

Luke: Chapter 1

The Gospel of Jesus the Savior



Begin each reflection in prayer: Suggested prayer:

Loving God, you called us each by name and gave your only Son to redeem us. Open our hearts to Jesus in the Gospel of Luke

Send us the Holy Spirit to complete the mission of Jesus among us.

Give us the courage to speak his name to those who are close to us. And grant us the generosity to share his love with those who most need it.

We pray that every person may be invited to know Jesus and love him as Savior and Redeemer. May that love transform every element of our society.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

INTRODUCTION: Luke 1:1-4

1:1 Now ¹ many have undertaken to compile an account ² of the things ³ that have been fulfilled ⁴ among us, **1:2** like the accounts ⁵ passed on ⁶ to us by those who were eyewitnesses and servants of the word ⁷ from the beginning. ⁸ **1:3** So ⁹ it seemed good to me as well, ¹⁰ because I have followed ¹¹ all things carefully from the beginning, to write an orderly account ¹² for you, most excellent Theophilus, **1:4** so that you may know for certain ¹³ the things you were taught. ¹⁴

Day 1. (Read Lk Chapter 1)

1. What are your impressions of Luke's beginning chapter? What word or phrase stands out for you?

2. What does Luke identify as his purpose for writing the Gospel? (Luke 1:3-4).

Luke begins his two-volume work addressing it to Theophilus. He wishes to pass on to Theophilus and all who seek Jesus as the Savior a faithful interpretation of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Likewise, he authenticates the mission of the apostles and early Church by showing how this is rooted in the teaching and preaching of Jesus. He shows that the apostles are eyewitnesses to Jesus remarkable life, death and resurrection. Especially, in the final chapter he emphasizes that in the resurrection the apostles and disciples witnessed more than a vision or a spiritual encounter. They were witnesses to the resurrected person of Jesus.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF JESUS:

Luke presents two annunciation and birth stories; John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. John is the prophet who prepares the way for Jesus. He is a key figure because he bridges the promises of God to Israel found in the Old Testament with the beginning of the Reign of God proclaimed by Jesus in the New Testament. From the beginning Luke presents the core of salvation as receiving the "good news" and responding to it. Zechariah's response shows a lack of faith. Mary's response is one of faith and obedience to God's will. The good news is Jesus.

Announcement of the birth of John the Baptist: Luke 1:5-25.

1:5 During the reign ¹⁵ of Herod ¹⁶ king of Judea, there lived a priest named Zechariah who belonged to ¹⁷ the priestly division of Abijah, ¹⁸ and he had a wife named Elizabeth, ¹⁹ who was a descendant of Aaron. ²⁰ **1:6** They ²¹ were both righteous in the sight of God, following ²² all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. ²³ **1:7** But they did not have a child, because Elizabeth was barren, ²⁴ and they were both very old. ²⁵ **1:8** Now ²⁶ while Zechariah ²⁷ was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ²⁸ **1:9** he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, ²⁹ to enter ³⁰ the holy place ³¹ of the Lord and burn incense. **1:10** Now ³² the whole crowd ³³ of people were praying outside at the hour of the incense offering. ³⁴ **1:11** An ³⁵ angel of the Lord, ³⁶ standing on the right side of the altar of incense, appeared ³⁷ to him. **1:12** And Zechariah, visibly shaken when he saw the angel, ³⁸ was seized with fear. ³⁹ **1:13** But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, ⁴⁰ and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son; you ⁴¹ will name him John. ⁴² **1:14** Joy and gladness will come ⁴³ to you, and many will rejoice at ⁴⁴ his birth, ⁴⁵ **1:15** for he will be great in the sight of ⁴⁶ the Lord. He ⁴⁷ must never drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. ⁴⁸ **1:16** He ⁴⁹ will turn ⁵⁰ many of the people ⁵¹ of Israel to the Lord their God. **1:17** And he will go as forerunner before the Lord ⁵² in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, ⁵³ to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him."

