

# Saint Luke the Evangelist

a sermon preached on the

## Feast of Saint Luke

Sunday 18 October 2009

at

**St Michael and All Angels, Christchurch**  
by Fr Peter Williams

Before the commemorative walk to St Lukes Church  
To celebrate the Sesquicentenary

Lection: Isaiah 35: 3-6; 2 Timothy 4: 1-2, 5-11a; Luke 10: 1-6a

Fr David and people of St Lukes Parish; it is a great joy for us to have a part with you in celebrating 150 years of your community of faith, and 100 years of your great church building. In very perplexing times for faith communities like yours and ours, it is good to have friends. We appreciate your friendship, and will continue to offer ours as we go on our journey of faith together.

Very soon, those of us who are able, will go on a short journey, from our place to yours, as Bishop Harper and clergy and people did 150 years ago. After a short ceremony, we shall leave you, until some of us return at the end of the day to gather for your Festival Mass, and to say thank you to our abundantly hospitable God, for all that has been, for all that is, and for all that will be.

Your patron St Luke, whom we know in his Gospels, was one who told his great story of good news, as a great journey of God's visitation to his chosen people, and then into all of the world. Within this story are several smaller journeys, all with particular significance. Just a few verses before the passage we have read today is the beginning of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem to face the authorities and suffering and death; "He set his face to go to Jerusalem"; a journey in which he would be tried to the utmost and eventually to death, and in which he would after the third day, be raised from the dead by the power of God's Spirit. A second, is that of the earliest Christians, filled with the spirit of the Risen Christ, going from Jerusalem out into all the known world, and so eventually to us in this distant corner of the world. We continue that journey even now.

Luke tells these stories as a saga of the hospitality of God. God who gives us this wonderful creation to live in and share and enjoy, visits us all in Jesus Christ, and calls on our hospitality. Those who respond gladly and generously are the blessed, but there are always those who cannot and won't respond, who can't share and give and be thankful. The great journey is one into the full and final hospitality of God, and the way to it, is in giving ourselves up for each other, and for the good of all creation.

In a few weeks we shall start reading the Gospel of Luke again Sunday by Sunday, and we shall run into some wonderful hospitality stories; of Mary and Elisabeth, of Mary and Joseph, of Zacchaeus, the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan, and of the Emmaus disciples and so forth. Always, hospitality; sharing and generosity, call forth the transforming grace of God.

Today too, even in Christchurch, we who celebrate St Luke, have our place in this great story of good news. In times that are fairly desperate for the Church, we need to be reassured by Luke's models of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Our business is the boundless and abundant and practical hospitality of God. We are to respond to Jesus Christ and those in whom he continually comes our way, with care and generosity, lending them our ears, giving them our time and care, letting them be a demand upon us. At the same time we are to go among these people around us in such a way that they have the opportunity to extend their hospitality to us. In Luke's stories, and in his great story overall, it is in the opportunity given, to be hospitable, that is the lively point of evangelisation. For it is the hospitality called forth in all of us that becomes the hospitality of God.

And so in today's Gospel, "the harvest is plentiful"; the world is rich in the gifts of God; they need only be called to their purpose, to their exercise, to their fulfilment. So go into the harvest, not armed with all your confidences and securities, but relatively empty handed, and watch for their hospitality towards you, and respond within that. Let your hospitality and theirs meet.

From some there will be none, so wipe their dust from your feet.

But from many there will be an opening up, a sharing, a making room, hospitality; there will be the Lord's peace. Together we will find ourselves sharing in the hospitality of God which heals and delights.

That is what we celebrate daily and weekly as we break bread at the Lord's table. We do it here so that we may better see it out there.

May this milestone of your parish and of ours, be one in which, in the face of much discouragement, we together appreciate and enjoy, and share, and call forth in each other, and in many friends and strangers, the transforming hospitality of God.

And remember as we walk on our journey, "how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation".

Let that beauty, that blessedness be ours as well, as we seek to carry the good news in our own persons, in our own community, for the sake of all.