



## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

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### LESSON 3 - STUDY QUESTIONS LUKE 3:1-38, 4:1-44

#### DAY ONE

1. Of the beautiful and familiar stories in Lesson 2 (Chapter 2), was there something new that you learned from your reading of the Chapter, the Commentary, or from the Spiritual Reflection?

#### Read Luke 3:1-7

2a. As today's lesson begins, Luke moves us forward in preparation for Jesus' public ministry. He sets out the exact time and place in history in which the action occurs. Luke states that it was "in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee ..." List the other Roman and Jewish authorities who were in power according to Luke (verse 1 and beginning of verse 2).

b. At the end of verse 2 we read that "the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness." What would be another way of saying what happened to John?

3a. According to verse 3, what did John do after the word of God came upon him?

b. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John parallel Luke's reference to the beginning of John the Baptist's preaching. Read and record John 1:6-7.

4. In verses 4-6 Luke describes John as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3-5. John is, indeed, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness" who is to "prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight." What is the result of this preparation in verse 6?

**NOTE:** These verses from Isaiah's prophecy were beautifully incorporated into Handel's "Messiah" oratorio. For a musical lift, listen to "Every valley shall be exalted," and note how the music goes up and down like hills and valleys, a musical technique called "text painting"!

5a. John began his call to repentance with harsh words, reminding the crowd of their need for repentance before judgment day, a theme we will revisit throughout Luke. Record the warning he gave those who come out to be baptized in verse 7.

b. The concept of God's wrath for the unrepentant on the day-of-judgment was familiar to the Jews. Read Isaiah 66:15-16 and record one phrase that speaks to you of judgment day.

6. CONNECTION: John the Baptist came to prepare the Israelites for the coming of the Messiah, who was to be the redemption of Israel and the whole world. Through the Word of God (the Holy Spirit) John began to make the Jewish nation aware that their relationship with God was broken (that they were sinful) and that they needed redemption - difficult news to hear. We, too, dislike being told that we are not perfect. Consider a time when you came face-to-face with a change that you needed to make. In what ways did your faith help you to make this change or what did you learn by having to admit that you were wrong?

Read and record Acts 3:19 and begin your prayer today thanking God for His gift of forgiveness.

## **DAY TWO**

**Read Luke 3:8-20**

7. John continued to lecture the crowds that came to be baptized by him, warning them to "bear fruits worthy of repentance." This was John's way of telling them here (and throughout this passage) that their deeds must match their words of repentance. He also warned them not to take for granted their status as the chosen people. According to verse 8, what else did he say?

8. Verse 9 continues the warning with another metaphor: "every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And yet in verse 11 John gives them a

simple but radical remedy to prevent this terrible retribution. What does he tell them they must do?

9a. Even tax collectors and soldiers came to John and asked him what they should do. In your own words, briefly explain John's message from verses 13 and 14.

b. John's preaching filled the people with expectation. What was the question in their hearts concerning John (verse 15)?

10a. John answered all of them by saying "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals." What else does John tell them that the Messiah will do (end of verse 16)?

b. John went on to describe the harvesting process of tossing grain in the air with a forked shovel in order to separate the useless chaff from the precious grain kernels which will feed the people. What was to happen to the chaff (those who are unrepentant) (verse 17).

11. John continued strongly urging the people to repent, and proclaiming the good news (verse 18). Not everyone was happy to hear John's exhortations, especially Herod the ruler. Describe from verses 19 and 20 why Herod had John shut up in prison.

**NOTE:** The relationship between King Herod and Herodias was complicated! Herodias was the half-niece of Herod and the divorced wife of his brother, Philip, so Herod's relationship with her was unlawful under Jewish law.

12. CONNECTION: In this passage we can clearly see how John not only preached matching actions to words, but lived this message. Surely he knew that challenging Herod to repent from his evil deeds was dangerous. Matching our actions with our beliefs is a challenge for all of us. John's command to share our "second coat" with others gives us a concrete example for how we as Christians should live our faith. Give an example of how you or someone you know gave away a "second coat."

