

Healed Completely
Isaiah 35:5-8

These last few weeks we have drank deeply from the book of Isaiah and that's great because it is a wonderful place from which to draw refreshment. We've seen the care and provision of the master of the vineyard. Even in the wrath of that master, we've seen it enacted not on us but on his only son, Jesus. Last week we were comforted with a gut busting meal and breathtaking show taking place on the mountain of God. We saw death cast off forever. Our tears were wiped away, never to return. Isaiah is an incredible book and today we hear more incredible news. But I want to look at it from a different perspective. Combined with this reading is a unique liturgical opportunity to look at Luke the Evangelist. Often sprinkled throughout our church calendar we have festival days that honor the saints across history. Today, our attention is given to the author of the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. You may not know a ton about Luke the Evangelist, and that's okay, but I thought it would be neat to look at Isaiah through his eyes. Considering who Luke was and what he wrote I'm curious what he would think about the comfort Isaiah gives us in chapter thirty five.

Scholars aren't sure whether Luke was a Greek Christian or a Hellenistic Jew who became a follower of Jesus. Depending on who you read, depending on the academic, they'll argue either side. The things that we do know about Luke is that he was a physician. He was a good friend of the apostle Paul. He also wrote about one third of the New Testament. Luke the Evangelist wrote, of course, the gospel of Luke and he wrote about his time in the early church in the book of Acts because he was present during a lot of it. So Luke is an important voice in scripture but also in the history of the church. Luke's approach to writing his gospel is a little bit different than the other gospel writers. He did a lot of research because a lot of the things in his gospel he did not witness himself. He went on a fact finding mission in order that he present the most accurate depiction of Jesus' life. It's really amazing to me. He's a physician. He's a doctor. He thinks surgically. He writes precisely. He wants to get every detail right and it makes me wonder what those interviews and conversations were like because there are things in Luke's gospel that don't appear in the others. There are things he knows about Jesus' birth, his childhood, about the feelings of Mary that no other gospel writer mentions.

Luke's gospel is unique in several features. First, he begins with information that could only have come from the blessed Virgin Mary herself. He intimates as much when he notes that the Virgin "treasured up all these things in her heart", holding the words and sayings that at first she could not understand. She then must have opened up her heart to Luke and told him the events surround our Lord's birth. So only from his gospel do we come to know the details of the annunciation, the visitation, the conception and birth of John the Baptist, the trip to Bethlehem, the manger and the shepherds, the angels and their song, Simeon and Ann in the temple, and the trip to Jerusalem when our Lord was twelve. He gained this unique perspective and understanding as he gathered the facts about Jesus. The miracles he didn't see he learned about from eye witnesses. He wrote a comprehensive book about the story of Jesus' life in the gospel of Luke. Then he went on to write, often in the first person, the acts of the apostles and the growth of this new movement called the Church. He writes about the challenges and successes of the early church. Luke is a very important figure, a significant historian for us.

I spent some time this week thinking about these things. Thinking about who Luke was, what he was writing and what he saw. I think about him as a physician, a man of science, with proven methods to treat and care for people. Then Jesus Christ comes along claiming to be the Son of God, healing people mysteriously and miraculously. I wonder what Luke thought. Let's hear those words from Isaiah 35 again. These are words written about the promised messiah, the one Luke wrote about and investigated, the one he witnessed and confessed as Lord. Here are the words of Isaiah again and I want you to focus particularly on the promises that would have stuck out the a physician witnessing the works of Jesus. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of

water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.”

When we read prophetic words from Isaiah we see them acted out in Jesus. Last week we talked about some of Isaiah’s words that we haven’t seen yet, a future promise. But Luke. Do you think he ever flipped back the pages to Isaiah and saw words like these and said, “truly this man is the Son of God”? A physician. A man who heals. A man who cares for people sees the ancient words of God being fulfilled in this Jesus. Pretty incredible stuff. Luke has to see the connections. He has to see it all coming together as we do from our position in history. The blind are given sight. The lame are given strength to stand again. The ears of the deaf are unstopped and those who cannot speak are given a voice. All of those things happen and so much more. Lepers who were once isolated and hopeless are given their homes back. The forgotten and discarded are noticed and cared for by God. The dead are raised back to life. Things no mere human can do. Nothing a doctor can accomplish no matter how polished or proficient. People are healed by Jesus, completely. All along this path, this journey he takes to the cross. This way of Holiness.

I wish we were like Luke, seeing it all play out in front of us. I wish we were like the Evangelist, hearing all of these stories first hand. It would be so incredible to witness. It would be such an affirmation to our faith, our discipleship. It would be great because of how hard it is to believe at times. We don’t have the advantage of seeing it with our own eyes. We are stuck just trusting it to be true. In our sinfulness we chase after things that seem more real because we can’t hold God the same way. But Luke’s testimony, his words written plainly for us in the scriptures only work to confirm the prophecies of old. They are a carefully researched and constructed story for us who haven’t seen, yet believe. Jesus came to heal. Jesus came to fix. Jesus came to repair what once was broken. Jesus came to restore what had fallen into disarray. He came to bring life to dead places and dead people. He came to lift heavy hearts and heads. He came to heal not just tattered souls but shattered bodies. He came to be everything that the prophets said he would be. He came to do all that they claimed he’d do. In him all things are held together. In him all things are made whole. In him all darkness is chased away. Luke saw that with his own eyes. He heard the stories from eye witnesses. We are told these things in scripture by those who know it to be true. We also know there is more to be seen. We also know there is more to be done and we know that Jesus is more than capable to do it.

So for me, when I think of the connections today, it is very obvious that we have a gospel that is concerned with more than just our souls. We have a hope that exists beyond just dying and going to heaven. We have a life beyond being buried in the ground. Our souls are mended and saved through his work on the cross. By his wounds we are healed but Jesus is the Great Physician of more than just our spiritual selves. Proclaimed by Isaiah, confirmed by Luke, Jesus has plans for our physical bodies as well. He is the great healer that manages to do more than just save our souls but cure our ailments. He heals us completely. He heals us holistically. He heals every part of us and we shouldn’t expect anything less. We can anticipate the completely. So we don’t have to convince ourselves that God doesn’t care about the pains we feel now. We know for certain he hasn’t abandoned us to Sheol, as the Psalmist says. He hasn’t left us rotting underground. He fixes it all. He heals it all. He has a plan for our entire selves. Nothing less. Nothing less hopeful than that. That is our God. That is our great hope. We talked about it last week. We continue it today. In a world where we are told to trust the science. In a world where all our hopes are placed in doctors and specialists. We have the Great Physician that has an answer to every pain and problem in life. No speculation. No second guessing. No shifting models. Just a sure and certain hope found in Jesus. Predicted by the prophet Isaiah. Told to us by a physician named Luke. One day seen by our weary eyes and felt in our broken bones. In Jesus’ name. Amen.