

Morning worship for St Luke the evangelist

Preparation

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength;
ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name.

The whole earth is full of his glory.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Opening Prayer

Holy God,

faithful and unchanging:

**enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,**

that we may truly worship you,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Cast your burden upon the Lord:

And he will sustain you.

Create in us clean hearts O God:

And renew a right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence:

And take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Give us the joy of your saving help:

And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.

Blessed be the Lord day by day:

The God of our salvation who bears our burdens.

We confess our sins.

God the Father forgives us in Christ

and heals us by the Holy Spirit.

Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness,

all slander and malice,

and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

(cf Ephesians 4.30,32)

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

Lord our God,

in our sin we have avoided your call.

Our love for you is like a morning cloud,

like the dew that goes away early.

Have mercy on us;

deliver us from judgement;

bind up our wounds and revive us;

in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God,

who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,

bring you his pardon and peace,

now and for ever. **Amen.**

Praise

O Lord, open our lips:

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the Lord:

All praise to his name.

Gloria in Excelsis

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,

almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks,

we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father:

receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,

you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The word of God

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

This is the word of the Lord: Thanks be to God (Isaiah 35:3–6)

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke:

Glory to you, O Lord

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."

This is the Gospel of the Lord: **Praise to you, O Christ (Luke 10:1-9)**

A Reflection by Rev'd Stephen Burge

This morning we are remembering the life of St Luke, the writer of the Gospel and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. Luke was also a physician, and I think his life as both a Christian and a medic is particularly pertinent for us all as we continue to deal with the impact of the Coronavirus on our lives and communities.

Human life is very fragile and transient, and there are many things throughout the world that can and will harm us. There is no other way to say it: people get sick and we will get sick. But God did not leave us in a dangerous world ill-equipped to deal with all the threats around us. As part of our bodies, he gave us our brains. And there are thousands of scientists and doctors throughout the world who are trying their very hardest to find therapies to help patients with Covid, to understand how the disease works

and spreads among communities, and to create a vaccine that can help curb its rapid growth. But we should remember that scientists and doctors, like St Luke, have been doing these for centuries; developing the treatments and therapies that can help us combat all the diseases and illness that can afflict us. It is important that we pray for all those scientists and researchers and give thanks for all the work that they do.

In the US there is a well-known Jesuit priest called Fr James Martin who appears on the TV News Stations fairly frequently. He recently posted something on social media about one of Donald Trump's many recent press statements, in which he told people to "not be afraid" of Covid-19. Trump though misunderstands what fear is, and it will be good for us to think a little about what fear really means.

Fear can be dangerous, it can be something that can alienate us from God, as we become enwrapped in our own fears and concerns. Fear and worry can be paralysing, it can cause us to get stuck in a rut, unable to move emotionally, spirituality and, sometimes even physically. Such a state is something that Jesus wants us to be wary of – we can't grow, if we are afraid, which is why Jesus often tells his followers to not be afraid, just as God tells his people through the Prophet Isaiah to "Be strong!" and "Not to fear!". The opposite of *fear* in the Bible is not usually boldness or confidence, but is *love* – which tells us much about how Jesus and early Christians understood *fear*: *love* is about looking beyond ourselves to those around and the world around us, acting to the betterment of others. Fear is the opposite: it hinders our relationship with God and focuses our minds on ourselves.

In this same social media post Fr James Martin also points out that while Jesus does not want us to fear, he also does not want us to forget ourselves and our own humanity. If we look at the Gospels, Jesus' words are not about abandoning our humanity and what it means to be human, they are about freeing ourselves from all those things that hinder our relationship with God. The sending out of the seventy disciples encapsulates this way of thinking: I am sure that many of them were afraid – I know that I would be! – and Jesus sees that there is a need for them to overcome their fears and to get out there and on the road – to be strong; but he also tells them to leave any place that does not welcome them. Essentially, he is telling them to look after themselves and take themselves out of danger and harm's way. God made us *human* and uses us in all our weaknesses. God also wants us to respect and honour our human bodies, and with that comes our

frailty. That means that we *do* need to be cautious and aware of things that could harm us or those that we love. Fr James Martin writes, "...Jesus is not telling us to ignore the reality of human life. That is God does not ask us to check our brains at the door and be stupid about our bodies. We don't jump off buildings expecting not to get hurt. We don't drink poison expecting not to get sick. We don't touch a hot stove expecting not to be burned." We do well, and we honour ourselves, and we honour God by looking after ourselves and our bodies, avoiding being reckless and doing harm. Jesus message for us is that we should be afraid of Covid-19, but we should not let that fear prevent us from showing love and compassion to others. Just as the disciples were undoubtedly afraid as they set off on their mission, we cannot let our fear prevent us from doing what we need to do; but, at the same time, Jesus told his disciples to be careful and to look after themselves: fearlessness is not about boldness and confidence, fearlessness is, for Christians, about love, wholeness, and our relationship with God.

