

Doctor, Doctor...!

Isaiah 35³⁻⁶; Psalm 147¹⁻⁷; 2 Timothy 4⁵⁻¹⁷; Luke 10¹⁻⁹

Do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully. [2 Timothy 4⁵]

What's the difference between a medical doctor and God? God knows his limitations!

Luke wasn't one of the 12, the first set of Apostles. We know that he is probably a Gentile and that he is certainly a medical man, a physician. He is cultured and literate and he sets out to in the two books of the New Testament, of which he is the author, Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, to write an orderly history of the life of Jesus. The characteristics of his writing are:

- ✘ He is enthusiastic about preaching about the **Kingdom of God**. It is Good News for everyone who will hear and respond.
- ✘ He is also passionate about the offer of Salvation – the God who, in Jesus, involves himself with humanity in the conception and birth of the Christ Child and lives, teaches and then dies for sinners before rising from the dead and then empowers the Apostles to continue his work and message.
- ✘ Luke is also passionate about the community of Christians that becomes the Church and then tells the story of how it shares the *kerygma*, the message of Good News, in a way that challenges and changes the world.
- ✘ Luke is unique in how he represents the Blessed Virgin Mary – she is the one that the Church comes to call the Virgin Mother of God and she is there from the promise of Jesus birth, accompanying him in his ministry, there at the cross and at the resurrection as well as at the Ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church – encouraging to us in this Church.

Was this what his parents had in mind for him when they sent him off to medical school? They probably hoped that he would be an influential member of the community and that he would make his name, but it was his encounter with the man and the message of Jesus and the Salvation he offers that changed his life and means he is remembered 2000 years on. He found his calling and fulfilled it!

What we do know is that it isn't about us as individuals, but about God! That is clear throughout all the readings set for today:

- ✘ The Psalmist teaches us that we are resourced when **we honour him with praise**. Then we have a series of verbs about what God does: **builds; heals; binds-up; counts** (the stars); **lifts up the poor;** and **casts down the wicked**.

Isaiah picks up the same theme – appropriately for the Feast Day of a physician) – **strengthen the weak knees; make firm feeble hands;** to the **fearful heart, be strong; the eyes of the blind opened; the deaf will hear; the lame leap; the speechless, sing**. God is the Good News that Luke has experienced and wants to proclaim. If it isn't about God it isn't Good News!

- ✘ Paul looks back on his adult life, devoted to the Gospel. He has that proper exhaustion of a job well done – **I am already being poured out as a libation** and he knows **the time for my departure has come**. His own autobiographical eulogy is, **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith**. He looks forward and anticipates **the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me**. Whatever has happened and whoever he felt let him down (and he does feel that with the reference to **Alexander** and his assertion that **no one came to my support**) but it was the **message** that mattered and not the man!
- ✘ The Gospel teaches us that we don't fulfil God's purpose for us by sitting still! The **after this** at the beginning of our Gospel points back to the chap who wanted to follow Jesus but wanted to say goodbye and bury the dead! That got Jesus saying, **no-one who puts their hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God!**

The 70 were **sent out** with the warning that they were **like lambs into the midst of wolves** (so Jesus does know Handsworth!) with very practical advice about their packing and that they couldn't complain about their accommodation (no *Trip Advisor* for Apostles!). The command to **cure the sick** is the Greek word (*θεραπευτε*) from which we get the English '*Therapy*' and may just mean that we need to get our hands dirty in caring for people (although miracles aren't excluded). To share the Good News by becoming it!

We may not write a Gospel and be remembered in 2000 years, but the Gospel is written on our lives for others to read and what we have to be aware of is what others read there about God and how the Good News applies to them.