

St Luke, evangelist and martyr

"We need to recover the sense that the Gospel is always about healing, because it is always about telling effectively and transformingly how God has inhabited and continues to inhabit this world."

These are words of Rowan Williams... 'We need to recover the sense that the Gospel is always about healing.' This evening as we celebrate the life and witness of St Luke the patron of the healing arts and sciences we need to be reminded of this fact. The gospel is about healing because this is what Jesus does, there is no adequate word so my apologies to grammarians amongst you Jesus is engaged in 'wholing' making whole. As important as the healing miracles are what is more significant is what they tell us about Jesus and his ministry; they tell us about what he brings. Jesus in his very person embodies wholeness...holiness; as Eucharistic prayer says, addressing God: all life, all holiness comes from you through your Son.

Belief in Jesus *is* belief in his holiness and so when Jesus heals in the gospels he invariably says something like 'go, *your faith (in me)* has healed you.' This is problematic for us today who live in an age of medical science, who think of healing in terms of being made better, of a cure. What can happen is that if a cure is not forthcoming folk are deemed to lack faith. Nothing could be further from the truth. Lord I believe...help my unbelief, this is probably the mantra of most of us, I know it is for me. Perhaps we feel at one with poor old Jeremiah:

Is there no balm in Gilead?

Is there no physician there?

Why then has the health of my poor people
not been restored?

But despite the weakness or perhaps the waxing and waning of faith I believe in healing in exactly the same way that I believe in forgiveness and salvation, because they are exactly the same. Most of us tend not to live our lives looking for evidence of forgiveness or salvation, we are called in live in such that shows their reality in our lives. Healing is exactly the same. To look for proof is to misunderstand what is happening. We are called to live in our lives as people who have been healed who have been made whole.

I have been lent a little library of books by Canon Jim Glennon as I prepared for this evening. He was instrumental in the revival of the Church's healing ministry in this country and beyond. He wrote: 'why ask for what you've got, you have what you accept.' This is Jim at his provocative best, yes we do ask for health, forgiveness and salvation, even if we believe we already have them, what is important is that we accept it and live as though we do.

This living as people made whole involves our communion, you can't be holy on your own, healing, wholeness, occur in community. 'Do your best to come to me soon' St Paul writes to his protégé Timothy. And Jesus sends out the seventy into the community to heal the sick, to say to them that the kingdom of God has come near to you. When we receive communion, when we receive anointing, when we are absolved these sacraments are signs of what has already occurred, the kingdom has come near.

So when we pray for healing for ourselves or others we should expect and believe that that healing has occurred, but in ways that sometimes will not be obvious. During the

anointing and laying on of hands the Taize Memento Nostrum Domine – Remember us O Lord is strange, a little unsettling, a reminder to us that God's moving among us bringing holiness is not always what we expect. It is perhaps best summed up by the great German theologian Jurgen Moltmann who defined true health as 'the strength to live, the strength to suffer and the strength to die.' Let us together pray for that strength. Amen.