

Seeing with New Eyes



A study guide for Luke's Gospel

Welcome to this study guide on Luke's gospel!

The good news according to Luke (the full name of the book) is a beautifully crafted narrative account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It's packed to the brim with wonder, amazement, confusion, joy, sadness and revelation. This study guide is in no way comprehensive, but will hopefully help you to experience the story with fresh eyes.

In the Church of England, we often like to chop up and mix around the gospel accounts. That's not a bad thing on it's own – it can help us to really understand each passage on its own. But it's also not how the book was designed to be read. It was originally supposed to be read cover to cover, much like a regular book.

The aim of this booklet is to help you experience Luke's gospel as a single work. To see and understand the themes running throughout, and to travel the emotional rollercoaster that the characters in the book went along. To that end, most of the studies in here are based on multiple verses which are scattered throughout the book.

So how should you use this booklet?

The studies here are designed to help tie the whole book together, and so work when best when accompanied by a complete reading, from cover to cover. You could do that before starting this booklet or after, or even both (all the quotes we use are from the good news translation).

We suggest that you go through these studies in order. They are designed to help you to understand how different parts of the book fit into the whole, to feel and live the emotional experience that was originally intended, and to see these stories with fresh eyes and amazement, much like the original readers.

When you next read a part of Luke's gospel after you've been through this booklet, try to remember how it fits into the journey you've been on here. Try to remember how it made you feel and how it fits into the bigger picture, and let that guide your reading.

So go ahead and start reading, and try to really live out these stories. The words of Luke's gospel are a revelation from God, and He's waiting eagerly to make them shine off the page and into your heart.

Who is Luke?

The gospel of Luke is the third gospel in the Bible. It is one of the three synoptic gospels which means it shares some material with both Matthew and Mark.

To read Luke's gospel it is helpful to know three things about the gospel:

1. Who was Luke?
2. Why did Luke write the gospel and for whom?
3. When and where did Luke write his gospel?

Who was Luke?

In church tradition the author of this gospel is called Luke and in church tradition he is also accredited to be the author of the Acts of the Apostles. There are quite a few hints throughout the New Testament on who Luke was. Luke is referenced in Colossians, in Timothy and in Philemon. From these we can learn a little about Luke: he knew Paul, he was a gentile and he was a doctor.

Why did Luke write the gospel and for whom?

Luke is a gospel written by a gentile, a non-Jew predominantly for a gentile audience. It is written for those without knowledge of the Old Testament, for those who the message of one God is a new one. It is

therefore a gospel that doesn't dwell heavily on the prophecies of the Old Testament and emphasises the universalism of Jesus' message. In the opening chapters we see shepherds arrive at the birth of Jesus: those that are called to witness the birth of the son of God are the poor and the downtrodden. This is a theme that is seen throughout Luke's gospel.

When did Luke write his gospel?

The most straightforward answer to this question is: we don't know. But, theologians think that Luke was written after Mark's gospel and before the gospel of John. It seems likely that Luke had read Mark's gospel and used it to write his own. This means that Luke's gospel was most likely written in the latter half of the first century A.D.

Catriona Inglis

Songs of Praise

The start of Luke's gospel is littered with songs. So what's going on here? Well, these songs are a way for people to express their feelings. All three of the songs we're looking at here are songs of joy, and they're bursting with this emotion and show a real outpouring of this joy into the world.

First read Luke 1:46-56

This song was sung by Mary soon after her encounter with an angel. The first few verses are just a declaration of happiness and praise of God. Read verses 46-50 again and really take in the joy that's bursting off the page.

The next part of the song then reflects on God's character, and echoes the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. God has "lifted up the lowly" and "filled the hungry with good things," declares Mary. This is a declaration of God's goodness for everyone. Here is a God we can really celebrate!

The song finishes by talking about promises and ancient characters. Although this might seem a bit strange to us, it would have been very familiar to the original readers. Jews in the first Century were living under oppression and uncertainty, and waiting for God to fulfil his ancient promises. And here, in this

glorious song, is the first glimmer of hope: the promise has been fulfilled.

