

ST LUKE'S GOSPEL



This year on the Ordinary Sundays we read from Luke's Gospel. For the next five Sundays, until Lent begins, we will be exploring Luke's account of the beginnings of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee.

This Sunday, after hearing the opening words of Luke's Gospel, we take up the story in chapter 4 where Luke presents Jesus entering the synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus reads from the Prophet Isaiah and Isaiah's words become the "Mission Statement" of Jesus' ministry.

The Australian Jesuit priest and scripture scholar Brendan Byrne has called his book on Luke's Gospel, *The Hospitality of God*. He believes that the idea of "hospitality" is a key to understanding Luke's Gospel.

Many important moments in Luke's Gospel are in the context of a meal where Jesus either offers hospitality or shares in the hospitality of others. Also significant for Luke's Gospel are the individuals and groups with whom Jesus shares a meal. A good example towards the end of the Gospel is the meeting between Jesus and Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus is a tax collector and that makes him an outsider in his society. Yet Jesus asks to stay at his home. Zacchaeus is delighted to be asked and offers hospitality to Jesus. But in the exchange that follows it becomes clear that Jesus the guest becomes Jesus the host.

At the very heart of Luke's Gospel is the understanding that Jesus is the one who offers us the hospitality of God. As Byrne puts it "Luke sees the whole life and ministry of Jesus as a visitation on God's part to Israel and the world."

In Luke "Salvation" is the invitation to share in the hospitality of God but it is not just the end point of the journey, it is the journey itself. The invitation is to be one with God now not just in the future.

We share in the hospitality of God every Sunday when we gather to share in the Eucharist.

Paul Crowley

Published in St Mary's Parish Concord Bulletin 23 January 2022