1:18 Zechariah ⁵⁴ said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? ⁵⁵ For I am an old man, and my wife is old as well." ⁵⁶ **1:19** The ⁵⁷ angel answered him, "I am Gabriel, who stands ⁵⁸ in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring ⁵⁹ you this good news. **1:20** And now, ⁶⁰ because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, ⁶¹ you will be silent, unable to speak, ⁶² until the day these things take place."**1:21** Now ⁶³ the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they began to wonder ⁶⁴ why he was delayed in the holy place. ⁶⁵ **1:22** When ⁶⁶ he came out, he was not able to speak to them. They ⁶⁷ realized that he had seen a vision ⁶⁸ in the holy place, ⁶⁹ because ⁷⁰ he was making signs to them and remained unable to speak. ⁷¹ **1:23** When his time of service was over, ⁷² he went to his home. **1:24** After some time ⁷³ his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, ⁷⁴ and for five months she kept herself in seclusion. ⁷⁵ She said, ⁷⁶ **1:25** "This is what ⁷⁷ the Lord has done for me at the time ⁷⁸ when he has been gracious to me, ⁷⁹ to take away my disgrace ⁸⁰ among people."⁸¹

Israel has waited four hundred years for a prophet. God has not sent a spokesman for four centuries. Israel had rejected one prophet after another, killing many of them. God has chosen a crucial moment in history to speak and God has chosen a dynamic man to be his Son's messenger, John, flesh and blood cousin to Jesus.

Day 2. (Read Lk: 1:5-25)

1. Contrast Zechariah in Luke 1:11-20 with Abraham in Genesis 15:1-6. What is similar in their stories? What is different?

2. Have you ever responded to God's promises as Zechariah did? What tempts you to do this and how can you overcome this temptation?



Elizabeth & Zechariah

Luke presents the moment in an historical context, *"In the days of King Herod, King of Judea."* Herod the Great ruled for 40 years. The birth of John and Jesus comes at the end of his reign. Luke presents the moment in a religious context, *"There was a priest named Zechariah of the priestly division of Abijah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron named Elizabeth. Elizabeth was barren and both were advanced in years. When he was serving as priest in his division he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense."* Like

Abraham and Sarah, Zechariah and Elizabeth are about to embark on a religious journey to become parents in God's plan for salvation. Zechariah and Elizabeth represent the hopes and prayers of the Old Testament peoples of Israel. However, Zechariah will show himself lacking in faith. He was a priest of the Temple who found that he was only giving lip service to God's presence. Nonetheless, God will intervene and bless the couple with a son who will be his prophet.

The priest, Zechariah, who voiced many prayers, will become mute until his son is named. Then he will pray from his heart the greatness of the God who saves (Lk 1:68-79).

Several themes surface early, which will reappear throughout Luke's writings.

- **"Fear not."** This message echoes throughout Luke's Gospel. Jesus calls his followers to realize that he is with them in all situations and places. The believer is called to live confidently in God's presence.

- **Angels.** The angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah and Mary. The angels will appear to the shepherds at Jesus' birth. An angel will strengthen Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Again the angels will appear at the empty tomb and Ascension of Jesus. Angels are messengers sent by God to accompany and guide his people. The apostles who become Jesus' messengers and missionaries will embrace the role of angels as messengers of good news.
- **Temple of Jerusalem.** The story of Jesus begins where it will end, the holy city of Jerusalem. The Temple is the heart of Jewish faith and life located in Jerusalem. Jesus will become the new Temple in the writings of Luke.



1:14 Joy and gladness will come ⁴³ to you, and many will rejoice at ⁴⁴ his birth, ⁴⁵ 1:15 for he will be great in the sight of ⁴⁶ the Lord. He ⁴⁷ must never drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. ⁴⁸ 1:16 He ⁴⁹ will turn ⁵⁰ many of the people ⁵¹ of Israel to the Lord their God. 1:17 And he will go as forerunner before the Lord ⁵² in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, ⁵³ to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him.”

