

Minor Festivals: St. Luke, Evangelist, October 18

Who was Luke? Luke was most likely a Gentile (a person not of the Jewish race). Although we don't know where he hailed from, his name means "Native of Lucania," which was in southern Italy. He was well educated. He was a physician. We first meet him in the year 49 A.D. in the city of Troas during the apostle Paul's Second Missionary Journey (49-52 A.D.) There Paul received a vision of a man from Macedonia (northern Greece) pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Luke accompanied Paul, Silas, and Timothy to Philippi in northern Greece. Luke remained there while Paul finished his Second Missionary Journey and went on his Third Missionary Journey (53-57 A.D.) At the end of Paul's Third Missionary Journey, Luke joined up with the apostle. He accompanied him to Jerusalem where Paul was delivering an offering gathered for the famine-stricken Jewish Christians in that city. While there, Paul was arrested because the Jewish religious leaders hated him. After a plot on his life, the Roman commander had Paul secretly transferred to Caesarea on the coast. Luke accompanied him and remained nearby while Paul was imprisoned. Paul remained in prison for a couple of years. It was during this time (about 59-60 A.D.) that Luke most likely wrote his gospel. That is why he is called an Evangelist, which means Gospel Writer. His gospel is sometimes called "Paul's Gospel" because many believe Paul gave Luke much of the information the Holy Spirit led him to write. In about 61 A.D. Paul appealed to Caesar for justice. He was transferred to Rome where he remained under house arrest for two years. Luke stayed by his side throughout this time. Perhaps this was the time during which Luke wrote Acts. Paul was released and went on a Fourth Missionary Journey, at the end of which he was arrested. The last we hear of Luke, he was faithfully by Paul's side shortly before Paul was executed.

The Gospel of Luke is the second of the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Gospel means "Good News." The four Gospels tell Good News of the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Luke's audience was predominantly Gentile (non-Jewish by race); he wrote to display Jesus as the sacrifice for the sins of all people.

As stated earlier, the Gospel of Luke is the first volume of a two-volume set. The second volume being Acts. Both were written in Greek. Luke's is the most literary and thorough Greek of the New Testament. Both volumes were written to a man named Theophilus (means "Lover of God"). He may have been a high official in the Roman government or a man of considerable means. Some believe that this Gospel converted Theophilus, because at the beginning of Luke he is called "Most Excellent Theophilus," and at the beginning of Acts the formal "Most Excellent" is missing, Luke calling him simply Theophilus in a brotherly manner.

The Gospel of Luke stresses a number of important truths:

- The universality and completeness of God's grace, his undeserved love for us underserving sinners.
- Complete forgiveness for the worst of sinners through God's grace.
- Jesus "welcomes sinners and eats with them."
- The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.
- Emphasis on prayer.
- Joy at the announcement of the Good News.
- A special concern for the role of women.
- A special concern for the poor.
- An emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit.
- The term "Son of Man" identifying Jesus as the Savior of all mankind.

Luke gives us a number of liturgical songs:

- Magnificat, the Song of Mary (Chapter 1)
- Benedictus, the Song of Zechariah (Chapter 1)
- Nunc Dimittis, the Song of Simeon (Chapter 2)
- Gloria in Excelsis, the Song of the Angels on Christmas Eve (Chapter 2)

Pastor Zuberbier

After sharing this devotion with your family, take the time to read Luke Chapters 1 & 2.