

The Feast of Saint Luke

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Date: 19 October 2025

Preacher: Seminarian Matthew Stuart

[0 : 00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.! Please be seated. Only Luke is with me.

Five words from the pit of a Roman prison. Five words that reveal the heart of Christian ministry that his martyrdom is near.

I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now, at the end, he looks around and names those who have gone.

Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica, Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

Some may have left for noble work. Others, perhaps, for less worthy reasons. But the result is the same. Paul is alone, and he is in chains.

[1 : 10] Except for one man. Only Luke is with me. The theme of this feast is the ministry of faithful presence.

In a world that measures Christian service by numbers, invisible success, Luke reminds us that sometimes the greatest ministry is simply to remain, to be present, to stay when others depart.

In today's epistle text, Paul's words lay before us both the pain of abandonment and the comfort of loyalty. Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.

There lies the great temptation to love comfort more than companionship and to love comfort more than courage and faith to stay by another side, even in the darkest of times.

Demas was not accused of heresy or wickedness, only loving this present world. And that was enough to draw him away. The others, Crescens, Titus, they both left for reasons unknown.

[2 : 28] But we know that Luke remained. Only Luke is with me. Those few words reveal a faithfulness that asks for no reward and expects no recognition.

It is the ministry of presence, unseen by many, often difficult to bear, yet steadfast in love.

This steadfast love finds its pattern in Christ's own commission. In today's gospel reading, we hear that the Lord appointed 70 others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, and to every city and place where he himself was about to go.

And he said to them, Behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. These are not words of comfort or of safety, but of courage and trust.

The Lord does not promise success or security. He calls his followers to vulnerability. Then he adds, Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals, and greet no one along the road.

[3 : 48] But whatever house you enter, first say, Peace to this house. They are to go lightly into the world, bearing nothing but the peace of Christ.

Luke understood this calling. He once went out into the harvest field proclaiming peace in Christ's name. Now, in Paul's imprisonment, he fulfills that same mission, but in a different way.

He brings peace not to a crowd, but to a single man. His field is not a village or a city, but a prison cell.

Yet the work is the same, to be present, to bear witness, and to bring peace. Luke did not abandon Paul when the other apostles' circumstances became dire.

He understood that sometimes the harvest field is a place of suffering, and that ministry of the gospel may simply involve staying with the one who suffers.

[4 : 57] He brought peace to that Roman prison, not the peace of easy words, but the peace of faithful companionship. This was not a glamorous ministry.

There were no crowds to impress, no miracles to perform, no church to plant. Yet, Luke's quiet devotion fulfilled something essential to the gospel itself.

He became a living reflection of the Lord he served, the Christ who promised, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

In Luke's loyalty, we glimpse the divine loyalty and the faithfulness of God who remains with his people in their darkest hours.

We live in an age that finds it easier to move on than to remain. Commitments are easily broken. Presence is often replaced by convenience.

[5 : 59] How many marriages falter because one or both have forgotten the sacred call to stay? How many elderly people sit in silence because family and friends are too busy to visit?

How many parishes struggle because members come and go as consumers rather than abiding as stewards? The world teaches us to seek what is new, to pursue what is easy, but the gospel teaches us to remain, to be present, and to endure to stay.

Luke's faithfulness stands as a quiet rebuke to our impatience. The same faithfulness that kept him beside Paul also shaped his work as an evangelist.

In the opening of his gospel, he writes that he had carefully investigated everything from the very first so that Theophilus may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

These are the words of a man who stays with a task, who listens closely, who sees a work through till the end. Luke's devotion was not driven by pleasure, but by faithfulness, a faithfulness rooted in love.

[7 : 23] The ministry of presence requires courage, but our Lord said, Behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves to remain with those who suffer, to sit beside the dying, to stand near to the forgotten or the accused.

This is not safe work. Luke stayed with Paul knowing that in his loyalty, that could mark him as suspect in the eyes of Rome.

To visit a condemned man was to share in his shame and perhaps even in his sentence. Yet Luke remained because he understood that this is what love does.

Love shows up. Love stays. Love bears the cost of companionship. But courage alone is not enough.

The ministry of presence also demands humility. Paul presses Timothy, Be watchful in all things. Endure afflictions.

[8 : 32] Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry. Luke fulfilled his ministry quietly. He did not need to be led or to be seen.

He didn't need to lead. His faithfulness was not public, but it was personal. His greatest commendation comes in those simple words. Only Luke is with me.

In staying with Paul, Luke was staying with Christ himself. The Christ who said in Matthew chapter 25, verse 40, As you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did it to me.

To remain present where God has placed us as one of the most countercultural acts that we can perform, it is to say that people are not disposable, that the church is not a convenience, and that love is not a passing feeling, but a covenant to be kept.

The peace of Christ commands us to bring peace to this house. That's not a mere sentiment. It is the peace of his faithful presence.

[9 : 42] Luke brought that peace to a prison cell. We are also called to bring the peace of Christ into the ordinary places of our lives and the difficult places we encounter in our lives.

The Lord of the harvest still sends us out, sometimes into the workplace, sometimes into the hospitals, sometimes just the quiet duty of prayer and perseverance, and yes, sometimes even into prisons.

Wherever he sends us, he also goes before us, just as he did with the 70. And as we follow, he calls us to do what Luke did, to stay, to serve, and most importantly, to love.

So as we honor St. Luke today, the beloved physician, the evangelist, and faithful friend, let us give thanks for his loyal witness, and let us pray for the grace to follow his example, to be the ones who stay, who remain present, who bring the peace of Christ wherever we are called.

May it be said of us as it was of him that when others turned away, we remained. When love required endurance, we did not depart.

[11 : 09] And when faithfulness became costly, we still stayed. For in staying, we bear witness to the Christ who abides with us always, even to the end of the age.

Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.