Now read Luke 1:67-80

This song was sung by Zechariah, celebrating the birth of his son. Zechariah had just endured 9 months of silence, and was probably bursting to tell his friends and family the amazing news he'd heard. And now that he can finally speak again, all that emotion bursts out in song.

Zechariah starts off by talking about these ancient promises and their fulfilment. And notice how he says this has happened – God has come to his people. This isn't a God who stays at a distance and watches our struggles, it's a God who has come right into the middle of our lives to help us.

Zechariah talks a great deal about what Jesus will do – rescue us from our enemies, set us free, make us holy, forgive our sins and guide us into peace. This an astonishing picture of what God's kingdom will look like. Read over this song again and try to feel



the amazement that the first listeners and readers would have felt at such incredible proclamations.

Now read Luke 2:29-32

This final song was sung by Simeon, shortly after seeing the baby Jesus. He was probably quite old, and had spent most of his life waiting for this moment, waiting on God's promise. And just like so many other promises, that promise was fulfilled to him on this day in the temple.

“Let your servant go in peace” – for many years, Simeon has been laboured by anxiety, worry and uncertainty. And after seeing this baby, he knows that everything will be alright. He might not know how, but he trusts in God's goodness, seen in the face of a baby, and that overcomes all his fears.

Look at Simeon's description of Jesus in verse 32 – “a light to reveal your will.” Amid all the other celebrations and excitement we've seen, this is the heart of the matter. This little baby is the light of God in the world.

When you next have time, read from 1:1 to 2:38, and as you do so, let these songs come alive for you, and really try to feel the emotion behind them. Then remember that joy as you read on.

James Cochran

Temptation & Scripture

Read Luke 4:1-13.

In this passage, we encounter the devil tempting Jesus just before he begins his ministry in Galilee. We're told in v. 1 that Jesus is "full of the Holy Spirit" – he has just been baptised by John (Luke 3: 21-22). What an amazing 'high-point' spiritual experience! But then Jesus is led straight into the 'low-point' wilderness to fast, and he naturally ends up hungry (v.2). Where might you have felt high and low points of your own faith? Perhaps returning to the normality of school after an exciting Christian festival? Having a great moment at church on a Sunday, then finding yourself struggling the day after?

In this passage, the devil tempts Jesus 3 times. Let's look at each scenario in turn:

Now read Luke 3-4 : stones into bread

What do you notice? Here, the devil uses Jesus' hunger as a form of temptation. He taps into Jesus' basic desire – we all like to eat! But if you were sitting next to Jesus right now, at this point in the passage, what would you say to him? Why would you tell him not to give in to this temptation? Isn't eating a good thing? Perhaps the eating isn't the temptation here; perhaps instead, the devil is trying to tempt Jesus to

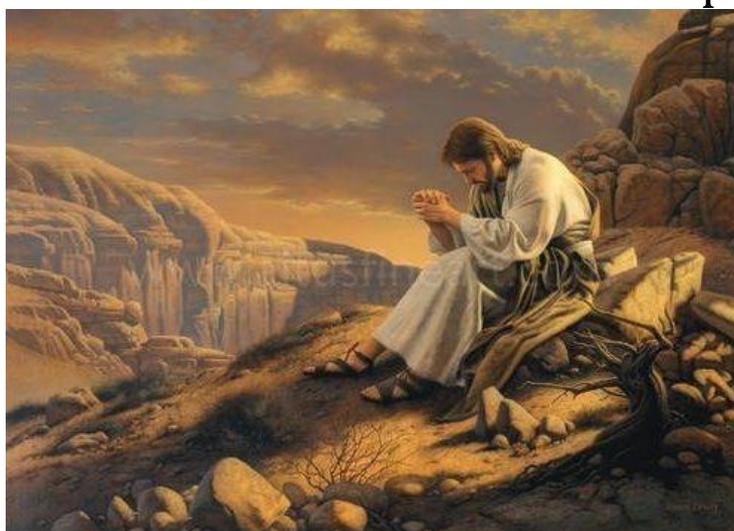
forget his need of God, to perform the first miracle in Luke's Gospel for wrong reasons ... ?

