

# The Message of Luke

by G. Campbell Morgan

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*The Gospel of Luke presents Jesus Christ as the Saviour, the racial First-born, the representative Brother, and the redeeming Kinsman, and calls the Church to become witnesses of Him and to fulfill the terms of discipleship.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 53:4-5, Matthew 16:24-26, Luke 14:26-33, Luke 19:10, John 1:14, John 3:16, Romans 8:17, Galatians 3:28, Hebrews 2:11, 2 Peter 1:4

**Topics:** "The Nature of Christ", "Salvation and Discipleship"

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## Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the profound message of the Gospel of Luke, presenting Jesus as the 'Son of Man' who embodies the perfect human experience and serves as the racial First-born, representative Brother, and redeeming Kinsman. He highlights the significance of Jesus' immaculate conception and sinlessness, which allows Him to seek and save the lost, establishing a new relationship with humanity through redemption and regeneration. The sermon calls the Church to witness the transformative power of Christ in their lives and to share this message of salvation with the world, emphasizing the terms of discipleship that require total commitment to Christ. Morgan concludes by urging believers to recognize the unique nature of Jesus, who is both intimately relatable and infinitely distinct from humanity.

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## Transcript

### A. THE PERMANENT VALUES

#### I. The Central Teaching

##### i. The Presentation of the Saviour. "The Son of Man."

##### a. The racial First-born.

##### 1. The Fact.

Hebrew merged in humanity.

Humanity springing from God.

##### 2. The Method.

Immaculate Conception.

The sinless Man.

b. The representative Brother.

1. The Negation of Distinctions.

2. The Realization of Essentials.

c. The Redeeming Kinsman.

1. The Right.

2. The Accomplishment.

ii. The Proclamation of Salvation. "To seek and to save that which was lost."

a. Through Redemption, Regeneration.

b.. Through Regeneration, Relationship.

c. Through Relationship, Realization.

II. The Abiding Appeal

i. The Attraction of the Personality.

a. The Identity.

b. The Distance.

c. The Sympathy.

ii. The Terms of Discipleship.

a. Negation of old relationships and Choice of new. xiv. 26.

b. Acceptance of Law of new Relationships. xiv. 27.

c. Renunciation of all in order to the Reception of all. xiv. 33.

B. THE LIVING MESSAGE

I. To the Church

"Witnesses.

i. In the Power of Relationship with the Son of Man.

a. Fulfillment of Terms.

Redemption.

b. Realization of Results.

Fellowship.

c. Demonstration of Truth.

Manifestation.

ii. For the Sake of the Lost.

a. Revelation.

b. Conviction.

c. Persuasion.

II. To the World

"The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

This third Gospel presents Jesus of Nazareth to us in the grace and glory of His perfect Manhood.

Its essential message is crystallized in the declaration of the Lord Himself in answer to the persistent criticism of the Pharisees; "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

The message of this Gospel is not a simple message. The more carefully we study this book the more are we impressed with its profundity, with the wonder and spaciousness of the thing it has to say to us concerning Christ. It first presents the Saviour, the Son of Man; it secondly, and consequently, proclaims the possibility of salvation for the sons of men.

Let us then first consider the Saviour that this book presents to us. There are three things to be noted. Luke is careful, in his introductory section, to show us the nature of this Person. He presents to us the racial First-born; the second man; the last Adam. The first man appears upon the page of the Old Testament, and he fails. The second Man appears upon the page of the New Testament, and He realizes all the Divine intention for humanity. The first Adam, the head of the race, from whom the race has proceeded, is presented to us in the Old Testament. The last Adam, the Head of a new race, is presented in the New Testament. There will be no other. The ultimate, the final race, is to spring from this second Man, Who is the last Adam.

He is then presented as the representative Brother, not Brother of the race that is fallen, but Brother of the race that is to be made—a distinction which we need to make very carefully. There is a sense in which He took on Him the very nature of Adam; but He did not share his sinful nature, although eventually He bore his sin in the mystery of His dying. We look first of all, not at the Saviour Who in the mystery of His passion wrought out human redemption; we look at a Man, the second Man, the last Adam, the racial First-born, and therefore the representative Brother of all such as are to follow, of all such as are to spring from Him, as surely as the race sprang from Adam.

Finally, and let us mark the sequence, He is presented as the redeeming Kinsman, or, to borrow the old Hebrew word, the Goel.

The experimental process is in the reverse order. We come to the redeeming Kinsman; and receiving the redemption which the Kinsman provides, enter into fellowship with the representative Brother; until at last

we are made perfect partakers of that life which makes us one with the racial First-born.

