

18 October 2026
Saint Luke, Evangelist

Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“The Doctor Is In”

Text: Luke 10:1-9; 2 Timothy 4:5-18; Isaiah 35:5-8

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

I’ve never been to medical school, but I hear it’s tough! There is lots to learn, long hours, intense training, and a lot of competition.

I bring that up because today we are commemorating Saint Luke, the Evangelist, who, as we prayed in the Collect of the Day, was a doctor, a physician (Colossians 4:14). A *physician of the body* who Jesus called to be a *physician of the soul*. Which means he had to go through medical school *twice*! Once for the body and once for the soul. I wonder which was tougher . . .

It was the second we heard about today, his second medical school - Luke’s *spiritual* medical schooling. Part of his internship. That’s what we heard in the Holy Gospel today that Luke himself wrote. For although the seventy-two disciples Jesus sent out aren’t named, Christian tradition has always held that Luke was one of those seventy-two. One of those Jesus sent out into the towns and places ahead of Him. And this was no easy thing they were being sent to do! Jesus says they are lambs in the midst of wolves. They aren’t to take anything with them. They are to greet no one on the road. They have to depend on what is given to them. But as they go, they will bring healing. Of both bodies and souls.

So first, He says, they will be ***lambs in the midst of wolves***. Wolves ready and eager to devour them. The first and foremost wolf being satan, who wants to stop Jesus’ mission, whatever it takes. Jesus *and* any who belong to Him *and* any that He sends. Satan working through false prophets and false teachers who will not take kindly to these disciples coming into their towns and proclaiming the Gospel and bringing healing. So they will be attacked and opposed. Wolves.

And second, Jesus tells them, don’t take anything with you. Travel light. ***No moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals***. Medical school isn’t a vacation. They’re going to work. They’re going to get down and dirty. So don’t shy away from that. For with the down and dirty is exactly where He is sending them, and where they need to be.

And taking nothing with them means they have to depend on what they are given. ***The laborer deserves his wages***, Jesus said. They'll have no safety net. They'll have to go on faith. Faith not in the people they are going to, but faith in Jesus and His Word to provide for them and take care of them. The faith they proclaim is the faith they will live.

And finally, Jesus says, ***greet no one on the road***. No chit chat. No dallying. There's a sense of urgency. Like EMTs or paramedics rushing to the scene of an accident. They don't stop at 7-11 on the way . . .

Now maybe that sounds a bit over-the-top, a bit too dramatic, for I don't think we usually consider *spiritual* healing like that - that important. I mean, if someone is bleeding and dying on the side of the road, then yeah! They need help. *Obviously*. But that's what Jesus sees when He looks at our world. People bleeding and dying *spiritually*, with lethal wounds - you just can't, perhaps, see them. He sees wounded people, people who need help, maybe some in critical condition. People stabbed in the back by a friend. Punched in the gut by a ruthless world. Sliced by the hurtful words of a neighbor. Trampled by a stampede of people who's only concern is getting ahead of you! Paul talked about some of that in the Epistle today - the spiritual attacks that happened to him. Maybe you've experienced that, too.

But it's even worse than that, actually. For those things you know, when they happen to you! But what about the disease many don't even know they have? The spiritual cancer called sin that has metastasized through our bodies. This sin that has effected our brains and thinking, our hearts and desires, our mouths and words, and how we act. Yet many think they're perfectly fine, perfectly healthy - no different than everyone else.

But then comes your spiritual exam . . . and the results aren't good. Your spiritual blood work, x-ray, MRI, EKG, revealing sickness and trouble with your spiritual life. All those times you doubt God and His Word and His mercy and love for you. Your prayer life that, well, ain't much. Maybe boredom and indifference to God's Word instead of gladly hearing and learning it. All those times you lost patience with your family or friends and instead of loving them, snapped at them and criticized them and cut them down to size. Maybe you have a problem with *stewing* - holding onto and stewing in your anger, bitterness, hatred, and jealousy, or in your victimhood. Then there is the lust, slander, evil thoughts, greed, and selfishness that have taken up residence in your heart . . .

