



As we prepare to journey through the Gospel of Luke during the upcoming season of Lent, it is important to understand what we know of Luke and how his background influences his perspective in his Gospel message.

Of the four Gospels, Luke's was the work of the only Gentile author in the bible. Traditionally thought of to be a physician (Colossians 4:14), Luke was well educated and he writes in the most accomplished Greek, dedicating his work to a man called Theophilus. It is believed that Luke was a friend and former travel companion of St. Paul. Like other ancient historians, the sources he really valued were eye witness accounts from those who had been disciples of Jesus from the beginning of his ministry. Luke also used one very important written resource which was Mark's Gospel. In fact, about a third of Luke's content came from Mark. This is why many of Mark's stories can also be found in Luke (although they are often shortened and rewritten).

The rest of Luke's material is believed to have come from other sources including those from some women who were disciples of Jesus. By drawing together material from written and oral sources, Luke creates a Gospel which tries to present a more comprehensive account of Jesus' teaching. It is because of this approach, that we owe many of the most memorable parables of Jesus to Luke. Parables such as the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector and the Rich Fool only appear in the Gospel of Luke.

Something that also makes Luke's Gospel unique is that there are over a hundred characters who appear in the Gospel. Jesus is always surrounded by crowds of disciples and is constantly meeting individuals that he heals or become his disciples or ask him questions or show him hospitality. So, Luke's Jesus, mixes with everyone, right across the social world of the day, women as well as men. However, above all, Jesus seemed to go out of his way to reach out to those who were left aside and upon the fringes of society. This is what particularly stands out in Luke.

Luke's account of Jesus' ministry is presented from the perspective of one who understands its relevance to people on the margins of society: the poor, the outcast, the barren, the feminine and the non-jew. Luke offers the good news in this manner as a reminder that God's salvation through Jesus has a universal reach. No longer is anyone beyond the pale of salvation.

Furthermore, although each of the Gospels shows God's mercy, Luke emphasises this aspect of the Lord's ministry in radiant fashion. As a physician and drawing from his own experiences of human suffering, Luke highlights the Lord as a "divine" physician and stressed his kindness, tenderness and concern. The mercy of Jesus which Luke presents is about freedom from sin and darkness. It is about a mercy that leads to personal peace, the peace between oneself and God and peace between oneself and others.

Therefore, as we embark upon this Lenten Season with Luke's Gospel, it is fitting that we strive to live out the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy in our daily lives. The Corporal Works of Mercy are those found in Jesus' teaching and provides a model for how we should treat others as if they were Jesus in disguise. The Spiritual Works of Mercy have long been a part of our Christian tradition, appearing in the works of theologians and spiritual writers. They guide us to help others in their spiritual needs. By performing these works of mercy, we witness to God's compassion in our world and the life that flows from it.

Over the coming weeks of Lent, there will be suggestions and words of advice in our bulletin on how we can all live out these merciful acts in our daily lives.

God bless and may the peace of Christ be with you.

Kind regards,

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