But how does Jesus respond? He quotes scripture (Deuteronomy 8:3)! Jesus uses the promises and the commands in scripture to remind himself that it is God who gives him all that he needs.

Now read Luke 5-8 : all the kingdoms of the world

What stands out? How is this different from the last scenario? Here the devil tries a different tact. Instead of tempting Jesus to do a miracle, he is offering to do a miracle for Jesus – giving him all “glory and authority” ... but only if Jesus worships him!

But how, again, does Jesus respond? He quotes Deuteronomy 6:1 – again using the commands of scripture. But note how Jesus doesn't refute the fact that the devil could indeed give him all that he says. That's because the real temptation here is not about



getting all the “glory and authority” – it's to worship the devil, and to forget God. That's what Jesus counters in his use of scripture.

And finally, read Luke 9-12 : will the angels catch you?

What do you notice is different in this last scenario? Here it is the devil who quotes scripture first - he's using God's words against him, just like in Genesis 3:1 - "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'". He twists the meaning of scripture to tempt Jesus to forget God and doubt his identity as God's son.

But how, again (!), does Jesus respond? He quotes Deuteronomy 6:16. Jesus knows scripture so well that he knows that what the devil is saying is a twisted message. How does this challenge you in how much you know the Bible?

In this passage, we see Jesus face many of the types/and forms of temptations that we might experience ourselves. But despite these temptations looking different on the surface, perhaps they are all alike? Perhaps all temptations try to make us forget who God really is, and how much we really need him. Do you agree?

And having read this, does Jesus now feel more or less relatable to you? What could you do that might make you more like Jesus this coming week?

Tom Musson

Who is Jesus?

Read Luke 4:36, 7:49 and 8:25

In all three of these passages, we see people asking who Jesus is and where his power comes from. Go back to each passage and have a read of the verses just before. What do you notice?

Each time this question is asked, it's straight after Jesus has either performed some kind of miracle, or claimed to have done something amazing. Now imagine you're reading this account for the first time, and you've never heard of Jesus before. How would you feel when you heard about these miracles? Amazed? Confused? Perhaps you would find yourself asking, "Who is this?"

In this early part of the gospel, Luke is trying to build that sense of wonder amazement. He's inviting you, the reader, to ask who this person might really be.

Now read Luke 9:20

Building on this crescendo of suspense, we finally have an answer about who this person is. God's Messiah. Again, imagine you're encountering these stories for the first time. Is that an answer that seems to make sense of what you've already read? Does it help you to understand the power and authority that Jesus seems to have? Or does it seem absurd?

Either way, this is Luke's answer to the question he's been building in your mind. After all these signs and wonders, he's telling us that this is the Messiah. And for his original readers, this had a profound implication – that this person was going to do far more amazing signs.

After this, it's a long time before the question is asked again. We've been told who Jesus is, and are invited to watch his ministry from a place of understanding.

Now read Luke 23:39

“Aren't you the Messiah?” The question has returned, but it's now a challenge, questioning the power of a man who is being crucified. Again, imagine you're reading this for the first time. Do you find yourself wondering the same thing, asking whether he wasn't



the Messiah after all? How do you make sense of everything that's happened?

This moment, as Jesus is crucified, is when he really achieves what he came to earth for. When he truly shows himself to be God's Messiah. But for the criminal, and for many others, it seemed like a defeat. At this point in the gospel, the reader is invited to make up their own mind. Perhaps, like the criminal, you shrug it all off and ignore him. Or perhaps, you take him at face value. To do so requires understanding why God's Messiah would allow himself to be crucified, a task that the surrounding chapters will help you with.

