

## **Feast of St Luke (Luke 10:1-9)**

*The following was shared as a reflection on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October, the feast of St Luke. It was shared over Zoom with the Moot community (<https://www.mootcommunity.org/>), my other spiritual home, based at St Mary Aldermary, Bank in the City of London.*

I often refer to Malcolm Guite's sonnets when I am involved in services and I make no apology for that, he is a wise man. So today I want to start with his reflection for St Luke:

*His gospel is itself a living creature  
A ground and glory round the throne of God,  
Where earth and heaven breathe through human nature  
And One upon the throne sees it is good.  
Luke is the living pillar of our healing,  
A lowly ox, the servant of the four,  
We turn his page to find his face revealing  
The wonder, and the welcome of the poor.  
He breathes good news to all who bear a burden  
Good news to all who turn and try again,  
The meek rejoice and prodigals find pardon,  
A lost thief reaches paradise through pain,  
The voiceless find their voice in every word  
And, with Our Lady, magnify Our Lord.*

The Kingdom of God in times like these is something to ponder. Across churches that are celebrating St Luke today, I imagine much will be said about the line “do not move about from house to house” but we’ve met, and I don’t want to labour that point.

I come here before you tonight, acutely aware of how healing services can be both incredibly holy experiences and incredibly painful or alienating ones. And while this is not a “healing service”, I know the same feelings may abide and I pray that the words I say will share something of God’s welcome. And I pray there will be no hurt here, as we reflect on healing.

I’ve never read Luke’s Gospel cover to cover before and – I won’t lie – I didn’t manage it before today. But I did read through enough chapters to wonder at the number of Jesus’ miracles Luke recounts. Luke may have been a doctor, but Jesus was a healer in ways we can only dream about and pray for. In my most – uncomfortable to recount – pious moments, I look to Jesus and wonder how I could be more like him. For most of my life, Jesus has been the aspect of the trinity I’ve understood least of all. He was both human and divine, question mark...? That, right there, blows my mind. Then all the Jesus miracles? I don’t know about you, but I have prayed – in both my personal and professional life – for Jesus miracles. Divine interventions. Seemingly impossible healings. Whatever you want to call them. I cannot think of a single one that played in the way I’d hoped or prayed for. The depression hasn’t gone but life is lived to a fullness with it. The tumour did kill, but through death there was an outpouring of love. The heart, once stopped, was kept beating until family arrived, accepting death and were able to say goodbye.

You might think healing is my bread and butter, being a nurse and all, but I'm not sure it is. Healing has changed its definition in my life and through my work. There are great and wonderful advances in medicine but in my neck of the woods (Intensive Care) rarely is one problem completely fixed without a lingering something else; physical, mental or both. My own head and heart have taken a bit of a beating this year and reading through some of Luke's Gospel wasn't as reassuring as I had hoped, until I was caught by the realisation – the reassurance – that through these miracles Jesus allows people to be welcomed back into the fold, into life they'd been excluded from. It is easier, in my experience, to focus on the act of the miracle and not the outcome of the welcome.

When I think back to the examples of situations I had prayed for miracles to “fix” – a friend's depression, a loved ones tumour, a strangers heart beat – none of them were “fixed” in the way I **wanted** but they all (ultimately) welcomed a new way of being. When we are in the throws of suffering, it is nigh on impossible to see how there could be a welcome there. Perhaps the welcome is a metaphorical glimpse of sunshine, or momentary relief from pain, or laughter, or a prayer shared. Perhaps it is something more tangible and absolute – a recovery, or a hug, or a space where you feel safe to be, when other spaces haven't been safe.

As we, individuals and a community of faith, negotiate our way through the coming months, I wonder how we will respond to a world that needs healing in all kinds of ways. I wonder what we will do for each other, so God's welcome is known and felt. I know it's not simple, I really do.

I know we come to this table sometimes full of love and sometimes broken too. We are a fiercely complex, and we are welcomed by the Trinity to be here in all our complexities. My question is, how do we share that welcome with the world?