

**October 18, 2021 – Feast of St. Luke**  
**by Joan Mumaw, IHM**

Today we honor two missionary disciples, Luke, the evangelist, physician, and theologian and Paul, who brought the message of Jesus from Jerusalem to Rome.

Luke was a disciple of pagan origin; he was well travelled and a history buff. Perhaps this influenced his writing. The Gospel of Luke presents the message of universal salvation. This message takes flesh in the early Church and is depicted in the Acts of the Apostles, sometimes referred to as Part II of the Gospel according to Luke. In the Acts, we see the message of universal salvation being proclaimed to the ends of the earth; at that time it meant to the Gentile world (Samaria, Antioch and Rome.) Luke emphasizes the role of the Spirit in spreading the Word beyond Jerusalem.

Luke wants the Jewish people to see the continuity between the message of the Torah and that of Jesus. In Luke 4, so familiar to us, Jesus uses the message of the prophet Isaias as his inaugural proclamation. In Jesus, all the messages of the prophets are fulfilled. Our God is a God of love, mercy, and forgiveness for all.

Luke intends that his writings have a pastoral function. The Good News is for all: those of various ethnicities, religious beliefs and the poor; those marginalized by society – the blind, the disabled, and women. Luke introduces us to the pastoral dimension of the message of Jesus when he puts the words of the Magnificat on the lips of Mary while she is visiting her elderly cousin Elizabeth. In the Magnificat, the rich are challenged and the poor raised up.

Paul's letter to Timothy is concerned with how the message is being proclaimed and the quality of pastoral ministry in the early church. The section we read here is a message written not long before his death. In the few lines just before the section we read today, Paul urges his disciples to be "persistent in proclaiming the Word whether convenient or inconvenient...to put up with hardship and fulfill your ministry." He has given his all and is being "poured out like a libation;" his departure is imminent. In the section we read today, Paul is describing his experience of imprisonment and asking for visitors and a warm cloak, creature comforts for a prisoner. He also lets his disciples know that "God has stood by him in his time of need so that the Word could be proclaimed to all."

The importance of the Community is emphasized in today's section from the Gospel of Luke. The disciples are sent two by two. They are not alone in proclaiming the Word. They are not to be burdened by excess baggage, be it their own concerns or possessions. They are warned not to dawdle; if the message is not accepted by those hearing it, they are to move on to those who may be more receptive. There is a sense of urgency to spread the message of universal salvation. The disciples will know the presence of God wherever they experience peace.

The responsorial psalm affirms the message of Luke and Paul. "Your friends make known, O God, the glorious splendor of your Kingdom."

Missionary discipleship, depicted in these readings, is also the subject of recent encyclicals by Pope Francis. In *Fratelli Tutti* and in *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis urges all of us to exercise our missionary discipleship in our encounters with the other and all of creation. The quality of our relationships is at the heart of the Word.

What does it mean for those of us who are no longer in the forefront of active ministry to exercise our missionary discipleship? Theresa of Lisieux never left the monastery and yet she is the patroness of missionaries. Prayer may be the most important intervention we can make at this time. Our world and church are in chaos; events are moving at the speed of lightening. How many of us think about what happened on January 6<sup>th</sup> in Washington, DC or at the end of August in Afghanistan? Do we remember that we sent sisters to the border to assist asylum seekers or that there was a terrible earthquake in Haiti? And how do we respond to the climate challenges facing our Earth?

We are confronted with serious issues in this country and around the globe not to mention the fact that we are in the midst of a pandemic with the majority of the population of the world with little to no access to vaccines.

How do we pray in the midst of this? I pray with the newspaper in hand or the words of the evening news on my mind and in my heart trusting that the Spirit of God hovers over the chaos and will show us the way through to new life and to relationships that foster the kingdom of God in our midst. How do you exercise your call to missionary discipleship these days when your energy wanes and words fail? For what do you pray?