

Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws

Adam Hamilton

Chapter 1 Discussion

Lifting up the Lowly (pgs. 1-18)

Biblical Foundations Luke 1-6

Opening Prayer

Holy God, you inspired your servant Luke the Evangelist to write a carefully ordered account of how your Son, our Lord Jesus, fulfilled your saving purposes. Inspire us now as we study Luke's work, that in it we may read, hear, and believe the good news of your promises kept and made in Christ, and may grow as his faithful followers. Amen.

Before we Start...

POP QUIZ

1. Luke is closely related to John's Gospel.
2. Luke's Gospel is our only biblical source of information about Jesus' birth.
3. Only Luke tells us John the Baptist and Jesus were relatives.
4. Luke puts a strong emphasis on Jesus' ministry to those who are poor and vulnerable.
5. The parables of the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, and Lazarus and the rich man are found only in Luke.
6. Luke devotes less attention to Jesus's journey to Jerusalem than do the other Gospels.
7. Only Luke records Jesus's miraculous "feeding of the five thousand."
8. Luke contains more material about worship and prayer than do the other Gospels.
9. In Luke, Jesus appears first to several women after his resurrection.
10. Luke is the only New Testament Gospel with a "Sequel."

God Can Choose and Use Those of Any Age

The first two chapters of Luke's Gospel include instances of God choosing and using of all ages to accomplish God's purposes- from the very old in Elizabeth, Zechariah, Anna, and Simeon, to the teenage Mary.

Read Luke 1:5-7

Zechariah and Elizabeth, both were righteous in the sight of God, they were childless and very old.

Read Luke 2:25-35

A man in Jerusalem, named Simeon, he was righteous and devout. The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

*He had praised God by saying:
Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
You may now dismiss your servant in peace.*

*For my eyes have seen your salvation,
Which you have prepared in the sight of all nations.
A light for revelations to the Gentiles,
And the glory of your people Israel.*

Simeon's spoke to Jesus' Mother Mary: "This child is destined to cause the falling, and rising of man in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.

Read Luke 2:36-38

Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She too was very old and lived with her husband of seven years after marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four.

She never left the temple, worshipped night, and day, fasted, and prayer. Coming up to them at every moment she gave Thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Joseph and Mary completed all their legal requirements, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. The child great and because strong, he was filled with Wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.

Discuss:

- What does Luke tell us about Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon, and Anna? (pg. 4)
He says that they were very old, but righteous in the sight of God, observing all commands and decrees blamelessly.
 - **Zechariah and Elizabeth**
 - Were very old.
 - Were righteous and devout.

- Scripture sometimes spoke of people as blameless, this did not necessarily mean perfect, but mean that they did not break explicit Biblical commandments.
- Because some people supposed that those unable to bear children (v. 7) were cursed, it is important for Luke to counter that this family was blameless.

- **Simeon**
 - Was very old.
 - Was righteous and devout.
 - Waiting for consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on Him and revealed to Him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.
 - He went to the temples where parents brought in a child.
 - Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God with a prayer (2:29-32)
 - Simeon blessing Jesus and told Mary his destiny as a powerful figure (2:43-46)

- **Anna**
 - Was very old.
 - Righteous and devout.
 - Married to her husband who had died, and she was widowed.
 - She stayed in the temple and worshiped, fasted, and prayed.
 - She prophesied about a child.

- How are these individuals alike and different?
- How does each one of them accomplish God's purposes? (pg.
- Luke portrays all four of these seniors as righteous and devout.
 - Who are the most righteous and devout seniors you know or know of?
 - How has their faith in God shaped your own?
- "Scripture does not see infertility as a sign of God's pleasure or disregard," says the author. Throughout the bible we do find God's compassion and concern for those who wrestled with infertility."
 - How much stigma do couples who struggle with infertility face today?
 - How does your congregations show compassion to these couples?