The last chapter helps us to make sense of the cross and brings new hope. But, as Luke finishes this work, the reader is left with one important, life-changing question to ask themselves.

Who is Jesus?

James Cochran

Praying with Jesus

Praying isn't always easy. I, for one, often feel uncertain about how to pray, when to pray and what it is OK to pray about. Luckily, we have the example of Jesus praying in the gospel and we can learn from His example and teaching. Luke tells us where and how Jesus prayed; he records the words Jesus gave us to help when we get stuck about what to pray about.

Start by reading Luke 6:12-13. Where, when and why does Jesus pray?

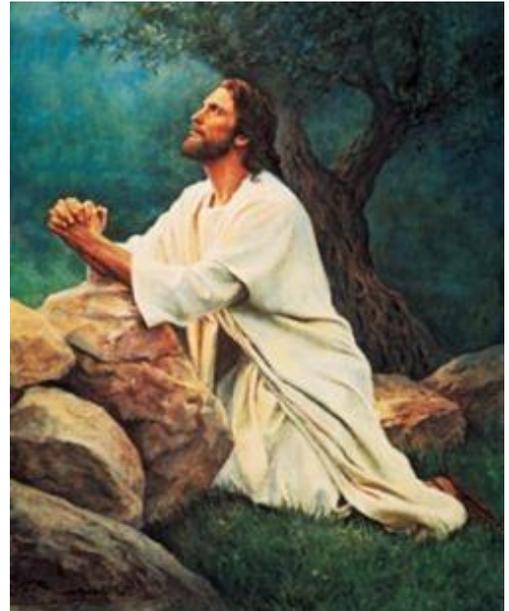
Here Jesus prays alone, he goes off, away from other people. He has a big decision to make, and it is as though he is uncertain and takes his doubts or thoughts about who to choose as disciples to God, his father. Jesus is patient, - he prays all night to God, waiting for the guidance he seeks. Then in the morning he is confident in his choice! Have you ever been uncertain about something or the way ahead, the right path to take? We can trust God will guide us too.

If we don't hear straight away, we can keep praying for guidance. Jesus tells a funny story about a neighbour demanding bread in **Luke 11:5**: 'if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless

persistence'! Don't give up!
'Everyone who seeks, finds. And
to everyone who knocks, the
door will be opened'.

What else can we pray for? What can we ask for?

Let's look at Jesus suggestions in
the prayer he gave us: **Verses
11.1-4**



We should put God at the centre of our lives, keep his name holy, and pray for his kingdom. We should ask for the basic necessities of life, for forgiveness when we've done things wrong, for the strength to resist doing things we know are wrong, and for the ability to forgive others. Whenever I struggle to find the words to pray, I always find comfort in turning to the Lord's prayer.

In **Luke 11.13** Jesus is quite clear about what our personal requests should be – not a bucket list – its for the gift of the Holy Spirit. That's all we need to guide, support, encourage us.

Have a read over the next verses: **Luke 18:9-14**

See that God isn't interested in public proclamation, or people convinced of their own superiority and

right to blessings! He's there for us when we feel we are not good enough, when we've messed things up and want to be forgiven, when we humbly acknowledge we need help.

Can we pray for ourselves?

Yes, Jesus did! Have a look at: **Luke 22:41-45**

Jesus is faced with his crucifixion, knowing that this was what God had planned, yet is human enough not be able to cope with it, and prays '*Father, if you will, take this cup of suffering away from me.*' He is so anxious and upset that his sweat is like drops of blood, but the answer he finds can help us too when we pray. '*Not my will, however, but your will be done.*'

I think that Jesus teaches us a huge amount about prayer. He says to find a quiet time and a quiet place; to honour our God and seek his kingdom; to ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit; to ask for forgiveness but also share all our worries and ask for anything we want! I think it's important to remember though that God sees much more clearly than we do. He has a plan for all of us and he knows best. So perhaps always end your prayers like Jesus - **Thy will be done.**

Edward Sleath

Jesus and the Old Testament Law

Luke does not use the Old Testament, or Old Testament law in his gospel very often. Luke is a gentile writing a gospel for other gentiles so he does not assume his readers will have a great deal of knowledge about the Jewish scriptures. This means that when Luke does reference the Old Testament he must consider it to be important.

