Gospel of St. Luke

- **Luke**: a vigorous champion of the outsider
  - Only Gentile in an all Jewish cast of NT writers
  - Jesus includes those who typically were treated as outsiders by the religious establishment of the day: women, common laborers (shepherds), those racially different (Samaritans), the poor

- **Author**: St. Paul’s co-worker; a physician (steadfast friend); travel diary to help construct some of the history of *Acts*
  - Did not know the historical Jesus
  - Mistakes about Palestinian geography
  - Did not come from the Holy Land
  - Wrote in polished Greek
✓ Wrote for Gentile Christian Churches
✓ Universality of Jesus’ offer of salvation
✓ Elimination of passages that might confuse a non-Jewish audience
✓ Drops passages about Jewish traditions, return of Elijah, reference to the Old Law (Sermon on the Mount)
✓ Omits Jewish names (master for rabbi; lawyer for scribe; Savior for Messiah)

• **Sources:** Mark (60%), Q, L

✓ L Source: early hymns, a genealogy, Finding of Jesus at the Temple, a collection of parables (Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son), a group of miracle stories
• **Date:** 75-90 AD (Aware of Jerusalem’s destruction)
• Orderly account (Concern with historical detail and literary purpose)
• Jerusalem as a central symbol
• Gospel dedicated to Theophilus “lover of God” (Greek) – monetary sponsor
✔ Wants to show Theophilus and all readers that their instruction in the Christian faith was sound

• A restatement and defense of Jesus’ Good News
• Faith-filled testimony about the continuing activity of the Resurrected Jesus and the Holy Spirit in history
• Organizes gospel around the symbol of Jerusalem
• In the *Gospel of Luke*:
  ✓ **Infancy Narrative**: Jesus goes from Galilee to Bethlehem to be born
  ✓ In Jerusalem, prophecies of Simeon and Anna that Jesus is the promised Savior
✓ At age 12, Jesus with “teachers” in the Temple in Jerusalem (“doing My Father’s work)
✓ Luke 9:51: Jesus determined to journey to Jerusalem (God will fulfill all of His promises)
✓ In Jerusalem Jesus instructs apostles to await the descent of the Holy Spirit
• In the *Acts of the Apostles*:
  ✓ Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles at Pentecost in Jerusalem
  ✓ Gospel spreads to the Roman Empire
  ✓ *Acts* ends with Paul arriving in Rome

✓ Christian life as a journey   Jerusalem: Jesus suffered, died, rose from the dead
✓ Early Church with its journey   Jerusalem: Share the gospel to the ends of the earth (Paul and missionaries met with rejection and suffering)
Common Themes in Luke and Acts

• Jesus as a prophet
• Church continues Jesus’ prophetic ministry
• Role of Holy Spirit in Salvation history
• Prayer, joy, peace
• Special role of Mary and women
Jesus The Prophet

• *Luke 4: 16-24*
  - Jesus reads from Isaiah in a synagogue service in his hometown of Nazareth
  - Jesus claims to be the Messiah (rejected)
  - “No prophet ever receives honor in his hometown.”
  - *Fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy of liberation:* Heals the sick, cures lepers, ministers to the hated Samaritans, treats women as equals, forgives and eats meals with sinners, exorcises demons, responds to a plea from a Roman centurion (represents an oppressive power)
✓ **Foreshadows Jesus’ public life:** initial acceptance; people change their opinion and reject and kill Jesus

✓ **Role of the Holy Spirit:** importance of prayer in the life of Jesus and of the early Church

• **The Church Continues Jesus’ Prophetic Mission (Acts 1-2)**
  • Risen Jesus with the apostles for 40 days
  • Mary as a faithful witness to her son; source of strength for the disciples
  • 12 tribes 12 apostles
  ✓ Choice of successor for Judas (Matthias)
• **Coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost)**

✓ Feast of Weeks: 50 days after Passover (God’s giving of the covenant to Israel at Mt. Sinai)

✓ **Pentecost:** “birthday of the Church” – 3000 converts baptized

✓ **Characteristics of an Ideal Christian Community:**

  ❖ Christian fellowship or communion (koinonia): sharing of goods and love among members

  ❖ Praying for each other/Celebrating Eucharist in their homes: commemorated the Pascal Mystery

  ❖ Apostolic eyewitnesses to Jesus’ gospel teachings
• **Role of the Holy Spirit in Salvation History**
  ✓ Age of Promise
  ✓ Time of Jesus
    ❖ Peter and Paul featured
    ❖ Holy Spirit leads and directs Jesus in His own ministry
    ❖ Holy Spirit inspires disciples to proclaim the message (70 references)

• **Prayer**
  ✓ Pervasive theme in Luke and Acts
  ✓ Jesus went to the synagogue to pray; prays before choice of apostles; withdrew to lonely places
  ✓ Lord’s Prayer; Not to lose heart when we pray
    ❖ Perfect way to pray: seeking God’s will in all we do
    ❖ Pray often as Jesus did
• **Joy and Peace**

