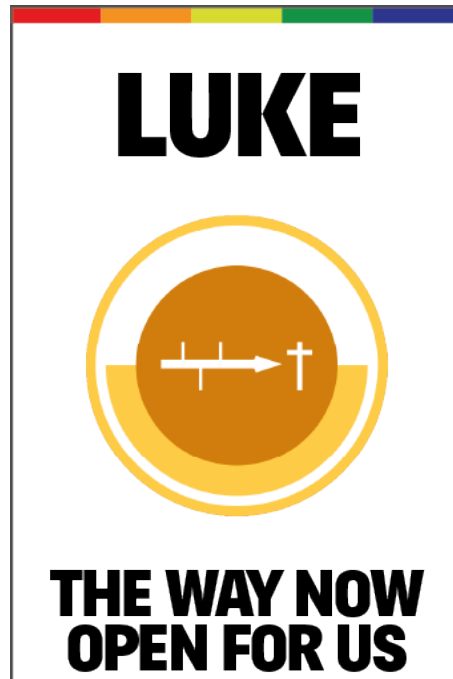




BIBLE IN A YEAR 2020



Summary

This is an orderly, credible account of mind-blowingly incredible events which point to one person we can all follow from suffering to relief, defeat to victory, even death to life.

While a religious saviour was highly anticipated by Israel, this account was written primarily for people who were not among God's chosen people or able to join them, even if they had come to believe in God and wanted to worship him.

As we see him here, Jesus often frustrated the people who thought they would be first in line for rescue by God. He opened the way to a new life of freedom, love and joy to people that respectable religious leaders thought should not be welcome. Do you think that might include you as well as me? We'll have to follow Jesus for a while to find out...

Bern Leckie

Wednesday July 22: Luke 1-2

Can God interest you in new life?

Every day we're reading, listening to or watching part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

What did I like about today's reading?

Isn't it great to see Jesus again? We do hear about him all over the Bible, but there is something powerful about being in his presence, even on the page.

I love that this is an orderly, credible account of mind-blowingly incredible events. While most of scripture is written for a Jewish audience directly, I love that Luke's gospel is aimed more at outsiders looking in who may have loved God, or at least the idea of God, but lacked a way to connect their family tree with his. I love that Luke is going to show the way to do that, through Jesus, very practically with lots of examples of outsiders restored.

Crucial to this is the wide-ranging, jaw-droppingly potent and purposeful power of God. I love how memorably this was at work around Zechariah before Jesus was even born. Note to self: don't argue with an angel! Unless you've got a really good question, like Mary's...

I love how encouraging it is to see and credit God at work. In Zechariah's song especially, I'm struck by how his inspired praise illuminates a massively important theme of Luke's gospel: salvation. What problem does Jesus solve? Why do we need him? There's a "salvation" answer to this in terms of how Israel needed rescuing from enemies, but what about the rest of us? Zechariah's song extends to "the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins", which is far more than a political prop for one country, more like new life for all. Could God's work really do more than empower Israel but illuminate darkness like the sun?

The least likely witnesses, shepherds at night, would be the first to see this in real life. I love how Luke shows the breadth of unlikely characters whose hopes were fulfilled by meeting Jesus, even before he was old enough to be a leader. From a man and woman with lifelong God-centred devotion, to the festival crowd whose attention was grabbed by overhearing young Jesus in the temple courts, I think Luke is making a point. If you're paying attention to God, his Spirit can point you to Jesus. Then if you pay attention to Jesus, he can show you everything about God.

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God's work of salvation and restoration is massive. It forms part of a bigger story told through the nation of Israel, but it's for everyone. When we know Jesus, we can join in too.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

Thank God for the reminder that he led the way to restoration with him. It wasn't something I or anyone else worked out by cleverness or received by privileged status. I want to raise my expectations of what God can do by grace among anyone interested in him.

Who am I going to share this with?

I hope, some in my school community who like the idea of God but don't yet follow Jesus.

Saturday July 25: Luke 3-4

Make straight paths for the Lord – with Jesus?

Every day we're reading, listening to or watching part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

What did I like about today's reading?

I'm still loving feeling this close to Jesus and his work again. From Luke's point of view, it must have seemed so obvious that Jesus was special and so frustrating that not everyone he met understood what God was doing through him.

One thing I'm noticing is that many of those who embraced Jesus did so after he made their life clearer in purpose or dealt with a major problem like illness which was impeding their life. Following Jesus may have come with challenges, but why not follow someone who can deal with life's difficulties like this?

