

Joy in Luke

ABSTRACT

Sometimes Christianity has been presented as a very solemn faith to the point of being gloomy. People have been so set on attaining the joys of heaven that they have forgotten the joys of earth. Luke would not have recognized such a way as truly Christian. Joy runs through his gospel. It is clear that he understood Christianity as a faith that filled the whole life with joy. This paper investigates the significance of the theme of joy in Luke's Gospel. With the announcement of the birth of Jesus, a new era has dawned. Joy fills the scene. In the infancy stories in Luke 1:14 and 2:10 the dominant mood is that of joy. This mood persists throughout the Gospel as joy at the acts of Jesus (13:17 and 19:6). Joy is also the mood of people (18:43 and 19:37). There is joy in the finding of the lost (15:5-7, 9 and 32). There is joy at the knowledge that one's name is written in heaven (10:20). Luke adds a final accent when the disciples return to Jerusalem with great joy after the ascension (24:52).

1. INTRODUCTION

Luke has a good deal of what may be called human-interest material. Not only did he include material that no other evangelist included, but he also had an own way of going about with his material, even with material included in other gospels. Phrases which indicate the expression of emotions are unusually common in Luke (Plummer 1982[1896]:lx).

In a time where many people yearn for stronger experience of Christian faith, an obvious place to search for guidelines is in the Bible. Considering Luke's interest in human interests and emotions, it is likely that he would present a significant contribution in this regard. This article investigates Luke's interest in the theme of joy in order to establish his teaching on this theme. In this regard one may ask whether Luke does not paint an unrealistic portrait of the life of a Christian or a "theology of glory" ignoring hardships and suffering of life. Is it possible for joy to persist when the church is exposed to suffering?

To answer these questions, an overview is given of the special interests of Luke's Gospel with special attention of the concept of joy. Investigation is done of the prominence of the theme of joy in the Gospel and the Luke's teaching on this theme.

2. SPECIAL INTERESTS OF LUKE

The special interests of Luke can be recognized in several themes. These interests impact on his teaching of joy:

- Luke is the theologian of *Heilsgeschichte*. "He (Luke) regards history to the realm of God's redemptive activity and interprets the movement and goal of history by this fact" (Ellis 1966:15). Conzelmann notoriously has pointed to this significant focus of Luke in calling his book on the third Gospel *Die Mitte der Zeit* (1954).¹ All history pivots on Christ

¹ The German original *Die Mitte der Zeit* was published in 1954. It has been translated and less revealingly titled "The Theology of St. Luke".

and the coming of Jesus – the centre of time. The eternal salvation appeared in Jesus of Nazareth by God's grace (cf. Du Plessis 1996:144; Howard 1989:9).

- Closely related to Luke's focus on the history of revelation, is that Luke replaced the hope of an immanent *parousia* by the idea of a progress of Christian history. He shifted the emphasis of Christian faith from the future to the past, and gave the present a positive significance (Howard 1989:79). Luke emphasises the blessings of salvation which Jesus brings.
- Salvation is open to all nations. While there is a deep interest in the Jews, there is nothing like Jewish exclusivism (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:128; Esler 1989:36).
- Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the apostles together form a two-volume work. It is the one story of salvation that Luke tells. This salvation rests on who Jesus was and what He did, but this story did not cease when Jesus died. Salvation went on in the life of the church and went out to the gentiles (Conzelmann 1987:xliv).
- A very significant feature in Luke's Gospel is his interest in those who were generally held as of no account in the first century: women, children, the poor and the disreputable. Luke likewise warns against riches and those who live in affluent society, while drawing attention to the needs of the despised (Du Plessis 1996:149; Howard 1989:138).
- Luke has a deep interest in the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. This is most clearly in Acts, but is also significant in his Gospel (Floor 1988:21-25; Viljoen & Stoltz 2005:260; Van Bruggen 1996:31; Won 1999:22-47).
- Luke emphasizes the importance of prayer by presenting an elaborate account of Jesus' teaching on prayer and many prayer texts (Han 2000: 675-693; O'Brien 1973:111-127; Smalley 1973:59-71).

Keeping these special contributions of Luke in mind, the question for this article is what contributions the third Gospel offers on joy, and related to this, on praise and worship. In an overview of the Gospel, the following incidents draw attention to the concept of joy and worship:

- Luke begins and ends his gospel on a note of joy and worship (1:14 ff. and 24:52 ff.) (cf. Viljoen 2003:200).
- In between there are many phrases expressing joy: people who exuberantly leap for joy (6:23), laughter (6:21), Zaccheus' joyful encounter he has with Jesus (19:6), merriment (15:23) and rejoicing over the recovery of what had been lost (15:6, 9, 23, 32).
- Furthermore it is only Luke who records the canticles that are best known by their initial Latin words: *Magnificat* (1:46-55), *Benedictus* (1:68-79), *Gloria in excelsis Deo* (2:14), and *Nunc Dimittis* (2:29-32) (cf. Viljoen & Floor 2004:752).
- Luke has more occurrences of the joy words, viz. the verb χαίρω and the noun χαρά than any other book in the New Testament (Conzelmann & Zimmerli 1978:367). People are often found rejoicing or giving glory to God or praising Him (e.g. Lk 1:14, 44, 47; 2:20; 7:16; 10:21; 13:13). Far more often than in the other Gospels we are told that those who received special blessings glorified God (e.g. Lk 2:20; 5:25, 26; 7:16; 8:13; 17:15; 18:43). The expression "praising God" (εὐλογεῖν τὸν θεόν) is almost peculiar to Luke (Lk 1:64; 2:28; 24:53).