Read Luke 6:1-11

What is your first impression of this passage? How does it make you feel?

This passage describes Jesus healing on two different Sabbaths and also references David, an Old Testament king. For us, Christians in the 21st century, reading this passage, we might find it strange that the Pharisees were so caught up in following the sabbath – that they seemed to value following the rules more than human lives. However, for Jesus' contemporaries following the sabbath is what set them apart in a world that was hostile to them.

On the Jewish Sabbath, the Jews aren't allowed to do any form of work. The disciples picking heads of grain would have been considered work, as would Jesus' healing of the man with a shrivelled hand.

In this story Jesus says “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath”. The Son of Man is a title Luke uses to describe Jesus. Jesus also tells the story of a time where David broke the rules, eating some consecrated bread. David, as one of the Kings of Israel was the exception to the rule. In this passage Jesus is also claiming to be the exception to the rule.

Through this passage Luke tells us who Jesus is. He is the exception to the rule, he has the power and the authority to break the rules of the sabbath.

Now read Luke 13:14-17 and Luke 14:1-6

These are two more examples of Jesus healing on the sabbath. How do these passages make you feel?

In the first passage Luke tells us who Jesus is by showing us he has the authority to break the rules of the Sabbath, and he directly questions the Pharisees.

What might Luke be trying to tell us about Jesus here?

In these passages Jesus puts people over the law. It is more important to him that he helps people than that he follows the law. This tells us what the purpose of the law is for us as Christians. The law is important as it helps us to love each other and to love God. But it should never come before doing those things.

Catriona Inglis

The cost and reward of following Jesus

Let's start by having a look at Luke 5:11 and 28.

Both these verses simply express how Jesus' followers "left everything and followed him" after he had demonstrated his power and grace, through making Simon Peter's nets full of fish and eating with Levi, who was a tax collector and therefore considered a 'sinner'. In our world, we need firm evidence to persuade us to trust something or someone, so the simplicity of the disciples' response



here is striking. But it is clear that they understood the reward of following Jesus far outweighed the cost. In each scenario (for Simon Peter and Levi), what do you think the cost of following Jesus is? What is the reward? We will revisit this at the end of the study.

Now read Luke 14:25-27

Jesus is telling us not to love anyone more than Him. If you like, Jesus is number one in the list of who you care about. So in these verses, we are learning more about what the cost of being a disciple is. We must of course still care and love those around us, but we need to prioritise Jesus in our lives. In a way, “father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters” is referring to our “earthly things”. In Colossians 3:2, we are told to focus on things greater (i.e. Jesus and our eternal life with Him). Therefore what we can take from these verses in Luke is that we should concentrate on things greater in order to be a disciple of Jesus.

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” Colossians 3:2

What things in your life currently are more important to you than Jesus? How can we learn to prioritise Jesus and our faith?

Read Luke 18:28-30

So here we learn about the reward of following Jesus! In this parable, Jesus is telling a certain ruler to sell everything he has and give it to the poor, then come and follow Him. Now this ruler will have been extremely wealthy and Jesus says that “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God”. This is because the ruler is putting too much value in ‘earthly things’ and not enough value in God. Therefore in order for the ruler to be fully committed to Jesus, he needs to remove the distractions. How do you think the ruler will have reacted to this? It does seem quite extreme doesn’t it? But in verse 29, we learn what the reward is: eternal life with God. And truly we cannot put a price tag on that!

How do you think we can apply what we have learnt in these verses to our lives today? (just to clarify, I’m not telling you to be like the ruler in chapter 18 and sell everything you own on ebay!)

And finally, let’s come back to the question, what is the cost and reward of following Jesus?