This made me wonder about the prophet Isaiah's word to "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him." I've always read this like it meant to roll out a red carpet, moving stuff around to get ready for a royal visit, with John having a special role in pointing clearly to Jesus. He certainly lives up to this role.

But why does God need a straight path? Can't he deal with a bit of rocky terrain? What if the prophecy is also about the paths we need, the removal of obstacles and straightening up which needs to happen in our lives if we are not just going to see Jesus but walk with him?

And what if we are not alone in making these paths, sorting ourselves out? I'm looking at things in the prophecy we would struggle to do – filling in a valley, levelling a mountain – and then looking again at the people who went with Jesus because he moved the immovable things in their lives. Is there more to this call to get ready for God's salvation, and more to expect from a life following Jesus on a path he is showing us how to clear?

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God is bringing long-promised salvation through Jesus. This is not just about our final destination after death, but very much about the path we take through life. Jesus can clear obstacles and deal with opposition from every force which wants us to walk away from a life led by God and empowered by his presence. Jesus' invitation to join him in our lifetimes can lead to incredible changes for us and our neighbours, including freedom and sight where we might have been held back and blind to what God can do with us.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

I'm reminded of Psalm 27, its writer's awareness of a need for salvation and desire for "a straight path" as he asked God, "Teach me your way..." I need to reflect on what God might want to lead me and my family into. What have we written off as impossible or simply not seen? There is stuff he is doing, I'm sure, that we should credit him more clearly too.

Who am I going to share this with?

Not sure. Over the summer, our pattern of praying with others has changed, but someone!

Wednesday July 29: Luke 5-6

All hail King Jesus

Every day we're reading, listening to or watching part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

What did I like about today's reading?

How exciting is a walk with Jesus!? I am blown away by trying to imagine how his followers felt – some incredible combination of confusion, challenge, inspiration and exhilaration – and it's pretty clear from Luke's account that no-one in their right mind could have seen Jesus simply as a nice, wise man with some good ideas. His presence brought unforgettable changes to people's lives as they finally saw God's Kingdom working in practice.

What a difference it makes to be in the presence of the King! Jesus' authority is visible in so many ways. Fish move to help him make a point. Disease gives way to Jesus' good news that healing and restoration are coming. Jesus even takes authority over sin, offering forgiveness on authority only possible from God himself.

In a way, we can't blame the Pharisees for noticing that the detail of the law about the Sabbath had been broken, and Jesus' push back is astonishing. Is he arguing that breaking the law is fine as long as it's for a good purpose? I don't think so. By claiming authority as 'Lord of the Sabbath', Jesus is grabbing the attention of anyone interested in the Kingdom of God and how it works. There is no point in trying to follow its rules if they don't produce the main thing they are designed for – to help us recognise and obey the authority of the King!

And if we thought that recognising and following the King might only help us grab a few forbidden crumbs, look at what Jesus expects, empowers and commands under his authority in the second half of chapter 6. We can love enemies and live judgement-free.

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God's long-term purpose is revealed in Jesus. While God provided a law which would point people towards recognising their need for a saviour, this saviour turns out to be the King whose authority enables the life which the law alone could not. Life with King Jesus is not static – it's not like we "get" everything when we meet him and accept salvation from him. It is more like a journey, a way of life or walk with him in which our assumptions are challenged, authority has to be given from ourselves to him, and our minds are changed.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

I'm reminded of what a practical thing it is to grow in faith on a walk with Jesus. I'm going to reflect on how God is continuing to challenge my assumptions and show how different life is when he is King.

Who am I going to share this with?

My family and others I follow Jesus with.

Saturday August 1: Luke 7-8

How to walk from death to life

Every day we're reading, listening to or watching part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

What did I like about today's reading?

Yesterday in Deuteronomy we looked at one big, dramatic scene depicting the choice between life and death as God's people got ready to walk into the promised land. Today, I'm loving these multiple little scenes where people from all over the world take their first steps into faith and covenant relationship with Jesus.

I'm also loving that none of the people starting their faith walk had to carry stone tablets full of laws, but simply hearts full of obedience to Jesus and his call to "repent and believe".

The centurion gave up his independence, power and dignity to submit to Jesus and his authority. The widow and the large crowd gave up their death march when Jesus enabled her son to repent of being dead - that's a lot of repentance and belief! And the "sinful woman" who anointed Jesus gave up what may have been the most valuable thing in her life to recognise Jesus' value, showing her belief that he could change her life. I love how Jesus affirmed her and the faith she showed while others would have dismissed her.

