Lectio Divina – 8th Sunday of the Year C

Contexts

Luke's Gospel (in brief)

- Composed between 80-90 CE
- Part of a 2 volume work (together with The Acts of the Apostles).
- 2nd Century tradition names the work for Luke and claims he was the same person as the companion of Paul. However, there are significant differences between Paul's writing and what appears in Luke about Paul's writing which seems to suggest that the author of Luke was not the Luke referred to in Paul's letters.
- Author is clearly an educated man and a city-dweller, not a country-sider.
- Sources include Mark's Gospel and the Q source and a good deal of other material.
- From Mark: the narrative detail about Jesus' life
- From Q, the 'sayings' (teachings) of Jesus.
- Don't really know where the other material comes from, e.g. the infancy & childhood narratives.
- Work is addressed to "Theophilus" which means, "Lover of God" – this could be a specific individual, or simply every Christian.
- An ordered account of life of Jesus and apostles
- **Structure of Luke's Gospel**
  Following the author's preface addressed to his patron and the two birth narratives (John the Baptist and Jesus), the gospel opens in Galilee and moves gradually to its climax in Jerusalem

  A brief preface addressed to Theophilus stating the author's aims;
  1. Birth and infancy narratives for both Jesus and John the Baptist, interpreted as the dawn of the promised era of Israel's salvation;
  2. Preparation for Jesus' messianic mission: John's prophetic mission, his baptism of Jesus, and the testing of Jesus' vocation;
  3. The beginning of Jesus' mission in Galilee, and the hostile reception there;
  4. The central section: the journey to Jerusalem, where Jesus knows he must meet his destiny as God's prophet and messiah;
  5. His mission in Jerusalem, culminating in confrontation with the leaders of the Jewish Temple;
  6. His last supper with his most intimate followers, followed by his arrest, interrogation, and crucifixion;
  7. God's validation of Jesus as Christ: events from the first Easter to the Ascension, showing Jesus' death to be divinely ordained, in keeping with both scriptural promise and the nature of messiahship, and anticipating the story of Acts

Luke 6:39-45 – things to notice

- Continuation of the Sermon on the Plain – and direct continuation of last Sunday's Gospel.
- Jesus continues to address all those who are listening.
- The theme of *radical reversal* continues but note the change from 'what others do to me' to 'what I do to others', from retaliation to judgement.
- The teaching, in the form of parables, centres around judgement of others and begins with the rather humorous image of one blind person leading another and both falling into a pit.
- Then a saying about the relationship between disciples and masters. Taken together, these two verses seem to indicate that disciples are blind until their eyes

are fully opened by Jesus' teaching about the sharing of possessions, even with enemies. Once they have been fully trained they will be able to instruct others.
- The parable about splinters, planks and hypocrisy. The need to remove the plank first before attempting to help others.
- The images of trees and fruit applied to human being.
- Goodness comes from the store of goodness in the heart. Evil likewise.
- You can tell the character of a person by their words. Connection with the theme of the first reading.

The Liturgical Context – why does the church choose this passage to reflect on this Sunday?

'Even casual readers of the four Gospels quickly see that each one offers its own distinct portrait of Jesus. Part of the powerful appeal of Luke's Jesus lies in the stories he tells of God's boundless mercy, in the distinctive role he gives to women, and in his generous giving and receiving of hospitality.

'More than any other evangelist, Luke has Jesus insist repeatedly on the need for his followers to embrace poverty and to be under no illusions about the danger of wealth. Jesus is blunt and uncompromising, as we find today.

'If we are to enter into the mystery of God's love for the poor, we must ourselves become poor. Those who remain possessed by their possessions and the privileges they bring are unable to receive the gift of salvation.' (BOTW)

The First Reading from Ecclesiasticus is about how the character of a person may be known through their words.

Reflection
We live in a world of words thanks to modern mass media and, particularly, social media. We have seen the extremely harmful way in which words can be used in harsh judgement against other people, and the sheer vitriol of some on social media gives us pause for thought. It begs us to ask the question, implied in the first reading for today (Eccl 27:4-7), 'What do my words reveal about who I am?'

Today's Gospel is our final reading from Luke's Sermon on the Plain. This week, Jesus' radical teaching continues to focus on lavish generosity in our dealings with one another.

The Gospel opens with a parable about one blind person leading another and both falling into a pit. The disciples, like ourselves, are on a lifelong journey with Jesus, our teacher. On this journey there is always more to discover, greater depths to be plumbed, new insights to be gained as we grow to be more like Jesus; as we move from being 'blind' to 'seeing' with the eyes of Jesus.

We gradually learn to let go of our self-righteous inclination to judge small faults in others while never noticing our own larger, more destructive, blind spots (the story of the splinter and the plank).

When we learn God's way of mercy and generosity, we refrain from the kinds of judgements which would otherwise limit God's generosity, mercy and kindness at work in us. Our hearts are being built in goodness.

Like trees that are known by their fruit, so will the disciples be known by their words and actions, their values and attitudes, by who they truly are, by what is in their heart.

Our journey of learning with Jesus gradually builds God's heart within our own so that we live, speak and act, more and more, out of that great store of mercy and generosity.