"There can by no doubt that the Christianity Luke knew was a wonderfully joyful affair" (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:132). "Clearly Luke merits the title of the 'Gospel of joy'" (Painter 1992:395).

Though it falls outside the limits of this article, it is significant to note that according to Luke's second volume, Acts, joy also denotes the beginning of the age of the church.

Even so, Luke puts much emphasis on the passion in his Gospel. Although Luke does not specify the purpose of the cross in the way the other evangelists do, he devotes a good deal of space to the cross and its predictions (Lk. 5:35; 9:22, 43-45; 12:50; 13:32-33; 17:25; 18:31-33). It is therefore misleading to assume, as Conzelmann does when saying that there is no “direct soteriological significance drawn from Jesus’ suffering or death” (Conzelmann 1960:201). Luke as a matter of fact uses the terms such as “Saviour” and “salvation” much more than the other evangelists (Powell, 1992:8).

3. PROMINANCE OF JOY WORDS IN LUKE

To establish the prominence of the concept of joy as presented by Luke, attention is paid to words that function within the semantic field of joy. The concept of joy is being expressed by no less than seven words: ἀγαλλιάω, ἀγαλλίασις, εὐφραίνω, σκιρτάω, χαίρω, σύχαιρω, and χαρά. Ἀγαλλιάω and ἀγαλλίασις, though derived from classical use, are found only in Jewish works or writings dependent on them. Εὐφραίνω and σκιρτάω are also strongly attested in the LXX and are found only in the books of the LXX but are dominant in the Gospels (Plummer 1982:lix).

Painter (1992:395) illustrates the distribution of these joy words in the Gospels and New Testament in general.

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Gospels -Total	New Testament Total
ἀγαλλιάω	1	0	2	2	5	11
ἀγαλλίασις	0	0	2	0	2	5
εὐφραίνω	0	0	6	0	6	14
σκιρτάω	0	0	3	0	3	3
χαίρω	6	2	12	9	29	74
σύχαιρω	0	0	3	0	3	7
χαρά	6	1	8	9	24	59
Total	13	3	36	20	72	173

From this table it is clear that Luke in his Gospel makes use of each of the words and has by far the most uses of “joy” vocabulary. Matthew only makes use of three of the joy words, and on a limited scale. Joy is not a significant feature in Mark. Each of the three uses of joy words occurs in negative contexts (4:16; 14:11; 15:18).

4. TEACHING ON THE THEME OF JOY IN LUKE’S NARRATIVE

Luke emphasises that the immediate effect of salvation is the experience of joy. Such joy results in the praising of God. In the following section parts from Luke’s Gospel are discussed pertaining “joy”-vocabulary and the theme of joy.

4.1 Joy in the birth narratives

Luke presents the birth of Jesus as being anticipated with joy, abundantly using “joy”-vocabulary. The theme of joy is further emphasised by the canticles. Two births are promised in parallel: that of the herald and that of the One whom that herald is going to introduce.

4.1.1 The birth of John the Baptist

In Luke 1:14 Zechariah is told of the joy associated with the coming birth of John as forerunner of the Messiah.

καὶ ἔσται χαρὰ σοὶ καὶ ἀγαλλίασις καὶ πολλοὶ ἐπὶ τῇ γενέσει αὐτοῦ
χαρήσονται.

He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice of his birth.

Joy terms are used abundantly in this verse, *χαρά* (joy), *ἀγαλλίασις* (delight) and *χαρήσονται* (rejoice) to signify exuberant gladness. The first term, *χαρά* is repeated in 1:28, 1:46, 1:58 and 2:10. The second term, *ἀγαλλίασις* is a forceful word denoting spiritual exaltation (Evans 1990:149), meaning “extreme joy, jubilation” as does the corresponding verb in Luke 1:47, 10:21 and Acts 16:32. The word is not classical, but frequently used in the LXX (Plummer 1982[1896]:13). Elsewhere in the New Testament it is only used in Luke 1:44, Acts 2:46, Jude 24 and Hebrews 1:9 (from Ps. 49:8). Corresponding to *χαρά* the verb *χαρήσονται* is used. *χαίρειν* more often takes the simple dative, but *ἐπί* marks the basis of the joy. The joy at the appearance of a prophet after centuries of need was immense, although not universal. The terms “joy and gladness” have definite eschatological and messianic overtones (e.g. Isa. 12:6; 25:9; 29:19; 49:13) (Johnson 1991:33; Nolland 1989:30). The birth of John is not merely a family affair (Van Bruggen 1996:37). John’s birth has significance for all people (cf. Lk 3:2-18; 7:24-28; Acts 13:24-25). The joy of Zechariah and Elizabeth at the birth of John signifies eschatological joy, for he is the forerunner of the expected Saviour. For this reason many others will also rejoice because of the birth of this child. The angel of the Lord, Gabriel, confronts Zechariah in the temple (1:11) with this message of joy. It is important to realize that Luke begins his account in the heartland of Jewish piety attached to the temple. The impetus for all that is to follow takes place when Zechariah has his once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to offer incense before the Lord. The infancy narratives begin and end in the temple (cf. 2:41-51) and the whole Gospel ends in the temple (24:53). God’s acts on behalf of his people is taken onto a higher level and given an eschatological setting. With this announcement the greatness of the eschatological purposes of God is celebrated (Nolland 1989:23). Luke’s interest in presenting the redemptive activity of God is evident. God’s work brings great joy.

