

## **Celebration of St Luke. Evensong 21 October 2018. As we are.**

What is your gift? Are there any physicians here, medical doctors of any kind? In the first reading the writer has high praise for doctors of all kinds, recognising the high calling and the extraordinary skills and gifts which they bring to us, gifts from God. Is that your gift? I would include the broad range of medical sciences in this gracious offering celebrated in that reading. Nurses, doctors and many others who care for us are agents of God, caring for our bodies. A good way of celebrating St Luke, who is remembered as a physician who then was called to expand his response to God into other ways.

Perhaps your gift is something different. Can you sing? We are extraordinarily blessed today with beautiful music brought to us by the choir of St John's Cathedral in Brisbane. We are being blessed by many people whose gifts include the capacity to lift our hearts and minds and souls towards God as they sing. It is said that those who sing pray twice. Certainly each word offered and uttered as a song of prayer then also echoes as a prayer in us as we hear it.

Am I exaggerating? I don't think so. There is something about sublime music offered which draws us closer to God, whether we are singing or listening. The offering of music in song or through instruments is a gift. Is it your gift or one of them? Is that offering part of how you serve God?

If not in medical sciences or song, where is your gift? What is it that God has placed in you which you then offer? We all have something. I never ever believe people who tell me that they have no gifts, nothing to offer. There is always something. Absolutely always. If we don't see that in ourselves then we need to be open to allow others to shine a light into our lives and to help us to see who we are and what the blessing is which has been placed within us.

Having come from a shared lunch I am both deeply blessed and more profoundly rotund because of the blessing of hospitality which exists in this parish. Food, glorious food, is a glorious and gracious way of meeting and sharing and connecting! Thank God for those who are blessed with generosity, hospitality and culinary expertise!

Why count our blessings today in particular? It is because we are celebrating St Luke, a man blessed by God with many gifts. As a physician he cared for the people to whom he was called. As a leader in the church he cared for the people who God brought together with him. As a compiler and writer of one of the four Gospels he is a passionate advocate for so many ways in which God reveals love for us. Luke collected and shared many stories which were not known to the other evangelists. Without Luke's attention to these stories we would not know of the Good Samaritan, the road to Emmaus, and many other profound stories of exquisite, intimate connection into which we are invited by God.

Luke also had a passion for those on the fringes, those beyond the 'acceptable people', those who may have seemed on the outer. Luke reminded us that when we slip into taking perspectives of privilege and encouraging exclusion in any way then we are not looking from God's perspective at all. From where God looks everyone is welcome and embraced and accepted and invited into deep intimate relationship. Everyone. Even the people with whom we may disagree. Even the people very different from ourselves. Even the people who we may not like very much. God loves them.

Seeing from that perspective, from God's perspective, is a gift. It is part of the gift of Luke. It is a challenging gift because it rattles our certainties and pious arrogance. Sadly it seems that the renegade Diocese of Sydney has yet again forgotten God's perspective in the narrowness of puritanical doctrinaire absolutism. May they learn again that God desires mercy.

Luke was blessed with many gifts, gifts which have been shared. And that is part of the DNA of being a Christian. Sharing who we are. God takes the things of who we are and invites us to include them in who we are, as we are, 'in Christ'

Incarnation. It is not just about what happens to Jesus. It is what happens to us. We are involved in who we are in God, the whole of us is involved. God expressed and experienced and celebrated and immersed in the world in humanity in Jesus is a way of describing what we mean as 'incarnation'. It is where divinity and humanity are woven together in a profound expression of giftedness and a profound expression of offering of life in love.

That is what we are called to do and to be. In us the gifts we have which come from God are expressed and offered in love. They are part of who we are and how we are seen and who we grow to become as we delight in being 'in Christ'.

So, on this day when we celebrate Luke, a doctor, leader, writer, inspirational follower of Jesus, what are the gifts in you which are incarnated, divine blessings shining in and through who you are and what you say and what you think and what you do? What is your gift?

**Paul Mitchell**