

HOMILY – LUKE, DA evening – Isaiah 35.2-6, Acts 16.6-12a

Isaiah – the anthem of our congregations – we want to be whole again, to get back to the stage when the body didn't creak and complain

Isaiah's picture of heaven, the Kingdom, a better time – no one is blind, no one is deaf, no one is lame, no one is dumb

If I was feeling stronger, that's a passage that needs unpacking – talk to some folk who are blind, deaf, disabled, unable to speak – and it isn't that simple

It's the whole question as to whether you are disabled, or differently abled – whether your life will be “better” if you are made “whole”, made “normal”

We are dealing with very personal things – and even prophets need to see the person first and foremost.

I'll stick to the vision of waters in the wilderness and streams in the desert – I can picture that more easily, run with that more easily.

In Acts we have Paul and Timothy getting on with the job, being apostles, telling the good news of Jesus. They were travelling through Phrygia and Galatia. You can get a map out or find one on line (just search Map Paul's second missionary journey) and work out where they are, travelling round what we know as Turkey. Following God's guidance as where to go, and being surprised where he is not leading them. Then Paul has a dream, a vision, a man from Macedonia, from Greece, pleading with him “come over and help us”. This actually is the movement from Asia into Europe, so quite a bit thing.

“When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia”

It's not THEY, it's WE – the author of Acts, who we assume is Luke because it bears such a resemblance to the gospel that bears his name, so Luke, Paul and Timothy are travelling by sea across to Greece.

It is worth reminding ourselves that our bibles are written by humans, humans inspired by God. Written by people who were there, made the journey, told the story – and that inspires me.

Today we celebrate Luke, a doctor (and if you want to know how we know that, read this morning's sermon on the web), and a gospel writer.

Like we do with all saints, we use him to help us pray for our world today – and, in his case, specifically our doctors and medics

Like we do with all named saints, they also stand for those whose names we do not know.

I will never forget Dr Scott, Mike Birch, Prof Elliott – I'll never forget Nadine and Tracey (psychologist) – I'll never forget the ambulance car driver as we powered down the M11 at 110 mph with lights and sirens – I'll never forget other individuals, though I don't know their names.

But it's also worth a reminder that medical care is bigger than names. When I had my op last year I let a doctor I had never met before examine me and tell me what I needed, I handed my clothes to a woman I had never met, I let another woman put a mask over my face and send me to sleep, and I let someone (and I have no idea who) stick a knife in me. It's called trust – and they all did a good job.

Isaiah should have said “Strengthen the weak hands, make firm the feeble knees, and mend the hernia”. Being healed makes life worth living. For me, that is a real vision of the kingdom of heaven – thank God for our healers.