In Luke 1:58 we have the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecy of Luke 1:14.

καὶ ἤκουσαν οἱ περίοικοι καὶ οἱ συγγενεῖς αὐτῆς ὅτι ἐμεγάλυνεν κύριος τὸ
ἔλεος αὐτοῦ μετ’ αὐτῆς καὶ συνέχαιρον αὐτῇ.

Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and she shared her joy.

Elizabeth gave birth to the boy as had been predicted by the angel Gabriel. Her relatives and neighbours rejoiced with her (*συνέχαιρον*). The shared joy echoes the joy with the birth of Isaac (Gen. 19:19 and 21:6) (Nolland 1989:78). This motif of shared joy is typical of Luke and also runs as a thread through the parables of Luke 15. Here, as well as elsewhere (1:50, 54, 55, 72 and 78) emphasis is placed on God’s mercy and loving kindness (Hendriksen 1979:114). God fulfilled his prediction, John (significantly meaning “Yahweh has shown favour”) had been born, signifying that the eschatological age has dawned (Evans, 1990:179). In realising that this age has dawned, people experience joy in fellowship with one another.

The birth narrative of the forerunner is complemented by and rounded off with the joyful song of Zechariah (*Benedictus*) (1:68-79). The song speaks of eschatological fulfilment. Zechariah is filled with joy because of all that God has done by miraculous provision (Nolland 1989:85). The *Benedictus* follows the pattern of a Jewish blessing prayer, the *berakah* (Johnson, 1991:45). An initial statement of praise is followed by the reason for the praise, followed by more blessings. In the first part (1:68-75) Zechariah praises God for having provided salvation for his people. The *Benedictus* presents one of the many prayer texts in Luke describing prayer as an expression of joy and praise. God fulfilled the prophecy and of his holy covenant and the oath he swore to Abraham. In the second part (1:76-79) Luke, in accord with Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1, summarizes the child's mission as way-preparer for the Messiah. This song is filled with joy and hope (Bentley 1992:28).

4.1.2 The birth of Jesus

Parallel with the narrative of the birth of John, Luke tells the story of the birth of Jesus. This narrative also abundantly speaks of joy. Elizabeth and her unborn son blesses Mary and her unborn Son joyfully (Lk 1:41-45), Mary praises God (Lk 1:46-55), the angels and shepherds join in joyful adoration (Lk 2:8-20) and the old man Simeon sings for joy (Lk 2:29-32).

When Mary greeted Elizabeth, the baby in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy (ἐσκήρτησεν) (Lk 1:41 and 44).

καὶ ἐγένετο ὡς ἤκουσεν τὸν ἀσπασμὸν τῆς Μαρίας ἢ Ἑλισάβετ, ἐσκήρτησεν τὸ βρέφος ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐπλήσθη πνεύματος ἁγίου ἢ Ἑλισάβετ,

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὡς ἐγένετο ἡ φωνὴ τοῦ ἀσπασμοῦ σου εἰς τὰ ὦτά μου, ἐσκήρτησεν ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει τὸ βρέφος ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ μου,
--

As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.
--

The salutation of Mary caused the movement of the unborn child, and therefore he rejoices in his mother's womb. Elizabeth was inspired by the Holy Spirit to interpret the movement of the baby within her womb as being a sign of its joy (Hendriksen 1979:97). She interprets this natural phenomenon of pregnancy, as a leaping for joy (ἐσκήρτησεν) (a term also used in 6:23). The verb σκιρτάω suggest an eschatological recognition (cf. Ps. 113:4, 6 (LXX) and Mal. 4:2) (Johnson, 1991:40). It probably alludes to David's leaping before the ark (2 Sam. 6:16)² (Nolland 1989:66). John is described as the prophet in accord with the angel's prediction in Luke 1:15.³ The leaping for joy is a supernatural witness conveyed to Elizabeth by the unborn John, himself inspired in her womb, to the unborn Jesus as the inaugurator of the eschatological joy of salvation (cf. Lk 1:14) (Evans 1990:170). Not only did Elizabeth receive Mary, but the unborn

2 An allusion to the pushing of Rebecca's children which foretold their later destinies (Gen. 25:22) is unlikely, since the leaping there is an image of struggle and opposition.

