**Sermon – Sunday 18th October 2020 – St Luke**

**May I speak in the name of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Today in the church’s calendar we celebrate Luke the Evangelist and this has a particular resonance here within our Team as St Luke’s is celebrating their patronal festival.

What do we know about Luke?

Well, he is referred to three times in Paul’s Letters in the New Testament.

Paul describes him as “the beloved physician” and in the reading that we heard from Timothy he is Paul’s only companion in prison.

He is believed to be the author of two books of the New Testament – the Gospel that bears his name and the Acts of the Apostles which tells the story of the birth of the early Church.

Luke was a Gentile – non-Jew- and in his writings he makes it clear that the good news of salvation is for all, regardless of gender, social position or nationality.

Luke is important as his writings account for approx. 25% of the New Testament so it has a major part to play in our understanding of Jesus and the early Church.

Theologians have debated the sources of Luke’s Gospel and whether or not Luke was an eye-witness to the events recorded or whether he was recording from third parties and expressing what he thought ought to have happened.

Whilst we engage in these debates and analyse the historical texts, it is important that we do not lose sight of the underlying message of the Gospel and in particular some of the narratives that are unique to Luke:-

* The Good Samaritan
* The Prodigal Son
* The Magnificat
* Nunc Dimitis
* Benedictus

And in Acts:

* Pentecost
* Post-Easter activities of Peter, Paul, etc.

Our Gospel reading this morning is one of those passages from Luke that reminds all of us of the calling that we each have to take the Gospel out in to the community and I hope we can all agree that at the moment there is a need more than ever to provide a message of hope and reassurance.

Yesterday I had the privilege to be at the priesting service of Revd Carol Bates at St Michael’s, East Wickham and the sermon focussed on the ministry that not only Carol and her fellow deacons are called to but all of us.

Jesus in the Gospel is commissioning the 70 to go out into the community and warning them of the challenges that they will face and how they should prepare for this task.

At first sight the instruction to not take anything with them and not to greet anyone on the road may appear a bit stark and counter-intuitive but Jesus was asking them to be focussed on the task and not to be distracted by practical issues or others who may try and draw them away from their mission and to trust God for their sustaining for the task.

There is also an instruction to all of us to support those engaged in ministry and God’s work and certainly provided a model that informed the early Church and its way of supporting the Christian community.

This instruction to go out and about in the community is obviously a challenge at the moment as we are now under the Tier 2 restrictions and thus some of the things that we might want to do naturally we should not do.

We are all getting used to different ways of living and the challenges of keeping in touch with people who we may not see for long periods.

I think we can all agree that there is an element of fatigue setting in and the constant changing of the rules and guidance does not help and the illogical nature of some of the instructions can appear bizarre.

However we all have a duty to try to keep to the rules and play our part in maintaining the safety of everyone, especially the most vulnerable.

I mentioned earlier that one of the narratives that occur in Luke’s Gospel is the story of The Good Samaritan which hopefully you are familiar with. (Luke 10 v 25-37).

To place it into context Jesus had been asked a question by a lawyer as to who his neighbour was in response to the instruction to “love your neighbour as yourself.”

In answering, Jesus told the story of the traveller who is on a journey from Jericho to Jerusalem and is robbed on the road and left on the roadside and a priest and a Levite pass on by “on the other side” and do not help him.

And then a Samaritan comes across this person, bandages him up and takes him to a local inn and pays for his lodging until he is recovered.

And Jesus poses the question – “Who was the neighbour to the man who was robbed?

And the lawyer says the man who stopped and helped the injured man and Jesus instructs the lawyer – “Go and do likewise.”

As I mentioned one of the themes of Luke’s Gospel is that the good news of salvation is for everyone and one of the messages of this parable is that our neighbour is everyone, not just those from the same background or any of the other labels that we place on one another.

The current pandemic has shown us that this is true as the virus has not stopped at particular borders or ignored certain areas and we are all truly in this together which is why it is important that we continue to look out for each other.

Alongside the immediacy of the current situation there is going to be a long term impact of the economic and wide health implications of the virus and the consequences of the measures that are being taken.

We can see these around us with the growth in unemployment and the lengthening of hospital waiting lists for the routine operations that so many rely on to improve or maintain a quality of life.

So what are we to do in the face of such challenges and apparently insurmountable problems?

Firstly, we should continue to pray for the world and those in positions of responsibility, for wisdom in the decisions that have to be made, each with consequences.

Secondly, we should play our part by keeping to the rules or following the guidance, no matter how hard that may be.

Thirdly, we should try to keep in touch with people, particularly those who are shielding or on their own.

The next few weeks and months will be challenging and there will be times when we may feel disheartened and despondent and that sense that there is no end in sight is overwhelming.

We know that God is journeying with each one of us, just as God was with the 70 that the Lord sent out in to the towns and villages. As God sustained them, so God will sustain each one of us.

**Amen.**