

'This Scripture has been fulfilled'

THE GOOD NEWS

GOD'S WORD IN EVERYDAY LIVING



By Father Paul Turner

DON'T MISS this Gospel!

Next week may seem like just another wintry Sunday in ordinary time, but the Gospel (Luke 1: 1-4, 4:14-21) will provide a key to understanding the whole year ahead. I recommend you dig out your Bible and look up this passage in its context.

Notice that the reading is drawn from chapters one and four of Luke. Rarely does the lectionary make such a large skip within one reading. The reason for it is that both chapters give us important introductory material for Luke's Gospel.

The reading begins with the opening verses of the entire book. Or, more accurately, these verses introduce both books of Luke. Remember, Luke is also the author of Acts of the Apostles, and the two books go hand in hand, like *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. You won't really understand one story without knowing the other. These opening verses set the stage for the entire work.

HERE WE LEARN what Luke has in mind: He sounds a little testy about the other Gospels. He recognizes that eyewitnesses have assembled their accounts, but Luke implies that they lack order, and that's what he contributes to the story. Luke is best qualified to do it, since his writing style is probably the best in the New Testament. He can write in different voices, create memorable characters, and most importantly, Luke can tell a story. He's the Pulitzer winner of New Testament writers.

He tells us he's writing for Theophilus, a patron who apparently commissioned him to write the work. Note the Greek name. Luke is not writing for

Judeans; he writes for Gentiles, probably a wealthy community which could afford to commission a respectable author, and whose wealth will be challenged in this Gospel from the get-go.

Then next week's Gospel skips over several chapters. We're missing some wonderful material: the whole story of Jesus' birth and infancy, the appearance of John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus, his genealogy, and his temptation in the desert. But the lectionary cruises over all this because during the liturgical year we hear these passages when they fit the season. So next week we simply drop anchor in chapter four, where the story of Jesus' adult ministry gets up and running.

Scene one has him in the temple, a pious Jew, unassumingly reading from the Isaiah scroll. Jesus jumps around here, citing Isaiah 61:1, 58:6, and 61:2--some marvelous passages about bringing good news to the poor and freeing captives and the oppressed. (Luke wants his well-to-do audience to hear that line about the privileged place held by the poor.) Then this coy Jesus rolls up the scroll, eyeballs the congregation, and declares, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." On day one of his public ministry, Luke's Jesus declares himself to be the fulfillment of the messianic prophecy from Isaiah. What a beginning!

IN COMBINING texts from two different chapters next week, the lectionary gives us a double introduction--we meet Luke the evangelist and Jesus the messiah. One writes the good news the other preached.

We'll be hearing from Luke quite a bit this year. He will challenge us to rethink our approach to prayer, the Holy Spirit, material possessions, and the role of women. He will also try to help us figure out how we can still call God faithful when the promised messiah underwent so much suffering.

The important clues are already here in these important introductory verses. The Spirit of God rests upon Jesus, whose life and death will bring good news to all the oppressed.

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Daily Scripture Readings

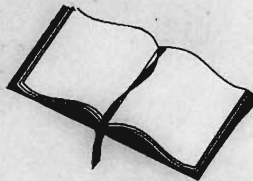
**Second Sunday
In Ordinary Time
Sunday, January 15**
Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalms 96:1-3, 7-10
1 Corinthians 12:4-11
John 2:1-11

Monday, January 16
Hebrews 5:1-10
Psalms 110:1-4
Mark 2:18-22

Tuesday, January 17
Hebrews 6:10-20
Psalms 111:1, 4-5, 9-10
Mark 2:23-28

Wednesday, January 18
Hebrews 7:1-3, 15-17
Psalms 110:1-4
Mark 3:1-6

Thursday, January 19
Hebrews 7:25-8:6
Psalms 40:7-10, 17
Mark 3:7-12



Friday, January 20
Hebrews 8:6-13
Psalms 85:8, 10-14
Mark 3:13-19

Saturday, January 21
Hebrews 9:2-3, 11-14
Psalms 47:2-3, 6-9
Mark 3:20-21

**Third Sunday
In Ordinary Time
Sunday, January 22**
Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10
Psalms 119:8-10, 15
1 Corinthians 12:12-30
Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21