Day 3: (Re - Read Lk 1:14-17)

1. What will be John's mission?

2. Who has led you to Jesus? How?

Announcement of the birth of Jesus: Luke: 1:26-38.

1:26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, ⁸² the angel Gabriel ⁸³ was sent by ⁸⁴ God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, ⁸⁵ 1:27 to a virgin engaged ⁸⁶ to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of David, ⁸⁷ and the virgin's name was Mary. 1:28 The ⁸⁸ angel ⁸⁹ came ⁹⁰ to her and said, "Greetings, favored one, ⁹¹ the Lord is with you!" ⁹² 1:29 But ⁹³ she was greatly troubled ⁹⁴ by his words and began to wonder about the meaning of this greeting. ⁹⁵ 1:30 So ⁹⁶ the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, ⁹⁷ Mary, for you have found favor ⁹⁸ with God! 1:31 Listen: ⁹⁹ You will become pregnant ¹⁰⁰ and give birth to ¹⁰¹ a son, and you will name him ¹⁰² Jesus. ¹⁰³ 1:32 He ¹⁰⁴ will be great, ¹⁰⁵ and will be called the Son of the Most High, ¹⁰⁶ and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father ¹⁰⁷ David. 1:33 He ¹⁰⁸ will reign over the house of Jacob ¹⁰⁹ forever, and his kingdom will never end." 1:34 Mary ¹¹⁰ said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have not had sexual relations with ¹¹¹ a man?" 1:35 The angel replied, ¹¹² "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the

Most High will overshadow ¹¹³ you. Therefore the child ¹¹⁴ to be born ¹¹⁵ will be holy; ¹¹⁶ he will be called the Son of God. **1:36** “And look, ¹¹⁷ your relative ¹¹⁸ Elizabeth has also become pregnant with ¹¹⁹ a son in her old age – although she was called barren, she is now in her sixth month! ¹²⁰ **1:37** For nothing ¹²¹ will be impossible with God.” **1:38** So ¹²² Mary said, “Yes, ¹²³ I am a servant ¹²⁴ of the Lord; let this happen to me ¹²⁵ according to your word.” ¹²⁶ Then ¹²⁷ the angel departed from her. **1:38** So ¹²² Mary said, “Yes, ¹²³ I am a servant ¹²⁴ of the Lord; let this happen to me ¹²⁵ according to your word.” ¹²⁶ Then ¹²⁷ the angel departed from her.

Mary and Elizabeth **1:39** In those days ¹²⁸ Mary got up and went hurriedly into the hill country, to a town of Judah, ¹²⁹ **1:40** and entered Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. **1:41** When ¹³⁰ Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped ¹³¹ in her ¹³² womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ¹³³ **1:42** She ¹³⁴ exclaimed with a loud voice, ¹³⁵ “Blessed are you among women, ¹³⁶ and blessed is the child ¹³⁷ in your womb! **1:43** And who am I ¹³⁸ that the mother of my Lord should come and visit me? **1:44** For the instant ¹³⁹ the sound of your greeting reached my ears, ¹⁴⁰ the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ¹⁴¹ **1:45** And blessed ¹⁴² is she who believed that ¹⁴³ what was spoken to her by ¹⁴⁴ the Lord would be fulfilled.” ¹⁴⁵

Day 4: (Read Lk 1:26-45)

1. What does Gabriel's message to Mary say about Jesus?

2. What is your favorite title or image of Jesus? Why?

3. What does Mary's visit to Elizabeth say about Mary's missionary spirit?

The scene changes from the temple of Jerusalem to the small, insignificant town of Nazareth, from the solemn ritual of the priest in the temple to the ordinary yet profoundly faithful response of Mary. The change of scenery sends a clear message. God seeks the humble and poor. In them God chooses His instruments and messengers. The faith of young girl Mary is contrasted with the mistrust of the priest Zechariah. The majestic sanctuary of the temple of Jerusalem is contrasted with the living sanctuary of Mary. The stunned silence of Zechariah is contrasted with the joy filled prayer of Mary.

