

It is the often-accepted tradition of the church that Luke was a physician, as is written from the letter to the Colossians in the New Testament. But another tradition that hasn't always gained the same traction for the majority of Christians is that Luke was also an artist. The story so goes that he was the first to craft an icon of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Of course, there's no way to prove that, but there's this little part of me that hopes it's true.

Now, I will be the first to admit that my least favorite class in school, without any question whatsoever, was art, as someone who has next to zero artistic integrity. I believe that our four year old twins have more artistic talent than me, but even I can still find tremendous beauty from the works of those who can pull it off. Even I can be captivated by the Van Goghs and the Rembrandts and the Monets and the Da Vincis and the Michelangelos and those who don't quite have the same notoriety. I can marvel at paintings that somehow insist that even in the seemingly most miniscule matters of life can still inspire awe and wonder. I can be easily convinced that in the works of artists are not just pieces that can fill museum walls or the hospital hallways or hotel rooms, but that they can also provide their own source of healing to even the slightly curious observer.

So, yes, there's a part of me that hopes this not as well-accepted tradition of Luke is, in fact, true. I hope that even if he was well-trained in the medical science of the time, that he also had a way of healing people with whatever artistry he had flowing from the depths of his soul. And even if he didn't craft the first icon of Mary, that maybe his most profound work of art was his storytelling that is still offering its own source of healing to the world thousands of years later.

For it is in the Gospel of Luke that we hear about a teenage girl bewildered over the possibility of carrying the Son of God to share with all humanity, and her song, in response, that still captivates children of God long after she's gone. It is in the Gospel of Luke that we hear about measly disgusting shepherds being one of the first recipients of the Greatest News the world had ever heard. It is only in that Gospel that we hear about a Good Samaritan, the most unlikely first-responder to a stranger beaten down and left for dead, and even the hated Samaritan responds with the same love of God that would reach down into the ditch of our living to save us all. It is only from Luke that we hear about a son who squandered absolutely everything given to him by his father, and is still embraced by that same parent,

as if no one is beyond the grace of God in any circumstance whatsoever. It is only from this account, that we hear about a road called Emmaus, in which eyes are opened with a simple breaking of bread, as if to remind all of us that in our Communion meal we still have a direct encounter with the living God. It is only from this Gospel, that the lineage of Jesus Christ is traced all the way back to Adam, as if this Lord is truly the Lord for all of humanity to enjoy and thrive.

So, even if Luke didn't pull off the first icon of Mary, his ultimate work of art is still captivating the world with all the love and grace and hope we need in this life. But the story isn't meant to stop there, because art is also meant to inspire the recipient. This Gospel is also put together so that we may be further emboldened to share our story. This is meant to make us believe that we have gifts to share with the world, whether as scientists or artists or teachers or administrators or factory workers or in our retirement years or simply as disciples of Christ: there is something about God at work in us, and this God will insist on continuing to share the story of love and grace and hope even through us.

Hopefully it doesn't just take a stewardship season to remind us not just of the financial gifts, but the even more important intangible gifts that we are called to share with our home communities of faith and beyond. Gifts that do not simply fill rooms in church buildings with whatever activity, and for us to place in impressive lists of all we do on websites or social media walls, but gifts that have their own special way of healing those who are desperately yearning for hope. I wonder if that's why Luke insisted on certain stories being included that didn't make the cut in other places in Scripture for whatever reason. But he knew of the people who desperately yearned for the most awe-inspiring hope. Such stories had to be told, because there's too much love, too much grace, too much life-shaping hope to not share it with all the world. And maybe even in us can our story with God showing up over and over again still captivate those near and far away. So, for that Greatest News of all from Luke and still being brought to life today, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!