In presenting the First-born of the new race, Luke is careful to show how the Hebrew was merged in humanity, and how humanity sprang from Deity. That is the suggestiveness of the genealogy which he gives. Notice the difference between that of Matthew and that of Luke. Matthew, who was presenting the King, was careful to set Him in relation to David, as of the royal line, and to Abraham, as of the Hebrew people. Luke sweeps back through everything that is purely Hebrew, until he comes to the fountainhead of humanity, Adam; of whom, in a word that would astonish us if we were not so perfectly familiar with it, he says, "the Son of God." Thus he presents Jesus as human, of our very nature, human as we are human, but he puts Him even in that nature into immediate relationship with God.

Luke then tells us the mystery of how this second Man came into human life. He declares that the conception of this Man was immaculate. The Roman dogma of the immaculate conception has nothing to do with the phrase in the sense in which I use it. That dogma was promulgated in 1854, and was never held before. There had been long arguments from the twelfth century, not as to the sinlessness of Jesus, but as to the sinlessness of Mary, which is a very different thing. When the Roman speaks of the immaculate conception, he means that Mary was sinless in being, because sinless in the mystery of conception, which is the Roman theologians' way of attempting to account for the sinlessness of Jesus. To say the least that is but to put the difficulty one stage further back, namely, to the mother of Mary, and then to fail to solve it. With fine delicacy of touch Luke declared that in the mystery of the conception of this new Man there was a process by which He was sinlessly conceived-"That which is to be born shall be called holy." In the mystery of that Divine activity of the overshadowing of the Virgin. she was cleansed from all sin so that the Man Who appears before us is immaculately conceived, and therefore is a sinless Man.

In the Biblical account of creation we have an ascending scale. Day one; light and darkness, day and night. Day two; the dividing of waters. Day three; land, and vegetable life. Day four; signs and seasons, days and years. Day five; sentient life. Then what? Man, the result of all the upward processes from chaos and darkness, the crowning glory of all that which constitutes the lower side of his being. But how? Mark this most carefully; there was now a new activity, not part of the process that had preceded, but distinct from it; God "breathed into his breathing places the breath of lives," and man appeared. The processes did not create man, they only contributed towards the material fact of his human nature. Human nature is not animal nature. All the processes did but produce the temporary tabernacle, that which is to pass and perish. The Divine inbreathing produced the man.

The next picture is that of an assault upon man by the powers of darkness, of man yielding to those powers, and of his consequent descent or fall. The process runs on through history. From that man sprang the race, inheriting and sharing the results of that man's loss of the sceptre, because of his rebellion against the throne of God.

Now behold the second Man, the last Adam. As the first man was, as to his material nature, taken out of the dust through the processes of ascent, and then by the final act of Divine breathing was made man, who never had been man before, and never could be man but by that mystery; so now in the fullness of time God again took hold of dust, only beginning this time not away back where we cannot trace the workings, but beginning at the point where He ended before. This second Man was taken out of humanity, inheriting all its essential qualities, but distinct from it ; like in all things to His brethren, unlike all those from whom He is taken, because of immaculate conception, and therefore sinless. This is a new beginning, a new start in the history of the race. From that moment I read on, and the Gospel reveals this Man as the

First-born of the race, as the representative Brother of the whole family.

When we look at this Man we see the negation of all distinctions. I quote from Paul in the Galatian letter for the sake of conciseness and brevity: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye all are one in Christ Jesus." Mark the divisions. How is humanity divided today? By race, by caste, and by sex. In Christ there is neither race, nor caste, no sex. Think in the presence of Paul's word of this Man presented in the Gospel, and see how He represents every type, every class, every possibility, every phase. Jesus was not a poet. You cannot place Him in the Poets' Corner; but more poetry has come out of the things He said than from any other fountainhead in the history of literature. Jesus was no philosopher. He enunciated no system of philosophy; yet the great philosophies all owe something to His inspiration and suggestion. Jesus was not a Man of science; but all scientific investigation has had its chance as the result of His opening the way and making possible the investigations of the centuries. The Easterner is at home in the presence of Christ with all his mystic dreaming; and so also is the Westerner, with his was less, practical, determined endeavour. Whatever the type or class may be, both men and women find in Him the inspiration of noblest things, the crown and glory of all that which is peculiar to them. There He stands upon the page of the Gospel, the Representative Brother. Whether men dwell North, South, East or West, they touch Him and feel the answering thrill of His Brotherhood. He is the Head of the race, and therefore the Representative Brother.

If in Him I find the negation of distinctions, in Him I also find the realization of the essentials of human nature as I know it.

