

Readings: 2 Timothy 4: 10 – 17; Psalm 144 (145): 10 – 13,17,18; Luke: 10: 1 – 9.

Today's feast celebrates the author of the two-volume work which we know as *The Gospel according to Saint Luke* and *The Acts of the Apostles*. He is generally identified with the 'Luke' mentioned in today's first reading and with *the beloved physician* and *my fellow worker*, mentioned among Paul's companions during his imprisonment in Rome (Colossians 4:14 & Philemon v. 24).

The sudden introduction into *Acts* (16 verse 10) of passages which say (for example) we sought to go into Macedonia has led some scholars to claim that the author of the whole of *Acts* joined Paul at Troas and accompanied him from there to Philippi (chapter 16), from Philippi to Jerusalem (chapters 20 & 21), and from Jerusalem to Rome (chapters 27 & 28). Other scholars think that this companion contributed some material, but was not the author of the whole two-volume work.

Luke – whoever he was – reveals himself as a historian and especially as a storyteller of great skill – see, for example, parables which are found only in his *Gospel* (including the "Prodigal Son" and the "Good Samaritan") and also the account of Paul's shipwreck in *Acts* 27.

However his intention was not historical but theological. He gives us a picture of Jesus as Saviour of all – Gentiles, the poor and needy, sinners, even a dying thief. He also shows us the first Christians following the pattern set by their Lord, for example in the witness and death of Stephen. For his *Gospel* he used records of the ministry of Jesus which was already available – the *Gospel of Mark* and other material used by *Matthew* too. He also includes material unique to him – not least the accounts in the first chapters of his *Gospel* of the annunciations and births of John the Baptist and of Jesus. He presents Jesus as the one who fulfils the promises made by God under the former covenant. So in the canticles *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*, provided by Luke, which the Church uses daily at Morning and Evening Prayer, we join in praising God who has *raised up for us a mighty Saviour ...as he promised by...those who were his prophets from of old*, and has *remembered...the mercy he promised to...Abraham and his sons for ever*.

He clearly regards Jerusalem as a key place in the development of the Christian story. It is the place to which Jesus travels for his Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, After the gift of the Holy Spirit it is the place from which the preaching of the Good News spreads through the world.