Now, a medical doctor - like Luke! - who saw all those symptoms of disease in a patient would surely rush them to the hospital! So Jesus, who sees all that - and more! - sends out His *spiritual physicians*, to diagnose, reveal, and bring healing.

And that's why you've come here today, to what we could call this *spiritual hospital*. You didn't come because you're in perfect health, but because you know you're not. You didn't come for a quick spiritual workout, like going to the gym. You came for medicine and healing. You came because you're dying and need life. The life that the *great* physician of both body *and* soul came to provide for you. When He came into our sinful, dying world, became *incarnate*, which means He took on our human flesh, and was born as one of us. And it is St. Luke the Evangelist who writes the most about that! He gives us details the other Gospel writers don't - of the angel coming to Mary, His birth in Bethlehem, the angels and shepherds . . . Because maybe Luke, as a physician, could see what was really happening with Jesus - the great doctor making a house call on us! To bring us the healing and life we need.

Which is what the seventy-two were to proclaim as they went. That ***the kingdom of God has come near you***. That is, the king has come. The doctor has come. Jesus of Nazareth.

And in coming, fulfilling the words of the prophet Isaiah that we heard today. Bringing physical healing and the healing of creation as signs of the *spiritual* healing He has come to bring. And Luke's Gospel is filled with accounts of Jesus doing just that. And parables, too, like the Good Samaritan, found only in *Luke*.

And it was for Jesus just as it was for those seventy-two that He sent. He was the Lamb of God who came into this world of wolves who were always trying to bite and devour Him. He took nothing with Him - He had no place to lay His head, Luke tell us (9:58). He rushed to the scenes of sinful devastation. Got down and dirty. He didn't avoid such people or places. He was there among the lepers and prostitutes, the outcasts, the hopeless and dying. And He healed . . . but as He healed, He was also taking the disease into Himself, until our sin killed Him, crushed Him, on the cross.

But that was the plan, the way to wholeness and life, as Isaiah would go on to write a few chapters later. That

he was pierced for our transgressions;

he was crushed for our iniquities;

upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,

and with his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:5). Forgiven.

And then with His resurrection from death, *breaking* the grave, we have not only forgiveness, healing, and life now, but the promise of a sin-free, spiritually healthy life forever.

And so risen from the dead, the great physician who made a house call for us, is still making house calls! To every church where those He sent *after* the seventy-two are

still sent. To every church where His Gospel is proclaimed and His sacraments given. For where these are, there is He. There our great physician is, with His forgiveness and healing. He promised.

He promised to be in the water of Baptism, washing away the disease of sin. He promised to be in the word of Absolution, where His healing forgiveness is administered to us. He promised to be in His Word that we hear of the life He comes to bring and the hope we have in this world of death. And He promised that in this Bread and Wine is His Body and Blood, the food and medicine of immortality, as the church fathers would say. It's all Him. To heal you. To give you life.

Which is what Luke was sent to proclaim as one of the seventy-two, and who Jesus later used to write one of His Gospels, and then also the Book of Acts, telling of how Jesus continued His work after His ascension by the Spirit. His work still continuing today. Here. For you. For all sick with sin and in need of healing.

Like a man named Theophilus. That's who Luke addresses his Gospel to, in the prologue, the first four verses. It's written in very nice Greek and very orderly - as, I think, you would expect at the beginning of a written Gospel. But I think it would have been different in person. That if Luke bumped into Theophilus on the street instead of writing to him, he wouldn't have been so nice and orderly! I think he would have grabbed him by the jacket and exclaimed: *Theophilus! Boy, am I glad to see you! The doctor is here! He's come for us. So we can live. Let me tell you all about Him . . .*

Well, that's what Luke's Gospel is for all of you - for all of you *Theophilii*. Luke wants you to know, the Doctor is here. And there is no disease too deadly, no sin too great for Him. He has come to give you life, and you have to come receive it. To hear it, eat it, drink it, and live it. Because just as Luke and the seventy-two proclaimed, here, ***the kingdom of God has come near to you***. Because the King, the Great Physician, the Lamb of God, the very Son of God, your Saviour, is here.

So come! The Doctor is in.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.