

Sunday 18th October 2026 St Luke. Benefice Holy Communion, Ampleforth.

Today we give thanks to God for St Luke: physician, evangelist, historian and faithful companion of St Paul. St. Luke was born in Antioch, Syria. He did not know Jesus in his lifetime but traditionally he met Mary, John and Peter, as well of course Paul, to gather information for his Gospel and the Book of Acts to which he is credited as author. It is said that he converted from paganism and became a companion of St. Paul. He accompanied him on his missions and into prison two different times. Through Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit has given the Church a rich portrait of Jesus Christ and a stirring account of the Gospel spreading from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Luke does not draw attention to himself. Instead, like every true evangelist, he directs our hearts to the Lord who seeks the lost, heals the broken and welcomes the outsider.

Tradition remembers Luke as *"the beloved physician"*. That description is more than a detail about his occupation. It helps us recognise the tenderness with which he tells the Gospel story. Repeatedly, Luke notices people whom others overlook: the poor, the sick, women, children, foreigners, sinners and those pushed to the margins. He records the song of Mary, who rejoices that God lifts up the lowly. He alone gives us the Good Samaritan, who refuses to pass by a wounded stranger, and the Prodigal Son, whose father runs to welcome him home.

Luke shows us that the mercy of God is not an abstract idea. It has hands that bind wounds, feet that cross the road, eyes that notice suffering and a heart that rejoices when the lost are found. In Jesus, God comes near to the

whole person—body, mind and spirit. Christ touches lepers, restores sight, forgives sins, shares meals and speaks peace. The physician Luke bears witness to the great Physician, whose compassion reaches deeper than any human skill and whose saving love is stronger even than death.

Yet Luke's message is not confined to private comfort. His second book, Acts, tells of the risen Christ sending the Church into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples pray, preach, serve, endure opposition and form communities marked by generosity. The Gospel moves across boundaries of language, nation and culture. Luke reminds us that Christian faith is never merely something to admire. It is good news to be lived, shared and carried wherever God sends us.

Luke himself understood faithful companionship. In the letters of Paul, he appears as one who remained when others had gone. "Only Luke is with me," Paul writes during a lonely and difficult time. Those few words reveal a quiet holiness. Luke was not only a gifted writer; he was a dependable friend, he stayed near in hardship, he shared the risks of mission. He offered the healing ministry of presence. There are moments when we cannot solve another person's troubles, but we can refuse to abandon them. Simply remaining—with patience, prayer and love—can become a powerful sign of Christ. Luke was this model for chaplaincy and pastoral care.

St Luke therefore speaks with force to our own age. We live among remarkable medical achievements, yet many people still carry hidden wounds. Loneliness, anxiety, grief, poverty and exclusion cannot always be seen. Luke

teaches us to notice. He asks us to look beyond labels and statistics and recognise a neighbour. He challenges the Church to be a place where truth is spoken with love, where strangers are received with dignity, where the suffering is accompanied and where forgiveness opens the way to a new beginning.

Above all, Luke invites us to encounter the living Christ. His Gospel begins with promises fulfilled and songs of praise; it journeys through villages and cities; it leads us to the cross, the empty tomb and the road to Emmaus. There the risen Jesus walks beside disappointed disciples, opens the Scriptures and is made known in the breaking of bread. That story gives hope to every weary believer. Even when we do not recognise him, Christ comes alongside us. He listens, teaches, rekindles hope and turns us back towards fellowship and witness.

As we pay tribute to St Luke, let us ask for grace to share his vision: eyes attentive to the overlooked, minds devoted to truth, hands ready to touch and heal, and hearts steadfast in friendship. May our words and actions point beyond ourselves to Jesus, the Saviour for all people, and may the Holy Spirit make us courageous witnesses, so that our homes, workplaces and communities and churches become places where mercy is practised, hope is renewed and the good news is joyfully proclaimed.

Thaks be to God. Amen.