The announcement of Jesus' birth by the angel Gabriel identifies the person and mission of Jesus.

- **Son of David:** In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is a direct descendant of King David through the lineage of Joseph. **Son of David** was a title given for the Messiah who would unify and save God's people. Jesus is identified as the Messiah, Son of David.
- **Son of God:** The angel Gabriel announces that Jesus is the **Son of God**. This is the greatest of titles. Jesus is greater than King David. His mission surpasses the earthly power and reign of David. Jesus is the very Son of God.
- **Kingdom of God:** Jesus is the long promised descendant of David. King David united the 12 tribes of Israel and made God's people a nation with power and influence. Jesus is both identified as the Son of David and the Son of God. Jesus will usher a new kingdom of God's presence and justice that will never end. Jesus is sent to initiate the Kingdom of God.

Day 5: (Read Lk 1: 46-55)



Mary's Hymn of Praise

1:46 And Mary ¹⁴⁶ said, ¹⁴⁷ "My soul exalts ¹⁴⁸ the Lord, ¹⁴⁹ **1:47** and my spirit has begun to rejoice ¹⁵⁰ in God my Savior, **1:48** because he has looked upon the humble state of his servant. ¹⁵¹ For ¹⁵² from now on ¹⁵³ all generations will call me blessed, ¹⁵⁴ **1:49** because he who is mighty ¹⁵⁵ has done great things for me, and holy is his name; **1:50** from ¹⁵⁶ generation to generation he is merciful ¹⁵⁷ to those who fear ¹⁵⁸ him. **1:51** He has demonstrated power ¹⁵⁹ with his arm; he has scattered those whose pride wells up from the sheer arrogance ¹⁶⁰ of their hearts. **1:52** He has brought down the mighty ¹⁶¹ from their thrones, and has lifted up those of lowly position; ¹⁶² **1:53** he has filled the hungry with good things, ¹⁶³ and has sent the rich away empty. ¹⁶⁴ **1:54** He has helped his servant Israel, remembering ¹⁶⁵ his mercy, ¹⁶⁶ **1:55** as he promised ¹⁶⁷ to our ancestors, ¹⁶⁸ to Abraham and to his descendants ¹⁶⁹ forever." **1:56** So ¹⁷⁰ Mary stayed with Elizabeth ¹⁷¹ about three months ¹⁷² and then returned to her home.

<p>1. Read Mary's prayer, the Magnificat. (Lk 1: 47-56). What strikes you about the prayer?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>2. Can you identify with Mary's prayer? How or when have you felt like Mary in this prayer?</p> <hr/> <hr/>



The Birth of John

1:57 Now the time came ¹⁷³ for Elizabeth to have her baby, ¹⁷⁴ and she gave birth to a son. **1:58** Her ¹⁷⁵ neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown ¹⁷⁶ great mercy to her, and they rejoiced ¹⁷⁷ with her. **1:59** On ¹⁷⁸ the eighth day ¹⁷⁹ they came to circumcise the child, and they wanted to name ¹⁸⁰ him Zechariah after his father. **1:60** But ¹⁸¹ his mother replied, ¹⁸² “No! He must be named ¹⁸³ John.” ¹⁸⁴ **1:61** They ¹⁸⁵ said to her, “But ¹⁸⁶ none of your relatives bears this name.” ¹⁸⁷ **1:62** So ¹⁸⁸ they made signs to the baby’s ¹⁸⁹ father, ¹⁹⁰ inquiring what he wanted to name his son. ¹⁹¹ **1:63** He ¹⁹² asked for a writing tablet ¹⁹³ and wrote, ¹⁹⁴ “His name is John.” And they were all amazed. ¹⁹⁵ **1:64** Immediately ¹⁹⁶ Zechariah’s ¹⁹⁷ mouth was opened and his tongue ¹⁹⁸ released, ¹⁹⁹ and he spoke, blessing God.

