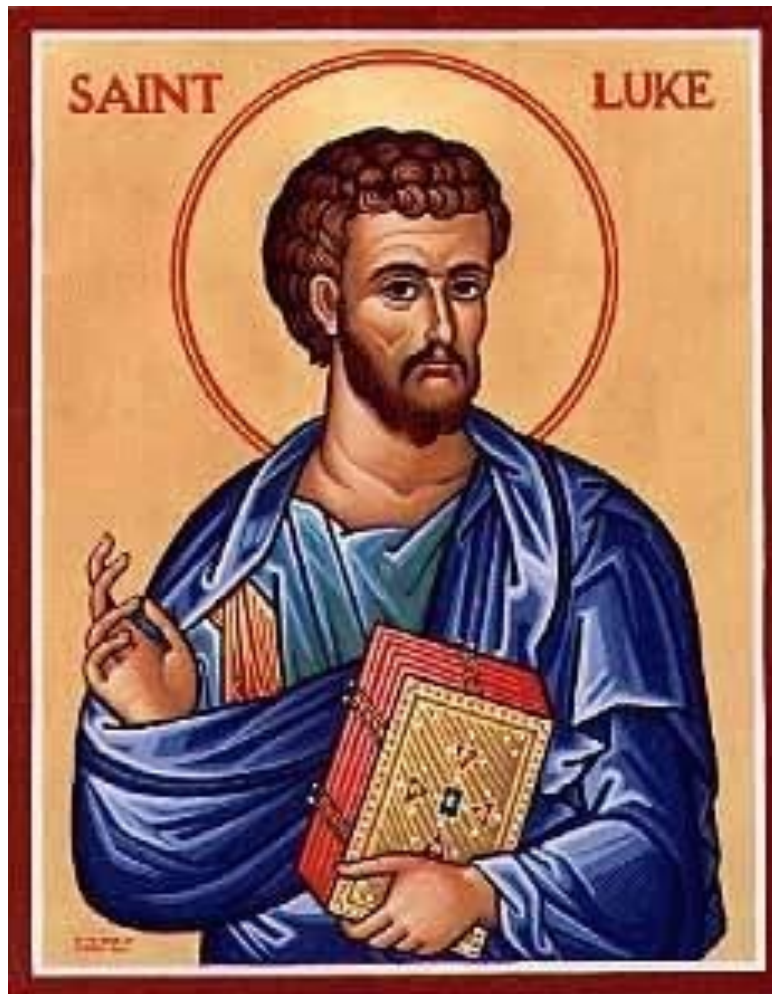


**PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES**



**YEAR C**  
**THE YEAR OF LUKE**  
**2018-2019**



**ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH**  
IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST LUKE

Luke's Gospel was written c. 85 AD and includes almost all of the material found in St Mark's Gospel. It is the longest Gospel, and Luke's Greek is the best of the four Gospel writers; it was almost certainly his mother tongue.

Luke himself was well educated and knew the Jewish Scriptures in Greek. He was probably not raised a Jew, but may have converted to Judaism before he became a follower of Christ. He was a physician with an interest in healing men and women, and he also uses technical vocabulary. He seems to have been a sympathetic man with a genuine love for others. He shows a positive picture of human nature, encouraging people to lead a healthy life.

We cannot be absolutely sure where Luke came from, nor what kind of person he was. It is often claimed (though without clear evidence) that he was a Syrian from Antioch – the political and cultural centre of the Roman Empire, with a mixed Greek-speaking population that included Jews. His writing, both in language and format, seems designed to appeal as much to Greeks and Gentiles as to Jews.

Luke does not claim to be an eyewitness, but rather someone who learned the stories of Jesus from those who had been there at the time.

He belongs to the second or third generation after the events he relates.

Legend also claims Luke as a skilled painter. More realistically though, it was his skill as a writer that enabled him to offer a vivid visual portrayal of some of the scenes he narrates. He seems able to find the style which most clearly reflects the feelings of the people involved.

*St Luke painting the first icon of the Virgin Mary (Russian, anonymous)*



Of the four Gospel writers, St Luke particularly sees Jesus as the one who sacrificed himself for all people: Jews and Gentiles, saints and sinners alike. His symbol is therefore a winged calf or ox, a sacrificial animal. (Each evangelist has a symbol which tries to capture the particular viewpoint of the Gospel in question.)



Luke is generally agreed to be the author of the Acts of the Apostles as well as the Gospel that bears his name, though both of these works are anonymous. From the outset, he probably conceived them as two volumes, and scholars often refer to them as 'Luke-Acts'. Volume 1 (Luke's Gospel) tells of the events surrounding Jesus, while volume two (Acts) is a history of the Early Church. Both books are addressed to 'the **most excellent** Theophilus', a title given to high officials in the Roman Government.

Luke's text is carefully researched and well written: as the fellow-worker and companion of St Paul (see 2 Timothy 4: 11: 'Only Luke is with me'), he would have known many of the great figures of the Church. Sometimes his desire for accuracy is particularly striking, as when he carefully dates the emergence of John the Baptist. (Luke 3: 1–2)

His is a Gospel of mission and salvation, with journeying as one of its key themes. Jesus's journey to Jerusalem with his disciples occupies ten chapters in Luke (9: 51 to 19: 48), by comparison with just one chapter in St Mark's Gospel.

