

# Gospel of Luke

Jesus, Savior of the World



# Session Two

- Last week, we read the infancy narratives. They bridged the OT with Jesus' ministry.
- This week, we enter the period of preparation for Jesus' ministry.
- Both major events in the Christian year, Christmas and Easter, are preceded by a period of preparation, Advent and Lent.
- We won't get to Jesus' ministry until chapter 4. With Luke, the event is impoverished without the anticipation.
- As with the infancy narratives, this is the story of John and Jesus.
- Now we will see clearly that John's ministry is one of preparation.



# John the Baptist, the One Who Goes Before

*The setting of John's ministry (3:1-6)*

- In some ways, we begin with a new introduction, much like the intro to some OT prophetic books (e.g., Jeremiah, Hosea, Ezekiel).
- Luke is careful to give us time and place. Perhaps 28AD.
- Luke highlights the universality of Jesus. Luke embeds his gospel in the "real world" of politics, religion, wealth, and power.
- John hears God's call in the wilderness and preaches the good news of repentance and forgiveness of sins for "all flesh" (all people).
- John invokes the ancient words of hope brought by Isaiah.
- Who is John baptizing?
- Jews who have come to the Jordan river, a symbol of salvation.



# John the Baptist, the One Who Goes Before

- Luke's presentation of John the Baptist combines material like that in Matthew 3:1-12 and Mark 1:2-8 with material unique to Luke (Lk 3:10-14)
- Like a painting placed inside a beautiful frame, John the Baptist's ministry (3:2b-3) is bracketed between the historical context (3:1-2a) and the context of Old Testament hope (3:4-6)
- Among the Gospel writers, only Luke takes the time to mention leaders in power at various political levels when John appeared. Luke is also unique in emphasizing the extent to which John's coming represents a renewed realization of the promise of Isaiah 40:3-5



# John the Baptist, the One Who Goes Before

- He ministers in the wilderness, brings *the word of God* and preaches *a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*. The concept of repentance is central to Luke
- John's baptism is a one-time rite in preparation of God's approaching salvation.
- Still, John's baptism differs from Christian baptism. John's baptism looks forward, while Christian baptism assumes Jesus' provision of the Spirit. John's baptism anticipates the Spirit's coming, while Christian baptism reflects the Spirit's arrival through Jesus.



# John the Baptist, the One Who Goes Before

- John is like Elijah, The passage itself compares preparing for the events of salvation to preparing a red-carpet reception for a king
- To listen to John is to be called to account
- A general message of repentance (v. 7–9)
- Time is running short. Repent – bear fruits. The Jews cannot rely upon their being the descendents of Abraham.
- John's later remarks about the Spirit (3:15-17; Mt 3:11-12) make it clear that one of the signs of the kingdom's arrival will be the Messiah's distribution of the Spirit,



# John the Baptist, the One Who Goes Before

- So John preaches that the one who pleases God seeks to serve others
- John obviously scored with some in his audience. Three different groups ask, "*What should we do then?*" John does not simply say, "Be baptized." Rather, he points them to their jobs and personal relationships
- True repentance is a matter of the heart and results in change in everyday behavior
- That is why the word *do* is repeated several times in verses 10-14. Each group wants to know the appropriate response to John's call; each reply points to how others are treated



# John the Baptist, the One Who Goes Before

- Be ready to share their clothes
- The tax man is simply to collect the appropriate taxed amount, not extort additional monies
- The teaching of this text is not an ethical given
- John's answers are stated directly and concretely. The penitent is committed to fairness to neighbors, sensitivity and responsiveness to others' needs, and willingness to accept a "no-frills" standard of living



# John the Baptist, the One Who Goes Before

- John asks, "Where do we stand as the day of God's evaluation draws near?" Since John comes before the period of the cross, he cannot tell the people to place their trust in the work accomplished there. Rather, he calls them to live as children of God.
- John the Baptist's ministry is a two-sided coin: a plea for repentance in preparation for the Lord's coming on one side, and looking to Christ on the other.
- This section explains why John is a pointer, not the center of God's plan. The theme is clearest in verses 15-17



# John the Baptist, the One Who Goes Before

- Luke is unique in recording John's imprisonment before, Jesus' baptism. John departs from the scene.
- This Herod Antipas is the son of Herod the Great. Herodias is the 35 year-old daughter of one of Herod the Great's sons, married another, and then married another (Antipas).
- Herod Antipas arrests John because he condemned the marriage to Herodias. (Antipas' first wife ran to Papa who crushed Antipas' army!). Some Jews saw this defeat as judgment for Herod's arrest and execution of John.