- Luke implies Simeon is an old man and tells us Anna is an old woman.
 - What have they been waiting for see and to proclaim?
 - What would cause you to tell God you could “go in peace” if you experienced it, and why?
- Hamilton describes the difference between “fluid intelligence” and “crystallized intelligence” to help us see the value of experience and wisdom that come with older age.
 - What does each kind of intelligence mean?
 - Fluid intelligence includes problem solving, quickness of thought, memory, adaptation, and pliability.
 - It’s physical corollaries are strength, speed, and the ability to work seventy hours a week.
 - Crystallized intelligence is the vast body of knowledge that continues to grow.
 - It is maturity, wisdom, insight, and experience.
 - These are all things that we see and use in our Christian life as well.
 - As we age, we have the potential to have more patience, grace, humility, love, understanding, knowledge, and wisdom.
 - Which do you think you have more of right now?
 - How might that be a valuable gift that God can use through you?
- How has your response to God’s calling changed over time?
- How is God seeking to choose and use you right now?

Read 1:26-38

- *6th months into Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to a young woman.*
- *This woman was pledged to a man named Joseph- who was a descendant of David.*
 - *The betrothal period was often a year, and Jewish tradition suggests that couples in Galilee were not left in chaperoned during that time. Betrothal involved financial agreement between families, and it could be ended only by divorce or death. It concluded with the wedding night, at which point the marriage could be consummated sexually.*
 - **Descendant of David-**
 - Because the royal line was through the father, any legal son of Joseph would belong to David’s line.

Legal lines mattered more for this purpose than did genetic ones, thus e.g. the Roman emperors during this period were *adopted* rather than biological sons of their predecessors.

- *This woman was a virgin, her name was Mary.*
- *She was greeted by Gabriel, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you!”*
 - *The greeting is unusual, especially to a person of low status. Given the usual age of marriage for Galilean virgins, Mary may have been in her mid-teens (13-14); her age, her gender, and her being a Galilean villager together would have given her little social standing.*
 - *The Lord is with you- Divine announcements often included the assurance that God was “with” the hearer, including when God was calling someone to a difficult task.*
- *He later said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to the Son, and you are to call Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”*
 - *Others called by God found favor in him.*
 - *Conceive- The announcement echoes Isaiah 7:14; this passage, appears particularly pertinent for a virgin, especially in the Greek translation of Isaiah.*
 - *God promised David an eternal lineage and being adopted as God’s children, but David’s royal line no longer ruled. From the stump of the line, however, would come an eternal ruler, the one who would reign on David’s throne eternally. This would also be the Mighty God.*
 - *The eternal kingdom also belonged to the son of man. Jewish people expected this kingdom to come in the time of the fourth empire, which Jewish people in Jesus’ time believed was the Roman Empire.*
- *Mary was baffled at this, and asked how will this be since I am still a virgin?*

- *Given the usual age of marriage in Judea and Galilee, Mary was probably in her teens. Girls could marry as young as twelve, but 13-16 was more common, and some were even past 20; apparently most Jewish men married around the ages of 18-20, perhaps a decade younger than most Greek men.*
 - *The angel answered her “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will **overshadow** you.*
 - *The language evokes the image of God’s glory, as when God’s glory filled the tabernacle.*
 - *So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even **Elizabeth** your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.”*
 - *Although Sarah, who doubted that she could have a child in her old age, God reminded her that nothing was impossible with him.*
 - *He leaves her saying “I am the Lord’s **servant**.”*
 - *Calling oneself the other’s servant expressed compliance or gratitude, including in addressing God or angels.*
 - *Mary responded, “May your word to me be fulfilled.”*
 - *The Angel left.*
- *Hamilton states that Mary was “thirteen or fourteen” when God called her to be the mother of Jesus.*
 - *Why do you think God chose this young girl for what Hamilton calls “the single most significant event that will happen on earth since creation?”*
 - *Mary, carrying Jesus was in God’s plan from the beginning. She was chosen by God to do the most important job in world history, carry the savior. The savior who would take away the sins of all humans and restore the salvation of mankind.*
 - *Her lineage shows her relation to Adam the first man. Although some scriptures demonstrate that Jesus was also of the tribe of Judah.*
 - *Her Son, Mary’s Son would be qualified to bear the title “Son of David” and be the righteous “Branch for all humankind. (Isaiah 11:1 says A shoot will come up from*

the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.) This Branch being Jesus.

