

The Service of the Lord's Day

25 November 2018 - Christ the King

Worship Leader – Rev Dr Barry Brown

We Gather to Worship God

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE WURUNDJERI PEOPLE

PLEASE STAND AS THE BIBLE IS CARRIED IN

GREETING (Revelation 1: 4b-5) Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

CALL TO WORSHIP

WE SING "*Rejoice, the Lord is King....*" TiS 215

1

Rejoice, the Lord is King;
your Lord and King adore;
let all give thanks, and sing,
and triumph evermore;
*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice.
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!*

2

Jesus the Saviour reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when he had purged our stains,
he took his seat above:

3

His kingdom cannot fail,
he rules o'er earth and heaven;
the keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus given:

4

He sits at God's right hand,
till all his foes submit,
and bow to his command,
and fall beneath his feet:

5

Rejoice in glorious hope;
Jesus the judge shall come,
and take his servants up
to their eternal home:
*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;
the trump of God shall sound, Rejoice!*

PRAYER OF ADORATION and CONFESSION

We Listen to God's Word:

AN EARLY WORD and PRAYER WITH THE CHILDREN

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO LUKE-ACTS

Introduction to Luke-Acts

LUKE is the Principal Gospel for the liturgical year starting next Sunday, the first Sunday in Advent. Luke and Acts are two volumes by the same evangelist, with the same key themes. Readings are from Acts during the Season of Easter 2019, that is, for nine (9) weeks culminating at Pentecost.

These New Testament books are by the same Evangelist and begin with a similar salutation: **“Dear Theophilus”** (Luke 1:3 & Acts 1:1). Some think Theophilus was a sympathetic Roman official. Others think this simply a way of address those who are **beloved of God**, which is the meaning of *Theophilus*.

The two books are meant to be read in sequence. Together they form 27% of the whole New Testament. Some scholars think there may have been a Third Book that has since been lost. Others consider this was probably an unfulfilled intention of the evangelist.

Traditionally these two New Testament books have been attributed to Luke - ‘The Beloved Physician,’ the sometimes companion of Paul. The Evangelist was clearly a Gentile Christian with Jewish connections, and with a focus on the Mission to the Gentiles. He was a highly skilled writer with polished Greek. His writings seem to be an ‘*Apologia*’ for Christianity. Its original readers/hearers are likely to be a Christian community at Caesarea or Antioch (Syria). It is best dated around the mid-80s CE, say 85 CE.

It is possible to detect Luke’s principal sources. He uses Mark’s Gospel as a general framework, as did Matthew. Of Mark’s 661 verses, Luke uses 350. There is another source, mainly containing ‘sayings of Jesus,’ which Luke uses in common with Matthew, but sometimes varied in location and context. For convenience, scholars have dubbed this source ‘Q’. Another major source, accounting for around half of Luke’s Gospel, is peculiar to Luke and is identified as ‘Special L.’

Luke seems to have had ready access to the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, (the Septuagint LXX - translated by 70 scribes). Overall in Luke’s writing there are nine (9) explicit quotations from Isaiah and more than one hundred (100+) verbal allusions. The only book of Scripture referred to more frequently is the Book of Psalms. The accuracy of Luke’s quotations from Isaiah, compared with extant copies of the LXX, suggests that Luke had ready access to Isaiah LXX scrolls, if not his own copies. Luke includes more extended quotations from Isaiah than from any other scriptural book.

Luke 3:4-6	Isaiah 40:3-5
Luke 4:18-19	Isaiah 61:1-2
Acts 7:49-50	Isaiah 66:1-2
Acts 8:32-33	Isaiah 53:7-8
Acts 28:26-27	Isaiah 6:9-10

Luke clearly connect the life and ministry of Jesus with themes in the Book of Isaiah, and he also interprets Isaiah through the life and ministry of Jesus.

Each of the four New Testament Gospels has a Prologue by which the main themes and contexts for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are introduced. These Prologues differ, but each is important to understanding what follows. Luke (like Matthew in a different way) uses the Birth Narrative as a means of introducing the Key Themes of both Luke and Acts.

This morning the Proclamation will be based on Eight Key Themes. Over the Advent – Christmas season, and throughout 2019, the Year of Luke, you will see these themes appearing again and again.

BIBLE READINGS:

2 Samuel 23:1 – 4

Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man whom God exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the favourite of the Strong One of Israel:

The spirit of the LORD speaks through me, his word is upon my tongue. The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.

