

# Doing theology Lukewise

## Luke as theologian and storyteller

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# What do we mean by 'theology'?

- Augustine: 'reasoning or discussion concerning the Deity' (*City of God* 8.1)
- Richard Hooker: 'the science of things divine' (*Eccl. Pol.* 3.8.11)
- θεολόγος *theologos* in Liddell & Scott's (classical Greek) lexicon

A. *one who discourses of the gods*, of poets such as Hesiod and Orpheus, *Arist. Metaph.* 1000a9, *S.E.M.* 2.31; of cosmologists (like the Orphics), *Arist. Metaph.* 1071b27, al., *Cic. ND* 3.21.53; θεολόγοι καὶ ποιηταί *Phld. Piet.* 48; of diviners and prophets, θ. καὶ μάντιες *Philol.* 14; οἱ Δελφῶν θ. *Plu.* 2.417f, cf. *Luc. Alex.* 19, *BMus. Inscr.* 4.481\*.295 (Ephesus, ii A.D.), *IGRom.* 4.1431 (Smyrna): fem., *CIG* 3199, 3200 (ibid.).

2. *theologian*: ὁ θ., = Moses, *Ph.* 2.152, 416.

# What is a *theologos*?

- Allen Brent: a role in pagan cult for gods such as Artemis or for deified emperors
  - storytelling through drama and music
  - director and choreographer
  - spoke eulogy on the emperor
  - took emperor's role in dramatic presentation

# So what is 'theology'?

- not a purely rational, intellectual exercise
  - earliest believers seeking a full, wholehearted response to God in Christ
- 'Theology is taught by God, teaches of God, and leads to God' (attributed to Thomas Aquinas)
- theology is **speaking about God in order to evoke a response of faith, love and obedience**
  - loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength  
Mark 12:30

# Luke does theology through stories

- using techniques similar to ancient writing
- a function of Luke's organisation of his book

1 Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, 3 I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, **to write an orderly account for you**, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. (1:1-4)

# Luke's 'orderly account'

- chs 1–2 introduce Jesus onto the scene through the infancy narratives
- 3:1–9:50 is then focused in Galilee
  - John the baptiser 3:1-22
  - Jesus' genealogy 3:23-38
  - Jesus' initial ministry in Galilee 4:1–9:50

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- 3:1–9:50 is then focused in Galilee
- 9:51–19:44 the journey to Jerusalem
  - note markers of travel
  - much distinctively Lukan material here
  - focus on re-forming the people of God

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- 9:51–19:44 the journey to Jerusalem
- 19:45–24:53 in Jerusalem: the last week



# Luke's portrayal of time

- 2:40 (12 years)
- 2:52 (18 years?)
- 19:28–24:53 (a week?)
- 22:1–23:56 (48 hours?)

# Luke prepares for the passion

- Jesus' death predicted by Jesus himself

9:31 'he spoke about his *exodus*, which he was to fulfil at Jerusalem'

9:51 '[Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem'

12:50 'I have a baptism with which to be baptised, and what stress I am under until it is completed!'

13:32-33 'Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!'

17:25 '...[the son of man] must endure much suffering and be rejected by this generation.'

# Luke prepares for the passion

- Luke interprets the passion using Scripture

18:31-33 ‘Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and **everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished**. For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.” ‘

20:17 ‘What then does **this text** mean: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”?’ (Ps 118:22)

22:37 ‘For I tell you, this **scripture must be fulfilled in me**, ‘And he was counted among the lawless’; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled.” (Isa 53:12)

# Luke prepares for the passion

- Luke interprets the passion using Scripture

24:26-27 “Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then **beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.**

24:44 ‘everything written about me **in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms** must be fulfilled’

24:46-47 ‘**Thus it is written**, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’

# Luke does theology through characters

- Three kinds of characters
- **flat**: small number of predictable traits
  - the religious leaders in Luke
- **round**: variety of (potentially conflicting) traits
  - Jesus' disciples in Luke
  - Jesus himself in Luke
- **stock (agents)**: only one key trait
  - the widow 21:1-4

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- Key question: what reaction is Luke seeking from his readers to a character?
- **empathy** = identify strongly
  - Jesus' disciples in Luke

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  - the woman 7:36-50—Jesus' attitude vv 44-50

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  - Judas
  - Satan



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- Key question: what reaction is Luke seeking from his readers to a character?
- **empathy** = identify strongly
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- **antipathy** = alienation from or disdain for
- **leaving it open**
  - the older brother 15:11-32

‘Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”’ 15:1-2

# Luke does theology through patterns

- wealth and poverty
  - poverty is not just economic
  - social capital
    - family
    - sex
    - disability
    - performance

# The associations of poverty

4:18

poor  
captive  
blind  
oppressed

6:20

poor  
hungry  
mournful  
persecuted

7:22

blind  
lame  
leper  
deaf  
dead  
poor

14:13

poor  
maimed  
blind  
lame

14:21

poor  
maimed  
blind  
lame

16:20, 22

poor  
ulcerated  
hungry

“

In ‘evangelizing the poor,’...Jesus in the Third Gospel is concerned fundamentally with those defined as ‘them,’ as outsiders—a social status that may or may not have economic roots.

