

Sermon 18 October 2020 St Luke - Isaiah 35:3-6, Luke 10:1-9

Lord God, open our hearts and minds to your healing Holy Spirit amongst us, Amen

- Today we celebrate St Luke. Luke who wrote a Gospel and the book of Acts of the Apostles, travelled with Paul on some of his missionary journeys and was a physician - a doctor- which I think gives him a grounded, compassionate, inclusive way of telling the world about Jesus, the Son of God, who was also a healer of anyone who wanted to be healed.
- You can't be a doctor without wanting to help all people, to enter into their story and heal them in a physical or emotional way or, with Jesus, a spiritual way.
- Only in Luke do we find the parable of the Good Samaritan - the compassion of a "sworn enemy" saving the life of a victim of violence he comes across on the road after those expected to look out for a fellow Jew, do not because they are completely wrapped up in their own lives
- In the Gospel reading today we hear of Jesus sending out the 70, (some versions say 72, but let's not quibble about another 2) Jesus instructs his followers that as well as telling the towns about Jesus they are to cure the sick.
- On the face of it that's a strange thing to say - How are they supposed to do that? Were they all healers and doctors like Luke? Almost definitely not.

These were just ordinary folk like you and me (apologies to any highly trained medical staff here!)

These 70 ordinary people sent out by Jesus were to cure the sick and tell people that the Kingdom of God had come near..... healing isn't just about mending a broken bone or a physical wound knitting together, healing is about much more - it is about becoming whole as a complete person, entering the Kingdom of God.

Surely that is what Jesus and the Kingdom of God is all about- healing our brokenness and our sin and making us whole through God's love and forgiveness. a belief and trust in Jesus putting us right with God so that we can enter eternal life. But this healing can begin in our earthly life, because of Jesus - God made flesh, fully human and fully divine- bringing the Good News and bringing in the Kingdom of God here on earth, now.

Just glimpses of it of course, because the Kingdom of God is a place without sin, and we are all fallible human beings who need healing continually but on whom our God of love and forgiveness and compassion pours out a never ending supply if we turn to Him for help.

- And this is the message for us today as the Christian Church- the body of Christ- the fellowship of believers filled with his Holy Spirit - for us to be just like those 70 ordinary people being sent out to bring healing to a hurting world,
- to make God's Kingdom known to others and to bring to birth a tiny fragment of true wholeness of life:
- to set off a chain reaction of God's way of working, inspiring others to live as Christ, through our actions of kindness, generosity and joy.
- Cling to that reassurance..... cling to that hope.....cling to that restoring, healing power of the Holy Spirit at work in so many ways already and look outwards rather than inwards, when things are tough..... and you may be surprised at what positive changes can happen.
- And looking at the Old Testament reading from Isaiah:

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

Such emotional words in Isaiah asking for healing and followed by the powerfully affirming words which are true for Christians like us today:

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.'

Some people are born with a disability and others are suddenly hit by accidents or a serious illness out of the blue, many of us during this pandemic have a fearful heart, but if we hand our most desperate moments to Jesus, we can through prayer and fellowship and worship, gain an incredible

strength to face whatever we have to - and surely that is the most powerful form of healing available to us.

He will come and save you- and I would add : and **heal you** and enable you to move forward in your life in a new way -

- maybe completely physically healed...but more likely healed in being more aware of your limitations, your need for medication not being a weakness but a necessity , healed in your need to rely on others for help sometimes and having a greater understanding of others' problems and struggles and healed in a realisation of what is important in life: God's total all-embracing love and forgiveness and patience and for us to show thankfulness to God for the blessings he has actually given us..

So when life's a struggle, or you are getting knock backs, when you feel overwhelmed or when physically or emotionally you have a huge mountain to climb, don't give up on Jesus- open yourself to being vulnerable and turn to God in prayer, take the plunge and act outside your comfort zone to ask someone for help or to pursue what you feel God's Holy Spirit is nudging you to do and then give thanks and share with others when God *does* help you.

He will come and save you- and heal you and enable you to move forward in your life

But what about the next words: "*He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense.*"

- language that horrifies us today when we believe in a God of love. But Isaiah the prophet brought warning in the way he hoped people at that time would connect with - trying to make sense of the destruction people saw around them and bring them back to following God and receiving healing because look at the positive words immediately following:

He will come and save you

In other words God brings hope, and it's not just for humans but for all creation

*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;*

- But aren't we just as bad as the people Isaiah was railing against ?
- Are we taking action against poverty, inequality, climate injustice, our world burning up or being buried under plastic and other pollution.
- Maybe more leaders of the Church should be speaking out about the ills of today but also that **He, God, will come and save you-** calling more loudly for ordinary Christians to go out and act out their faith and to speak words of healing to their neighbours, - telling people it is God's love that can transform us and the world, that we as Christians have so much more collective power than the single prophet Isaiah, because Christ came to save **all** people, not just the Israelites, and his Holy Spirit can inspire anyone all over the world, but we have to be brave and want to be healed , we have to be courageous and trust in Jesus to walk alongside us and never leave us.
- We have to WANT to play our part in drawing God's creation back from the brink of disaster, to disentangle ourselves from the hate speech and the fake news that fuels racism and intolerance of groups who don't fit the norm, to open our eyes and our hearts to the sickening divide between rich and poor and the link of human activity with pandemic disease searing open the previous protective boundaries between species, and to acknowledge that we each have to change in some way in order to be healed and to move forward as Christians.
- So let Isaiah's words **He (God) will come and save you** inspire each one of us, let Jesus strengthen each one of us and let His Holy Spirit give each one of us the right words and actions to enable us to go out like the 70 with the direct mission from Jesus to bring God's healing to the world and to ourselves.
- In the name of Christ, Amen

Katrina Nice, 18.10.20