✓ John the Baptist leaps in his mother’s womb
✓ Mary praises God when Elizabeth blesses her faith
✓ Birth of Jesus with angels glorifying God
✓ Shepherds worship Jesus with joy and peace
✓ Crowds rejoice over Jesus’ mighty works
✓ **Zacchaeus** (tax collector) receives Jesus with joy into his house
✓ **Prodigal Son:** joy over the return of a lost sinner
✓ Jesus’ Resurrection: greets followers with peace - “Their hearts bursting with joy”
• **Special Role of Mary and Women:**
  
- First Century: women seen as inferior to men with no right to an education; limited legal rights; no role in public life
- Jesus’ view: positive and revolutionary
- *Infancy Narrative:* Mary with a key role (Joseph in the background); Mary with faith in the angel’s revelation that she is to be God’s mother; Fidelity of Elizabeth; patience of Anna; *Strong, faithful women*
- *Luke’s Gospel:* Widows; *Mary Magdalene,* Women who were traveling companions
- *Women as central characters in 2 parables*
  - *Lost Coin:* Compares God to a woman
  - *Unjust Judge:* Praises the woman for her strong faith and persistence
  - Women witnessed Jesus’ death; First to proclaim his resurrection
Mary

- Model of Christian faith
- Yes to God’s plan
- Faithful to Jesus
- Awaits Holy Spirit with the apostles in the Upper Room
- **Theme:** God’s preferential love for the poor (Mary, a simple, humble young girl)

**What the Church Believes About Mary:**

- **Immaculate Conception:** From conception, Mary is immune from all stain of original sin; Patron saint of U.S (December 8)
- **Ever-Virgin:** Always a virgin “before, during, after” the birth of Jesus
- **Mother of God, Mother of the Church:** As Mother of Christ, Mary is Mother of God; Spiritual mother of humanity (New Eve)
- **Assumption:** Mary, assumed body and soul into heaven; Death’s decay did not touch Mary
Jesus: A Compassionate Messiah and Universal Savior

- Friend of the friendless
- Identifies with the poor and lowly

✓ **Shepherds**: social outcasts of pious Jews
✓ Jesus’ Presentation in the Temple (2 turtledoves)
✓ More than any other gospel, Luke reassures the poor and warns the rich
✓ Love for the poor, manifested in concrete deeds, is a requirement for Jesus’ disciples
Compassion to the Poor (Luke 16:19-31)

• Only gospel with the story of *Lazarus and the Rich Man*

✓ Lazarus: name means “may God help us”
✓ Jesus warns that those who have plenty in this life must share with those who have less
✓ Generous service of God and others, with compassion for the poor and outcast, are mandatory for the followers of Jesus
Friend of Outcasts (Luke 19:1-10)

• **Zacchaeus** (tax collector): Short in stature, climbed a tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus
  - Received Jesus into his house
  - Gave half of his wealth to the poor

• **Cure of Ten Lepers**: Reviled and lived apart from others
  - Ten cured but only one with the thoughtfulness to return and thank Jesus for his great mercy (a Samaritan, an enemy of the Jews)

- **Story of the Good Samaritan**
  - God’s love and compassion know no bounds. Nor should ours.
  - Setting: a lawyer testing Jesus “Who is my neighbor?”
  - Neighbor is everyone
  - Priest, Levite passed by a suffering Jew (Did not risk getting involved)
  - Samaritan: compassionately ministered to the man
  - Inconvenienced himself follow-up care; spent 2 silver coins (equivalent to 24 days)
  - Break through our prejudices and imitate God by embracing even our enemies
Friend of Sinners  (Luke 15)

• Heart of Luke’s gospel

• **Parable of the Lost Sheep  (Luke 15:4-7)**

✓ Foolish shepherd who left 99 sheep alone to go after the one lost

✓ God’s love is seemingly foolish in human terms in the pursuit of the one who has lost his/her way
• **Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-11)**

✓ Woman goes to great lengths to find a misplaced coin

✓ May even have spent more on a party celebrating its finding than the value of the coin lost

✓ God’s love exceeds what the learned and “holy” ones of Jesus’ day expect

✓ God’s love: astonishing, excessive, almost ridiculous compared to our standards
• **Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)**

✓ Bondless love of the father; receives son unconditionally
✓ Symbols of a free man (shoes) and privileges of being a member of the family (ring and robe)
✓ Son’s return: an occasion of great rejoicing and a great feast
✓ Older brother: faithful to the father out of a sense of duty not true love; jealous; whining
✓ Return of sinners brings great joy in heaven; God loves sinners
Jesus and Money

• “No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other.” (16:13)

• “Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.” (6:38)

• “Everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.” (14:33)

• Lord *(Kyrios* in Greek); most common title of Luke for Lord

• Presents Jesus as a martyr *(witness – Greek)*: Consistent, loving, faithful, compassionate Jesus Is even in his darkest hour

• Promises heaven to the “good thief”

• Roman centurion proclaims the truth about Jesus (“This man was innocent beyond doubt.”)
• Conclusion of the Gospel of Luke (Resurrection appearances)
• **Emmaus Story:** summarizes the entire gospel
  ✓ Journey of 2 disciples after crucifixion talking on the road to Emmaus
  ✓ Eyes opened at the breaking of the bread
  ✓ Ritual of reading the scriptures and breaking bread in Jesus’ name: carried on by the earliest Christians (*Acts*)