

## St Luke the Evangelist

Saint Luke was one of the four Evangelists. Like Saint Mark, Luke was not among that chosen group of disciples who walked alongside Jesus during his earthly ministry but probably he was a disciple of Saint Paul, who mentions a Luke who accompanies him on his missionary journeys.

We know very little about Luke's life although in Colossians (4:14) he is referred to as a physician. But we know he wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles; two foundational works for knowing Jesus Christ and the early Church. Many scholars believe him to be a Gentile Christian though others think he was a Greek Jew.

Every one of the four Gospels has a unique perspective and is written for a specific audience. Saint Luke seems likely to have written for a non-Jewish audience as he translates into Greek, words that the other authors leave in the original Hebrew and Aramaic.

The first few verses of the gospel explain why Luke is writing his account.

“Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed”. (Luke 1:1-4).

Written to someone called Theophilus it has been thought by some to be written to a man lost to Christ to help him learn all he needed to know about Jesus. The Greek name Theophilus means “beloved by God” or “loving God”. It seems therefore to me that it was written for everyone who wants to know more and certainly as I read this gospel I feel it speaks to me very personally.

Luke portrays Jesus as deeply compassionate, caring for the oppressed and the marginalized such as Samaritans, and women in particular. This theme runs throughout the gospel along with the Christian values surrounding Family, Sin and Forgiveness and Freewill among other things.

He relates certain details and stories the other Gospels do not. Luke alone tells the story of Lazarus and the rich man who repents of having ignored him. It is only in Luke that we have such a full account of the Incarnation. And only in Luke, is it recorded Mary's song when Gabriel visits her at the annunciation – what we know as the canticle Magnificat; which so complements the Promise/Fulfilment theme of Luke's infancy narrative.

Luke's Acts of the Apostles is a diary of the very early Church. Acts is often told from a first-person perspective. It is written like a journal and without these writings there would be many gaps in our knowledge of the progress of the early Church. Luke accompanies Paul's missionary team and remains at his side until the bitter end. When Paul is imprisoned in Rome, with his beheading drawing near, he is abandoned by all his co-workers save one. From his prison cell, Paul writes "Only Luke is with me" (2 Timothy 4:11).

Saint Augustine writes in the Confessions that the present tense of past things is called memory. The past is not really the past, then, if we remember it accurately. Memory can be ill-used when it carries a grudge and blocks forgiveness, or when it doesn't let the past recede but allows it to invade the present so strongly that no one can grow beyond their saddest five minutes. Understood in a healthy way, memory makes the good past live again.

When committed to writing, memory makes the past forever present for generations to come. The written Gospels make Christ come alive. Their pages are not Christ in full, as no one can be reduced to just some words on a page. But the Word made flesh, the Word who is alive today in heaven, is captured at a certain moment in time by the words of Saint Luke.

The Gospels capture the essentials of the life of Jesus Christ which God desires all Christians to know. And when these Gospels are read in the light of the living Gospel of the Church and accompanied by the witness of the saints, the grace of the Sacraments, and our own reasoning we have all that we need to achieve heaven.

Luke along with the other Evangelists make the original events of the life of Christ, present and more alive today, through their inspiring histories. If you haven't ever sat down and read these works as complete texts I would encourage you to do so.

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