10.18.2026 The Feast of St. Luke (2 Timothy 4:5-15)

If you were to ask someone for a brief description of St. Luke, they might think of his many accomplishments and tell you that Luke was a gifted evangelist and missionary, a detailed historian and a beloved physician. A person might say that Luke was the most prolific human author of the New Testament, because the two books that he was inspired to write, the Gospel according to St. Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, by volume make up more than a quarter of the New Testament, and in addition to that fact, Luke was the only Gospel author to record several of our Lord's most beloved parables, such as the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the Parable of the Lost Sheep, and the Parable of the Prodigal Son. There are a number of ways in which a person might describe St. Luke based on the many great things he accomplished, but one of the best descriptions of him has nothing to do with the work of his hands, but rather, the love found in his heart.

In the Epistle we read this morning, St. Paul had this to say about Luke, he wrote, *"Only Luke is with me"* (2 Timothy 4:11). When we consider the grim circumstances in which those words were written, we begin to understand why such a short, simple statement actually describes St. Luke more accurately than a long list of his many accomplishments. You see, Paul made that statement while he was suffering in a cold, dark prison awaiting his execution. The Apostle Paul had been arrested previously during his ministry, he'd been stripped, beaten, and imprisoned several times, but this imprisonment under Emperor Nero was different, and it would be his last. Under Nero's persecution of Christians, Paul was imprisoned in the dark, subterranean cell of the Mamertine Prison, and it was in this final captivity, which would end with his martyrdom, that Paul wrote, *"Only Luke is with me."*

Consider the conditions, and you'll see that in the hour of his death, it wasn't Luke's sharp intellect, his attention to detail, or any professional accomplishment that comforted Paul. Instead, it was Luke's constant presence, his faithful companionship, and his unwavering loyalty as a brother in Christ that ministered to St. Paul in that dark hour. When so many others had departed, or like Demas had forsaken him, it was St. Luke, the beloved physician, who brought both personal care and faithful fellowship to the

Apostle Paul, and because of his steadfast presence and the practical way Luke shared the love of Christ, Paul, it would seem could even look forward to death. With St. Luke by his side, Paul was able to declare, *"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have a fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"* (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

We often look to the saints, like Luke, for practical ways to express our faith in God and live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The saints, people like you and I, ordinary people by their extraordinary example, demonstrate for us how to live holy, virtuous lives, marked by the love of God, and as we look to their example it's important to note that they show us not only right doing, but right being. As we celebrate the Feast of St. Luke, this is the example I'd ask you to consider, not an example of doing great things, though Luke accomplished so much, but rather, an example of *being* like Christ. Being a person who, to use imagery found in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, being a person who doesn't move farther away from the wounded and the suffering, like the priest and the Levite who you'll remember saw the wounded, half-dead traveler on passed by on the other side, but instead, being the Good Samaritan, the Christ-like figure in the story, who moves closer that they might bind up those wounds, pouring in oil and wine, both spending and being spent out of love for God and neighbor.

"Only Luke is with me." When others crossed the road, distancing themselves from St. Paul in his suffering, it was Luke who moved closer, it was Luke who followed our Lord's example and didn't just passively observe the brokenness of this world, but by active love entered into the heartache and pain and was made, by his presence with St. Paul, a partaker in his chains. Holy Scripture calls us to *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2), and when we draw close to another person to the end that we may mourn with those who mourn and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15), we bear one another's burdens and fulfill that law, the law of our Lord, the new commandment Jesus gave to His disciples, saying, *"As I have loved you… love one another"* (John 13:34).

"Only Luke is with me." Luke fulfilled the law of Christ by remaining with St. Paul and bearing with him the terrible burden of suffering and death. This is the example he sets for us, and it's not only the example of St. Luke, it's the unparalleled example of our Savior Christ, who loved us, who, as Isaiah foretold, bore *"our griefs and carried our sorrows"* (Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17). Jesus not only gave us this law of love, He exemplified the keeping of that law, as He humbled Himself, drew near to us, remained with us in our heartache and pain, and even, *"while we were yet sinners,"* died for us (Romans 5:8).

"Only Luke is with me." This description not only reveals the heart of St. Luke, it reveals the heart of God. It reveals the heart of a Savior who calls us friends, and it challenges every one of us to examine our own heart. We must ask ourselves, are we, like the priest and the Levite or those who abandoned St. Paul, moving away from the brokenness of this world, or are we like our Lord, and every saint who follows His example, moving toward the sick, the suffering, the wounded, and all who know not the lovingkindness of God proclaimed so perfectly through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Only Luke is with me." St. Luke was the one who moved toward St. Paul in his dying hour, and this act wasn't about doing some great thing, it was about being like Christ. Being the constant, loving, faithful friend who suffers with us in this life, and rejoices with us in the next.