3 John would later publicly announce the eschatological coming of the Lord in Luke 3:4-17.

John leaped for joy at the presence of the unborn Christ (Bentley, 1992:23). Elizabeth pours out her joy by exclaiming her song in a loud voice (ἀνεφώνησεν κραυγῇ μεγάλῃ) (Lk 2:42). Verse 44 reformulates verse 41, making explicit both the rejoicing expressed by the child's movement and the connection between the movement and the child's prophetic insight.

When Mary visited Elizabeth, Mary's hymn of praise proceeded from her heart and lips. She also rejoiced because the divine work of salvation had begun in her (Lk 1:47).⁴

Μεγαλύνει ἡ ψυχὴ μου τὸν κύριον, καὶ ἠγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτηρῇ μου,

My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.
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The combination of the two words *μεγαλύνει* and *ἠγαλλίασεν* signifies jubilant and thankful exultation. Mary's heart is filled to overflowing of thanksgiving for that which God had done for her. She recognizes the intervention of God as Saviour (Nolland 1989:69; Van Bruggen 1996:55). Luke introduces the theme of salvation which is central to his gospel (Johnson, 1991:42). It is the act of divine salvation which is supremely the theme of rejoicing (cf. Bultmann 1978:20).

The theme of joy continues with the message of the angel to the shepherds in the field of Ephrata (Lk 2:10).

καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ ἄγγελος, Μὴ φοβεῖσθε, ἰδοὺ γὰρ εὐαγγελίζομαι ὑμῖν χαρὰν μεγάλην ἣτις ἔσται παντὶ τῷ λαῷ
--

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people"
--

The message of the angel to the shepherds was one of great joy (*χαρὰν μεγάλην*) in anticipation of the fulfilment of the promised salvation from God. Typically of Luke, he records the intensity of emotion. A joy so extensive may well banish fear (Plummer 1982[1896]:56). The message of the angel supplies the interpretative core of the birth narratives as a whole, and to some extent of the whole Gospel (Evans 1990:204). The joy of eschatological fulfilment has already surfaced in Luke 1:14 (Nolland 1989:106; Van Bruggen 1996:77). Once the angel made his announcement, suddenly an entire army of angels descended to complement this announcement of great joy by singing the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* (Lk 2:14) – as outpouring of their adoration (Viljoen & Floor 2004:753; Hendriksen 1979:155).

A third song is reported in the narrative of the birth of Jesus, the *Nunc Dimittis* (Lk 2:29-32). When the Holy Spirit made clear to Simeon that this very child was the Messiah, his heart was filled with gratitude. His song expresses an eschatology that is being realized in the existence of the child. The allusion is almost certainly to Isaiah. 52:10.⁵ Luke yet again emphasises the blessings of salvation Jesus brings.

4 The Magnificat alludes to the song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-10).

5 The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. The Magnificat alludes to the song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-10).

4.2 Joy in the narratives of Jesus' public ministry

4.2.1 Joy amidst animosity

According to Luke 6:23, Jesus taught those persecuted for his sake to rejoice, because their reward would be great in heaven.

χάρητε ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ σκιρτήσατε, ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολλὸς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ· κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ γὰρ ἐποίησαν τοῖς προφήταις οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν.

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For this is how their fathers treated the prophets.

Χάρητε and σκιρτήσατε denote extreme joy. The persecuted ones would receive a prophets reward (cf. Mt 10:41). Matthew uses the word ἀγαλλιασθε (Mt 5:12), while Luke uses σκιρτήσατε. Σκιρτάω is commonly used in the LXX for the leaping of animals. It is also used for festive dance in Hellenistic writings (Evans 1990:331; Johnson 1991:107). In the New Testament σκιρτάω is peculiar to Luke (also used in 1:41 and 44). Luke apparently introduces a word of more vivid leaping for joy as expressing the expectation of eschatological salvation (Fitzer 1975:402). Luke's use of σκιρτάω is in line with his taste for more precise psychological terminology (Nolland 1989:286). Luke does not teach a "theology of glory". Following Jesus implies rejection by the people, yet eventually a precious reward at the Day of Judgment. Jesus calls for suffering to be faced with exultant joy which is appropriate to the time of eschatological fulfilment. Luke's "in that day" makes the paradox yet starker.

4.2.2 Joy with the return of the seventy (two)

The reversal for a wrong basis of joy is apparent in Luke's account of the return of the seventy (two) (Lk 10:17-20).

Ἐπέστρεψαν δὲ οἱ ἑβδομήκοντα [δύο] μετὰ χαρᾶς λέγοντες, Κύριε, καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια ὑποτάσσεται ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου.

The seventy (two) returned with joy, and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name".

Luke 10:17 reports that the seventy (two) returned full of joy. "Returned with joy" (Ἐπέστρεψαν) is significantly Lukan and found again in Luke 25:52 (Nolland 1993a:562). The joy of the messengers reflects the eschatological nature of what they were experiencing (cf. 1:14). Joyfully they expressed their elation that even demons obeyed them. However, Jesus told them not to rejoice merely because the spirits were subject to them but because their names are written in heaven (Lk 10:20).

πλὴν ἐν τούτῳ μὴ χαίrete ὅτι τὰ πνεύματα ὑμῖν ὑποτάσσεται, χαίrete δὲ ὅτι τὰ ὀνόματα ὑμῶν ἐγγέγραπται ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς

However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Although they might rejoice yet, they should continue to rejoice in something even better. “Jezus zelf geeft vervolgens richting en diepgang aan deze vreugde” (Van Bruggen 1996:218). Somehow this language warns against being triumphalistic in this life. Christians are called to suffering in this life, yet for life in the kingdom of God. After all, the authority over demons was insignificant in comparison with having their names recorded in the heaven’s book of life. Casting out demons ceases when life here on earth ends. But everlasting salvation and glory, never ends (Hendriksen 1978:582).

The sense of spiritual triumph and joy in Luke 10:17-20 is continued and intensified by Luke in placing here the jubilant utterances of Jesus in 10:21.

Ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἠγαλλίασατο [ἐν] τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ εἶπεν, Ἐξομολογοῦμαί σοι, πάτερ, κύριε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς ...
At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth ...”

This is the only time in the Bible that we actually read that Jesus was full of joy (ἠγαλλίασατο) (Bentley 1992:159). The expression is the same used of Mary at the beginning of the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:47). His joy results because of inspiration. The Holy Spirit, by which the Saviour had been anointed (4:18), was the cause and originator of his joy and thanksgiving. Filled with the Holy Spirit and rejoicing because of the report of the seventy two, Jesus lifts up his heart and voice in praise to the Father. Jesus’ prayer follows the pattern of the Jewish synagogue prayers, the *berakah* (Johnson 1991:169). The opening praise is followed by the reasons for the praise and concluded by the repetition of praise. Jesus was joyful because the secret of the kingdom had been revealed to little children. This joy denotes a specifically religious joy before God, and a praise which makes his works known. In Acts 2:46 the corresponding noun describes the joy in the life of the early church.

4.2.3 Joy because of the wonderful deeds of Jesus

Valid bases for joy on earth are mentioned in Luke 13:17.

καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἔχαιρεν ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐνδόξοις τοῖς γινομένοις ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ.
But the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

After reporting Jesus’ healing of the crippled woman, a chorus of acclamation typical of miracle stories (πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἔχαιρεν) is given by Luke. The significantly Lukan interest surfaces in that a person of low account receives special attention from Jesus and may share in the joy He brings. The people rejoice for the divine work of deliverance. It is set over against the triumph of Jesus over all his adversaries (Evans 1990:552). All Jesus’ adversaries were silenced. The people rejoiced not only because of this one striking miracle, but because of all the glorious deeds that were being done by the Saviour. This event is an allusion to the LXX of Isaiah 45:16 which is seen as having been fulfilled here (Nolland 1993a:725).

4.2.4 Joy because of the founding of the lost

The section of Luke 15:1-32 defends and commends Jesus’ concern for the lost, and the

overflowing joy at their restoration. It is done by a sequence of parables, two short ones followed by a longer one, viz. the lost sheep, lost coin and the prodigal son. The sequence of parables gives a higher profile to the joy motif than would be evident in placing them as separate items. This trilogy emphasises God's interest in sinners and his joy in their conversion and salvation.

Firstly Luke reports the parable of the lost sheep. Luke shares this parable of joy at the finding of the lost sheep with Matthew (Mt. 18:13; Lk 15:5-7). The stress of joy, however, is much stronger in Luke.

καὶ εὐρὼν ἐπιτίθησιν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὄμους αὐτοῦ χαίρων
καὶ ἔλθων εἰς τὸν οἶκον συγκαλεῖ τοὺς φίλους καὶ τοὺς γείτονας λέγων
αὐτοῖς, Συγχαρήτε μοι, ὅτι εὗρον τὸ πρόβατόν μου τὸ ἀπολωλός.
λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὕτως χαρὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἔσται ἐπὶ ἐνὶ ἁμαρτωλῷ μετανοοῦντι
ἢ ἐπὶ ἐνενηκοντα ἑννέα δικαίοις οἵτινες οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχουσιν μετανοίας.

And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. The he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep." I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents that over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

The shepherd rejoices (χαίρων) because of the recovery of the sheep. Only Luke mentions that the shepherd carries the lost sheep back. He does not lead it back, nor have it carried. He carries it himself. There is no upbraiding of the wandering sheep, not murmuring of the trouble (Plummer 1982[1896]:369). The shepherd even invites his friends and neighbours to rejoice with him. In Matthew there is nothing about his calling others to rejoice with him. It is another mark of joy that it seeks company. The motif of shared joy (συγχαρήτε) runs as a thread through the parables of Luke 15. The emphasis on shared joy connotes some concrete activity of celebration, and not just fellow-feeling (Nolland 1993a:772). And now Jesus makes the application. To participate on earth in the rejoicing, evoked by seeing sinners repent, is to image the joy of heaven. The joy in human fellowship mirrors that in heaven (Johnson 1991:136). On earth we should share the joy of God in the restoration of sinners (Van Bruggen 1996:291).

