



5 - 11 December 2021 [The great leveller](#)

Related Bible reading(s): Luke 3.1-6

Bible study on Luke 3.1-6

This study can be used by a small family/household group, or by an online group, or – sometimes with a little adaptation – by an individual.

See our [Guidelines for a weekly Bible study](#)

Begin with an opening prayer

We come to praise you, Lord, God of Israel and all the nations.
We come to you who set your people free.
We come to you who guides us into the way of peace.
We come to you as we journey through Advent
and prepare to welcome, once again, the Christ child. **Amen.**

Read the passage

Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.

In an online group, you could share parts between those present, or use/adapt this week's Share the Word suggestion: Use the Jump to this week's menu on the right to go to Share the Word and scroll down to find the Gospel reading.

Explore and respond to the text

Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.

Bible notes

Traditionally, the point is made at Epiphany that Jesus was born as a sign and a gift for all people, not just the Jewish people. The same point is present in the characteristically Lukan use of 'all' in verse 6. Here is a preparing of the way for an understanding that God's salvation (through Jesus) is for all people and, arguably, all creation.

Luke's inclusion of the rogues gallery (vv.1-2) raises questions about the nature and scope of salvation. These characters could be seen as the sort of hateful people that Zechariah speaks of in the canticle reading. Commenting on this verse, Joel Green writes that, for Luke 'the reconciliation of God's people and deliverance from enemies are both part of one movement. For him, visions of salvation cannot be categorised as social or religious or political, for the epoch of peace is characterized by all of these' (Joel B Green, [The Gospel of Luke](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Eerdmans, 1997 ISBN 978-0-8028-2315-1). So, salvation is in part a liberation from those who oppress and abuse. Paradoxically, it is also the gift offered to all people – including the unsavoury characters listed by Luke. There are challenges here for how we understand salvation, and how we pray for those who might be the contemporary equivalents of Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas, etc.

There is a recurring theme in Luke of the levelling of social status – the humble exalted and the exalted humbled. When John quotes Isaiah, a picture is painted of the creation of a level playing field. The language is metaphorical and we need to be careful of interpreting it literally, but for people weighed down with worry and oppressed by injustice, this is profoundly hopeful. As noted above, John was preaching in physically the lowest place on earth. Present-day politicians talk a lot about levelling up. Here we have the forerunner of Jesus preparing the way for the one who will truly provide the means of transformation for all.

See also:

A time for spreading hope



Andrew Roberts discusses fake news, good news and Christmas with two young Christians, Jeremiah Gash and Caitlyn Arran.

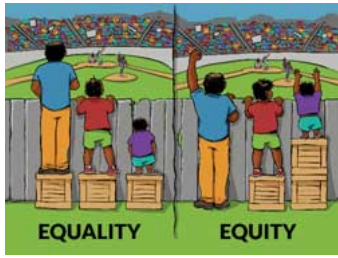
Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Many will remember Captain Sir Tom, who in 2020 (for his 100th birthday) walked to raise millions of pounds for the NHS. Some may also remember hearing about Kevin Sinfield, who ran seven marathons in seven days in support of his former rugby league teammate Rob Burrow, who has motor neurone disease. Neither of them needed to do what they did, but they were compelled to do so by their love and compassion for others. John the Baptizer didn't need to go into the wilderness as he did – or did he? Perhaps love and compassion compelled him, too. Perhaps, having experienced God's love and compassion for himself, he wanted to help others to see that, despite their sinful nature, God loved them with all and wanted them to know life in all its fullness. What about us – do we have love and compassion for our friends and family, and for our neighbours, and for the people we work with, spend leisure time with – enough to let them know about Jesus?

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



- Which is better: equality or equity? Indeed, what is the difference?
- Imagine that the fence shown was taken down – this might be labelled liberation. Which was John advocating? And Jesus?
- And where are we in this mix – are we for equality, or equity or liberation? How can we empower others to see that they can be freed from any oppression that they are feeling?

A simple worship activity

Reflecting on God's path – past, present and future.

- Place a box of pebbles at a suitable focus point in the worship space, together with a sign that says, 'Prepare the way of the Lord'. Some distance away – e.g. at the other end of an aisle – put a sign that says, 'Everyone shall see the salvation of God' and a few pebbles in a small pile.
- Invite people to take three pebbles – they will represent past, present and future. Ask them to think about: events that have shaped the past week or so for them; what is on their mind right now; and what their hopes, plans or concerns might be for the coming week. Take time to do this. Background music may be helpful.
- Encourage people to walk towards the 'Everyone...salvation' sign, putting down each pebble somewhere along the way as a sign of placing in God's care the experiences that the past, present and future reflections represent. The third pebble should be placed on the pile close to the 'salvation' sign, building a small cairn as a sign of hope and commitment for what lies ahead. **ESA**

Use the Jump to this week's menu *on the right* to go to more activities in Explore and respond.

Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

We thank you, God, for your richness.
We thank you for the way your light lets us see the world and its people.
We thank you for diversity and difference in people and places.
We thank you for signs and symbols and glimpses of your kingdom.
We thank you for bolts out of the blue that reveal you to us and for the tiny flame that offers us assurance.
We thank you for your care through the hands of others, hands of family, hands of friends and hands of strangers.
We thank you that in others we see you and that through seeing you we see them in different ways.
We thank you that in wilderness experiences you come to us, that you come in word or deed, that you come in touch or gift, that you come in cacophony or whisper, but come you do.
We are all your people, all your children, all your flock, and for us all you care – to you we give our thanks and praise.
Amen.

Use the Jump to this week's menu on the right to find more prayers, including up-to-date intercessions.

A prayer to end the Bible study

May the road we travel be smooth and straight,
every rut filled in, every bump smoothed out,
any diversions easy to navigate,
any obstacles easy to manoeuvre round.
May good companions share our journey,
and may we be voices for good in the world,
a sign of Jesus' love for all.
We pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Go with God 24/7

Encourage everyone to put their faith into action.

When you find yourself in a queuing in a crowded place this week, remember that God loves the people in front, behind, and to the side of you. Quietly prayer for those specific people that they might know that Jesus is for them too. **ES**

*Encourage everyone to explore their faith this week with the **ROOTS at home** resource.*