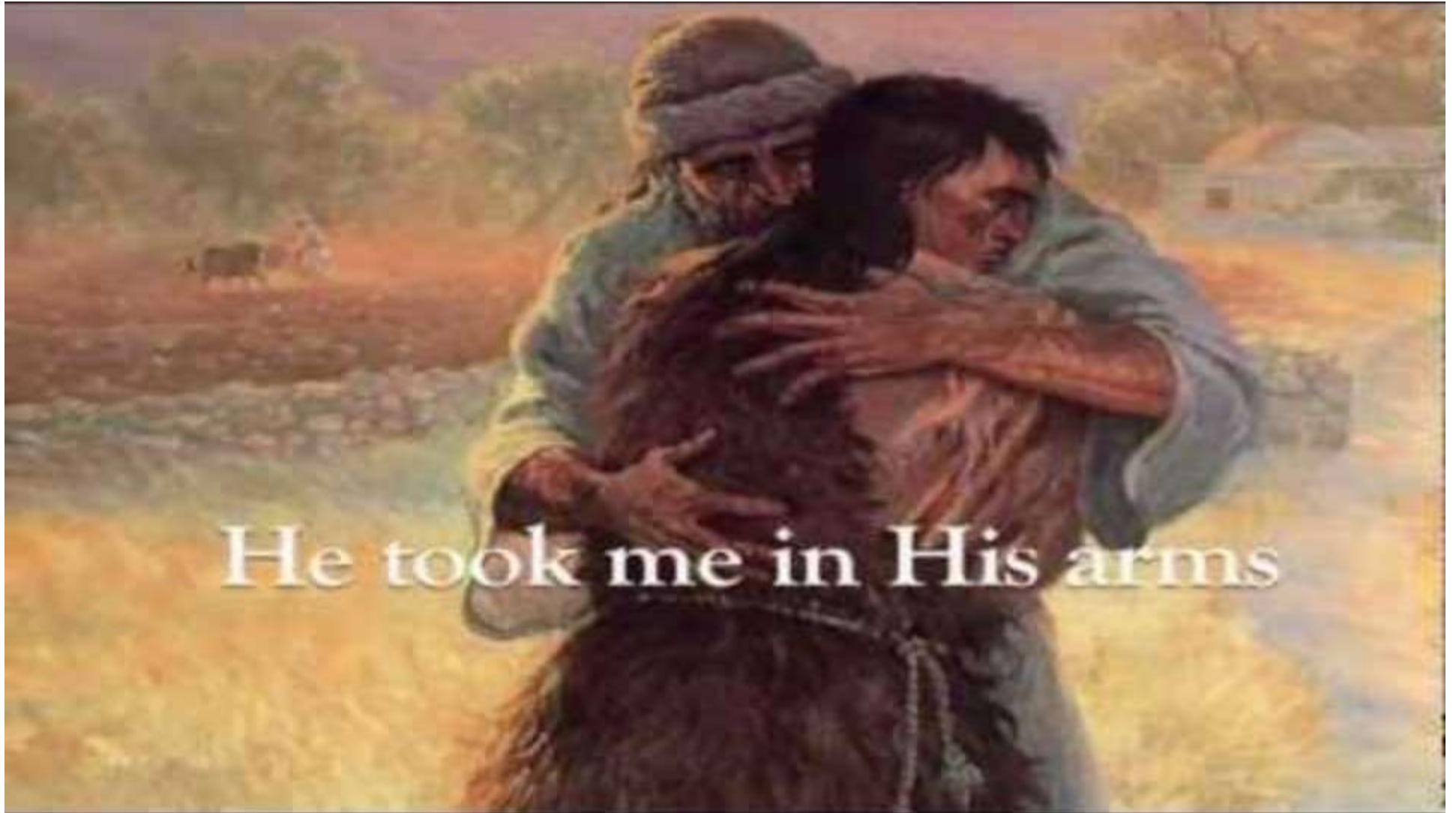
Jesus tells the story of a father with two sons.

The younger son demands his inheritance early, leaves home, and wastes everything in reckless living. When he hits rock bottom—hungry, ashamed, and broken—he decides to return home, hoping only to be treated as a servant.

But while the son is still far away, the father sees him, runs to him, embraces him, and restores him—giving him a robe, a ring, and a celebration. The father doesn't wait for a full confession or repayment; his joy is simply that his son has come home.

The older son, who stayed and obeyed, becomes angry at this grace. The father gently reminds the son that everything the father has is already his, but that it is right to rejoice—because a lost son has been found.

Jesus tells this story to show that God's heart is eager to forgive, restore, and celebrate the return of the lost, not to shame them—and that grace can be hard for the "faithful" to accept when it feels unfair.



He took me in His arms

If you take one thing away from Luke, think of Luke 15 – and the story of the Prodigal Son

I ended Mark with Jesus touching the untouchable

I ended Matthew with Jesus calling us to come to him

Let's end Luke with the image of God (Jesus) running towards the lost to welcome us home

“While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20)

Homework

Read John (2 to 2.5 hours total)

Watch for:

- Jesus' identity ("the Word", "the Son", "the Lamb of God", "I am ...")
- Signs (miracles that point beyond themselves, signs that reveal Jesus' glory)
- Belief vs unbelief
- Eternal life
- "Abiding", "Knowing", "Remaining"

Questions?