- What do you know about the other bible young people who served God whom Hamilton mentions?
 - David?
 - Esther?
 - Timothy?
- Can you remember or find other examples?
- What young people do you know or know of who have been called to serve God?
 - How do their responses influence your own openness and responsiveness to God's call?
- What did Jesus mean when he taught his disciples to “welcome God's kingdom like a child?” (Luke 18:17)
 - Truly, I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdoms of God like a little child will never enter it.
 - Children lacked social power; they also needed to depend on their fathers/mothers, or other providers.
 - Most Jewish fathers were able providers.

God Lifts Up the Lowly (Pg. 14)

- Hamilton describes the term “Am ha-Arez” as a phrase referring to “the lowly” in Luke and other early Christian and Jewish writings.

Discuss:

- Who were the “Am ha-Arez”?
 - *The people of the land. The vulgar, uncouth, uneducated.*
- What did the term signify?
 - *Those who were of low status, or social economic status.*
- How did the “Am ha-Arez” characterize the people Jesus came to minister to?
 - *These people were the lowly, the people that Jesus spent his life ministering to.*
- Why does God show special concern for the “Am ha-Arez” and the others who felt, or were considered by others, lowly?
 - *Because he was born in lowly, conditions, and was a person of lower class, because his mother Mary, could too have been part of the “Am ha-Arez.”*

Read 1:46-55

Mary's Song

⁴⁶ And Mary said:
“My soul glorifies the Lord
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost
thoughts.
⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”

- ❖ Which of Mary's words, phrases, or images most captures your attention or imagination? Why?
- In Mary's words, writes Hamilton, “Luke lays out the theme of his Gospel, the theme of his book: God looks with favor on those of low status: (Luke, pg. 14).
 - *This theme is that God's looks with favor on those of low status. Why? Those with low status tend to see things for what they truly are, they are not clouded with judgment on many things. Sometimes this is because they truly do not have a lot and are very grateful for the little that they have.*
 - *Hamilton says that God brings down the powerful from their thrones and Lifts us the Lowly.*

- *God chooses those who other may find washed up or have no value.*
 - *God values and uses those who have been pushed down, oppressed, or even disdained.*
 - What stories about God in Jesus “lifting up the lowly” did you notice as you skimmed through Luke earlier?
- What order Bible stories about God “lifting up the lowly,” can you remember or locate now?
- **A poor young woman like Mary would have had “low status” (verse 48) in her society.**
 - NIV- for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.
 - *Key word HUMBLE.*
 - *A sense of humility is a trait that is very rare these days. Those who are humble tend to be rich in God’s eyes rather than those who are wealthy.*
 - Who are the “lowly” in society today?
 - Who are the “powerful” (verse 52) and “rich” (verse 53)?
 - To which end of the status spectrum are you closer?
- **Mary’s words present uplifting the lowly as God’s action.**
 - *The Greek and Hebrew words for lowly both signify humility, of a humble state, but also those whom others consider lowly, or who have been pushed down by others, oppression, or outcast by society.*
 - *This can be due to several things, such as status, lineage, acts or deeds that you have done, sexual orientation, race, religion, gender, creed, migrant status, color, and even due to disability, or possibly medicinal conditions. Human states to which none of us have control or choice of.*
 - How, if at all, do you believe God “lifts up the lowly” through God’s people today?
 - What moral and ethical imperatives, if any, do you hear in Mary’s words?

Closing Prayer

God Most High, who always looks with favor on those who are lowly. Move us by your Spirit to show your mercy to people pushed to the margins and pressed down by suffering. Use us, unlikely choices through we are, to reach out with compassion to all people, in the name and for the side of him who was born among the hungry and the outcast, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Introduction

The Gospel of Luke has the same author as the book of Acts. Both contain a prologue addressed to the same man— Theophilus. In Acts 1:1-2 the writer refers to "my former book" concerning "all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven." This description fits the gospel of Luke. Neither book however, makes Luke as the author.

- I. **Early History of the Forerunner and of the Messiah (Luke 1:1-2:52)**
- The author clearly states the purpose of this gospel (1:1-4).