Rachel Clarke

The Greatest Among You

Read Luke 9:46-48, 14:7-11, 22:24-27

The question ‘who is the greatest?’ is a repeated theme throughout the gospel of Luke. Read these passages and notice how it is a question that comes up again and again. Why do you think that the disciples kept asking the same question? Do you think that Jesus gives a different answer each time?

Now read Luke 9:46-48

We don’t know why exactly the disciples started arguing about who was the greatest, the precise substance of the dispute, or what caused it in the first place. All we know is Jesus’ response to his disciples. The passage says that Jesus knew the reasoning of their hearts – that’s to say what they were really arguing about. Jesus brings a child to the disciples and suggests that it’s the way they treat children that will determine how they ultimately receive Jesus. This would have been quite challenging in the time. As a young person how does this passage feel to you?

Now read Luke 14:7-11

In this second passage Jesus asks us to imagine a wedding feast. Don’t go to the best place at the table first; rather sit in the lowest place and then ask to be moved up. Now this story is a parable, this means

that to understand it we don't immediately just translate the story to our own life. Rather we have to work out what the different bits symbolises to ultimately find out what it means. Spend some time reading this passage what do you think it means?

Read Luke 22:24-27

In this final section talking about the greatest and least in the kingdom of heaven Jesus is clearer. Read the section and think about it, what does Jesus say in it?

Finally, Jesus doesn't not give analogies with children or wedding guests. He answers the questions about



being great in the kingdom of heaven clearly. He says to his disciples in the normal way of looking at things it's the person that eats at the table who's important; and the person that is serving who is less important. But in the kingdom of heaven it's different. He gives himself as an example. He says, you believe I am the greatest – but look I am here serving you.

If we want to be great in the kingdom of heaven, we have to look to Jesus to see the things he models as greatness. Looking at the person of Jesus helps to work out what is of most value in the world. Being great in the kingdom of heaven it's not about the great things we can do ourselves; but the way that we serve others, follow Jesus and bear witness to him.

Zoe Mathias

Jesus Foretells His Death & Resurrection

Read Luke 9:21-22 and 9:44

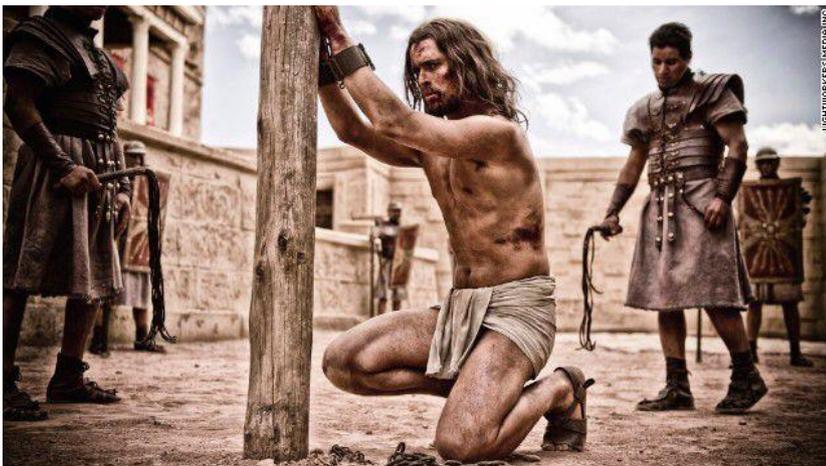
In these first two passages we're looking at today, we see Jesus revealing to his disciples the prophecies of his upcoming death and resurrection. Go back to these passages and have a read of the verses that come just before. What do you notice?

Each time Jesus speaks to his disciples about his death and resurrection here, it's straight after Jesus has either performed some kind of miracle, or claimed something remarkable about himself – “..and who do you say I am? Peter answered – ‘You are God’s Messiah’...and Jesus said – ‘now the son of man must suffer much” (9:20-21). Imagine yourself as one of the disciples here - how do you think you would react to Jesus’ words? Would you feel confused? Worried? In awe? Perhaps you’d ignore him until you got some more details!

