

Sunday Circle – May 4, 2025

Throughout Eastertide we will explore the first years of the life of the Church after the Resurrection, as told in the last chapter of the gospel of Luke and in the Acts of the Apostles.

*5/4: From Jesus' Resurrection to Pentecost*

*5/11: How the Church developed in the years immediately after the Resurrection*

*5/18: Examining the life of Peter after the Resurrection*

*5/25: No Sunday Circle*

*6/1: The Holy Spirit and the Church*

## **Background**

Who was Luke the Evangelist?

- Luke was born a Greek and a Gentile although some scholars think he could have been a Hellenistic Jew
- He was a physician. In Colossians 4:14 Paul called him "Luke, the beloved physician"
- He is considered well educated, a skilled writer, and a historian

Luke's Gospel and Acts

- Luke's Gospel includes many stories also found in the gospels of Matthew and Mark
- Approximately half of the content in his gospel is unique to Luke. This includes the birth story of Jesus; the presentation in the temple; the childhood visit to Jerusalem; the miraculous catch of fish; story of Mary and Martha; and the parables of the Good Samaritan, the rich fool, the lost coin, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, the widow and judge, and more.
- It is thought that Luke is primarily writing for a gentile audience and for Hellenistic Jews.
- Women play a prominent role in the gospel of Luke: the Archangel appears to Mary, Mary's cousin Elizabeth is the first to declaration of Jesus as savior, and Jesus appearing to the women first when he is resurrected, and more.
- The Acts of the Apostles is considered a sequel to Luke's gospel.
- Both books are thought to have been written around 80 AD, although the latest events recounted in Acts occurred around 60 AD
- The themes found in Luke-Acts include worship and prayer, food, and ministry to those on the margins of society, salvation as a reality to be experienced today, and the Holy Spirit.
- The Gospel and Acts combined make up 1/4 of the New Testament
- Acts is considered to be a history of the early church.
- Up through Acts chapter 15 Luke writes in the third person.
- In chapter 16 he begins to use the pronoun we indicating when he was present with Paul at various times.

## **From Jesus' Resurrection to Pentecost**

### **Summary of Luke Chapter 24**

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with the apostles encounter two angels who tell them Jesus has risen. They in turn tell the apostles who did not believe them

Peter goes to the grave and sees the linen cloths and the empty tomb.

In Luke two disciples walking to Emmaus are the first to see and speak with Jesus. As they walk Jesus explains all of scripture to them although they do not yet recognize him. Jesus joins them for a meal. When he breaks the bread, the two suddenly recognize him and he vanishes.

They return to the apostles in Jerusalem. As they share their experience, Jesus appears. He shows them his feet, opens their minds to scripture, tells them he will send the Holy Spirit, and brings them with him to Bethany where he ascends to heaven.

Luke chapter 24 tells of the post-resurrection encounters with Jesus and prepares the disciples to step into their new roles as leaders of the church as Jesus

- Shows them his resurrection is bodily
- Explains all of scripture to them
- Tells them that to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit

### **The first 50 days after the resurrection as told in Acts**

#### **Jesus**

- Jesus appeared to the apostles for 40 days between the resurrection and his ascension
- Jesus tells the apostles “you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” and “ you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” shortly before he ascends to heaven

#### **While waiting for the Holy Spirit**

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers. ~Acts 1:12-14

#### **Selecting a new twelfth apostle**

Peter recounts the betrayal of Judas and called for a follower who has been with them since the beginning to join the twelve apostles

They proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. ~Acts 1:23-26

## The Coming of the Holy Spirit – Pentecost

### Acts 2:1-42

1When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. **4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.**

14But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ...

32This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.. **'36Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.**”

37Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” 38Peter said to them, **“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”** 40And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41**So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. 42They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.**

On Pentecost we encounter a new Peter. A man transformed from the frightened person who denied knowing Jesus three times before the crucifixion to a man to stand before thousands of people to declare: This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.. '36Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Peter had been called by Jesus to lead the church and now he is. Peter models for us all how we can answer God's call. We will discuss more about Peter in two weeks.

Why is the coming of the Holy Spirit important to us?

- In John's Gospel Jesus said he would ask God the Father to send the Spirit to abide with us and in us forever. On Pentecost the Spirit came to fulfill this promise.
- The Holy Spirit is God at work in the world now.