Joel Green

# Poverty in (OT) Scripture

- people in poverty are forced to look to God

Ps 34:6 'This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord, and was saved from every trouble'

Ps 40:17 'As for me, I am poor and needy, for the Lord takes thought for me'

Ps 70:5 'But I am poor and needy, hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay!'

# Poverty in (OT) Scripture

- powerful and wealthy people have a responsibility for people in poverty

Mic 6:1 ‘Can I tolerate wicked scales and a bag of dishonest weights?’

Lev 23:22 ‘When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the LORD your God.’

Deut 15:11 ‘Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, “Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.”’

# The birth narratives 1–2

- the Magnificat 1:51-53

‘He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
he has scattered **those who are proud** in their  
inmost thoughts.

He has brought down **rulers** from their thrones  
but has lifted up **the humble**.

He has filled **the hungry** with good things  
but has sent **the rich** away empty.’

# The birth narratives 1–2

- the Magnificat 1:51-53
- Jesus born into a poor family 2:22-24

‘When the days of her purification are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. He shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement on her behalf...If she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean.’ Lev 12:6-8



# The birth narratives 1–2

- the Magnificat 1:51-53
- Jesus born into a poor family 2:22-24
- Jesus recognised by an elderly widow 2:36-28

Deut 14:28-29 ‘Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns; the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake.’

Deut 27:19 “Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

# The establishing of Jesus' ministry 3:1–9:50

- A programmatic statement in Nazareth 4:16-30

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me **to bring good news to the poor.**’ v 18

‘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.**’ vv 25-27

# The establishing of Jesus' ministry 3:1–9:50

- A programmatic statement in Nazareth 4:16-30
- 'tax collectors and sinners' 5:29-32

‘Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with **tax collectors and sinners?**” Jesus answered, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.”’

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- the blessings and woes 6:20-26

# Luke 6:20-26

20 Then [Jesus] looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are **you who are poor**, for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

22 Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man.

23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

25 Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

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## Luke 6:30, 35-36

‘Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.’

v 30

‘But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.’ vv 35-36

# The establishing of Jesus' ministry 3:1–9:50

- A programmatic statement in Nazareth 4:16-30
- 'tax collectors and sinners' 5:29-32
- the blessings and woes 6:20-26
- a welcome for children 9:46-48

46 An argument arose among them as to which one of them was the greatest. 47 But Jesus, aware of their inner thoughts, took a little child and put it by his side, 48 and said to them, "Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest."

# The journey to Jerusalem 9:51–19:44

- following Jesus means no fixed abode and dependence on others 9:57-58; 10:5-8
- be a neighbour to those in need 10:25-37
- pray for bread to be provided 11:3
- the rich fool 12:13-21

‘Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?”’ vv 13-14

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- be a neighbour to those in need 10:25-37
- pray for bread to be provided 11:3
- the rich fool 12:13-21
  - don't worry about your needs 12:22-31
  - sell your 'stuff' and give to the poor 12:32-34

# The journey to Jerusalem 9:51–19:44

- ‘When [Jesus] noticed how the guests chose the places of honour, he told them a parable.’ 14:7
  - the parable of the wedding banquet vv 8-11
  - call to invite ‘the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind’ to your parties vv 12-14
  - the parable of the great feast (rejected invitations) vv 16-24
    - ‘...the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in **the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.**’” v 21

# The journey to Jerusalem 9:51–19:44

- the parable of the rich man and Lazarus 16:19-31

‘There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores.’ vv 19-21

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- ‘make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.’ 16:9



“

I think you have a moral responsibility, when you've been given far more than you need, to do wise things with it and give intelligently.

J. K. Rowling

# The journey to Jerusalem 9:51–19:44

- the parable of the rich man and Lazarus 16:19-31
  - v 29 hear and respond to God's word in Scripture—so you know how to respond to people in poverty
- cf. the rich fool 12:16-21

# The journey to Jerusalem 9:51–19:44

- the parable of the rich man and Lazarus 16:19-31
- Jesus and Zacchaeus 19:1-10

‘[Jesus] entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; **he was a chief tax collector and was rich**. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature.’

vv 1-3

# The journey to Jerusalem 9:51–19:44

- the parable of the rich man and Lazarus 16:19-31
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‘Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord,  
“Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.” vv 9-10

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# The journey to Jerusalem 9:51–19:44

- the parable of the rich man and Lazarus 16:19-31
- Jesus and Zacchaeus 19:1-10
  - parable of pounds 19:11-27—how you handle wealth
- Jesus borrows a donkey 19:28-35

# The last week 19:45–24:53

- the question about taxes 20:20-26
- the widow who gives ‘all she has’ 21:1-4

‘In the hearing of all the people [Jesus] said to the disciples, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets. **They devour widows’ houses** and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

20:45-47; cf. the unjust judge 18:1-3

# The last week 19:45–24:53

- the question about taxes 20:20-26
- the widow who gives 'all she has' 21:1-4
- Judas 22:3-6
- Jesus depends on another's hospitality 22:7-13
- the dispute about greatness 22:24-30
- Jesus with criminals in his death 23:39-41