St Luke also highlights Jesus's sharing in meals with others, culminating in the Eucharist. Other important themes are God's forgiveness, Jesus at prayer, the Holy Spirit, the poor and marginalised, and women, with Mary the mother of Jesus seen as the first Christian. The climax of Luke's Gospel is Jesus's ascension into heaven. (24: 51–53)

We owe to Luke some of the finest biblical stories and parables, including the description of the disciples on the road to Emmaus and the parable of the Prodigal Son.

## THE SEASON OF ADVENT

Each year, the season of Advent marks the beginning of a new Church Year. 2018–2019 is earmarked as Year C within the three-year liturgical cycle, when we read from Luke’s Gospel on most Sundays.

Throughout this period of Advent – contrary to what the media would have us believe! – we prepare not just for Christmas festivities, presents and good food, but for the **coming of our Lord**. ‘Advent’ means Coming, and in fact we prepare for three comings:

- \* The coming of Jesus, Emmanuel; God made man, born weak and vulnerable in Bethlehem: *the First Coming*.
- \* The coming in glory of Jesus at the End of Time: *the Second Coming*.
- \* The coming of Jesus into our own hearts – where, with Mary, we welcome him and say YES to him.

We ourselves live in the period of history between the First and Second Coming, and during Advent, we reflect on this. We watch and wait in hope, as we try to prepare a way for the Lord, and long for his coming to dispel our darkness.

Advent is also a time when we try to prepare ourselves personally for the Lord’s coming, as we look at our own lives and repent for the times when we have not let his light shine through us.

With a great feeling of expectancy and joy we can cry out in Aramaic, the language Jesus himself used:

‘Maranatha  
Come, our Lord!’



*In these Advent days, what are you hoping for?*

### **Blessing of Hope**

So may we know  
the hope  
that is not just  
for someday  
but for this day –  
here, now,  
in this moment  
that opens to us:  
**hope** not made  
of wishes  
but of substance,  
**hope** made of sinew  
and muscle  
and bone,  
**hope** that has breath  
and a beating heart,  
**hope** that will not  
keep quiet  
and be polite,  
**hope** that knows  
how to holler  
when it is called for,  
**hope** that knows  
how to sing  
when there seems  
little cause,  
**hope** that raises us  
from the dead –  
not someday  
but this day,  
every day,  
again and  
again and  
again.

## PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

### FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT – YEAR C



HOPE

The lighting of a different candle on each Sunday in Advent invites us to pause and reflect. Each candle has its own symbolism, while the intertwined evergreen leaves of the Advent wreath remind us of the promise of eternal life that Christ brings. In most Christian traditions the first candle represents hope – a sign of our hopeful expectation as we await the coming of the Messiah.

#### First Reading Jeremiah 33: 14–16

Jeremiah 33 is not technically part of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible), which has led scholars to see it is a later addition. In fact we cannot be certain of its exact origins, since it forms part of the section called the 'Book of Consolation' (Ch. 30–33), telling of the future restoration of Israel, and the promise of a new covenant: its purpose is to give renewed hope to those living within a very difficult political climate. The historical context is one where people are losing everything they hold dear because of their exile to Babylon: Temple, city, king, home, family; all have gone. Ch. 33 itself consists of seven 'oracles', of which our passage is the fourth.

Jeremiah is in prison following his constant criticism of political intrigue during this hugely disruptive period, when it is feared that God has abandoned his people. Yet through Jeremiah's prophesying, God promises (in words nearly identical to those used in Jer. 23: vv. 5–6) that there will be a restoration of kings of the line of David. Judah, the Southern kingdom, will be restored to prosperity.

Christians in later centuries have seen in these lines the promise of the coming of the Messiah in the person of Christ. God is faithful: he does not abandon his people even in their darkest hour, whether that means exile or imprisonment.

As we journey through Advent, it is not so much that we await the fulfilment of the promise made in these verses, but rather that we are transformed by the waiting.



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH  
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## Gospel Luke 21: 25–28, 34–36

*'Your liberation is near at hand'*

Jeremiah prophesied the coming of a new 'virtuous branch' of Judaism, bringing hope and joy to the people who were living in such corrupt and difficult times (see the First Reading, opposite).

Today, on this first Sunday of the new Church Year, we therefore remember and celebrate the fulfilment of that prophecy of the First Coming of Jesus as a new-born baby in Bethlehem. We also remember that we are waiting for the time when Jesus will come again 'with power and great glory' (v. 27).

St Luke tells us of Jesus's warning to be ready for the Second Coming of the *Son of Man* (a term Jesus sometimes used to identify himself), especially by guarding against worldly indulgence.

As mentioned in the Background Notes above, Luke wrote his Gospel c. 85 AD, during that period between the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies (70 AD) and the expected final end. The people were wondering when Jesus would return. Luke himself was saddened by the decadent, corrupt and cruel times they were living in.

#### There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars

Jesus uses apocalyptic language that would have been familiar to his listeners, with the intention of encouraging them to have hope and faith in the triumph of good over evil at the End of Time. These terrifying happenings do not signal the destruction of mankind, but their ultimate liberation.

#### And then they will see the Son of Man coming in glory

The chaos in the cosmos is not a reason for Jesus's disciples to panic, but a time to stand erect with confidence and great expectancy, ready to greet the 'Son of Man'.

