Sermon: The Feast of St. Luke
Luke 4:14–21
By the Rev. Alfredo Feregrino
St. Luke's ~ San Lucas Episcopal Church
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Today is a special Sunday in the life of our congregation because we are celebrating the Feast of Saint Luke, our patron saint, and at the same time, we are beginning our 2027 Stewardship Campaign with the theme “Growing in Faith, Giving in Love.”

And I think there is something beautiful about bringing these two celebrations together, because both invite us to reflect on who we are as a community of faith, what God has been doing among us, and perhaps more importantly, where God is inviting us to go from here.

As many of you know, Saint Luke was not one of the twelve disciples, but tradition tells us that he was a physician and a companion of the Apostle Paul. He is also recognized as the author of the Gospel that bears his name and the Acts of the Apostles. And his Christian symbol is a winged ox or bull, as we can see in our beautiful window.

And perhaps one of the most beautiful things about Luke's Gospel is the way he reminds us that God's love is for everyone, especially those who are often forgotten or overlooked. And we see this in today's Gospel.

In the Gospel that we heard today, Jesus returns to Nazareth, where he grew up, and enters the synagogue on the Sabbath. He stands up to read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

When Jesus finishes reading, he sits down, and with everyone looking at him, he makes an extraordinary statement: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

I wonder if we can imagine what it must have been like for those who were sitting in the synagogue that morning. These were people who had perhaps known Jesus since he was a child, people who had watched him grow up.

And suddenly, Jesus announces that God's promises are not simply something to remember from the past or something to hope for in the distant future, but something that is being fulfilled in that very moment, right there, in their own community and in their own lives.

What is interesting about this passage is that Jesus begins his public ministry not by telling people what they have done wrong or what they need to do, but by announcing what God is already doing among them.

He speaks about liberation, healing, hope, and the possibility of a different future. He speaks about good news. He invites people to imagine a world where those who have been forgotten are remembered, where those who are suffering find healing, and where God's love becomes visible through the way people care for one another.

And I believe this is an invitation that continues to speak to us today, especially as we celebrate the Feast of Saint Luke and begin our stewardship campaign.

Because when Jesus says, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," he is also reminding us that God's work is not something that belongs only to the past. God is still speaking. God's work continues in the present, through ordinary people, through everyday communities, and through the many ways we respond to God's invitation to love and serve one another.

Earlier this year, during our Vestry retreat, we spent time reflecting on the life of our congregation and discerning where God might be calling us in the years ahead. And out of those conversations, three important areas, among others, emerged: building relationships within our parish community, reaching out to the wider community, and deepening our spiritual formation.

And what I appreciate about these three areas is that they are not simply goals for a committee or projects that we hope to accomplish. They are expressions of who we are invited to be as followers of Jesus. They remind us that the Church is not simply a building where we gather on Sunday mornings, but a living community where God's love becomes visible through our relationships, our hospitality, our generosity, and our willingness to grow together.

When we speak about building relationships within our parish community, we are talking about creating a place where people feel welcomed, valued, and connected. When we speak about reaching out to the wider community, we are talking about recognizing Christ in our neighbors and responding to the needs of the world around us. And when we speak about spiritual formation, we are recognizing that our journey of faith is never finished, because God continues to invite us to learn, to question, to discover, and sometimes to see the world differently.

And perhaps that is one of the most important invitations of today's Gospel: to learn to see differently, not only the world around us, but also ourselves and the possibilities that God is placing before our community.

So, I wonder,

What might happen if we began to see everything we do at St. Luke's ~ San Lucas through the lens of Jesus' words in today's Gospel?

I wonder, what if every act of hospitality became an opportunity to proclaim good news?

I wonder, what if every meal we share, every child we welcome, every person we visit, and every relationship we build became a way of making God's love visible in our community?

And what if, instead of beginning with what we lack or what we cannot accomplish, we began by recognizing the many blessings that God has already placed among us?

Because I believe that gratitude has the power to change the way we see our lives. Gratitude invites us to begin from a different place.

And this is where stewardship becomes so important.

Stewardship begins with gratitude, and gratitude leads us toward generosity.

You know, we give because we believe in the life and mission of St. Luke's ~ San Lucas, where children and young people grow in faith, people of different cultures and generations find belonging, and relationships are strengthened through worship, friendship, and service. We give because we believe in caring for one another, reaching out to our neighbors, and sharing the good news of God's love through our community.

Our stewardship theme this year, "Growing in Faith, Giving in Love," expresses this relationship beautifully. Growing in faith means allowing God to continue transforming us, opening our hearts to new possibilities and inviting us to move beyond what is familiar or comfortable. Giving in love means responding to that transformation by sharing what we have received, not out of obligation or pressure, but out of a sincere desire to participate in God's work.

And perhaps this is the invitation before us today, as we celebrate the Feast of St. Luke. We are not simply being asked to preserve what previous generations have built over the years. We are also being invited to imagine what God might accomplish through us in the years ahead. We are being invited to move forward with gratitude for our past, with confidence in the gifts God has given us in the present, and with hope for the future that God continues to place before us.

And so, as we celebrate our patron saint and begin this stewardship season, I invite each of us to reflect on a simple question: How is God inviting me to participate more fully in the life and mission of this community?

Perhaps for some of us, the invitation is to become more involved in a ministry, to build a new relationship, or to welcome someone we have not met before. For others, it may be an invitation to deepen our spiritual life, to spend more time in prayer, or to offer our financial support in a new or more intentional way.

Whatever that invitation may be, I hope we will receive that invitation not as another obligation, but as an opportunity to grow in faith and give in love.

You know, when Jesus stood in the synagogue in Nazareth and announced the beginning of his ministry, he proclaimed a vision of hope, healing, liberation, and transformation. And that same vision continues to guide the Church today.

Later, as we gather around this table to share the bread and wine of the Eucharist, we are reminded once again that everything begins with God's generosity. We come to this table because God welcomes us and feeds us with love. And from this table, we are sent back into the world to share that same love with others.

So, on this Feast of Saint Luke, may we give thanks for the community we have inherited, for the relationships we are building, and for the many blessings that surround us. And may we have the courage to move forward together, trusting that the same Spirit who anointed Jesus to proclaim good news is still at work among us, inviting us to grow in faith, to give in love, and to become the community God is inviting us to be.

Amen.

A Note from the Preacher

Because sermons are meant to be preached and therefore prepared with emphasis on verbal presentation (i.e., they are written for the ear), the written accounts occasionally deviate from proper and generally accepted principles of grammar and punctuation. Most often, these deviations are not mistakes per se but are indicative of an attempt to aid the listener in the delivery of the sermon.