- There have been other works written about Jesus, some by eyewitnesses and others that relied on accounts handed down from eyewitnesses.
- Luke himself intends to go beyond them to give a more concise or strict chronological account.
- Through this he intends to provide a better basis of Christian Teaching.
- Luke begins with John the Baptist.
- He is the first key figure in the series of events that begin to unveil the gospel and message of Christ.

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Joseph and Mary completed all of their legal requirements, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, he was filled with Wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.

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- She stayed in the temple and worshiped, fasted, and prayed.
- She prophesied about a child.

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- Before recording John's birth however, Luke announces the impending birth of Jesus to Mary, his mother (1:26-56), a young teenager.
- This announcement foreshadows what is to later come in the order of events in our story as humans, Christian's, and in Jesus' life.
- Now Luke intends to tell the story of Jesus, in order or chronologically (1:3) which he states very clearly in his purpose statement at the beginning of the Gospel.

- *6th months into Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to a young woman.*
- *This woman was pledged to a man named Joseph- who was a descendant of David.*
 - *The betrothal period was often a year, and Jewish tradition suggests that couples in Galilee were not left in chaperoned during that time. Betrothal involved financial agreement between families, and it old be ended only by divorce or death. It concluded with the wedding night, ad which point the marriage could be consummated sexually.*
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 - *Given the usual age of marriage in Jude’s and Galilee, Mary was probably in her teens. Girls could marry as young as twelve, but 13-16 was more common, and some were even past 20; apparently most Jewish men*

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 - *A.k.a Sarah, who doubted that she could have a child in her old age, God reminded her that nothing was impossible with him.*
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- *The Angel left.*

○ *Why do you think God chose this young girl for what Hamilton calls “the single most significant event that will on earth since creation?”*

- *Mary, carrying Jesus was in God’s plan from the beginning. She was chosen by God to do the most important job in world history, carry the savior. The savior who would take away the sins of all humans and restore the salvation of man kind.*
- *Her lineage show her relation to Adam the first man. Although some scriptures demonstrate that Jesus was also of the tribe of Judah.*
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- We also start to see the introduction of important figures.
- Mary's song/canticle or prayer (1:46-55), is similar to Hannah's (1 Samuel 2;1-10). This shows her promise of a son as a sign God is fulfilling his blessing to Abraham (v. 55; 1 Samuel 2:10).
- Zechariah's song/canticle or prayer (v. 67-69) also demonstrates John's birth as a sign that God is fulfilling his promise to Abraham (v.73) and to David (v.69).

Mary's Song

⁴⁶ And Mary said:
 "My soul glorifies the Lord
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has been mindful
 of the humble state of his servant.
 From now on all generations will call me blessed,
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
 holy is his name.
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 thoughts.
⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
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 but has sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
 remembering to be merciful
⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
 just as he promised our ancestors."

Zechariah's Song

⁶⁷ His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

⁶⁸ “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn^[a] of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David

⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

⁷¹ salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—

⁷² to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,

⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear

⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶ And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,

to guides our feet into the path of peace.”

Hannah's Prayer

2 Then Hannah prayed and said:

“My heart rejoices in the Lord;
in the Lord my horn^[a] is lifted high.
My mouth boasts over my enemies,
for I delight in your deliverance.

2 “There is no one holy like the Lord;
there is no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.

3 “Do not keep talking so proudly
or let your mouth speak such arrogance,
for the Lord is a God who knows,
and by him deeds are weighed.

4 “The bows of the warriors are broken,
but those who stumbled are armed with strength.

5 Those who were full hire themselves out for food,
but those who were hungry are hungry no more.
She who was barren has borne seven children,
but she who has had many sons pines away.

6 “The Lord brings death and makes alive;
he brings down to the grave and raises up.

7 The Lord sends poverty and wealth;
he humbles and he exalts.

8 He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes
and has them inherit a throne of honor.

“For the foundations of the earth are the Lord's;
on them he has set the world.

9 He will guard the feet of his faithful servants,
but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness.

“It is not by strength that one prevails;
¹⁰ those who oppose the Lord will be broken.

