

Saint Luke the Evangelist 2020  
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish  
Father Craig Looney  
2 Timothy 4.5-14 St. Luke 10.1-7



Hospitality, the act of showing kindness toward others, is at the very heart of both Judaism and Christianity. It is an important part of the Summary of the Law we hear said at every Mass: Love God above everything else; love your neighbor as you want to be loved. Love and hospitality go hand-in-hand.

We read in Genesis how Abraham showed great hospitality to three men passing by his camp. He ran out to greet them, invited them back to his camp to sit under a tree and rest shaded from the hot sun. He gave them water to wash the dust off their feet. He gave them food so they could continue their journey. He did what God's people are supposed to do: he showed them kindness and hospitality. To Abraham they were simply three strangers passing by. He didn't know they were angels sent from God with a message of hope...he and his wife Sarah would have a son...even in their old age.

Australian Jesuit, Father Brendan Byrne, author of *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel* writes, "The Gospel's essential purpose is to bring home to people a sense of the extravagance of God's love in their regard." Abraham and Sarah certainly experienced God's extravagant love almost 4000 years ago. But what do we know about the man named Luke, whose feast day we celebrate today...and his Gospel of hospitality?

Luke was born in Antioch. In his letter to the Colossians, Saint Paul identifies him as a Greek and a Gentile, and calls him "our dear doctor". Luke was likely converted through his association with Paul. He is believed to have suffered a Martyr's death in Thebes, Greece, around 84 AD. He is the Patron Saint of doctors and hospitals.

Luke never knew Jesus personally. He is considered the author of the Acts of the Apostles, the earliest history of the Church. Both the Gospel and Acts are addressed to *Theophilus*...Greek for one who loves God. Theophilus may be a person or Luke's way of addressing the entire Church...God's People.

Luke also had a special friendship with the Blessed Mother. Luke is the only Gospel writer who gives us the story of the Annunciation. When confronted with Gabriel's startling news she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit, Mary responded to this act of God's extravagant hospitality by saying, "I am the Lord's servant...may it happen to me as you have said." Later, Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Mary celebrated and praised God for Elizabeth's pregnancy in the words of the *Magnificat*, which we say at Evening Prayer.

Elizabeth was the mother of John the Baptist. When her husband Zechariah was confronted with Gabriel's message he and Elizabeth were going to have a son in their old age...he didn't believe what Gabriel told him. Gabriel rewarded Zechariah's doubt by making him speechless...literally...for the rest of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Elizabeth might have been saying to her self, "Now I can finally have some peace and quiet." When John is born, Zechariah is able to speak again, praising God's awesome hospitality in the words of the *Benedictus*, one of the canticles said at Morning Prayer and often at funerals.

One of the most touching scenes in the Gospel is at the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. When Mary and Joseph went to the Temple for her Rite of Purification and to dedicate Jesus to God, the aged Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God for keeping his extravagant promise he would not die before seeing the Messiah. We celebrate this event in the words of the *Nunc dimittis* said at Evening Prayer.

Luke gives us the account of the Angels bringing Good News to the shepherds that first Christmas night, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased."

God's hospitality is shown in the Parables... some unique to Luke: the Lost Coin and the Lost Son, the Great Feast, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector and the Good Samaritan are all about God's extravagant hospitality.

God extends his extravagant hospitality to us even in these uncertain times...let's embrace it with thankfulness and praise.