I'm encouraged that crossing into Kingdom life with Jesus happens in different ways for different people, but always with the same, simple, life-changing belief in him.

I also love Jesus' picture of what happens next when people accept God's word like a seed. They don't expect a small faith start to remain small. Instead, nourishing and persevering with the new life given by God produces a crop "a hundred times more than was sown". If a little faith can lead to a dramatic life change for us, can you imagine what to do with a lot?

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God wants people from all backgrounds to recognise and respond to him, and Jesus provides a lot we can see and respond to. When we accept Jesus' authority, he can turn our small steps of faith into big, life-changing leaps. In this way, God builds his Kingdom and writes his laws and principles onto our hearts rather than making us carry them on stone.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

I'm struck by Jesus' call to persevere in faith, which I need to do where I've seen people I love who are not yet healed or not yet ready to recognise and respond to Jesus themselves. I need to renew prayer for and faith-centred conversations with some people where I haven't done these for a while. I trust in Jesus' power to change lives, and that he's also grown faith and power like this in believers like me.

Who am I going to share this with?

Family and friends that I've been praying for.

Wednesday August 5: Luke 9-10

Don't just watch, walk

Every day we're reading, listening to or watching part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

What did I like about today's reading?

I find these stories about Jesus and his followers exciting and more than a bit scary. My excitement comes from being impressed again and again that Jesus is the real thing. He has so much power and uses it so well. He shows love in action, people get fed, healed, built up, shown the meaning of life and given significance and purpose in the universe. Yes!

So what's scary? It's these bits where he turns to followers and says, "Your turn."

It turns out that life with Jesus is not a spectator event. It's not a show put on for believers' comfort. It's far more involving, interesting, challenging, worthwhile and world-changing, because Jesus was not just being amazing. He was building and walking out a way of life for people to follow, as unlikely as that seemed given the incredible things he could do.

I'm trying to imagine how it felt to be with Jesus at that time of being sent out to do what he did, leaving behind all the stuff I would want to rely on for comfort. Being encouraged to stay where there's a welcome and having Jesus' permission to move on if there's not. And then actually seeing this healing I might have thought I'd only ever see at Jesus' hands.

Thinking back, although I've actually been on mission trips, believed and seen healing myself, and in Bristol too, I'm still in awe. Watching seems a lot easier than walking with Jesus.

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God's plan to draw people back to himself, enjoying fullness of life under the authority of his leadership, looked hard when all we could see was laws, but it looks a lot more doable when we can see Jesus. God wants us to understand what he expects of us, and Jesus' stories about living the laws of love help with that, but he also empowers us to live the way Jesus does too. That includes giving us the ability to get uncomfortable, go on journeys and do impossible looking things which bring life to others.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

Somehow it doesn't feel like the season for us to do mission trips at the moment (but I could be wrong about that!) In our life in Bristol, there is still the temptation to glue ourselves to a screen and watch great things happen somewhere else more than walking with Jesus into encounters and relationships where we can be empowered as followers like this. I'm going to pray more to see the opportunities God has sent us here for right now, and be ready to walk more with Jesus, not just sit and watch!

Who am I going to share this with?

My family.

Saturday August 8: Luke 11-12

Open your eyes to a new reality

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

What did I like about today's reading?

Jesus says and shows a LOT of amazing stuff here. But what grabbed my attention today was "the lamp of the body". When I see this, I usually mix it up with what Jesus says about the lamp that gets put on a stand to bring light that removes shadows and secrecy. Luke wrote about this earlier (Luke 8:16), and Mark also quoted Jesus on this (Mark 4:21). Matthew takes it further and quotes Jesus as saying we have light to shine to others, showing our good deeds so God can be glorified (Matthew 5:15). That's encouraging, that what we do can illuminate the world and help people to see God.

But it's not what Jesus is saying here in Luke 11:33. He's talking about light we need to come into us. It enters through eyes we need to keep healthy and open, and then the darkness within us can be defeated by light.

What I love about this is that if I only read about the light I'm meant to be giving out, I could spend a lifetime trying to generate that light within myself, do my best, dig deep for some brilliant passion and then just try not to mess up or get too tired. I do believe that the Spirit lives in me and equips me to be "the light of the world" as Jesus puts it. But how do we know what to do? How do we know what's right when we try and discern spiritual things?