Luke takes the theme further in the parables of the lost coin (Lk 15:8-10) and the lost son (Lk 15:23, 24, 29, 32), which are only found in Luke.

καὶ εὐροῦσα συγκαλεῖ τὰς φίλας καὶ γείτονας λέγουσα, Συγχαρήτε μοι,
ὅτι εὗρον τὴν δραχμὴν ἣν ἀπώλεσα.
οὕτως, λέγω ὑμῖν, γίνεται χαρὰ ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων τοῦ θεοῦ
ἐπὶ ἐνὶ ἁμαρτωλῷ μετανοοῦντι.

And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin". In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

The structure of the story is exactly the same as the first: the losing, the search, the finding, the calling of friends and neighbours, the invitation to rejoice, and the joy in heaven. Again

the point is that God takes special delight in the restoration of the sinner who has been lost from his people. “The penitent sinner is a source of great joy to God” (Nolland 1993a:776). This rejoicing takes place in the presence of the angels. There can be no question about the fact that God’s holy angels take a deep interest in man’s salvation (Hendriksen 1978:749).

Thirdly Luke reports the parable of joy with the return of the lost son.

καὶ φέρετε τὸν μόσχον τὸν σιτευτόν, θύσατε, καὶ φαγόντες εὐφρανθῶμεν,
ὅτι οὗτος ὁ υἱός μου νεκρὸς ἦν καὶ ἀνέζησεν, ἦν ἀπολωλὼς καὶ εὐρέθη.
καὶ ἤρξαντο εὐφραίνεσθαι.

“Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found”. So they began to celebrate.

On his return of the prodigal son, he is warmly welcomed by his father. The father’s brisk commands are noteworthy. So boundless is the father’s joy that he wishes to have his son treated as an important and honorary person (Hendriksen 1978:756). The theme of celebration runs through the rest of the story (15:24, 29, 32).

In sharp contrast to the joy of the father, the lost son was petulantly rejected by his brother (Lk 15:29).

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ, Ἴδὸν τοσαῦτα ἔτη δουλεύω σοι
καὶ οὐδέποτε ἐντολὴν σου παρήλθον, καὶ ἐμοὶ οὐδέποτε ἔδωκας ἔριφον
ἵνα μετὰ τῶν φίλων μου εὐφρανθῶ.

But he answered his father, “Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

The father tenderly also treats this son (Lk 15:32).

εὐφρανθῆναι δὲ καὶ χαρῆναι ἔδει, ὅτι ὁ ἀδελφός σου οὗτος νεκρὸς ἦν καὶ
ἔζησεν, καὶ ἀπολωλὼς καὶ εὐρέθη.

But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.

In stead of admitting that what his brother had done was unwise and wrong, he tells his son that to celebrate and to be glad is a must (εὐφρανθῆναι δὲ καὶ χαρῆναι ἔδει). Χαρῆναι (Lk 15:32) echoes the language of Luke 15:6-7 and 9-10 linking this story once more to the rejoicing in the previous two.

This long parable, where the return of the lost son is celebrated with a banquet, climactically completes the trilogy (15:1-32) on the joy in heaven that should be shared on earth.

4.2.5 Joy of Zaccheus

Zaccheus gladly received Jesus (Lk 19:6).

καὶ σπεύσας κατέβη καὶ ὑπεδέξατο αὐτὸν χαίρων.

So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

The story of Zaccheus is peculiar to Luke. As a result of meeting Jesus, Zaccheus was a changed man. He got converted and was filled with joy. Zaccheus joyfully welcomed Jesus. The note of hospitality is obvious, since Luke uses the same verb ὑπεδέχομαι as for Martha's reception of Jesus. The idea of joy is emphasized by referring to the haste of Zaccheus to receive Jesus and by placing the adverb χαίρων at the end of the sentence (as is also the case in Lk 15:5 and Acts 8:38). Deeper significance of messianic joy is suggested (as in Lk 1:14; 2:10; 6:23; 8:13; 10:17, 20). Luke associates this motive of joy with repentance (cf. Lk 15:5, 7, 10, 32) (Johnson, 1991:285; Nolland 1993b:905).

4.2.6 Joy with the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem

Only Luke mentions that the crowds, that heralded Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, were disciples and that they began to rejoice and to praise God. The reported words of the crowds, however, are the same in the four Gospels (Lk 19:37-38, cf. Mt. 21:9; Mk. 11:9-11 and John 12:13).

Ἐγγίζοντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἤδη πρὸς τῇ καταβάσει τοῦ ὄρους τῶν Ἐλαιῶν ἤρξαντο ἅπαν τὸ πλῆθος τῶν μαθητῶν χαίροντες αἰνεῖν τὸν θεὸν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ περὶ πασῶν ὧν εἶδον δυνάμεων,

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

The crowds praised Jesus, because they recognized Him as the long-promised deliverer (only Luke identifies the crowd as disciples). Their words of acclamation allude to the Psalm 118 (Van Bruggen 1996:346). Their rejoicing is a response to God's visitation (as in Luke 1:14; 2:10; 6:23; 8:13; 10:17, 20; 13:17; 19:6). This joy results in praising of God (as in Lk 2:13; 20: 18:43; 24:53 and Acts 2:47; 3:9). The act of acclamation is described in language characteristic of Luke in miracle stories, as rejoicing and of praising God (Lk 5:26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43 and especially 13:17 and Acts 3:8). Thus they praise God for Jesus, and not simply Jesus himself (as in Acts 2:22 and 10:38) (Evans 1990:680; Johnson 1991:297).

4.2.7 Joy for the wrong reasons

In contrast to heavenly rejoicing Jesus taught the superficiality of earthly joys. In the parable of the soils the stony ground represents those who at first receive the word with joy, but this impulsive joy is not based on deep-seated convictions (Lk 8:13 and parallel in Mt 13:20; Mk 4:16).

οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς πέτρας οἱ ὅταν ἀκούσωσιν μετὰ χαρᾶς δέχονται τὸν λόγον, καὶ οὗτοι ῥίζαν οὐκ ἔχουσιν, οἱ πρὸς καιρὸν πιστεύουσιν καὶ ἐν καιρῷ πειρασμοῦ ἀφίστανται.

Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

Jesus teaches us how to know whether marked emotional behaviour is the evidence of true faith. Superficial joy will not endure testing (Hendriksen 1978:426).

Joy based on worldly values is shown to be unfitting in the parable of the rich fool (Lk 12:19).

καὶ ἔρῳ τῇ ψυχῇ μου, Ψυχὴ, ἔχεις πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ κείμενα εἰς ἔτη πολλά· ἀναπαύου, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου.

And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat drink and be merry.

This fool founded his joy in his richness, while he has not been rich toward God (Evans 1990:523; Johnson 1991:523). He found his selfish joy, self satisfaction, well being and security in his earthly riches.

This theme is repeated in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man had joy in this world (Lk 16:19) but torment thereafter.

Ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος, καὶ ἐνεδιδύσκετο πορφύραν καὶ βύσσου εὐφραϊνόμενος καθ' ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς.

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.

He found his joy in showing off his richness in splendid clothing. He feasted extravagantly. Each detail suggests overdone luxury in which this fool sought his misplaced joy and blasphemous merrymaking (Nolland 1993b:828).

4.3 Joy in the narratives of Jesus' post resurrection appearances

Important for Luke, Matthew and John is the joy at the appearance of the risen Jesus (Lk 24:41, 52; and parallel in Mt 28:8, 9; John 20:20), however absent from Mark.

ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστούντων αὐτῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς καὶ θαυμαζόντων...

And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement ...

After Jesus had shown the men his hands and his feet, they were overjoyed by amazement. "Joy" in Luke is almost entirely associated with the response of positive acceptance (1:14; 2:10; 8:13; 10:17; 15:7 10). But according to Luke 2:41 joy apparently is a cause of disbelief! Plummer (1982[1896]) describes the phrase as "a remark which, with many similar expressions, we owe to the most profound psychologist among the Evangelists". Johnson (1991:402) remarks that Luke portrayed their emotional response which is so powerful that they were too overwhelmed to really accept the reality of Jesus' appearance. Obviously the fact of Jesus' appearance must have been most unexpected and been experienced as unreal. They were struck by amazement,

while Jesus turned their fear into joy (Van Bruggen 1996:413).

Jesus continued to reveal Himself by eating a piece of grilled fish in their presence and by explaining the significance of what has happened in the last few days. In such a way Jesus opened their minds so that they could understand Scripture and grasp the fact that the resurrected Jesus stood in their midst. Thus they were convinced that the Lord had risen from the dead and was among them.

After giving his final instructions and promises, Jesus ascended to heaven while blessing his disciples. His disciples responded with joyful worship (Lk 24:52).

καὶ αὐτοὶ προσκυνήσαντες αὐτὸν ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ μετὰ χαρᾶς μεγάλης.
--

Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.
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Luke's expression of emotion continues to the end (cf. Lk 2:9, 10; 8:37; Acts 5:5, 11; 15:3). The disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy and spent their time in the temple praising God. Why this great joy? Should they not rather have mourned the loss of a true Friend? "A writer of fiction would have made them lament the departure of their Master" (Plummer 1982[1896]:565). However, they knew better. They had lost nothing and had gained much (Hendriksen 1978:1077). Their worship and great joy mark their unqualified faith in the resurrection of Jesus (Nolland 1993b:1228). As often in Luke, joy signifies a state of messianic exaltation and peace (Lk 1:14; 2:10; 8:13; 10:17; 15:7, 10). The disciples knew they had work to do and that they would be given the power to do that work when the Holy Spirit came upon them. They also knew that their blessed Lord would one day come back to this earth (Bentley 1992:328).