A good few years ago, I was taken to the Convent of Our Lady of Saydnaya in a small village a few miles north of Damascus in Syria. Inside the Church in that remote dusty village was an icon of the Virgin Mary, which, according to tradition, was painted by St Luke. Because of this, St Luke is not only the patron saint of medicine, but he is also the patron saint of artists. Medicine and the arts are not normally paired together, but I think there is something to be said about the creative power that art and science can have within our lives. The rational, logical sciences *and* the creative, emotional arts are part of what it means to be human - they feed into and out of one another and we are wrapped up in them both. There is also something incredibly meaningful about the power of beauty and love to bring healing and wholeness in our lives. This brings us back to the pairing of *fear* and *love* that Jesus often talks of: love and beauty are what make us whole, and what can lead us to renew and deepen our relationship with God. The arts – paintings, poetry, music and film – can point to the beauty of the world and bring us healing.

If we think of healing as means to bring us a sense of peace and wholeness, the process of healing takes on a sense of looking beyond ourselves, from our finite, fragile, transient bodies into the infinite, imperishable and eternal love of God. It is wrong to say that we should not fear Covid-19, or for that matter any disease – we shouldn't walk about willy-nilly, without a care in the world, as if it is nothing. Being Christian means about caring for our bodies, and about caring for other people; and

so, we it is right for us to be cautious and wary of it, and to do all the things that health experts and the government are asking us to do. But Jesus calls us to not let that fear overcome us, and instead we should abide in love. Fearlessness does not mean recklessness, but fearlessness should be rooted in love. Fearlessness emerges from a sense of wholeness and feeling of God's presence, which gives us the strength to go out into the world and to overcome those things that we are afraid of. We will always lack something, but God is always with us, God loves us, and God will give us the strength us to overcome our fears, make us whole and grant us peace.

Our faith

Let us declare our faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession led by Diane Goodwin

Heavenly Father, thank you that you are the light of the world, guiding our steps on your path. Your word says that you are a Good Father who gives us good gifts. Thank you for the gift of the church, a community of your children that you have gathered together to worship, serve, pray and love. Give us strength to live as ambassadors for you in the world. Lord, bless this and the worldwide church and keep us pure, make your face shine upon us. Turn your face towards us and give us peace. Lord in your mercy.... **Hear our prayer**

Loving Father, we recognise our daily dependence upon you for fresh grace and power to live a life full of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. As we receive grace from you each day, so we pray for the needs of the wider community, and especially the political leaders of all parties, that they would recognise their responsibilities to work together for the common good. We pray that all world leaders and parties would engage meaningfully with each other at all levels, so that they might find a way to resolve the current pandemic. We know that nothing is too hard for you and so we pray with confidence knowing that if we ask anything according to your will, you hear us as we approach you in prayer.

Lord in your mercy.... **Hear our prayer**

As we move toward the winter months, hear our prayer today for all women and men, boys and girls who are homeless. For those sleeping under bridges, on park benches, in doorways or bus stations. For those who can only find shelter for the night but must wander in the daytime. For families broken because they cannot afford to pay the rent. For those who have no relatives or friends who can take them in. For those who have no place to keep possessions that remind them who they are. For those who are afraid and hopeless. For all these people, we pray that you will provide shelter, security and hope. We pray that those of us with warm houses not be lulled into complacency and forgetfulness. Jesus, help us to see your face in the eyes of every homeless person we see so that we may be empowered through word and deed, and through all the means we have, to bring justice and peace to those who are homeless.

Lord in your mercy.... **Hear our prayer**

Creator of the universe, you were there at the beginning of all things, shaping our world and preparing it for us. You have provided the mountains and the trees, the waters and the earth. Help us to be good caretakers of your gifts, protecting the land from abuse, and ready to share with all in need. Show us how to use our science and technology in creative, not destructive ways. Deepen our awareness of our connectedness with all your creation, so that future generations will also enjoy this blessing. We lift to you all who suffer because of poverty, injustice or climate change. We pray that world leaders and influencers will be guided in their decision making by principles of justice and sustainability. And we ask that you will inspire and equip each of us to make a difference in shaping a fairer and more sustainable world. Every little bit we can do will collectively make a difference.

Lord in your mercy....**Hear our prayer**

Jesus, we pray for all those dear to us and on our prayer board who need your healing touch or your loving arms around them: those who are sick at home or in hospital and are fearful of the future; those who need strength and courage to face a new direction in life. Lord, you order our steps ...in the face of new challenges, help us put our trust in You. You are our comfort, shield and hope. We also remember and give thanks for those who have gone before us and have died in the faith of Christ and we recall those whose years mind falls at this time:

Merciful Father,

accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

A prayer for the coronavirus pandemic

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

Give us this day our daily bread.

**And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Conclusion

The Collect for the day

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

You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power.

For you have created all things,
and by your will they have their being.

You are worthy, O Lamb, for you were slain,
and by your blood you ransomed us for God.

From every tribe and language and nation,
**you have made us to be a kingdom and priests
serving our God.**

To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
**be blessing and honour and glory and might
for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 4.11;5.9b,10,11)**

We end with the words of the Grace, an ancient Christian prayer of fellowship, remembering that although we are not together in person, nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

Please let us know if you want us to pray for you either individually or if you would like to be included on the Prayer Chain.

(admin@stmaryseatonbray.org.uk)

Reverend Joy Cousans; Reverend Stephen Burge

Material from New Patterns for Worship.

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Times and Seasons:

The Liturgical commission of the Church of England