Luke 4:16 – 30

When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, *“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”* All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, *“Is not this Joseph’s son?”* He said to them, *“Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’”* And he said, *“Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”* When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

WE SING *“Hail to the Lord’s anointed...”* TiS 275 (1, 2 & 4)

1

Hail to the Lord’s anointed,
great David’s greater Son;
hail, in the time appointed,
his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
to let the captive free,
and take away transgression,
and rule in equity.

2

He comes with help and mercy
to those who suffer wrong,
to raise the poor and needy,
and bid the weak be strong,
to give them songs for sighing,

their darkness turn to light,
whose souls condemned and dying
were precious in his sight.

4

Kings shall fall down before him,
and gold and incense bring;
all nations shall adore him,
his praise all people sing;
to him shall prayer unceasing
and daily vows ascend;
his kingdom still increasing,
a kingdom without end.

A Proclamation based upon Luke's Overture – Key Themes in Luke-Acts

[The following is a precis of the sermon preached by Rev Dr Barry Brown 25 November 2018]

Introduction

Once a month a group of six retired ministers meet over lunch. A few weeks ago the conversation turned to the difference between a lecture and a sermon (two are former professors). Basically we agreed that a lecture was a means of conveying information, possibly featuring some new ideas or understandings. A sermon, on the other hand, is a proclamation based on Biblical foundations, usually a passage or a text. The proclamation is intended to do more than just provide insight and information; it is intended to elicit a response to the message. Today's proclamation is intended to do both. I hope to provide information about Luke's Gospel (and Acts) that will enable informed hearing of the readings and proclamations each Sunday during the 'Year of Luke.' I also want to elicit a response from you to the Biblical text – in this case to the Birth Narratives in Luke 1 & 2 (the Prologue – Overture) and, by extension, the whole of Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

Today, in the Church's Calendar, is the last Sunday of the liturgical year. Next Sunday, Advent Sunday, we commence a new liturgical year. This last Sunday is sometimes known as 'Christ the King' or 'The Rule/Reign of Christ.' I'm not sure that these designations relate correctly to the meaning of the Gospels. It might be better, following Luke's Gospel, to attend to the assertion of Jesus that he is '**The Lord's Anointed.**' This reflects our three readings today; and it reminds us of the account in last Sunday's reading of Samuel, acting for the Lord, as the anointer of God's chosen leader.

I now reflect briefly on eight (8) Key Themes in Luke-Acts, each of which is introduced in Luke's Prologue – Overture – The infant narrative in the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel:-

Salvation-Healing-Wholeness

These three words: Salvation/Deliverance, Healing and Wholeness are closely related in Luke's Gospel. While they often refer to individuals, they also have a corporate and missional sense and speak of God's 'Past, Present and Future' purposes. The notion of a *Theology of Hope* (Moltmann) has deep roots in Luke-Acts, and this is also reflected in our core UCA theological document, the Basis of Union.

The Universal Gospel

Luke has a strong emphasis on the ministry of Jesus, and the purposes of God, being for *all* people. It is a Gospel for the Gentiles (non-Jews) as well as the Jews. Note that in his Genealogy of Jesus Luke traces Jesus' ancestry right back to Adam (Lk 3:38), whereas Matthew begins with Abraham. This notion of the 'Universal Gospel' (offered for all) informs and shapes our relations with other people, our mission, and our sense of social justice for all.

The initiating activity of the Holy Spirit

Luke makes a point, in the birth narrative, of telling that the insights and actions of Elizabeth, Mary, Zechariah and Simeon are all directed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit rests upon Jesus' ministry throughout the Gospel record; and the Acts of the Apostles is so full of the same theme that some have suggested it is better to refer to Luke's second volume as 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit.' We are

reminded that the Christian life begins and exists as a gift of God's Spirit who empowers, gifts, equips and enables us to engage in both personal and corporate Christian worship, witness and serve.

The 'Journey' motif

Luke's account of the birth of Jesus makes a feature of the 'journey' made by Mary and Joseph to the village of Bethlehem (David's town). The Gospel story is then framed by the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. Acts is the story of the progression of the mission of Christians, led by the Spirit, from Jerusalem to Rome – to the centre of the known world. Acts 1:8 is a key verse: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth."*

The concluding paragraph of our core UCA theological document, the Basis of Union, reminds us that as individual Christians and as a Church, we are, *"a pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal; here the Church does not have a continuing city but seeks one to come"* (para 4); and that we belong *"to the people of God on the way to the promised end"* (para 18).

