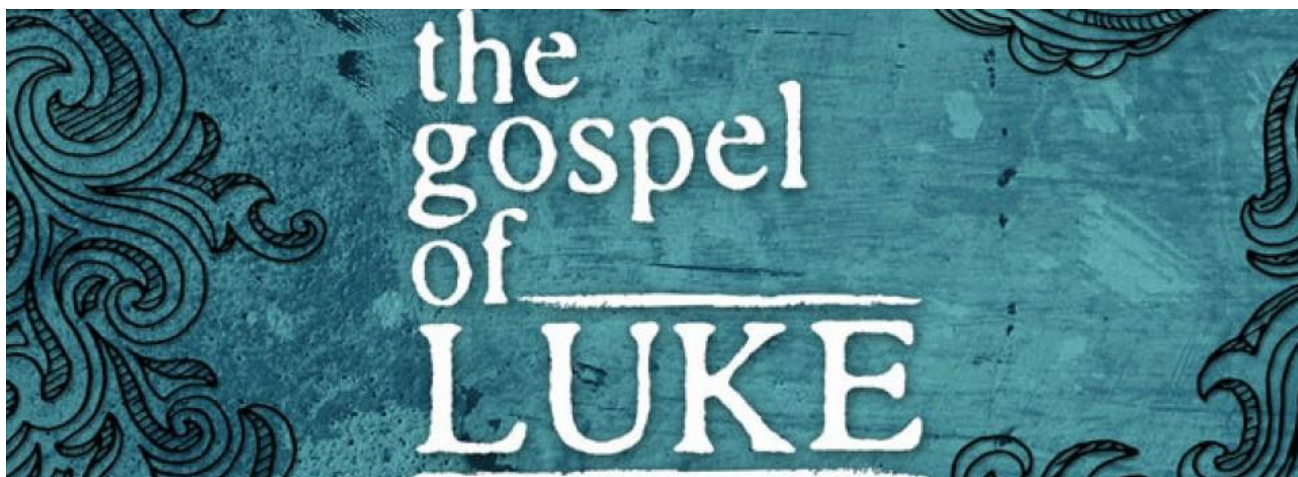


Luke the Evangelist



Though it seems unlikely that Luke was a first-hand witness of the life of Jesus, he nonetheless brings us a distinct and vital perspective on the way Christ formed his character. As much as any other writer of the New Testament, Luke helps us to understand the degree to which Jesus drew people into the circle of his presence. Both in his gospel and in the book of Acts, he draws a vivid picture that the community of Christ is one which touches and reaches out to all people.

Right from the beginning, Luke's depiction of the life of Jesus finds him amongst the outsiders. He is concerned with a community built around a faithful response to the action of God, who is transforming lives and turning reality upside down.

Luke records for us the very beautiful songs of Mary and Zechariah. He tells of angels visiting common shepherds with the good news of Jesus' birth. He reveals traditions that instruct us in the wisdom of the child Jesus, and from the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus is shown as one who has a special place for the outcast, powerless and desperate.

When we come to the book of Acts, Luke takes up the ministry of the early church as the bearer of the Spirit of Christ, going into the world to encompass Gentile and Jew alike. As the infant church spreads throughout the region, comprising house churches and tiny communities, Luke reveals the power of the gospel, a power revealed in smallness and faithfulness.

Inclusion and Exclusion

Scan the book of Luke	Scan the book of Acts
Identify people or groups that were included and incorporated into the community through the ministry of Jesus.	identify ways in which the early church took up this ministry of inclusion
On what basis were the people identified excluded?	What are some of the ways the first Christians struggled to act out their experience of Jesus and the leading of the Spirit
What did Jesus do to include them?	

What might we as a church learn about the way of Jesus as we seek to be an inclusive community of God's people?	
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An Inclusive Church

In his book, *The Open Church* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1985), Jurgen Moltmann wrote,

Even in the church what hurts most is our lack of human relationships. The worship services in which we participate every Sunday morning themselves remain devoid of genuine human contact. We scarcely know each other with any genuine mutuality. We do not even consider it very valuable to create community with each other. "Life is lonely. No person knows the others. Everyone is alone." Is this the case even in the church of Christ? Such loneliness is intolerable. (p.29)

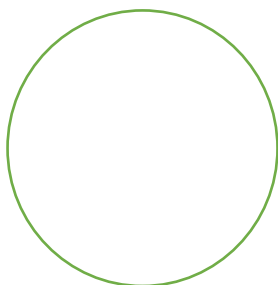
Luke 4:18-19

- How do you think your fellowship lives out this statement, which is almost a manifesto for the ministry of Jesus?
- What prevents us from following fully the way of Jesus?

Read the poem

In what ways have you felt included in the circle of God's people?

Using the circle below, if the circle represents the periphery of your church's life, and the centre is the core of involvement, where would you place yourself?



- What do you think Jesus' attitude to being part of the in-group or living on the edge might be?
- Reflect silently on the question: What would it take for you to be moved into the very centre of the group?
- How might the presence of Jesus in your life make a difference in this

move?



Centred

From the edge
to the centre,
from a distance
to the core,
from rejection
to acceptance,
from heaving oceans
to the shore –
I come home
into your presence
finding self and family true,
in your touch and
word I'm found now,
life and love abound
anew.

Grasping, hoping,
wishing, longing,
all is past
for here I'm whole,
circled round by
godly passion,
coming home,
restored, renewed.

Ian Price