Finally, He is the redeeming Kinsman. What was the right of the Goel, according to Hebrew law and practice? Nearness of kin was the fundamental right. It was the next-of-kin that must redeem his brother. So He came, the next-of-kin to humanity. But the redeemer must accept responsibility. He came accepting responsibility. The redeemer must overcome those who are against his brother. He overcame all the forces against humanity. The redeemer must create the opportunity for his brother's reinstatement; the work of the Goel was the redemption of the person and the inheritance. All these things are fulfilled in this Man. Luke the Greek, writing to Theophilus the Greek, declared that in this Man he had found the fulfillment of the Greek ideal: being and birth, childhood and confirmation, development and anointing; physical, mental, spiritual perfection. In the next section he showed how this perfect Being was perfected, demonstrated perfect through processes of temptation, teaching, and transfiguration. That was the filling to the full of the Greek ideal. They never saw any further than the possibility of perfecting the individual.

The final section of the Gospel, the greatest section of all, shows that this Man not only fulfilled the Greek ideal of personal perfection, but He broke it into a thousand fragments, seeing it was too small to hold Him, as He turned His back upon His personal rights, that He might die and liberate His life, and so make it dynamic for others.

This Gospel of Luke says, Behold the Man; the racial First-born; the representative Brother; the redeeming Kinsman. So it presents the Saviour.

Then it makes proclamation of salvation. "The Son of man" ; that is the Saviour presented ; "Came to seek and to save that which was lost" : that is salvation proclaimed.

Through His redemption, He regenerates men who have fallen; and through that regeneration, He brings them into living relationship with Himself as the new Head of the new race; and through that relationship with Himself, makes them members of the new race. That is salvation.

He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." By the mystery of His death He put sin away, and liberated His life, placing it at the disposal of those who have lost their own. When they receive His life, it is His life they live. Through regeneration He brings them into living relationship with Himself. By that relationship He makes possible their realization of the same nature. Christ is more than human. Every Christian becomes more than human. Christians are made "partakers of the Divine nature."

What then is the abiding appeal of this Gospel? Its first note is that of the attraction of the Personality. First because of the identity between men and Himself. His familiarity with men was born of His conception of the dignity of humanity. If we feel that there are people we hold in contempt, it is because we have a low estimate of humanity.

People were attracted to Christ also by the sense of distance. They said, He is so near us, and yet is so different. He sits down to eat with us, and yet all the while He is saying things we have never heard before.

The final reason of His attractiveness was that of His sympathy. Give that Gospel of Luke to some man who has never read it, who is an honest man; let him sit down and read it, and I venture to affirm he will feel the same charm that men of old felt, the humanness of this Man, the identity with our own life, His distance from it, and the tender sympathy breathing through everything He does and says. That is the first appeal of this Gospel.

The appeal is more than that. It is not only the attraction of Personality. It is that of the terms of discipleship. It is in this Gospel that I find the passage which I never read without trembling. Just before the parable of lost things occur the most severe and appalling words that ever fell from His lips, "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be My disciple." Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." That is the appeal of the Gospel.

These three conditions correspond to the three facts we have considered. Racial First-born, He says to men, You must sever connection with the old race entirely if you are coming after Me; if there is any love in your heart for father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister, which is going to interfere with your loyalty to Me, you must crucify it. I am the First-born of a new race, and you must come after Me by severing your connection with the old race.

Representative Brother of the new race, He says that we must accept the new responsibility. If you are coming after Me you must take up the cross! You cannot find your way into the brotherhood with all its benefits, if you are not fulfilling the conditions.

Redeeming Kinsman, He declares that He can only redeem us, as we give up everything for Him. If you are going to have the benefit of redemption, you must renounce all that you have! There must be mutual sacrifice. It is upon the plane, where He is stripped of dignity and I am stripped of everything, that we meet.

That is the appeal of the Gospel according to Luke. The attraction of Personality and the terms of discipleship.

In a word, let me make the twofold application. I find the application to the Church in the words of the risen Lord, "Ye shall be My witnesses." In the power of the relationship with the Son of Man, I am to become His

witness, His defense, His evidence! His witness, fulfilling the terms we have considered. His witness, realizing the results of the fulfillment of those terms in actual fellowship with Himself. His witness, demonstrating His power because I who was ruined am now redeemed, I who had lost my sense of the infinite and my love of the pure have been brought into fellowship with God, and have purity as the passion of my heart.

Then, because He came to seek and to save the lost, this Gospel calls the Church into fellowship with Him for the sake of the lost; by revelation of what He is able to do in our transformed lives, by conviction so produced in the minds of those who observe, and then by persuasion of such as are convinced towards the selfsame Saviour.

What is the message of this Gospel to the world? Carry it to the ends of the earth, let it speak its own truth to the men who are lost, and it tells them of a Kinsman Who, to borrow the old Hebrew figure, is able to discharge their debt, destroy their enemies, make possible the redemption of their persons and the redemption of their inheritance, as offspring of God.

Behold the Man, but do not try to place Him on a level with yourself. He is intimately near all the essential things of my humanity are in Him! He is infinitely far; all the incidentals of my sin and pollution are not in Him! Because of His purity, in the mystery of His death, He becomes the Son of man seeking and saving the lost.

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