

# **Gazing at Christ: Meditations on the Gospel of Luke**

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Christ as an infant child, a man teaching and healing, training His friends to do the same, giving a counter-cultural perspective on what is important, choosing danger and death with courage, suffering, rising from the dead—all of these images of Christ come to us through Luke and the other gospels. As we read of Christ we have a choice to be looking at Him with a tourist's gaze—detached, as visitors, perhaps critical and skeptical. Or we can look at Him with a giving gaze—a gaze of love, affection, wonder, curiosity, and deep desire to understand.

## Preface

Luke's presentation of Christ includes the very personal, very pastoral, and very compassionate Christ. I love all the gospels, but find a special connection to this one. His version includes more material regarding the journey to known death in Jerusalem than the other gospels, and more references to poverty and the poor than any other gospel.

His journey reminds me of mythic images of a king, hidden, not known to his subjects, who selects his companions for a great journey. The journey leads to a climactic battle between good and evil, and in the best story-telling tradition, ends with his unexpected triumph, revelation as the king, and beginning of this reign. In all the gospels, the Kingdom of Heaven is the focal message: its coming, its hiddenness, its perfection, and Christ as its King. Luke can be divided into five sections that draw out that theme:

The Hidden King	Chapters 1-4
The Companions	Chapters 5-9
The Journey	Chapters 10-14
The Covert Kingdom	Chapters 15-18
The King Revealed	Chapters 19-24

In all these meditations, I have had these questions in mind:  
What does this tell us about Christ?  
What does this tell us about our world?  
What does this tell us about our life with him?

For me, this has been a way of interacting with the text and meditating on it (i.e. it was fun and profitable for me even if no one else ever finds benefit in it!). In each section a brief summary of the passage is given after the reference and title, and the poem or meditation follows. Christian teachers I've heard have recommended that one re-write Scriptures in ones' own words as a way of understanding it more deeply. My poetic renderings are an exercise in a somewhat elaborate form of doing that.

