

Scripture Reflection: February 25: St Luke's Gospel of Tenderness

Once, having taken a tutor group to Alton Towers, I asked them later what it was like. Each of them gave a very different story of the day: some went on the rides, others barely moved out of the fast-food outlets, others met groups from other coaches and made friends, some went to the gardens. Together they made a picture of what the experience was like, but individually it was not the whole picture of Alton Towers.

The gospels are a bit like that. Each of the Evangelists brings their own personality and set of priorities to the story of Jesus and his teaching. February's gospel readings are from St Luke's account and his story reflects very much his compassionate background as a gentile doctor. He meets and understands humanity in all its distress.

The February gospels come from his "Sermon on the Plain". Rather like St Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount", it too contains Jesus' core teaching of what it is to be truly human and in relationship with a loving God our father. Here though, Jesus comes down from the mount where he has been praying and meets with the people on the flat land: God comes down from Heaven and meets his people on their level. The teachings of Jesus are about how you live a merciful life, which God requires of us. The word Luke (a fluent Greek speaker) uses is "oiktirmon" which suggests tenderness and the visceral compassion God has for those in difficult situations. Luke says this is the defining characteristic of God (unlike Matthew in his Sermon on the Mount who stresses that God is perfection and we should be perfect because God is perfect). Luke says we should be *merciful* because God is merciful. (6:36)

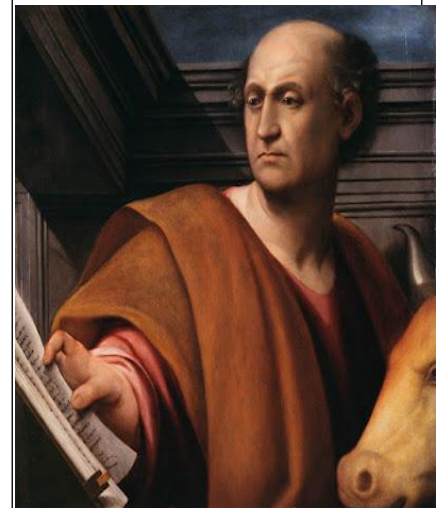
Straight after this passage Luke shows us Jesus' priorities for all humanity, especially the outcast and poor and proves it with his power to bring the diseased and dead back to life. He heals the Roman Centurion's servant and brings back to life the widow's dead son at Nain. Luke tells us that Jesus saw her "and had compassion for her" and so raised her dead son to life. God's compassion goes out to the gentile Roman and the destitute widow. God's love and power have no boundaries and does not judge as people may judge.

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged... give and it will be given to you... the measure you give will be given back to you" 6:17.



St Luke painting a picture of Our Lady

St Luke



Fratelli Tutti: Pope Francis

"Some parts of our human family, can be readily sacrificed for the sake of others considered worthy of a carefree existence."

"We need to develop the awareness that nowadays we are either all saved together or no one is saved"

"The quality of mercy is not strained, it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven, Upon the place below" Merchant of Venice. Shakespeare.