Luke made this clear to his audience of people who were largely not Jewish and just getting into a new world of discovering God. Good news – it's easy! Just open your eyes! With everything that Jesus is showing, and that the Spirit is doing right in front of our eyes, we only have to look to get illuminated, clued up and cleaned up to be fit for purpose in God's kingdom. Isn't that encouraging?

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

Jesus talks a lot in this passage about the battle between God and enemies, light and darkness, along with signs that God is going to win. He also reassures believers that in his new kingdom reality, prayer is simple and effective when we look for that kingdom coming and trust God to meet our needs.

God knows that we can easily let things get in the way between us and clear view of him, like religious confusion, worry and desires for possessions. But he has moved heaven and earth to restore closeness to us and simply needs us to open our eyes to see it.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

Pray simple prayers next week, on the pattern Jesus says, and increase my trust in God.

Who am I going to share this with?

My family and others I pray with.

Wednesday August 12: Luke 13-14

Think you've got it sorted? Think again!

Bern Leckie writes:

What did I like about today's reading?

"Repent" is a strange word. So churchy. Who else uses it, and who can avoid thinking about strange shouty men with hand painted signs when they hear it? I've always wondered if we have only kept using that word, which could be translated much more naturally as "change your mind" or "think again", because the whole idea of changing our minds is so unsettling. By using this unusual word, one we associate only with saying sorry to God and maybe making a one-time turnaround towards salvation in our lives, I think we've managed to keep a lot of discomfort at a distance. Have you repented and called Jesus your Lord and Saviour? Hooray! You're a Christian bound for heaven. And I believe that.

But I don't think it was Jesus' point.

I'm struck here by Jesus stressing that "unless you repent, you too will all perish." So far, that sounds like a shouty sandwich board man. But what is Jesus telling people to repent, or change their minds, about?

I think he was addressing the popular belief that bad people suffered and good people deserved better. Think again, said Jesus. It's not the worst sinners who suffer the most, and anyone thinking their survival had to do with them being fine, upstanding, law-obeying people was wrong. Everyone who thought this had to change their mind or perish too.

I love how Jesus talks about, then demonstrates again, what God really wants and why our minds need to change and keep being changed, grown and matured by the Spirit. God wants to grow fruit in us, more than we are currently producing. More than we need just to be peaceful in ourselves. Enough to share with others to change the world and see God's kingdom come, starting small and always growing.

I'm really loving the contrast, too, between Jesus and Jephthah from yesterday in Judges, who was spiritually powerful but lacking in wisdom. Jesus shows what the combo of love, wisdom and power looks like in practice. How much do we have to change to be like that?

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God shares massive amounts of love, wisdom and power with us so that we and the world around us can be transformed. It happens slowly, constantly, like seeds growing into fruit. It does not only require a one-time commitment from us, but a lifetime of development in which we will find that our minds are changing, and we start to see life God's way.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

Let God do this with me, even more please!

Who am I going to share this with?

My family and other people I follow Jesus with.

Saturday August 15: Luke 15-16

God's way of including people is not reasonable

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

What did I like about today's reading?

I think Jesus wants us to take a leap here, and gives us lots of encouragement. The religious people around him are like many today for whom faith has become sensible, understandable, containable, manageable, even (for them) the mainstream establishment and home to all that is proper and reasonable.

But most of these pictures from Jesus about God and his coming Kingdom are anything but. We might be so used to them that we don't realise how weird and unreasonable they are, even though we can hopefully still relate to them. OK, if we're not sheep farmers, we might only relate to the joy of finding a lost thing, but not the madness of leaving 99 undefended – that's not reasonable. The coin I get more – finding a day's wages is no small thing, but even if I find a coin that's not worth the time it took to look, I feel excessively happy.

The lost, prodigal son story is super famous, and I don't know how many of Jesus' audience knew the original Buddhist version where the returning son earns back his place in the family after much work. For anyone who expected that, Jesus' new ending is even more shocking than it is for first-time listeners. Unreasonable, uncontainable love and joy from the father, despite the protests of the sensible elder son.

I love that Jesus is not rallying the sensible to defend the traditional, but warning them to expect an unreasonable revolution as God's Kingdom comes. They (and we, in our culture where Christianity is mainstream and traditional) should be shocked by Jesus, especially on issues of inclusivity. Expect God to pursue and bring in the people we didn't expect. Walking with Jesus, starting to see the world his way and joining him on his mission should change our minds.

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God knows how we like to get settled in our understanding and form regular habits. God also knows, and warned through countless Old Testament stories, prophecies, songs and poems, as well as the flow of Israel's history, that when we stick to what seems reasonable to us about God and religion, our minds and hearts are not in the right place.