This Gospel began in the temple (Lk 1:8) and ends in the temple. The temple forms the centre of the eschatological climax (Knight, 1998:146) and points forward to the later attachment of the apostles to the temple in the Gospel's sequel (Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:20, 42; 22:17).

5. CONCLUSION

Related to other special interests of Luke, Luke also underscores the necessity and privilege of rejoicing more emphatically than any of the other Gospels. Yet this joy is more than merely feeling happy. It is the joy of eschatological fulfilment of prophetic expectations. The eternal salvation realized in Jesus of Nazareth by God's grace. This salvation spurs the theme of rejoicing.

The dominant mood in Luke's Gospel is that of joy in the sense of eschatological soteriological piety. Luke begins and ends his Gospel in the temple, the heartland of Jewish piety. With the salvation God brings, this piety is raised onto a higher level within an eschatological setting. God enacts his salvation through the coming of Jesus Christ. God's acts of eschatological salvation are celebrated. Thus the experience of joy is a hall mark of the salvation Jesus brings.

The birth of Jesus is anticipated with great joy. In Luke 1:14 Zachariah is told of the joy associated with the birth of the forerunner of the expected Saviour (cf. Lk 1:58). When Mary greeted Elizabeth the baby in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy (Lk 1:41, 44). The message of the angels to the shepherds was one of great joy (Lk 2:10). The reversal of the basis of joy is

noticeable in the account of the return of the seventy (two). These disciples should not rejoice because the spirits are subject to them, but because their names are written in heaven (Lk 10:17, 20). After the healing of the crippled woman, the people rejoiced for the glorious deeds that were being done by the Saviour (Lk 13:17). Though Luke shares the parable of the joy at finding the lost sheep with Matthew, the stress of joy is much greater in Luke (Lk 15:5-7). Luke takes this emphasis further in the parables of the lost coin (Lk 15:7) and the lost son (Lk 15:23, 24, 29, 32) where the founding and return of the lost are celebrated with great joy. Zaccheus had much reason for joy in receiving Jesus as his guest and saviour (Lk 19:6). The crowd heralded Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and they began to rejoice and praise God (Lk 19:37-38). Luke reports the joy at the appearance of the risen Jesus (Lk 24:41, 52).

Joy becomes a shared experience. In realising that the eschatological age has dawned, people experience joy in fellowship with one another. But Jesus is also filled with joy on the return of the seventy (two) and is said to rejoice (Lk 10:21), and the joy on the part of recipients and spectators of God's grace (Lk. 13:17) is but an echo of the heavenly joy of repentant sinners to the Father (Lk 15:5, 7, 10, 32). Saved people and witnesses there of share their joy with one another, but also with Jesus and God the Father.

The inspiration by the Holy Spirit is mentioned as the cause of Jesus' joy (Lk 10:20, 21), of Mary (Lk 1:46-55) and of Simeon (Lk 29-32). Filled by the Holy Spirit they could lift their hearts in thanksgiving to God.

Joy "sings" its way through Luke's Gospel. Luke begins with five songs of praise and ends with "great joy" and continual praises to God (Lk. 24:52, 53). The angelic acclamation (Lk. 2:14) and the acclamation at Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Lk. 19:37 ff) are further examples of such joyful singing. In the heart and centre of the book Jesus himself (Lk. 10:20, 21) and God (Lk. 15:7, 10) are rejoicing in the saved sinners' joy. Joyful acclamations often follow the pattern of a Jewish prayer text (*berakah*) expressing the relation between prayer and song as expressions of joy.

Joy leads to the worship of God. With the birth of Jesus both the angels as the shepherds glorified and praised God (Lk 2:13, 20) as did Simeon (Lk 2:28). Finally, after the parting of the risen Jesus from his disciples, Luke adds a final accent. The disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple praising God (Lk 24:52).

In all this there is nothing triumphalistic. Joy is founded in the cross. God saved through the passion of Christ. Thus the disciples should be glad and rejoice even when being persecuted for his sake because their reward would be great in heaven (Lk. 6:23).

Luke also warns against superficial and worldly reasons for joy, by mentioning the theme in negative contexts. He does this with the parables of the soils where joy lasts no further than the first signs of trouble (Lk 8:13) and of the rich fools who sought their joy in earthly richness (Lk 12:19) and extravagant blasphemous merrymaking (Lk 16:19). The rich man had joy in this world, but agony hereafter.

Luke's Gospel is a prime source for deciphering the concept of Christian joy. It contains in fact profound and explicit reflections on the unique quality of joy. While we are living in a world with much despair, Luke offers us a vision of hope and joy.

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KEY WORDS

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TREFWOORDE

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Kontakbesonderhede:
Prof Francois P Viljoen
Fakulteit Teologie
Noordwes-Universiteit
(Potchefstroom-kampus)
E-pos; Viljoen.Francois@nwu.ac.za