

Prayer: O Lord God, who looks with compassion upon the needs of all people: Grant Your grace to all whom You have called to be sharers of Your works of service, that even as the beloved physician St Luke was called to use his talents to Your glory, so may we use our gifts in joyful service unto even the least of Your brethren, Amen.

In the Name of the One who gives gifts to us that we may use them in service to each other and to Him, Dear Fellow Redeemed;

Because his name is only mentioned three times in the New Testament, much of what we know about St Luke is gathered from inference and tradition. The Greek in his gospel is the best of the evangelists, at times even poetic. From this it is a safe bet to say that Luke was very literate and was quite well-read. Because his gospel tends to be chronological and he likes to add historical notes, like who was emperor, king or governor at the time Luke is often viewed as a historian. The fact that his gospel contains the Song of Zechariah, the Song of Mary and the Gloria in Excelsis has caused many to speculate that Luke was also a musician, since he seems to have an appreciation for these songs. There is even a tradition that says St Luke was a painter as well, and in fact in many Christian traditions St Luke is the patron saint of artists.

But even with his name mentioned only three times there are two things about St Luke that we know for certain. St Paul refers to him as "*the beloved physician*" in Colossians 4:14, so we know Luke was a physician, a doctor. What is interesting about this is that we often think of doctors as having a higher social status, this was not the case in the Roman world. In fact many doctors in the Roman world were Greeks who were slaves, or who had at least begun their lives as slaves. So it is very likely that Luke was of a lower social status than Paul, who was a Roman citizen and socially more on the level of someone like Peter or, ironically Jesus. Perhaps it is because he was a doctor and of a lower social status that Luke often highlights how Jesus addresses the suffering and those of lower social orders. And of course we also know that St. Luke was a Christian. He was a person who had heard the Gospel message and who had come to believe in Jesus as the One who had freed him from his sin.

All of this combines into a picture that at first glance does not seem to reflect most of us. After all, most of us are not doctors. I'm pretty sure none of us were slaves. Most of us don't think of ourselves as masters of literature, talented musicians or painters. Some of us like to think we share some of those things in common with Luke, but very often after hearing that summary of Luke's life most people think to themselves that the only thing they appear to have in common with him is their faith; that we, like St. Luke, through the message of the Gospel have come to believe in Jesus as the One who has freed us from our sin.

Yet the fact is, of all the saints, Luke may be the one with whom you have the most in common. St Luke is one of the few saints on the Lutheran calendar who is not an apostle, pastor or preacher. St Matthew, St Mark, St John, they are all remembered as Evangelist and Apostle, but Luke is simply St Luke the Evangelist, and called Evangelist not because he went out and preached but because he wrote the the Gospel that bears his name. While Jesus may have called Peter, James and John from their nets, Matthew from his ledger books, He did not call Luke to lay aside his medicines and bandages. Luke remained a physician. He accompanied St Paul on missionary journeys, but not as a fellow-preacher, he went as a doctor and as a companion. Jesus called Luke to remain in the profession suited to his gifts and talents, and now to use those talents to the glory of God and the welfare of his neighbor.

Just like you. When you were created in your mother's womb, God blessed you with a mixture of gifts and talents unique to you. And even before you were created in your mother's womb, Jesus died for your sins, and called you to faith by His Gospel. But one of the things we are reminded of when we remember St Luke is that the call to faith is not an automatic call to ministry, to service specifically in the Church. God does not say to everyone when they come to faith, "Okay, now I want you to become a missionary, now I want you to become a pastor, now you must become a person who preaches or teaches My Word," for not all of us have the gifts and talents necessary for that work. The talents of most of us are better used in other professions, and so we serve there instead. For while the call of the Gospel is not always a call to ministry, it is always a call to serve, to use your gifts and talents to the benefit of those around you. Lutherans especially have long recognized this, and even given a special name to it. We call it the doctrine or teaching of Vocation, the teaching that each of us have special talents and gifts, and that we are to use these gifts in service of our neighbor. As we said before in many Christian traditions St Luke is considered the patron saint of artists, but perhaps as Lutherans we should consider him the patron saint of vocation, for in Luke we are reminded that all God-pleasing professions are blessed and enriched by our faith. That God does not want you to somehow re-mold your talents so that they are more pastor-like or more churchly. He wants you to take the talents and gifts you have and use them to the best of your ability, and then use them in the place He has put you in this way bring glory to His name and benefit those around you. God will then bless our work and bestow upon it a greater importance than we alone could ever give to it. It isn't unusual to hear people who are not pastors speak of their "ministry", and while we can understand it properly it always makes me a little uncomfortable, and oddly enough because it seems to elevate church work to a place it really doesn't belong, as if the work of the pastor or teacher is somehow more important, more God-pleasing than other work. For as important as my work is, the work of pastor, as important as the work of Christian teachers is, something equally important is going on with the Christian who goes to his desk, to the shop, to the jobsite, to the nursery. They are carrying with them something better than their skill, no matter how skillful they may be. They carry with them the love of Christ, the fruit of the Gospel. You are showing how Jesus has freed you from selfishness and jealousy, to now deal with your neighbor

with forgiveness and love. How you have been freed to serve others has Christ served us.

We may not have the special talents we see in others. We may not be scholars, or eloquent speakers, or physicians. But have all been called to the cross of Jesus. We have all been told our sins are forgiven. We have all been called to faith in Jesus, and thus we have also, like St. Luke been called to humble service of those around us with the gifts God has given, as the Lord stands by us and strengthens us, so that in us all might see the love of Jesus, and see how we too were rescued, to be brought safely into His heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gloria Patri...

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