In this early part of the gospel, Luke is directly pairing Jesus’s identity as the divine Son of God with his upcoming role as the ultimate sacrifice for all of humanity. He’s got a purpose (!), and Luke is inviting us as readers to journey with Jesus as we see this purpose, and these prophecies, come true.

Now read verses 18:31-33.

Here, Jesus foretells his death and resurrection to his disciples for the third time, and he *finally* gives them a few more details - jot them down ... what are they? We learn that Jesus is going to be killed in Jerusalem; he's going to be rejected by the Jewish religious leaders but then killed by the gentiles (the roman authorities); and flogged, mocked and "shamefully treated". Again, imagine yourself here as one of Jesus' disciples - what would you say to Jesus after hearing this? Perhaps you'd simply ask - WHY?



WHY? Well Luke tells us in 18:31 that "everything that is written about the Son of Man (Jesus) by the prophets will be accomplished".

And scattered throughout this gospel, Luke gives us more insights as to what these prophecies are – for example, quickly check out Luke 22:37. Can you find where this originally comes from in the Old Testament?

Luke is referencing this OT prophecy here to tell us that Jesus will be a sacrifice for all of humanity's sins.

And for Luke's original audience, this had profound implications ... Jesus was the Messiah, and they thought the Messiah was a warrior - he was meant to fight and save Israel, not die! In these passages, Luke is deepening our understanding of who Jesus really is. He *is* the Messiah, 'The Christ of God' (9:20), but he's going to save Israel not as a warrior, but by dying and rising again so that all of humanity can have eternal life.

And now finally read verses 23:46 and 24:6-9.

Now all these signs and prophecies that have been foretold and promised meet in the two most important moments in Luke's gospel – Jesus' death and resurrection. See how in 24:8-9, the disciples remember what Jesus had told them previously, and this is why they go back and tell the others that he's been resurrected. At this point in the gospel, it is revealed to the reader that all that mysterious foretelling in chapters 9 and 18 had a purpose – they were all pointing towards this glorious moment! And Luke invites us to also take part in this discovery. Ask yourself - Who is Jesus to you? And after following our journey through the gospel today - Who is Jesus to you *now*?

Tom Musson

The Last Supper

Read Luke 22:1-23

What do you do to remember something? Do you have a calendar? An app on your phone? Do you write it on your hand? Would you trust something really important just to your memory?

How do you mark an important event? Have you been to a wedding? What did they do that was special to mark the occasion? Or, do you have something specific you do for your birthday every year? A particular cake you like to have, a specific meal or an activity you like to do? Can you think of any other rituals you do to mark important events?

At the last supper Christ gives us an activity to do to remember him with. The act of doing something helps us to remember to him.

In this passage Jesus celebrates Passover with his disciples. The Passover meal is already a ritual of remembrance: at Passover Jews remember the story of the exodus and their liberation from slavery from Egypt. There are specific foods to eat and activities to undertake.

It is at this meal of remembrance that Jesus gave us as Christians an activity to do to remember him. He commands us in this passage to “do this in remembrance of me”. You might recognise verses 17-20 from our communion liturgy.

At every communion service this story is retold. We then come forward to receive the bread and the wine as the disciples did. In retelling this story, we also remember what happens after this passage in the gospel: Jesus’ death and resurrection.

We also remember this passage on maundy Thursday, the day before good Friday in the liturgical calendar. Many Christians meet together on this day to share a Passover meal of lamb and unleavened bread. These meals often end with communion being shared.



Communion is an act of remembrance; but through remembrance we get closer to God: we have our sins forgiven and we grow our faith

Activity:

What do you do to help you remember Jesus in your day to day life?

Do you set a reminder to help you remember to pray?
Do you have a daily routine where you read the bible at the same time every day? Do you maybe have a bible app on your phone?

What are you doing to help you grow your faith in God?

Catriona Inglis