1:65 All ²⁰⁰ their neighbors were filled with fear, and throughout the entire hill country of Judea all these things were talked about. **1:66** All ²⁰¹ who heard these things ²⁰² kept them in their hearts, ²⁰³ saying, “What then will this child be?” ²⁰⁴ For the Lord’s hand ²⁰⁵ was indeed with him.

Zechariah’s Praise and Prediction

1:67 Then ²⁰⁶ his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, ²⁰⁷ **1:68** “Blessed ²⁰⁸ be the Lord God of Israel, because he has come to help ²⁰⁹ and has redeemed ²¹⁰ his people. **1:69** For ²¹¹ he has raised up ²¹² a horn of salvation ²¹³ for us in the house of his servant David, ²¹⁴ **1:70** as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from long ago, ²¹⁵ **1:71** that we should be saved ²¹⁶ from our enemies, ²¹⁷ and from the hand of all who hate us. **1:72** He has done this ²¹⁸ to show mercy ²¹⁹ to our ancestors, ²²⁰ and to remember his holy covenant ²²¹ – **1:73** the oath ²²² that he swore to our ancestor ²²³ Abraham. This oath grants ²²⁴ **1:74** that we, being rescued from the hand of our ²²⁵ enemies, may serve him without fear, ²²⁶ **1:75** in holiness and righteousness ²²⁷ before him for as long as we live. ²²⁸ **1:76** And you, child, ²²⁹ will be called the prophet ²³⁰ of the Most High. ²³¹ For you will go before ²³² the Lord to prepare his ways, ²³³ **1:77** to give his people knowledge of salvation ²³⁴ through the forgiveness ²³⁵ of their sins. **1:78** Because of ²³⁶ our God’s tender mercy ²³⁷ the dawn ²³⁸ will break ²³⁹ upon us from on high **1:79** to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, ²⁴⁰ to guide our feet into the way ²⁴¹ of peace.” **1:80** And the child kept growing ²⁴² and becoming strong ²⁴³ in spirit, and he was in the wilderness ²⁴⁴ until the day he was revealed ²⁴⁵ to Israel.

3. Read Zechariah's prayer, the Benedictus. (Lk 1:67-80). What impresses you about this prayer?

Mary's role:

Mary participates fully in the God's plan of salvation. Her unique place of honor lies not in the extraordinary privilege of being the mother of Jesus. It flows from her faith, which recognizes God's will and puts it into action. She is obedient to God's Will above all things. She is the new Eve. As the angel drove Adam and Eve from the Garden of Paradise because of their disobedience to God, the angel Gabriel finds in Mary the humble servant who will be completely obedient to God's Will. *"I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say."* (Lk 1: 38). Through her faithful response she will open the way for the birth of the Savior and a new creation for all humanity.

Mary's special place in history is memorialized in the angel's greeting, *"Hail favored one! The Lord is with you."* (Lk 1:28) and in Elizabeth's greeting, *"Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb."* (Lk 1:42). And in her own prayer filled response, *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit finds joy in God my Savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold from now on all ages will call me blessed!"* (Lk 1:47-50). Mary is a true believer whose faith is contrasted to the disbelief of Zechariah. This same testimony of faith will be connected to the first witnesses of the Resurrection in the Acts of the Apostles.

Fr. Judge: Mary the Mother of God

The title that makes Mary so great, the grace that explains her blessedness is that she is the Mother of Jesus Christ. These are tremendous words. My tongue should stammer and falter as I pronounce them—Mother of God!

Mary was his mother, truly his mother. All of you know what a mother is, though speech finds it difficult to explain... Who is it that clings so closely to a child as a mother? Upon whom is the child more dependent than upon his mother? What today is the great, wonderful inspiring power of the world, but the mother? Mary was his mother! When we speak of the Mother of Jesus many of our small ideas of motherhood are shattered because she was miraculously the Mother of God by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit. "And the Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the Holy which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." (Lk 1:35).

When we say the Mother of God, we say everything.



Fr. Judge: Mission sermon. Dec. 6,1918