The Most High will thunder from heaven;
the Lord will judge the ends of the earth.

“He will give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

- He places Jesus birth with the context of Roman history.
- When Cesar August was emperor, when “Quinirinius was governor of Syria” (v. 2:1-2).
- Because Joseph was of the line of David he had to register in the census of the time at his ancestral birthplace, in this case Bethlehem.
- This is the place where Jesus was born, as it was foretold by Micah (Micah 5:2).
- After Jesus’ birth in the manger, since there was no room in the Inn at the time, and this was the only warm place with a cradle (the hay trough) where they could lay the baby after it was born, they wrapped him in swaddling clothing (Swaddling is an ancient practice of wrapping infants in blankets or similar clothes so that the movement of the limbs was tightly restricted. Swaddling bands were often used to further restrict the infant. This practice became less popular in the 17th century.)
- Jesus birth was announced to the shepherds who lived out in the fields, *now remember the shepherds were the epitome of the ‘Am ha-Arez that Jesus came to teach.* (Luke pg. 18)
- These shepherds lived in the fields, watching over their flocks (2:1-20).
- The news of Jesus birth spread through the countryside like wild fire, where soon everyone was flocking to Bethlehem to see Jesus.

- On the eighth day after Jesus’ birth he was circumcised (Luke 2:21).
- Then later taken to the temple to be presented as firstborn. (Exodus 13:2, 12; 1 Samuel 1:22-28)
- Thus fulfilling the necessary rites for purification (Leviticus 12) .

- Luke demonstrates in his Gospel that Jesus is well aware of his calling and identity from the father at an early age.

- When Jesus was 12 he was among the teachers at the temple, “listening to them and asking questions.” (Luke 2:46)
- Everyone who heard Jesus teach was amazed at his understanding and answers that he presented.
- His response to this was “Didn’t you know that I had to be in my Father’s house?” (V.49)
- The Messiah was to have an essential role in worship of God at the Temple. Thus, that is where Jesus found he needed to be most.

- In spite of the self-awareness that Jesus had as the Son of God, he was “obedient” to his earthly parents. This short demonstration is closed with a summarizing statement, “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” (Luke 2:52)

II. *The Beginning (3:1-4:13)*

- Luke again offers dates, now for the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist in the “fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar” (3:1).
- On the basis of the Roman calendar, this date would be AD 29.

A. *John the Baptist, Forerunner of the Messiah (3:1-23)*

- John’s ministry was seen by many the possibility that might be the Messiah (v. 15).
- John quickly dispelled such ideas.
- Luke stresses by quoting Isaiah 40 (v. 4-6).
- John was the forerunner of the Messiah.
- Jesus’ baptism was to be the occasion for the announcement of the Messiah. There is a voice down from heaven and declared that Jesus was to be the Son of God (v. 22).
 - Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God, and said a prayer.
 - Mary and Joseph marveled at this. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary that her Son will do great things in his life, and is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.

B. *The Genealogy of Jesus (3:23-28)*

- Jesus is introduced in Luke's Gospel as a means of genealogy. (Genesis 5:28-29)
- Jesus has been identified as the Son of God in 3:22.
- The townsfolk will ask "Isn't this the Son of Joseph?" (4:22)
- Luke strategically places his genealogy to suggest that he was the son of Joseph. (3:23).

C. *The Preparation of the Messiah (4:1-13)*

- The Holy Spirit is very important in the work of Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert and the devil tempted him for forty days. (v. 1)
- The true test came when Jesus had not eaten and was hungry.
- "The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread" (v. 3).
- When God sent manna to Israel in the desert it was to test them to see if they would follow His instructions (Exodus 16:4).
- Jesus answered the devil's temptation with the lesson Moses himself drew from Israel's test of manna (reflected in Deuteronomy 8:3).
- Jesus, unlike Israel in the past, did not succumb to the temptations.
- This was by means of God's Word, he successfully deflected Satan's attacks.
- The devil made a strategic withdrawal "until another opportune time." (v. 13)
- The rest of Jesus' ministry is characterized as an ongoing battle with the devil.