Read and record Micah 6:8, and begin your prayer today asking God to continue to fill you with the spirit of generosity that you might truly live out your faith

### DAY THREE

Read Luke 3:21-38 and Luke 4:1-13

13. Today's lesson begins with the baptism of Jesus and the Holy Spirit's descent, which also appear in Matthew and Mark as well as John. Read verses 21-22. Though we are not scholars, we often hear the word "theophany" when studying the Bible. Look up and record the definition of theophany that best applies to these verses.

14. The appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at Jesus' baptism is followed by the powerful words "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased." Find and record one other passage in either the Old or New Testament in which similar words are used.

**THINK:** Meditate on what it means for you to have been baptized and confirmed in the Holy Spirit.

15. In verses 23-38 Luke records his version of the genealogy of Jesus. Both the gospel of Matthew and Luke trace Jesus' lineage to key figures in the history of Israel. Luke's genealogy goes all the way back to Adam, stressing that Jesus was qualified to save all mankind. Matthew's genealogy goes back to Abraham, stressing Jesus' kingship over Israel. Record three biblical names from Jesus' lineage and briefly note why they are familiar to you.

16. As Chapter 4 begins, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness (verse 4:1). What happened next according to verse 2?

17a. In Luke 4:3-13 the devil tempted Jesus three times, and three times Jesus rebuked the devil, quoting from the Old Testament. Record Jesus' response to each temptation.

(1) The first temptation: "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus' answer (verse 4):

(2) The second temptation: "If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours" (referring to all the kingdoms of the world). Jesus' answer (verse 8):

(3) The third temptation: "If you are the son of God, throw yourself down from here" (referring to the top of the temple). Jesus' answer (verse 12):

b. The temptation was over, and Jesus conquered every kind of temptation offered Him by the devil; however, we understand that sin was not yet conquered. How do we know this from verse 13?

18. CONNECTION: Jesus withstood the devil's temptations. As he did to Jesus in the wilderness, every day the devil tempts us with the wish for physical gratification, personal power, glory, and independence from God. Jesus gave us ways to overcome temptation through His example in this passage: prayer, fasting, knowledge of scripture and trust in God. Which of these methods do you employ against temptation? Is there a favorite scripture that helps you when you find you might be wavering? Share some thoughts with your group.

Our Lord knew that temptation would face us daily. He even gave us a prayer to say that asks that God "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Read and record James 1:12 and begin your prayer today asking God to help you resist temptation and stay strong in His love.

#### **DAY FOUR**

**Read Luke 4:14-30**

19. As today's lesson begins, Luke tells us that Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee. What happened upon His return according to the end of verse 14 and verse 15?

20a. In the beginning of verse 16 we read that Jesus returned to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. What did He then do according to the end of verse 16?

b. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him. He unrolled the scroll and read where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (verse 18). Record the continuation of verse 18 and 19.

21a. Try to picture Our Lord in the synagogue reading this prophecy from the scroll of Isaiah, then rolling up the scroll, giving it back to the attendant and sitting down. At that, the eyes of all were upon Him, because in the synagogue, the rabbi spoke seated in a chair. With what words did Jesus begin to teach (verse 21)?

b. Jesus had just told his listeners in the synagogue that Isaiah's prophecy refers to Him and is fulfilled in Him. Describe their reaction and what they said according to verse 22.

22a. Word must have spread to the Nazarenes about the miracles that Jesus had performed at nearby Capernaum (40 miles away). Jesus realized that they would ask Him to do likewise in His own hometown (verse 23). He said to them "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Doctor, cure yourself ..." What do you think He was saying to them?

b. In verse 24 Jesus answered their unspoken request for proof. What did He say?

23a. Jesus continued by relating His ministry to the Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha. He pointed out that these prophets performed miracles for Gentiles (a widow in Sidon and Naaman, a Syrian), not Jews. When the crowd heard Jesus' message that Isaiah's messianic prophecy was not just for Jews, what happened (verses 28-29)?

b. According to verse 30, how did He get away?

24 CONNECTION: "No prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown." Insecurity, jealousy, resentment of change ... all of these emotions explain why it is difficult for those who know us well to acknowledge our achievements. When this happens, we often lose confidence in our own ability. While hard work, honesty and diligence are their own reward, there are times when we need our efforts to be noticed. Consider a time when your achievements were unrecognized because of the jealous nature of someone close to you and how you handled this situation in a dignified and humble manner.