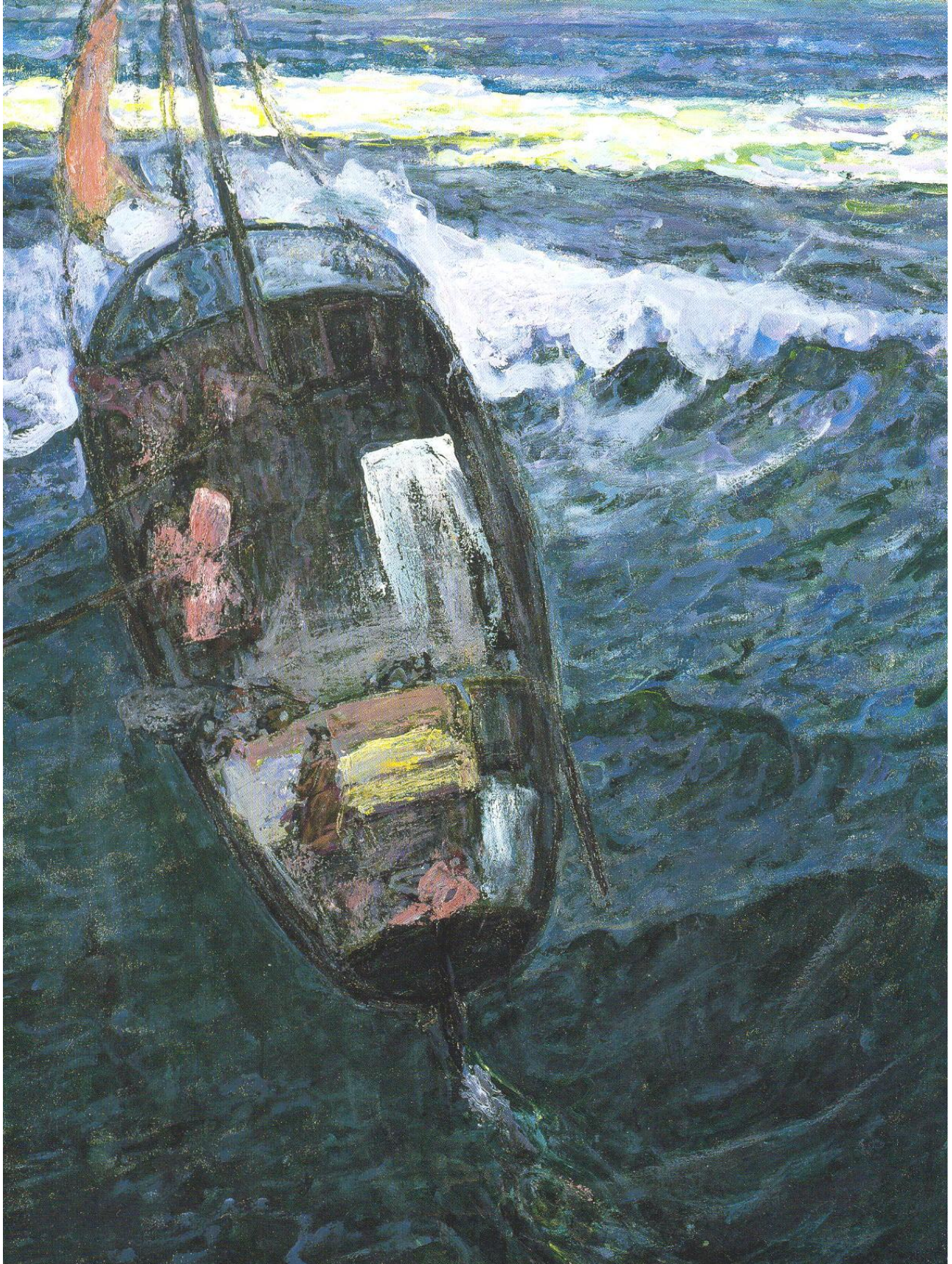
## The Paintings

All the following paintings are by Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859-1937), an American impressionist who spent many years in France. He was the first African-American artist who gained an international reputation. He began his career in 1881 and painted landscapes and genre paintings, including several remarkable pictures of men teaching children, a relatively uncommon theme in painting. In 1896 he painted *Daniel in the Lion's Den*, and began the series of biblical paintings that became so characteristic of his work. His father, a minister, made links between the story of Daniel and the experience of slavery. Similarly, he made an analogy between the liberation of the slaves and the resurrection of Lazarus. Tanner repeatedly painted the *Flight into Egypt*, something that paralleled his experience of frequent moves with his wife and son, perhaps from discrimination from their mixed marriage. Another favorite theme of his was that of the Good Shepherd which he painted in many different lights and moods. While the personal seeking of the Shepherd for each person's heart was important, his father also spoke of it as the story of God seeking those like slaves who were marginalized and rejected, and his loving effort to draw them into his community. I'm not aware of other impressionists who painted Biblical scenes. This and the sensitivity that comes from his racial position make him a remarkable painter.

## The Poetry

Some meditations consist of information I've collected. Most are free verse meditations, which is a popular and accessible form of modern verse, with no fixed form. But I also enjoy poetic forms and experimenting with a variety of forms drawn from different traditions. The form is indicated after each poem and a **glossary** at the end gives a brief description. The process of selecting a passage and ideas or images to focus on, selecting a poetic form, and then rearranging thoughts and words until ideas and forms seem to fit, has been a wonderful, fresh way to meditate on very familiar passages.





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## The Hidden King

- 1     The King is Promised  
      1:5-25     To Zechariah  
      1:26-45    To Mary  
      1:46-80    Through prophecy
- 2     The King is Presented  
      2:1-20     To the shepherds  
      2:21-40    To the prophets  
      2:41-52    In the temple
- 3     The King is Prepared for  
      3:1-20     By John  
      3:21-38    By His lineage
- 4     The King is Proclaimed  
      4:1-13     In the wilderness  
      4:14-30    As prophetic fulfillment  
      4:31-44    In Galilee

## The Companions

- 5     The Companions are called  
      5:1-11     To fish for men  
      5:12-16    To faith  
      5:17-26    To forgiveness  
      5:27-32    To friendship  
      5:33-39    To feasting
- 6     The Companions are coached  
      6:1-11     In the true law  
      6:12-19    As a team  
      6:20-49    In transformed thought
- 7     The Companions see compassion for  
      7:1-10     A slave  
      7:11-17    A son  
      7:18-35    Seekers  
      7:36-50    A sinful woman
- 8     The Companions are comforted by  
      8:1-21     Closeness  
      8:22-25    Calm  
      8:26-39    Control of evil spirits  
      8:40-56    Care of the sick
- 9     The Companions contribute by  
      9:1-9      Sharing the Kingdom  
      9:10-17    Serving food  
      9:18-43    Seeing His glory  
      9:43-62    Staying with Him

## The Journey

- 10 Hospitality on the journey
  - 10:1-24 For the servants
  - 10:25-37 For those in need
  - 10:38-42 For Jesus
- 11 Journey of the Heart
  - 11:1-13 In prayer
  - 11:14-28 In discernment
  - 11:29-32 In hope
  - 11:33-54 In motivation
- 12 Journey to Humility
  - 12:1-12 Don't fear
  - 12:13-34 Don't fret
  - 12:35-59 Don't faint
- 13 Journey of Hope
  - 13:1-21 Mercy
  - 13:22-30 Judgment
  - 13:31-35 Mercy from judgment
- 14 Journey to Happiness
  - 14:1-6 Invitation to wholeness
  - 14:7-14 Invitation to humility
  - 14:15-24 Invitation to celebration
  - 14:25-35 Invitation to commitment

## The Covert Kingdom

- 15 At home in the Kingdom
  - 15:1-7 The sheep found
  - 15:8-10 The coin found
  - 15:11-32 The son found
- 16 Holy in the Kingdom
  - 16:1-18 Freed from sin
  - 16:19-31 Freed from selfishness
- 17 Healed in the Kingdom
  - 17:1-10 Peaceful hearts
  - 17:11-19 Purified hearts
  - 17:20-37 Prepared hearts
- 18 Happy in the Kingdom
  - 18:1-8 Faith
  - 18:9-14 Forgiveness
  - 18:15-17 Fellowship
  - 18:18-30 Freedom
  - 18:31-34 Friendship
  - 18:35-43 Fantastic gifts!

## The King Revealed

- 19    The King's Title
  - 19:1-10    Turned hearts
  - 19:11-27    Ten servants
  - 19:28-40    Triumphal entry
  - 19:41-44    Tragic city
  - 19:45-48    Temple cleansed
  
- 20    The King Tested
  - 20:1-19    Authority questioned
  - 20:20-26    Sacred/secular authority
  - 20:27-47    Scriptural authority
  
- 21    The King Tells of His Return
  - 21:1-28    Signs of the times
  - 21:29-38    Signs of the tree
  
- 22    The King Taken
  - 22:1-6    Sharing a plot
  - 22:7-30    Sharing a meal
  - 22:31-38    Sharing a prediction
  - 22:39-53    Plot fulfilled
  - 22:54-71    Prediction fulfilled
  
- 23    The King Tried
  - 23:1-25    Trial
  - 23:26-43    Crucifixion
  - 23:44-49    Death
  - 23:50-56    Burial
  
- 24    The King's Triumph
  - 24:1-12    Empty tomb
  - 24:13-34    Explanation of Scripture
  - 24:35-49    Entering the upper room
  - 24:50-53    Entering heaven