

Sermon for the Feast of St Luke

19 October 2025

Sirach 38:1-4, 6-10, 12-14; 2 Timothy 4:5-13; Psalm 147:1-7; Luke 4:14-21

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we commemorate the Feast of St. Luke, our patron saint. Most of what we know of St. Luke can be gleaned from Holy Scripture: he was a Greek gentile, born in Antioch (present day Turkey), and he made his living as a physician. He was an early convert to Christianity, and a companion of St. Paul during his missionary journeys, only to be martyred himself a few years later. The symbol of St. Luke is a winged ox — a creature of sacrifice, which points to Luke's vision of Christian discipleship as being rooted in compassion, mercy, and self-giving love.

Every parish under the patronage of St. Luke carries deep in its bones a story of healing.

In addition to being a healer of bodies, St. Luke was also a healer of hearts. It is only in his gospel that we learn of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, Mary's *Magnificat*, and Simeon's *Nunc Dimittus*. Luke's Gospel is one that shows what God's divine love looks like when it bends close to human need.

In this morning's reading from St. Luke, we find Jesus, filled with the Spirit, having returned from his temptation in the wilderness returns to Galilee, where he'd grown up. Word of him has begun to spread, and he begins to teach in the synagogues. When he gets to Nazareth, he goes into the synagogue, and opening the scroll of Isaiah declares:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

In Luke's Gospel, healing is always about more than simply physical restoration; but instead understands healing to be fundamentally about restoring people to community — the leper is touched; the man possessed

by demons is clothed; the woman unable to stand upright is healed and stands straight among her neighbours.

Parishes that bear St. Luke's name are called to this same work: to be communities where those bowed down are lifted up, and where mercy itself becomes medicine.

However, note Luke's ordering of things — Jesus doesn't begin with his list of proclamations, but with a declaration of empowerment — *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me."*

The same as the crowds in last week's reading rushed to find Jesus wanting to know how they could get their hands on more bread, it's tempting to hurry to the content of the work to which we're called — serving, teaching, feeding — without pausing to attend to the *source* of that power; without grounding ourselves in the reality that God is already engaged in this work in creation, and ours is a call to join in that work. Without rootedness in prayer, ministry becomes activism, compassion without grounding, and service without soul.

Jesus tells his followers, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth."* Ministering in Christ's name takes more wisdom and strength than any of us possess on our own; and yet each of us is called in our uniqueness to work for the furthering of God's reign of mercy, justice, and peace, and to trust that God will equip us for the work to which we are being called.

As Martin Luther wrote in his famous hymn:

*That Word above all earthly powers
No thanks to them abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still;
God's kingdom is forever!*

God's call to us is one that is never solitary. None of us has every gift, and no parish bears the whole burden of meeting the world's need. Each member of the Body and each community is gifted with its own charism — some are called to excellence in teaching, others to acts of hospitality, or to make beauty in worship and music.

And so we must ask: "What is the ministry to which St. Luke's is being called in this next season job our life together?" Ministries that once thrived may now be ready to rest; and new ones may be waiting to be born — each is a natural part of the life-cycle of a Christian community. The Spirit breathes life where it is needed, and sometimes bids us release what has had its season.

You might recall that I asked each of us on my first Sunday to commit to "being courageous in rekindling the flame of God's spirit that is within us." "In the power of the Spirit" is one of Luke's favourite phrases, appearing throughout both his Gospel and the Book of Acts. From Jesus' conception, to his baptism, temptation, and the sending out the Apostles, the Holy Spirit is the thread holding the story together.

By placing this story of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth right at the start of his ministry, St. Luke declares that healing, liberation, and proclamation *are* the Gospel in action; and that wherever the Holy Spirit restores creation to wholeness, there the Kingdom of God has come near. The Church's healing ministry — medical, emotional, relational — is sacred. To bind up wounds, to reconcile, to clothe, to forgive, to include — these are all forms of healing done in the Spirit's power.

What might that look like here in this time and place? It means being a place where the lonely find companionship; the hurting are heard; the wandering find a sense of home; and the beauty of worship restores weary hearts. It means recognizing that every act of mercy — every meal shared, every prayer whispered, every act of compassion — is a dose of hope administered to the world. And in the end, this is the thing to which all Christian healing, indeed the entirety of the Christianity story points —

hope. Hope that in Jesus Christ, brokenness can be mended, that sin can be forgiven, and that even death itself can be transformed.

Our calling as St. Luke's is to dispense that hope generously, and to proclaim the Lord's favour made present *today*.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." In the coming weeks and months, let us not rush ahead of the Spirit, nor shrink from the Spirit's power. Let us with courage and compassion, wrestle, discern, and act, trusting that the same Holy Spirit that anointed Jesus at Nazareth anoints us still — to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed.

May St. Luke, physician of both body and soul, pray for us: that this parish which bears his name may be a place of mercy and wholeness; that together we may discern that healing work to which we are called; and that anointed by the Holy Spirit, we may proclaim not our own worthiness, but the Lord's favour made real among us.

May God give us grace to find it so. Amen.