

## **Rev Ruth Coombs: Luke 10.1-9**

Today is a red letter day, hence the red vestments as we celebrate St. Luke. Known as Luke the Evangelist, he is briefly mentioned in the New Testament on a few occasions and is referred to in Paul's letter to the Colossians as the physician. It is thought that he was both a physician and one of Paul's companions. The Early Church Fathers believed that he wrote both the Gospel according to St Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, a quarter of the New Testament – more than any other author – other scholars later confirmed his authorship. As a physician he would have been an educated man adept at reading and writing.

We don't know much about him but it is thought that he was a Gentile, and may even have been born a slave and educated in medicine by the family who owned him, which was quite common. Looking at the book of Acts, the way it is written indicates that Luke joined Paul at Troas and went with him to Macedonia, parting company when Luke stayed at Philippi for some years; leaving to rejoin Paul when he was on his third missionary journey. They travelled together through Miletus, Tyre, Caesarea to Jerusalem. We know he stayed with Paul when Paul was imprisoned in Rome.

Turning to the Gospel according to Luke, it is here that he shows his passion for evangelising Gentiles. It is only in his gospel that we hear the parable of the Good Samaritan, that we hear Jesus praising the faith of Gentiles such as the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian (Lk.4:25-27), and here that we hear the story of the one grateful leper who is a Samaritan (Lk.17:11-19).

His gospel accounts are focussed on social justice and the poor. It is Luke that writes "Blessed are the poor", not "Blessed are the poor in spirit" in the Beatitudes. It's Luke that tells of the poor man Lazarus and the rich man who ignores him. And of course it's in Luke that we hear Mary's Magnificat where she proclaims that God "has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (Luke 1:52-53).

Forgiveness is a common theme of Luke's too with the welcomed return of the Prodigal Son, the woman who Jesus forgave washing his feet with her tears. All these things are unique to Luke's gospel accounts.

And in today's gospel Luke focusses on the few ministering to the many, and reminding the seventy that the labourers deserve to be paid. In this case paid by kindness and hospitality, staying in one house sharing whatever they have.

At the heart of Jesus' call is the message of peace. "Peace to this house". Probably not the message his peers wanted to hear. They didn't want peace with their neighbours, the Samaritans, they certainly didn't want peace with their Roman oppressors. They were looking for a leader to take them into war, with God's justice coming swiftly to their aid to get rid of their enemies once and for all. Jesus' vision of God's kingdom and his rejection of violence grew out of his knowledge and love of Israel's God as the God of generous grace, powerful and healing love. This was the charge to the seventy, and this is our charge too.

In a world of hurt, confusion and anxiety we must look for peace, share God's love and peace with our neighbours and give thanks for God's grace and mercy to us. Amen