

All Age Talk on St Luke.

The Theme for this service is St Luke the Evangelist, whose feast day falls at this time of year on the 18th of October.

An Evangelist is the name that we give to one of the Gospel writers, so if you look carefully at the top of the East Window in the church where they are portrayed, one of those is probably meant to represent him. Luke is also thought to be the author of the book of the Acts of the Apostles (or Acts for short) so this means that if we look at these two works together, Luke wrote more of the New Testament than anybody else, even St Paul, with more than a quarter of it attributed to him. This makes him one of the most important writers of the Early Church.

Our two short readings are the introductions that he gives in each of his books, both addressed to someone called Theophilus which is one of the ways that we know they are by the same author because of the style of writing and the dedication. Theophilus may have been a person – a patron or sponsor, perhaps, who helped to produce the books – but since the name itself means a “lover of God” it might simply refer to any Christian reader and Luke is dedicating his writing to all of us for our learning in this and every age.

The four Gospels in the New Testament of the Bible are named after Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and they all have their own particular flavour, character, and style. In Luke’s Gospel, the writer is particularly concerned with social justice in the ministry of Jesus - healing for people who are sick, support for people who are poor, and encouragement for people who are oppressed or marginalised on the edge of society.

We have Luke to thank for his unique account of the Nativity on which we base a great deal of our Christmas story, and we also have to thank him for two very well-known parables of Jesus which only he recounts: The Good Samaritan and The Prodigal Son, without which our faith tradition would be very much poorer.

We have to thank Luke not just for his stories about Jesus in the Gospel, but also for his particular accounts of the beginnings of the Church in Acts where his account begins with the Ascension of Jesus and goes on to tell of the things that the disciples did to witness to Jesus life and teaching. This is so important that we read it every year in church on the Sundays that follow Easter. He then goes on to tell of the conversion of St Paul and his work and ministry as an apostle.

For our church dedicated to St Peter and St Paul, we would know very little about those two saints if it were not for the writing of St Luke whose accounts of the Early Church teach us a great deal about the beginnings of our faith.

An interesting thing about St Luke is that he is mentioned by St Paul in some of his letters as being with him, and there are some passages in Acts which are written in the 1st person plural – the so-called “we” passages where he writes as an eyewitness, in person, accompanying St Paul for some of his missionary journeys, so even though he was not an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus, he was very much there in person at the beginnings of the Church. We think he was a learned and a medical man, because Paul refers to him as the “beloved physician.”

Christian tradition has it that Luke lived to be 84 when he was martyred in the city of Thebes in Greece. A long life lived in the service of God and the Church, and a legacy left for all of us.

A doctor, a writer, a teacher, a Christian, a missionary, and a saint, and someone who cared enough about other people to make us all aware of how Jesus cares for all of us. **Amen.**