So Jesus and the Spirit shake things up radically. They call and enable us to leap from what we think we should reasonably do and who is living a reasonably good life to what God can amazingly do, far more inclusively than we expect.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

Reflect on how God has changed my mind over years about inclusivity and ask what's next.

Who am I going to share this with?

By next Sunday, I will have a talk finished on being trained by God, to share with you!

Wednesday August 19: Luke 17-18

God's relational way can surprise us

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

What did I like about today's reading?

In our more isolated than usual state, I think it's easier than ever to see life and faith in terms of stuff and things to be done. Maybe I do this more than most, as I've always found it a bit easier to focus on the apparent certainties of processes and achievements than the uncertainties of relationships. But I'm struck in these stories by Jesus turning anyone who had their minds on stuff getting done towards relational health, and who bonded with Jesus relationally might have come as a surprise to the high religious achievers.

On sin – yes, be concerned about it. But be more concerned with repentance and forgiveness. Keep forgiving when asked! On healing – it's great stuff to experience. But life-changing faith and wellness are shown when someone comes back, praises God, wanting a relationship their culture might not have had.

On prayer – be persistent. Faith isn't in the thing of prayer but the relationship and determination to keep asking. On how we regard ourselves – be humble. We might think we do all the right things, but in relationship with God we should have the perspective to know that we are servants, imperfect, exalting him rather than ourselves.

If our things are more important to us than relationship with God, we wouldn't be able to obey Jesus if he told us to sell stuff. And if we think our experience, achievements or any other kind of status make us special, we might miss Jesus wanting us to make way for children, foreigners or a blind beggar.

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God's plan to bring people back to himself does involve him forgiving and transforming us, but not so that we become proud models of self-improvement. Everything in his kingdom is about moving into healthy relationships, living with him as King and adopting his values, loving others and growing in relationships.

God also surprises even the faithful followers with who he brings into relationship with him – seemingly everyone who wants to be, even if we think they are too young, too old, too sinful, from the wrong culture... The people who ask for access to God get it, and the people who ask for forgiveness (and therefore relationship restored) from us should get it too.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

This has made me think about times when I might have missed someone's faith when I focused on things and processes too much. There are people I want to pray for and restore better relationships with!

Who am I going to share this with?

Those people directly, and others I pray and follow Jesus with.

Saturday August 22: Luke 19-20

Jesus opens the way to authority

Today Bern Leckie writes:

What did I like about today's reading?

I love that in these ancient conversations we can recognise some of the biggest arguments of today, like who has authority and whose word we can really trust. These were massive issues in the Israel of Jesus' time, overseen by governors ruled and taxed by Rome, looking for the kingdom and saviour long promised in scripture to free them, but having plenty of time to argue while they waited about what God wanted and how to live.

In a culture like this, authority was a privilege which had to be fought for. It was sometimes earned with talent but just as often traded as favours to prop up other leaders, and usually shown off with status symbols of expensive clothes, buildings, places of honour. Who paid for this pricey game? Ultimately, the taxpayers with no authority to challenge corruption.

I love how Jesus disrupts this structure in every possible way by claiming higher authority and, by making himself accessible to anyone who will call him Lord, subverting the system which gave power to corrupt authorities. Jesus' genius in this is not like a military leader, arming people for a violent revolution, but as a spiritual leader, changing how people see the issues which cause conflicts.

For example, I love how Jesus wants to change our relationship with money. He doesn't carry the resentment most of the country had about being taxed, so he can freely love, stay with and change the life of a tax collector. He turns a tricky question about tax into a non-issue for people who value God's blessings more than cash and don't confuse the two. His stories show that when we are ruled by stress about money and possessions, we miss the life we could enjoy by being ruled by God and, under his authority, investing in people.

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

Jesus chooses not to look like a traditional authority, but people recognise that he rules because of the miraculous life changes which come from following him.

He also shows authority through opening up the meaning of scripture, making it accessible to more than a few privileged, highly educated teachers and showing how it points to him as the ultimate authority.

Now that God has made authority accessible and understandable in human form, we are no longer bound to fail through inability to buy influence or to grasp and live by religious laws.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

Thank God for making Jesus and his way of life open and affordable to me.

Who am I going to share this with?

The people I follow Jesus with.

Wednesday August 26: Luke 21-22

We can't get enough of this story

Today Bern Leckie writes:

What did I like about today's reading?

