

Painting a Picture of Love: S. Luke's Day

Hymns for this act of worship:

At the Beginning: We cannot measure how you heal (712)

Before the anointing: Be still and know that I am God (66)

At the Offertory: I heard the voice of Jesus say (310)

At the end: For all the Saints (177)



The psalm

With all my voice I cry to the Lord,
with all my voice I entreat the Lord.
I pour out my trouble before him;
I tell him all my distress
while my spirit faints within me.
But you, O Lord, know my path

Psalm 142: 2 – 4

Lord, you are our strength and our refuge

How good it is to make music for our God,
how joyful to honour him with praise
The Lord builds up Jerusalem
and gathers together the outcasts of Israel.

Lord, you are our strength and our refuge

He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up all their wounds.
He counts the number of the stars
and calls them all by their names.

Lord, you are our strength and our refuge

Great is our Lord, and mighty in power;
his wisdom is beyond all telling.
The Lord lifts up the poor,
but casts down the wicked to the ground.

Lord, you are our strength and our refuge

From Psalm 147

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

.The Homily



Jesus and the woman with a haemorrhage – Ally Barrett, used with permission

S. Luke was probably a doctor who lived in *Antioch* – so, a dear connection there to our own hearts, here at S. Margaret of Antioch! We call him an evangelist, because he told the good news of Christ. He dedicates his gospel to a man named Theophilus, with the aim of laying down everything he has discovered about Jesus in an ‘orderly way’. He is an educated man, who has researched his subject, and writes in a beautiful, pictorial, style – giving us descriptive scenes from the life and ministry of Jesus, building up to painting a picture of our Lord that spans from before the beginning of the other gospels, and on beyond the end in his second book, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, which tells the story of the faith unfolding in the early Christian communities.

Luke is thought to be a doctor, but also a painter – perhaps even an icon writer. There is a tradition that he was the first to write an icon of Mary, the mother of our Lord, showing Jesus her son to the world. Perhaps this double gift - medicine and art – are what gives him his eye for detail, both for the centre of the picture, and for the things that might be overlooked around the edge. Either way, he paints us a picture of Jesus and the early Christian communities which is unique, and beautiful.

It is a feature of training for Ordination that we are asked frequently – what is your *good news*? What is it that is your particular calling to share of the grace of God? It is a good question for us all to reflect on, really. What is the Good News of Jesus for us, and how can we share it with others?

In his work, the Good News of Luke is to bring out the human face of Jesus, his empathy and sharing in our human experience - and his divine power to heal and restore. Luke saw Jesus' healing presence reaching out to connect with the places in society that others thought unimportant, or whose stories were not told. He shows us Jesus in love with humanity – his good news is a news of healing.

Alongside stories of healing and restoration common to the other gospel writers, Luke is the only gospel writer to share with us the story of the Good Samaritan, of the Prodigal Son (or the love of the Prodigal Father as I prefer to call it), the parable of the lost sheep and coin, the story of the ten lepers who come for healing, and who gives us the story of the Widow of Nain, showing us Jesus' empathy and pain for those suffering bereavement. He paints us a picture of our Lord who cares for the lost, for the grieving, for the hurting.

He is also the only one to tell the “Christmas story” - the story of the angel coming to Mary, and Jesus born as a small baby in a small town, to a poor family in a stable – choosing to open his gospel showing us a God who comes to be one with us in our human condition, in the brokenness and the struggle, the poverty, the blood and sweat and tears, with starlight and song, and the presence of hope and strength right in amongst the human story from conception to death, and beyond.

It is Luke who gives us shepherds, those whom society shuts out of the temple - tumbling down the hillside at the invitation of God, and going back up with eyes full of angel-light, and songs of praise. It is Luke who gives us the picture of an angel waiting in front of Mary with all the brokenness of the world, waiting for her yes, and for a new birthing of life and possibility. It is Luke who gives us the Prodigal Son, showing us God's infinite capacity to meet us in the Pig swill... of life, and to welcome us home with open arms. Luke's story of the Good Samaritan was the story that inspired Julian of Norwich, and led to her revelation of God's Divine Love that meets us most of all when we are most in need of mercy and healing – and when we might feel that the whole world might pass us by.