# John the Baptist, the One Who Goes Before

- But then a question remains: if not John, then who is the Christ? John's answer expresses Jesus' superiority at three points
  - ✓ First, Jesus has a higher position than John.
  - ✓ The second area of Jesus' superiority is the blessing he brings.
  - ✓ The third and final point of superiority marks the ultimate difference. Jesus is superior because he is the Judge who makes distinctions between people



# Jesus, the One Who Comes

- Luke turns now to describe Jesus' preparation for ministry. A divine endorsement accompanies Jesus' arrival (3:21-22), while the genealogy (3:23-38) and the temptations (4:1-13) give his historical and spiritual credentials
- There is no mention of John, of the place, or of the baptism itself. We get only what happens afterward.
- This is an example of a place where it takes a little concentration to focus only upon Luke's story.
- Jesus prays – this is a recurring emphasis in Luke



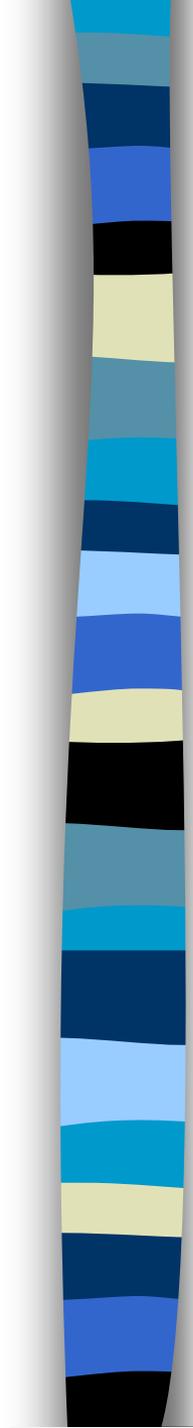
# Jesus, the One Who Comes

- “The heavens were opened”
- The big day has come! God is coming again (Isaiah 64:1-4). This is ,the apocalypse, the end of the age.
- The Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus.
- The Spirit empowers Jesus and the church. This marks the return of God’s Spirit.
- “You are my son”
- Not the “family” language. This confirms what we know already.



# Jesus, the One Who Comes

- So in this short event heaven places its endorsing stamp on Jesus. He is the promised regal Son, the chosen one, unique in his call. He reveals the will of God and serves him. This is the one for whom John prepared the people. Anointed with the Spirit, Jesus is truly the Christ, a term that means "anointed one" (4:18). He is ready to minister and carry out his call.



# Genealogy

- Seems a bit of an odd interruption!! It isn't clear why Luke gives the genealogy or why here. Perhaps he is following the pattern of Moses (Ex. 6:14-25).
- ✓ Jesus is about thirty.
- ✓ Jesus' genealogy is traced to Adam, not Abraham.
- ✓ Emphasizes Jesus' universality
- Luke uses eleven series of seven names each – 77 names.
- Jewish genealogies were stylized and even symbolic.
- We might be inclined to see this as chance to break with all the preparations and plunge into Jesus' ministry.
- But . . . The preparation is not yet over. Jesus must face Satan in the wilderness.



# The temptation of Jesus (4:1-13)

- After Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit leads him to the wilderness where the devil tempts him for forty(!) days.
- There are three questions/temptations:
  - ✓ Should Jesus use his power to turn stones into bread (so he can feed the poor?),
  - ✓ should he assume worldly power for all the good he could do,
  - ✓ should he coerce faith from the Jews by a dramatic and miraculous sign?
- What does it mean for Jesus to be about his Father's business?
- The devil is willing to give up what he has in order to prevail!
- In other words – the devil asks: "Do you really want to be human?" Of course, the tempter asked Eve, "Do you want to be like gods?"
- "Until an opportune time" – Jesus has not seen the last of the devil.



# Summation

- Repentance is about what we do, not just what we believe. John is very specific in spelling out what repentance means.
- We are all tempted. Jesus was tempted. The presence of the Holy Spirit does not spare us from temptation. Again, the question is what will we do?
- A real temptation is the offer to rise, not to fall – to have the means justify the ends. To a very close friend, Jesus said “Get behind me, Satan.”
- How does Jesus counter the temptation – with Scripture, quoting from Deuteronomy. The devil uses Scripture too, but Jesus knows the difference between a good use and an evil use of Scripture.



# Reflection

1. How do you prepare for Christ coming into your heart?
2. St Augustine says John is the Voice and Christ is the Word. What does Augustine mean?
3. What is the main challenge Jesus calls you to in his baptism?
4. How can you come to hear the interior voice of the Spirit?
5. How do you experience the temptations of power, possessions and prestige