

# St. Luke Sunday

Oct. 15, 2006

Luke 1:1-4; 24:44-53

Title: He Blessed Them

When Sally and I were on our 30<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary Cruise one of the most persistent instructions was about hand washing. You were encouraged to wash your hands before and after you ate, which is good advice.

Here's the instruction that was fascinating:

We were discouraged from using the public restrooms.

Everyday there was a reminder—use your stateroom bathroom Only.

Needless to say, there came that time when the stateroom was simply too far away. So I went into a public restroom. It was amazingly clean; you almost needed to wear sunglasses to see, since very thing was shining, almost shimmering back at you.

After using it once, why wouldn't you want to use it again and again. Two things about this were noteworthy—which I didn't see at first...

--A sentinel-like Cruise ship employee stood guard outside that bathroom. Once when I came out, I looked back and that sentinel went in. So I went back to see what he was doing. With a spray bottle and cloth in hand, that person was basically scouring clear the bathroom.

--Then I noticed it! Above the sink on the wall was a daily chart—every two hours –6, 8, 10 --- by each hour listed there was place for a name. In addition to following the customers into the public bathrooms, every two hours someone came in and thoroughly cleaned up this place...even signing their name.

This was more than impressive!

What a powerful image for the church! Guarding bathrooms? No, but being there, standing guard in places where there is danger, ready to come in and clean up the mess! Willing to get dirty and risk injury for the sake of others.

When we were baptized into Christ, you and I signed our names on the wall of life. We consented that what life is all about is following Jesus!

And you know where he goes! He went where people were dirtied by life!

We are so indebted to all the Gospel writers, but  
We are so indebted to St. Luke who time and time again  
Reminds us of where Jesus is—he's sitting down with sinners.

In chapter 15 Luke preserves three stories of why Jesus  
Sits down with sinners---because they are lost, they know  
Their need for God. There's a God sized hole in their  
Hearts and they've been filling it with all the wrong stuff.

In the parable of the lost/prodigal son there we see a parody of where Jesus  
sends us—into a culture of prodigals—who continue to seek life in all the  
wrong places—

Pursuing a name for themselves, pursuing wealth, power and  
Position—this won't last and we need to be there, you and  
I, so that when it comes crashing down, and people wake up  
And see their need for God, we can assist them!

Look at that little sentence in Paul's pastoral letter to Timothy:

“As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work  
of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.”

Later on Paul acknowledges that some have given up  
Being a sentinel for the gospel.

He even names several Demas, in love with this present  
World has deserted me—Paul names the brutal facts.

But he encourages Timothy to be like Luke and stay the course!  
Sober—be alert to the work you have been discharged with.  
What I love about our vision statement is the words ‘every member’.

It's tempting to see the work of the faith as reserved for the  
Paid, full timers. Somehow the rest of us are off the hook.  
What we do is watch them do the ministry.

No, you have a door to stand by! And the spirit of power and life is given to  
you! What will you do when a coworker is dying from relational distress at  
home? Can't you be the one to embody the good news of Jesus to  
That one person? Or will you be drunk by the desire to not get involved.  
Endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist!

Paul doesn't say all this to demand you and I have a miserable life—no so we can have a full life, the life God intended.  
An expansive and free life...a life willing to sign our names on the wall.

Suffering is part of the core curriculum of life. It's not extra-curricular  
And optional. The church that follows Jesus endures suffering  
Because it's most among the suffering that Jesus can be found.

I'm so grateful that Suzanne Torvall-Sager loaned me this  
Book Expecting Adam by Martha Becker. I've never laughed  
And cried so much.

This is a memoir of Martha, a graduate student at a prestigious  
Ivy league school, deciding to give birth to her second child,  
Adam, whom she and her husband knew would be born  
With down syndrome.

It was through the enduring of suffering that Martha reconnected with the  
life God had intended for her.

Once people found out Martha was giving birth to child with  
Handicaps, all but a few stayed away from her, would never  
Even mention the baby. It was even the case with her family.

But the coming of Adam was breakthrough...People had to confront  
That they were worshipping the wrong Gods—

They were bowing down to the God of perfection, achievement,  
Intelligence, ambition—everything Adam wasn't going to be.

His presence helped people realize how really impoverished  
They were.

As Martha reflects on this she says, "I studied all the great philosophers in  
the world. They spend so much energy determining that the meaning of life  
Is what happens to you. No, the meaning of life is not what happens to  
people, it's what happens between people."

Be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry  
Out your ministry fully.

This is where Jesus blesses us.

Be a sentinel. Open the door. Take the risk. Sign your name.

I have a secret pal on Wednesday nights at Faith Invasion. Almost  
Every Wednesday night when confirmation is about over, she comes  
Over to me with a question.

It's almost now part of our life together.  
She must spend time trying on the hardest questions  
And then bringing them to me.  
It's been so life giving. I count it a deep privilege.

A recent question she asked was –Why is life so unfair? Why do some  
people seem to have so much and others so very little? That's not fair.

What should I have said?

Be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist,  
Carry out your ministry fully?

Yeah, but not that way. What I should have said is you are so right,  
Life isn't fair. And God needs you to notice and he is equipping you  
To do something about it.

What would you say?

It could well be that the last thing someone says is paramount.  
It's most important. Luke also wrote the book of Acts, but  
Look at the last thing he writes about Jesus and disciples  
In his Gospel:

Just powerful reminders:

Jesus opens our minds to understand the scriptures—go there  
And be sober  
Jesus endured suffering and God raised him—live in hope,  
Endure suffering.  
Jesus gives us a mission to preach repentance and forgiveness—  
We have what this world desperately needs—do the work  
Of an evangelist  
Jesus promises us the power of the spirit—carry out your  
ministry fully! Fully under the power of the spirit.

And then he blesses them...us....you and I. Blessed by Jesus  
And the last thing Luke wants us to know is that the disciples in great joy,  
Were continually in the temple blessing God!  
There is the real testimony---to know whom to bless!

What would we look like you and I, silly, I think, in the best possible  
Way if we would come together more to bless the Lord Jesus.  
Thank you Lord for giving me the chance to visit with that coworker.  
Thank you Jesus the Christ for a child who questions,  
Thank you Jesus for calling me to live out my faith here in  
A culture enamored with self worship,  
Call me to my true life in you  
And help me in your name walk into a room  
Where my witness is needed  
Because I'm yours I want to write my name on that wall  
Large!

Almighty God, you inspired your servant Luke the physician to reveal in his  
Gospel the love and healing power of your Son. Give your Church, this  
church Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, the same love and power to heal,  
To the Glory of your name, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.