It is Luke who gives us the most detail in the stories of healing, getting right in there amongst the mud and the blood and the pain, and showing Jesus touching the untouchable and lifting up the overlooked; reaching into the brokenness of humanity with love, life, strength and hope. He shows us Jesus caring deeply about the individual pains and sorrows of human life, and being unafraid to touch and to give his strength and his life.

The Good News of Luke's gospel is a Lord who brings healing. Our gospel today reminds the disciples “Whenever you enter a town... eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, The Kingdom of God has come near to you”. How do we know we have encountered Jesus? We encounter his healing love, says Luke.

Luke also shows us Jesus' love restoring dignity and lifting up those on the margins. In Luke we hear the voices of women more clearly than in any other gospel, - not only does his gospel place such prominence on Mary as the Mother of Jesus, the pattern of our participation in birthing God's life into the world, but he also prioritises Anna, Elizabeth and Joanna, naming the women who follow Jesus. It is he who gives us the story of Martha and Mary, placing Mary firmly in the place of a disciple and healing the divisions in a patriarchal, exclusive world.

Luke shows us the healing of God, touching us in our need and pains. Meeting us in the injustices and brokenness of the world, and in such parables as the Good Samaritan, he also encourages us to live into that healing shared with us, and to share it with others. In the book of the Acts of the Apostles today we see the Apostle Paul hearing the cry of the people of Macedonia – an incredibly dangerous place for a Christian to go – and setting straight off to proclaim God's healing love in that place.

And what is the healing love of God? It is the love that meets us in our pain, our tears and the places we don't feel the world can see, or we keep deep buried within ourselves. It is the love that anoints us with his tears, with his touch, with his own life and strength. It is the love that joins us on the Cross to give us what we need to get through the burdens and the pains of life, and leads us through to Easter. It is the love where no-one is missed out, where nothing is too unimportant, or too shameful for him to include in his power to touch and restore.

It is the Love that calls us down the metaphorical mountainside of the darkness of our night, to kneel at a cradle, and glimpse the glory of the Lord meeting us there in the helplessness of humanity, and yet with the Grace of God that brings magi to their knees. It is the Love that meets us on the Cross, holding the pain of every broken story, and yet bringing it through to Easter. It is the Love that meets us on the roadside, kneeling in the dust with us, listening to our story, and lifting us to our feet, to walk with us all the way of our journey. It is the Love that transformed the lives of the disciples, and all who have walked with him ever since, in new hope, new courage, new strength, and new grace.

That says, *behold, I am making all things new.*

Intercessions

The response to the prayer
Lord of truth, of life and love
is
in your power, restore, renew us

Let us pray

Father, we thank you for all your saints,
and on this day especially for S. Luke
who shared your love for those who are heavily burdened,
and reveals to us your healing power.
We ask his prayers alongside our today.

Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

The weight of grief bears heavily upon us
but it is a load we need not bear alone.
Let us offer our burden to Jesus,
Lord of life and of death,
of the present and of the future.

Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

We bring before you, Lord,
our confusion in the face of shock,
our despair in the face of tragedy,
our helplessness in the face of death

Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

We bring before you, Lord,
the tears of sorrow,
the cries for help,
the vulnerability of pain

Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

We bring before you, Lord,
our sense of frustration,

our feeling of powerlessness,
our fears for the future

Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

We bring before you, Lord,
our frustrated hopes,
our unfulfilled desires,
our unfettered sadness,
our broken dreams

Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

We bring before you, Lord,
the stress of over-busy,
over-burdened society,
the emptiness of isolation and grief,
the grey weight of days where hope is small,
the need for peace, for love and mercy

Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

Lord, grant your healing grace
to all who are burdened with brokenness of mind,
body or spirit, that they may be made whole;
Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

Grant to all who seek your guidance,
and to all who are lonely, anxious, or despondent,
a knowledge of your will, and an awareness of your holding presence

Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

Bless all who are channels of healing grace and comfort in your world.
All who work for peace and healing;
all physicians, counsellors, medical researchers, nurses,
and others who work for peace and healing,
granting them wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience

Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

Restore to wholeness whatever is broken by sin,
in our live, in our nation, in our world;

Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

With you, Lord, is the well of life
and in your light we see light

Lord of truth, of life and love
in your power, restore, renew us

Hymn

Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know that I am God

I am the Lord that healeth thee
I am the Lord that healeth thee
I am the Lord that healeth thee

In you, O Lord, I put my trust
In you, O Lord, I put my trust
In you, O Lord, I put my trust

Text: unknown, based on psalm 46
Music: 'be still and know' unknown, arr. Adrian Vernon Fish

The Liturgy of Healing

It's a long way off but inside it
There are quite different things going on:
Festivals at which the poor man
Is king and the consumptive is
Healed; mirrors in which the blind look
At themselves and love looks at them
Back; and industry is for mending
The bent bones and the minds fractured
By life. It's a long way off, but to get
There takes no time and admission
Is free, if you purge yourself
Of desire, and present yourself with
Your need only and the simple offering
Of your faith, green as a leaf.

In Church by R. S. Thomas

It is a gift that Jesus shares with the Church, his Body here on earth. Healing is what the Church does – it prays for God's healing love in the world. Whether that is healing in a small kindness, in a smile, a cup of tea... or in the deep restorations of heart, body and soul. Sometimes it is dramatic, sometimes everyday, sometimes it meets us in the everyday, sometimes on the borders, and sometimes on the threshold of life and death, but it meets us.

The anointing of the Church is a grace God gives us, blessed by the Holy Spirit, to touch as Jesus did, to allow his love to sink into our skin, our hearts, to physically feel it, and know it in our souls. We bring what is hurting and needing, and we feel God say "I know".

So if you would like to come up in a moment, please do come, and as I anoint you in the authority of the Church and in the name of Christ Jesus, feel those hands as Jesus' hands, that touch as his touch, and his love meeting you in the hurts and pains of your hearts, and in the brokenness of the world, with his grace, and his power of strength and life.

Invitation

We come with our faith, and with our doubts
we come with our hopes,
and with our fears

We come as we are, because you invited us to come, dear Lord;

and you promised
never to turn us away

Jesus says, Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest”
– so come, you who are burdened by regrets and anxieties, you who are hurting in mind, body or spirit, you who are torn by relationships and by doubt, you who feel deeply within yourselves the division of the world, you who cannot name your sorrows, but the Lord has eyes who see.... Come... for Jesus meets you in his healing grace.

Luke – a sonnet by Fr. Malcolm Guite

His gospel is itself a living creature
A ground and glory round the throne of God,
Where earth and heaven breathe through human nature
And One upon the throne sees it is good.
Luke is the living pillar of our healing,
A lowly ox, the servant of the four,
We turn his page to find his face revealing
The wonder, and the welcome of the poor.
He breathes good news to all who bear a burden
Good news to all who turn and try again,
The meek rejoice and prodigals find pardon,
A lost thief reaches paradise through pain,
The voiceless find their voice in every word
And, with Our Lady, magnify Our Lord.

A Blessing Prayer -

this will be prayed at the end of the liturgy, but you may wish to keep it as a prayer for yourselves

O God of peace, who taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved,
in quietness and confidence
shall be our strength;
by the might of your Spirit
lift us now to your presence,
where we may be still
and know that you are God,

through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

Watch now, dear Lord, with those who wake or watch or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep.

Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ,
rest your weary ones, bless your dying ones,
soothe your suffering ones,
pity your afflicted ones,
shield your joyous ones,
and all for your love's sake
in Jesus' Name. Amen

The Blessing

The Lord who conquered darkness with light,
give peace to you.
The Lord who conquered death with life,
give peace to you.
The Lord who conquered loneliness with love,
give peace to you.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be with you and remain with you always

Amen