
Introduction to This Issue

Salvation Revisited: Luke's Dynamic Vision for Restoration, Reconciliation, and Transformation

Salvation is a big deal. For people of faith today, it means forgiveness, restoration, and reconciliation. It also means justice, rescue from oppression, and redemption. Salvation is both eternal as well as here and now. It is both individual as well as communal. It refers not just to internal dispositions, but also to interpersonal relations, ethical practices, social dimensions, global ecologies, and cosmic transformation. Clearly, salvation refers to a profoundly wide range of dynamic things.

Salvation is no less expansive in Luke's Gospel, the focus of the upcoming year of the Revised Common Lectionary (Year C). Joel Green points out that, in Luke's narrative, salvation is not merely an eternal destiny, but "embraces life in the present, restoring the integrity of human life, revitalizing human communities, setting the cosmos in order, and commissioning the community of God's people to put God's grace into practice among themselves and towards ever-widening circles of others.... Salvation embraces the totality of embodied life, including its social, economic, and political concerns."¹

Such a robust a theme—for Luke's Gospel and for our world today—deserves revisiting and reinvestigating, which is the focus of this issue. Our narrow-minded and short-sighted assumptions often lead us astray, in this case to thinking God's saving work refers primarily to things we know and prefer. But the bigger picture of how God "saves" is too rich to bypass. Luke's Jesus proclaims and embodies a salvation that is immediate, transformative, and real. What does this mean for us and our world today?

Troy Troftgruben explores the immediacy of salvation in the Third Gospel, seen in the recurring language "today." He maintains that this language is not merely descriptive (of past activity) but proclaims and claims salvation as an authentic reality for Luke's audiences. In this way, the Gospel bears witness to a transformative power that pertains to hearers of all times and places.

Monique Cuany points out how salvation in Luke's narrative is both personal and social—both individual and communal. In fact, these seemingly contrasting dimensions are intimately linked. Using the examples of Mary and Zacchaeus, Cuany shows how God's favor toward individuals inevitably generates and calls for transformative realities on communal and social levels, contributing to shalom in its fullest sense.

John Carroll not only shows how both individual and

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communal salvation is in Luke's Gospel, but also how often the redemption of individuals disrupts existing social systems and fractures communities. Using six narrative examples—Levi, an impaired man, a "sinful" woman, a Gerasene man, a crippled woman, and Zacchaeus—Carroll shows how Jesus' saving activity generates division, thereby inviting individuals to a more inclusive vision of community restoration.

Matthew Skinner draws attention to how sociopolitical salvation is for Luke's Gospel: whether "political" conveys the idea well, this salvation has public ramifications for transforming real relationships. Exploring the words of Mary, Zechariah, an angel, and Jesus (Luke 1–4), Skinner shows that Luke's vision of salvation entails the reconfiguring of social norms and the dismantling of oppression. Jesus deals not just with individual hearts, but with injustice in all its forms—a message especially relevant for our world today.

Luis Menéndez-Antuña points out how salvation in Luke's narrative does not happen in a vacuum, but always happens in relationship to sociopolitical dimensions. In fact, Jesus' saving activity engages these realities variously, whether aided by them, catalyzed by them, or complicated by them. Using insights from the modern Black Lives Matter movement and the notion of social death, Menéndez-Antuña explores healings of three individuals—a Centurion, a widow from Nain, and a Gerasene man—to show how the sociopolitical realm becomes a condition of possibility for salvation to take shape.

In the *Listening to Immigrant Voices* feature **Alicia Vargas** comments on the family separations of asylum seekers at the U.S. border in the summer of 2018, which elicited a strong compassionate response from many political and religious sectors in the U.S., leading to swift policy-changing results. As a once-immigrant child, she reflects on both her story of emigration and the economic-political reasons for the emigration of many of the families at the border. Prophetic questions are raised about our involvement and responsibility in the continuing circumstances that force endangered families to flee their countries.

The *Currents Focus* section includes three articles, exploring

1. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 24–25.

the ongoing significance of the twentieth-century theological figures of Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich. **Brach S. Jennings** demonstrates how Rudolf Bultmann preached the gospel to an age he believed could no longer accept the mythical worldview of the Bible, in order to proclaim the kernel of the gospel message existentially. Bultmann's existentialist interpretation of the gospel kerygma continues to bear important implications for Christian faith today. **Paul E. Capetz** proceeds next to explore the conflict between Bultmann and Karl Barth over *Sachkritik* as a confessional difference between Lutherans and the Reformed. This article argues that Protestants today must decide what is the genuine legacy of the Reformation heritage regarding the proper understanding of biblical authority, since nothing less than the integrity of the Protestant church and its ministry is at stake. In a second contribution, **Capetz** explores the implications of Paul Tillich's reflections on the Protestant principle to distinguish what is of mere historical interest from what is of enduring value in Luther's legacy. Tillich exemplifies the kind of dialogical historical-theological engagement with the church's heritage that is urgently needed, since it is captive neither to the right nor to the left.

Readers of this issue enjoy another feast from the contributions of our book reviewers and the authors of *Preaching Helps*. We are grateful for the keen insights of these preachers in introducing creative perspectives based on the weekly texts for the next liturgical seasons. The editors note that *Currents in Theology and Mission* invites interested readers to consider making an original contribution to the journal by serving as reviewers of books they believe would be of interest to our audience.

Salvation remains central to God's ongoing work in the world as witnessed by the Gospel of Luke. May we remain faithful servants of God's salvation in Jesus Christ as we foster life-giving relationships for the sake of our neighbors and all of creation!

Troy Troftgruben, Guest Editor
Craig L. Nesson, Issue Co-Editor

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