Have you ever noticed that in well written stories, heroes who try to change the world often don't succeed until they stretch, strain and ultimately, maybe in the final moments, give everything they possibly can to their effort? It's only when we know they could not give any more that we know they are fully invested, all in. They could lose everything, so their effort must be wholehearted. Now we know them fully and trust they are worthy to succeed.

Hollywood is built on these stories, and we can't seem to get enough of them. I don't think that's just because we admire heroes like that, but because we relate and want to be like them. We might not think we can be as strong, fast, bold or witty as some of our heroes, but don't we want a better world like they do? How can we share our passion wholeheartedly?

In these passages, Jesus tells and shows us. I love the short observation of the widow to start with. She gave the most because she gave all she had. This is how God sees things, not the way we do when we probably overlook how a couple of extra pennies could change our budgets at all, but the wholehearted commitment of someone giving everything is hugely significant in God's kingdom. It means they haven't just brought some stuff but their whole selves. Wholehearted reunion between us and God is the whole point of Jesus' ministry. I love how Jesus contrasts the significance of that against temporary riches and buildings.

What Jesus is building up to is more than talk about giving everything, though. We know where his story is heading. He is going to give all that anyone can give to save the world.

But before then, I'm reminded of how Jesus gave us a reminder of how he gave everything, his body and blood, and I'm struck by how easy he made it for us to keep this reminder in mind. Why the command to "do this" and act it out, though? Why not just remember the idea? I don't think it was Jesus addressing our dodgy memories, but more recognising that we would want and need to keep consuming the story about wholehearted giving, so that it would be our story too, and so that Jesus could strengthen us to play our part.

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God knows what we want and need for a satisfying and significant life. He has given us a way to find it by following and obeying Jesus in wholehearted giving of ourselves. He knows that we won't always succeed in our efforts, as Jesus tried to tell Peter who could not believe that he would disown Jesus under pressure. But he knows our hearts and how he can restore us, even if we mess up, when we remain in relationship with him.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

I'm keen to celebrate communion! I want to recommit myself wholeheartedly to God.

Who am I going to share this with?

My family and people at church, where communion has been a recent discussion topic.

Saturday August 29: Luke 23-24

The right way can look completely wrong

Today Bern Leckie writes:

What did I like about today's reading?

I was wondering what I could possibly find in such familiar stories that felt fresh, relevant and right to share today. It turns out there is always lots, but this stood out most.

We trust crowds too much. Isn't there wisdom in the crowd if most or all agree? Won't markets – crowds with money – tell us what works and what doesn't, where to invest and where not? If you can't raise the cash, crowdfund. If you're stuck for ideas, crowdsource. Where have crowds ever let us down? (Apart from Boaty McBoatface, perhaps.)

OK, you might think you're above being led by the crowd, but if you're lost like my wife and I were once in Moscow, unable to read the signs or ask around, seeing armed police on every corner and scared to do the wrong thing or go the wrong way in the middle of a big, fast moving crowd, wouldn't it seem OK to go their way if everyone else did and no-one died?

The crowd in Luke 23 was lost but didn't know it. They were sure of what they wanted, a saviour which would deliver what they expected and not make them feel rubbish, challenged to change the way Jesus did. The wisdom of this crowd shouted, "Crucify him!"

And who knew that the way to new life was to follow a condemned, beaten man through his suffering and death? Even Jesus' closest followers did not get this, I'm reminded from the story. I'm amazed that, after seeing their leader die, they kept any faith alive at all.

In human terms, this plan was nuts. But God, and only God, could deliver on it. Death had nothing to hold Jesus, so he could make a way right through it, a way now open for us to follow. It's not the way of the crowd. Giving ourselves to be redefined by Jesus is something we've all spent time resisting at some point in life. But look at where his way leads, connecting puzzles of the past to power in the present and an eternal future where life and love will beat death and suffering. If you could grab hold of someone going that way, wouldn't you? Jesus calls us to do that, along with everyone we think might never follow.

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God wants us to know him and his true power, surprisingly revealed in what looks like weakness and defeat. He knows we'll keep trying to get our heads around this! Perhaps we will in time. Meanwhile, he can put his arms around us and lead us better than any crowd.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

At this moment, as you may tell from what I've shared here, I'm more caught up Jesus' amazingness than the practicalities of stuff to do about it, other than trust him. But I'm glad that Luke's story continues into "what next?" practical territory in Acts. I'll keep reading!

Who am I going to share this with?

There's a lot to discuss, but I'm going to enjoy simply worshiping with family tomorrow.