Prayer and Faithful Waiting

Luke makes much of the importance of prayer and waiting. This is echoed in *Mary's Song*, and especially in the story of old Simeon and Anna who have been prayerfully waiting in the temple for the fulfilment of God's promises. In Acts the soon-to-be-Apostles are instructed to 'wait.' They then spent time in the Jerusalem temple praying and waiting – until Pentecost, when they received the Holy Spirit, releasing them and empowering them for mission.

The role of Women (male & female characters)

May I suggest that this Christmas, you look out for how much of the story of Jesus features the role of women – Mary, Elizabeth, Anna. Men are not left out, but Luke carefully stresses the importance of women in the life of Jesus. He also makes a feature of 'pairing' stories of both women and men (eg the parables of the lost coin and the lost son in chapter 15). He records that it was a group of women who accompanied Jesus and the disciples that *"provided for them out of their resources"* (Luke 8:3). Similar features appear in Acts, and it is worth noting that most of the house churches that were established in the mission to the Gentiles were hosted by women, some of whom were recognized as leaders (eg Priscilla – usually named before her husband Aquila). I am proud to be part of church tradition that in my life-times has recognized and values the leadership role of women as well as men.

The Poor and Outcast

None of the Gospels stress the importance of the poor and the outcast as much as Luke's does. Whether it be by race, poverty, medical condition, past faults, gender or other conditions, Luke reminds us the Jesus attends to the outcast - the excluded. The Gospel, according to Luke, and the mission of the Christian church, is both universal and inclusive – precisely because of who and what Jesus said and did.

And this emphasis is one that has, in the past, informed and shaped the work and mission of our faith tradition. And as our context for mission changes, we do well to keep this inclusiveness and focus on the poor and the outcast in our minds, our hearts, and our actions.

Joy (and 'rejoicing')

It is fitting to close with this theme. It is worth remembering that Joy is of much greater value than being happy. Happiness is an emotional response to the happenstances of life, which can be 'hazardous.' Joy is the deeper, more abiding spiritual quality that wells up within and finds expression in rejoicing. Note the opening words of Mary's song: *"My spirit magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour"* (Luke 1:47). Such joy does not abound because of the absence of troubles – but abides in the midst of troubles and hardship.

As we celebrate Advent and Christmas in coming weeks, and as we attend to Luke's Gospel in the coming 12 months – look for the stories of Joy and Gladness, and allow these to shape our lives. In so doing, the hymn we will no-doubt sing several times in the coming week will render true:

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
let earth receive its king.....*

*Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns
let us our songs employ...*

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love...*

We Respond to God's Word:

THE OFFERING IS COLLECTED AND PRESENTED

THE OFFERING PRAYER and SONG

Prayer:

Loving God - we continually seek your strength and comfort. You often free us from our unfounded fears, and provide us with wonderful examples of your love. In response, we offer these gifts, along with ourselves. We pray that each will help provide something, that touches people with your extraordinary love. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen

TIS 342 (verse 4)

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small:
love so amazing, so divine
demands my soul, my life, my all.

CHURCH NEWS, NOTICES and SHARING TIME

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE and THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, [ELLC]
***hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours now and for ever. Amen.***

THE CHILDREN SHOW AND TELL OF THEIR ACTIVITY

The Sending Forth of the People of God

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation 1:4b – 8

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds;
every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

WORDS OF MISSION, BLESSING and SENDING, ending:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:
In the name of Christ. Amen.

WE SING "*Glory be to God the Father...*" TiS 142

1

Glory be to God the Father,
glory be to God the Son,
glory be to God the Spirit,
God almighty, Three in One!
Glory, glory, glory, glory
while eternal ages run.

2

Glory be to him who loved us,
washed us from each spot and stain;
glory be to him who bought us,
made us kings with him to reign;
glory, glory, glory, glory
to the Lamb that once was slain.

3

Glory to the king of angels,
glory to the church's king,
glory to the king of nations,
heaven and earth, your praises bring;
glory, glory, glory, glory
to the King of Glory bring.

4

'Glory, blessing, praise eternal!
thus the choir of angels sings;
'Honour, riches, power, dominion!
thus its praise creation brings;
glory, glory, glory, glory,
glory to the King of kings!

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