



## Luke's Gospel and Tarore

**18 October 2017**

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*Isaiah 35:3-6*

*2 Timothy 4:5-17*

*Luke 10:1-9*

Last weekend some of us attended the film *Children of Parihaka*, introduced by Maata Wharehoka, member of the present-day Parihaka community in Taranaki. She spoke of the passive resistance of Te Whiti and Tohu to Pakeha attempts to take their land. On November 5<sup>th</sup> 1881, the invading constabulary of 1600 were met by the pa's 200 children holding white feathers of peace, singing and offering bread. Te Whiti and Tohu were arrested and taken with many others to the South Island, and imprisoned both here in Lyttelton and in Dunedin, where many built roads on the Otago peninsula. The film follows modern day children from Parihaka undertaking an emotional hikoi/pilgrimage to the South Island jails where their tupuna/forebears were exiled and forced to labour. I was struck by the grace with which Maata spoke of the people of Parihaka's acceptance of the Crown's apology, at a Reconciliation ceremony held only in June this year, 136 years on.

Today in our church's calendar, we remember St Luke and tomorrow, October 19<sup>th</sup> we remember one of the young saints of our church, Tarore of Waharoa, a 12 year old Maori girl, whose story is intertwined with that of St Luke's gospel. Tarore's story and the journey her Luke's gospel made through this land after her death are a profound witness to the power of the gospel to bring reconciliation, healing and new beginnings for the people of this land, including the people of the South Island/ Te Wai Pounamu.

Tarore was from the Ngati Haua tribe of Tainui in the Waikato. Her father was Chief Ngakuku, a nephew of the great chief Te Waharoa. A mission station had been opened at Matamata by CMS missionaries Alfred and Charlotte Brown in April 1835 on a site provided by chief Te Waharoa. Tarore attended the mission school at Matamata and learned to read. In 1836 she was given a copy of the Gospel of Luke in Maori published earlier that year by CMS missionary, William Colenso.

However troubles in the area persuaded the Browns to close the mission station and evacuate the school to Tauranga in October 1836. Chief Ngakuku and the CMS missionary John Flatt led a party of twenty children over the Kaimai Ranges. Their journey took them to the Wairere Falls where they made camp.

That night at evening prayers Tarore read from her Gospel of Luke to the travelling party of children the story of Jesus stilling the storm, to give confidence to the rather fearful band of travellers, on what turned out to be the night before her death.

For the smoke of their camp fire attracted a raiding party from Rotorua, led by Uita. Those in the camp responded quickly to the attack; Ngakuku was able to rescue his small son, and hide him and some of the other children, but in the confusion Tarore had been left where she had fallen asleep. After some fighting the raiding party withdrew. When Ngakuku and the others returned to the camp, they found that the twelve years old Tarore had been killed, still on her sleeping mat. Her death on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1836 immediately created a desire for utu/ revenge, but at her funeral the next day at Matamata, her father Ngakuku preached against revenge, saying there had been too much bloodshed already and that the people should trust in the justice of God, and rather forgive.

Tarore's copy of the Gospel of Luke had a continuing story. The leader of the raiding party Uita had taken Tarore's Gospel during the attack, thinking her kete (flax bag) might contain greenstone or something of some value. However, he was unable to read, and so the book lay unused in his pa. Some time later a slave who could read, named Ripahau, was brought to the pa. He read to the people from the Gospel. Uita was converted and decided he needed to seek out Ngakuku and ask for his forgiveness for the murder of Tarore. Ngakuku forgave him for Tarore's death, and they knelt and prayed together. Tarore's Gospel of Luke had brought the two chiefs together in peace and reconciliation.

Later, the slave Ripahau left Uita's pa in Rotorua and returned south to Otaki, coming into contact with Tamihana Te Rauparaha from Kapiti Island, the son of Wiremu Te Rauparaha, the great Ngati Toa chief. Ripahau again was invited to read from the Scriptures to Tamihana and his cousin Matene Te Whiwhi. In this way the two young chiefs learned

to read. However, Ripahau had only a few pages of Scripture with him, and so a messenger was sent back to Rotorua for more books.

The book that was returned to them, now somewhat worn, was the Gospel of Luke that Tarore had used, still with Ngakuku's name on it. In time Tamihana and Matene became Christians, and the slave Ripahau himself was converted.

It is said that Tamihana and Matene took Tarore's gospel of Luke with them when they travelled to the South Island in December 1842, preaching the gospel of peace and reconciliation. Tamihana and Matene travelled right down the east coast of the South Island as far as Stewart Island, over fourteen months. The people who'd feared and hated Tamihana's father Te Rauparaha were amazed to find Tamihana now preaching the message of God's love and peace. The Kai Tahu people wanted to know whether Te Rauparaha intended to come and attack them again. Tamihana's reply was: "He will not come; for I have come hither to you to bring an end to warfare, and to bind firmly peace, by virtue of the words of the Gospel of the Lord." Many came to believe in the power of the gospel as a result.

In 1844 Bishop Selwyn started his first missionary journey to the South Island, accompanied by Tamihana. To his amazement, he found the tribes living at peace and following Jesus in discipleship. They had learned to read and write and learned their faith from the Gospel belonging to Tarore. So Tarore's gospel had changed lives and brought peace to thousands right through the length of Aotearoa.

Tarore was buried at Waharoa, near Matamata. Her grave is the site of many visits and commemorations. In 1986 there was a large ordination of Maori clergy on her feast day, 150 years after her death, near the site of her grave, and so new preachers of the gospel were commissioned from the place which recalled Tarore's gospel witness.

So we give thanks this day as we remember Luke the writer of his gospel, and we reflect on the story of Tarore, and the many lives her St Luke's gospel impacted throughout this land. Through that gospel, people heard a story of grace, forgiveness and peace-making in Jesus Christ and they lived that out in the lives of their tribes. They found in Luke's gospel a story of true reconciliation for the offender and for the victim at the cross: Luke tells of the thief's 'Jesus remember me' and Jesus' reply, 'Today you will be with me in paradise' (Luke 23: 42, 43).

So we pray that the Gospel may continue to bear fruit in this land in our day as we seek to share the good news of a loving God who like the father in Luke's prodigal son story, never ceases to reach out his arms in love and forgiveness and welcome, and to celebrate when the lost are found.

May we too continue to be a community of St Luke who provide welcome and hospitality to all who cross our paths, who offer our bread at eucharist, and so speak of the love of God shown to us in Jesus Christ in our community, our society and our country in our day. Amen.