

## **Called to be Whole. 18 October 2020. St Luke's Day.**

**The Collect** for this Sunday: Almighty God, you called Luke the physician, whose praise is in the gospel, to be an evangelist and physician of the soul: by the grace of the Spirit and through the wholesome medicine of the gospel, give your Church the same love and power to heal; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

**Post Communion** prayer for this Sunday is: Almighty God, who on the day of Pentecost sent your Holy Spirit to the apostles with the wind from heaven and in tongues of flame, filling them with joy and boldness to preach the gospel: by the power of the same Spirit strengthen us to witness to your truth and to draw everyone to the fire of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### **The Bible readings:**

#### **Isaiah 35:3-6**

<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; <sup>4</sup> say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." <sup>5</sup> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. <sup>6</sup> Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

#### **Luke 10:1-9**

<sup>10</sup> After this the Lord appointed seventy-two<sup>[a]</sup> others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. <sup>2</sup> He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. <sup>3</sup> Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. <sup>4</sup> Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

<sup>5</sup> "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' <sup>6</sup> If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup> Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

<sup>8</sup> "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. <sup>9</sup> Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

### **St Luke's Day Sermon: Called to be Whole. Wholeness. Revd David Treharne**

Today is feast day of St Luke the Evangelist and Physician and patron saint of our daughter church in Tutshill! As a physician Luke is often associated with healing, wellbeing and wholeness. Therefore, our theme today is Called to be Whole.

#### **What is wholeness?**

Unbroken, undamaged, fullness, unity, completeness, ...

Wholeness is beautiful! Healing is great, but wholeness is so much more. Wholeness encompasses the physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, relational, financial, recreational, environmental etc.... It's the personal, interpersonal, public and cosmic! It's life in all its fullness. It's perfect peace. It's a perfect union between God and creation. It's total harmony with God, the earth and the community. Wholeness depicts the relationship that God establishes and intends for humanity with Himself, with other humans and with nature."

I don't know about you, but such wholeness feels like a dream more often than not! My experience, the human experience, creation's experience, is that to some greater or lesser degree we are all broken, fractured and damaged, and to some degree we live in a broken, fractured and damaged world.

Yet there is a longing deep within us and within creation for wholeness. As St Paul says, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning **as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.**" **Romans 8:22** There's a groaning for peace in hearts and lands. For justice, freedom, healing, and deliverance. For change and transformation. For God's reign.

And there is a longing in God too. He desires that creation is renewed, and that humanity is made new... and find wholeness.

In Luke 10:9 Jesus pronounces, "The Kingdom of God has come near to you." Here in Jesus God's longing for wholeness is revealed with the declaration of the coming of God's Kingdom, God's reign, bringing fulfillment, completeness, unity, healing, wellbeing and so much more. "The reign of God is near you!" That reign brings wholeness:

1. Individually in our personal lives
2. Interpersonally between people
3. In the public domain between peoples and nations.

### **On a personal level where and how might God's reign bring wholeness in me?**

I'm going to plump for the word here... contentment! Paul says in Phil 4 (11-13) *"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."*

As Kathy says, it's a verse for our time! So much time and energy is spent looking for satisfaction in romance, in addiction, in careers, in busyness and bank balances etc... rather than in God.

True lasting contentment is found in letting Christ Jesus wholly into our lives and situations to reign; to let go and let God reign in our whole lives. No one except God and nothing but God has the power to complete you as a person. "You are made complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). You don't need to look elsewhere. Psalm 73:26 says, *"God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."* God is our portion. He is a part of our whole. We are not complete without him. He makes us whole.

Our value and worth is not calculated on the basis of appearance, job performance or bank balance but from our identity as God's beloved children.

Train your mind listen to what God has to say about you. The mind can be a battlefield for wholeness. As 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, 'We demolish arguments that set themselves up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make them obedient to Christ.' What argument are you having in your head about your value and your worth? Demolish it! What argument are you having in your head about God's love and God's promises? Demolish it!

Worry and anxiety, which are currently hyper, rob us of wholeness. *"Come to me" says Jesus "all who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest..."* I will give you peace. I will make you content. I will make you whole. *(1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all your anxiety on him... he cares for you.")*

But wholeness is not just about ME ME ME. If it's merely an individualistic pursuit we will be **apart from wholeness** rather than **a part of wholeness**.

For wholeness in my life and in the world God's reign is needed on an interpersonal or social level.

### **Interpersonal Wholeness. What might that look like?**

I chose the word 'contentment' when thinking about personal wholeness. I am going to plump for a word here for interpersonal wholeness... 'blessing'.

The poet, and former priest John O'Donohue wrote *To Bless the Space Between Us* he talks about about the need to recover what he called the lost art of blessing. He says:

*When a blessing is invoked, it changes the atmosphere.... In the light of blessing, a person or situation becomes illuminated in a completely new way. In a dead wall a new window opens, in a dense darkness a path starts to glimmer, and into a broken heart healing falls like morning dew . . . . Let us begin to learn to bless one another. Whenever you give a blessing, a blessing returns to enfold you.*

Blessing, not cursing, one another contributes to wholeness. Speak well of others. Speak well to them. Let words of encouragement replace harsh criticism. Substitute vengeful thoughts with kind prayers. Let acts of random kindness take the place of selfishness.

Blessing rather than cursing others leads to forgiveness and reconciliation.

Blessing others opens the door to love and harmony, genuine friendship, companionship and community.

Blessing others is a significant part of wholeness.

### **We've talked about the personal and interpersonal, but what about the public societal level?**

Although we might not believe it, we can have an influence for good in public arena of ethics, politics, economics and the environment. As I was saying on Wednesday... chaos theory says that the tiny flutter of the butterfly wings can cause a tornado halfway across the world. Our small actions for good can have a big effect.

Our choices for God's reign around purchases and investments, our engagement in politics local and national, our attitudes and actions towards the environment, and our prayers for the world can influence.

Some of us may even find ourselves at the cutting edge of decision making and influence... involved in transforming unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind, directly working for peace and reconciliation; and safeguarding the integrity of creation.

A lot of time it's hard to see ourselves playing a part in God's reign of wholeness on a public level but we all have a part we can play.

### **So where do we go from here?**

Jesus sent the disciples out 2 by 2 and sends us out too... to be a part of his work of wholeness in creation on a personal, interpersonal and public level.

In the parishes here God has given us a mission to do relationship well... with God, each other, our communities and our world.

We are an anxious country in an anxious world at this time, yet we as a Christian community have a gospel of wholeness to proclaim.

For our neighbours, friends, colleagues, and family.

For the struggling parent

For the anxious child

For someone facing unemployment

For those dealing with end of life issues

For the lonely, hurting and broken

It's a message and promise of hope, justice, peace and wholeness.

As Isaiah (Ch 35 verse 5 & 6) says "the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert."

Wholeness is coming and will come with God's reign; individually, interpersonally, publicly, globally and eternally!