Read and record 1 Corinthians 15:58 and begin your prayer today knowing God recognizes what others may not.

#### **DAY FIVE**

**Read Luke 4:31-37**

25. When yesterday's lesson ended, Jesus left Nazareth, having been rejected by those of His own home town. In verse 31 we read that "He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and

was teaching on the Sabbath.” What was the reaction of those who heard him in Capernaum according to verse 32?

26a. In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon. What did he cry out (verse 34)?

b. Even though many men did not recognize Jesus as the messiah, in this passage the demon did. Why might the demon have suggested Jesus had come to destroy them?

27. We use the word "holy" frequently. In this passage, the demon calls Jesus "the Holy One of God," striking fear in the evil one inhabiting this man. Think carefully about what "holy" really means. Share some thoughts on your own definition of "holy."

28. Jesus rebuked the demon, telling it to "Be silent, and come out of him!" What happened after the demon threw the man down in front of the crowd (end of verse 35)?

29a. Summarize the reaction of those in the synagogue.

b. What was the outcome of this incident (verse 37)?

30. CONNECTION: It is ironic that in Nazareth nobody recognized Jesus' authority, but in Galilee even the demons recognized Jesus' holiness and power. Jesus' loving concern extended even to this man who was totally overcome by evil, showing us that He can save anyone. We learn some important things from this lesson. While not inhabited by demons, we are all subject to sin and fall short of God's grace. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which Jesus gave to His apostles after He rose from the dead, our sins can be forgiven and we can be restored wholly to God's favor. Give some thoughts on the blessings you have received from going to Reconciliation.

Read and record 1 John 1:9 and begin your prayer today thankful for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**DAY SIX**

**Read Luke 4:38-44**

31a. As today's lesson begins, Jesus has left the synagogue where He preached and expelled the demon. According to verse 38, where did He go?

b. According to the end of verse 38, what was wrong with Simon's mother-in-law and what was Jesus asked?

**NOTE:** While we have not yet "met" Simon, the USCCB indicates that this Simon was one of the apostles (Simon, called Peter), who will be reintroduced to us in Luke Chapter 5.

32a. Jesus stood over Simon's mother-in-law and rebuked the fever, much as He had rebuked the evil in the man in the synagogue. What happened then (verse 39)?

b. Simon's mother-in-law was given back her physical health. Why do you think that she immediately began to serve them, and how can this be a lesson for us all?

33a. The reports of Jesus' exorcising the demon in the synagogue and curing Simon's mother must have spread quickly. When the sun set, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to Him. What did Jesus do (end of verse 40)?

b. Once again, the appearance of the Holy One of God brought out demons from those who came to be cured, and once again, these evil ones recognized Jesus. What did they call Him and what was His response (verse 41)?

34a. Luke does not tell us whether Jesus slept that night, but he does say that "At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place." Why do you think Our Lord went to a deserted place?

b. The crowds were looking for him. What was their purpose when they reached Him (end of verse 42)?

35a. Although the crowds at Capernaum tried to restrain Jesus, He explained to them why He had to leave them. What did He say (verse 43)?



b. What a powerful statement Jesus has made, that He was sent to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. Where does Luke tell us that Jesus continued to preach (verse 44)?

36. CONNECTION: Today's lesson contains Luke's first mention of the "kingdom of God," a phrase which is used again and again throughout the gospels (as well as the Old Testament). The Good News is that God has sent us a Savior, Christ the King, who reigns in the hearts of those who do His will, in justice and compassion, in love. Upon His return, the kingdom will be complete. Pope Saint John Paul II summarized the concept of the kingdom of God: "In a word, the kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realization of God's plan of salvation in all its fullness" (*Redemptories Missio*, #15). Find one or two special scripture verses which help you to understand the kingdom of God and share them with your small group.

Write a prayer today incorporating one of your special scripture verses about the kingdom of God. Amen!

After completing this lesson, read pages 23-34 in the *The Gospel According to Luke* by Michael F. Patella, O.S.B. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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