

# **Materials for Virtual Worship**

## **Sunday 18 October Trinity 19**

### **Collects for 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Trinity**

Almighty God,  
you called Luke the physician,  
whose praise is in the gospel,  
to be an evangelist and physician of the soul:  
by the grace of the Spirit  
and through the wholesome medicine of the gospel,  
give your Church the same love and power to heal;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen

### **Readings**

#### **Act 16:6-12a**

#### **Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia**

They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

#### **The Conversion of Lydia**

We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days.

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**Luke 10:1-9**

### **The Mission of the Seventy**

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, 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." Amen

### **Sermon**

For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost' (Luke 19:10) It seems to be almost another age ago that every Thursday at 7 pm we stood on our doorsteps and clapped the doctors and nurses in the NHS. There are of course many others we should be clapping at this difficult time, but it is only right and proper to thank those who care for our health even at the best of times.

Today we are clapping for one particular doctor, the physician Luke. Had it not been for Luke we would not have his two-volume Gospel and Acts of the Apostles. Our knowledge of the very early church and growth of Christianity would be very sparse and other than his letters the life of St Paul would be very sketchy. Thank you, Dr Luke.

But that's not the sole reason why we are applauding Luke today. Our applause is directed to a man who probably more than any other New Testament writer understood that healing the body is insufficient

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unless the mind and spirit are healed as well. But there's more to it than this because for Luke healing also means healing the deeper social wounds of society – of class division, racial prejudice, gender discrimination, religious intolerance and so on.

Luke, the physician, has a mission to stir us up to action. In our Gospel reading today Luke's account of Jesus' instructions to his disciples fuelled by the crucial idea that as, 'the Kingdom of God is near you!' then the social revolution must begin now! The missionaries are to bring the shalom or the healing peace of the Kingdom into people's homes and that means breaking almost every social and religious rule under the sun. The model we have is Jesus' table fellowship with tax collectors, his treatment of women as equals, his great respect for the religiously despised Samaritans. By providing more examples than any of the other three gospels, Luke is in effect saying to us, 'Don't just listen, do likewise!'

It is not surprising, therefore, that we first meet Luke on the road and he appears to have joined St Paul for a while on one of his hectic missionary journeys. We can't know for certain that he is the man from Macedonia whom Paul sees in his vision (Acts 16:9), but it would make sense that Paul has somehow sensed that Luke is a particularly significant person. Furthermore, Luke's account of their itinerary from Troas to Samothrace to Neapolis and finally to Philippi (the capital city of Macedonia), appears to be a first-hand account from his journal – he uses 'we' not 'they'. The meeting must have made a deep impression on them both. Luke only uses his journal entries a few times afterwards, but Paul is clearly his hero in Acts of the Apostles, and in one of his letters Paul refers to this Greek trained doctor and Christian convert with the greatest respect as 'the beloved physician' (Colossians 4:14).

We can only but speculate what led Luke, a Greek physician maybe from Macedonia, to have embraced Christianity with such passion. But a clue may come in a passage from his Gospel which only he relates and that is Jesus' very first sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth.

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It is sabbath and Jesus reads the portion from the Torah set for that day, from Isaiah 61:

The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free. (Luke 4:17-18)

Isaiah’s mission statement is Jesus’ mission statement, and now it is Luke’s mission statement. But the difference is that Luke as the witness of Jesus’ life knows that it is not just an idea but a reality. Jesus says after reading Isaiah, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’ (Luke 4:21). For Luke The Kingdom of God is not a future reality, it is the now!

That is probably why for him as a physician the key word of Jesus’ manifesto is the word ‘release’. What do doctors want most for their patients but to relieve them of their pain, their anxiety, their suffering. Luke had only to look at Jesus’ life and the work of the early Christians to see the powerful signs of ‘release’ taking place of all those held captive by society’s prejudices and social structures.

But Luke has a particular place in his mission for the release of the poor. The poor are not just those who are economically poor but all those who are excluded from society, those who lack power or privilege and those whose lives lack spiritual meaning. He calls them the lost. As a Christian doctor Luke also knows that being poor or lost is not just a physical state but a mental and spiritual condition which can afflict us all.

It is not coincidental that some of the most memorable of Jesus’ parables which only Luke relates are about the restoration of the lost – the lost younger son, the lost sheep and the lost coin.

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But probably the greatest example of the transformation of the lost for Luke is the conversion of Paul. For it is the lost Saul who is held spiritually captive by his hatred of the early Christians only to find sudden and life-changing release in the vision of the risen Christ on his way to Damascus. Luke recounts the story three times in Acts of the Apostles. Perhaps as a doctor he used 'The Paul Damascus Case' in his own preaching surgery. 'Look', he says to one his patients, 'If Christ's Kingdom can transform a man like Paul, think what it can do for you.' So, we have a very great deal to thank that man from Macedonia, the Greek physician and inspired disciple of Christ. We don't applaud him every day, but today on his feast day, we do.

Michael Wilcockson

### Hymn (Gradual)

Lift High the Cross

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim  
till all the world adore his sacred name.

- 1 Come, let us follow where our Captain trod,  
our King victorious, Christ the Son of God.
- 2 O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,  
as thou hast promised, draw us unto thee.
- 3 Let every race and every language tell  
of him who saves our souls from death and hell.
- 4 Set up thy throne, that earth's despair may cease  
beneath the shadow of its healing peace.
- 5 For thy blest cross which doth for all atone  
creation's praises rise before thy throne.

Michael Robert Newbolt (1874-1956), George William Kitchin (1827-1912)

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### Hymn (Offertory)

Firmly I believe and truly (sung by St Martin's Voices)

- 1 Firmly I believe and truly  
God is Three, and God is One;  
and I next acknowledge duly  
manhood taken by the Son.
- 2 And I trust and hope most fully  
in that manhood crucified;  
and each thought and deed unruly  
do to death, as he has died.
- 3 Simply to his grace and wholly  
light and life and strength belong,  
and I love supremely, solely,  
him the holy, him the strong.
- 4 And I hold in veneration,  
for the love of him alone,  
Holy Church as his creation,  
and her teachings as his own.
- 5 Adoration ay be given,  
with and through the angelic host,  
to the God of earth and heaven,  
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

*John Henry Newman (1801-1890)*

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### **Post Communion Prayer**

Almighty God,  
who on the day of Pentecost  
sent your Holy Spirit to the apostles  
with the wind from heaven and in tongues of flame,  
filling them with joy and boldness to preach the gospel:  
by the power of the same Spirit  
strengthen us to witness to your truth  
and to draw everyone to the fire of your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen