

The Sunday of St. Luke the Evangelist

Luke 10:16-21

The Lord said to his disciples, "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."

- Feast Day of St. Luke the Evangelist
- One of the 70

St. Epiphanius of Salamis (4th century): "And he sent seventy-two others as well to preach, among whom were the seven who were put in charge of the widows, Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolaus—(4) but before them was Matthias, who was included among the apostles in place of Judas. After these seven, and Matthias who preceded them, he sent Mark and **Luke**, Justus, Barnabas and Apelles, Rufus, Niger and < the > rest of the seventy-two. (5) After them all, and along with them, he chose the holy apostle Paul with his own voice from heaven to be at once apostle and herald of the gentiles and the one to complete the apostolic doctrine. (6) It was Paul who found **St. Luke** ... and < made him > his own follower, both a co-worker in the Gospel and an apostle. And in this way all of the work of preaching the Gospel has been done, down to this time.

- Why 70? (some manuscripts 72!)
- The number 70 is not random, and we will do well to reflect on its significance for a moment. Numbers, after all, are important in Christian theology and liturgy, but not like they are in the philosophy of Pythagoras. Pythagoras believed that numbers had mystical qualities, and that numbers were not just abstract concepts but the physical building blocks of reality. For Christians, by contrast, certain numbers are important because they are associated with principle moments of divine revelation. The number three, for example, obviously represents the Holy Trinity. For this reason, we say, "Lord, have mercy" three times in many of our services, and perform a host of other liturgical actions three times as well. The number 12 is equally important, because there were 12 tribes of

Israel, and there were 12 disciples. This is why we say, “Lord have mercy,” 12 times in the services of Orthros, Great Compline, and others. Given the importance of these other numbers, what is the significance of the number 70? Two key issues are foremost.

- First, Genesis 10 lists 70 descendants of Noah, which means that the world is divided into 70 different nations of people. When Jesus sends out 70 apostles, therefore, he symbolizes that he is sending apostles to every nation of the earth. The number 70, therefore, is a very important number in today’s Gospel, and should not be casually overlooked.
 - The mission to the Gentiles is a call to spread the faith beyond our boundaries. This is happening right now in the Orthodox Church in the United States to an astonishing degree. We must embrace it, even as we educate and deal with it responsibly. Every good thing has a downside, and we have to be conscious of the pitfalls, but this is not only good, but is demanded by the Gospel.
- Second, Moses had a council of 70 elders around him when he led the people of Israel (Numbers 11:16-17). God promised that he would raise up for his people a prophet like Moses, and Jesus is that prophet. He is the “New Moses.” If Moses had 70 advisors, Jesus has 70 as well.
- Let’s dwell on this point for a few minutes. The disciples continue the ministry of Jesus. How? They continue his work as the “Prophet like Moses”
 - When he is risen from the dead, and walks on the Road to Emmaus with Cleopas and another disciple, we read:

Luke 24:27: “Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

- In other words, Moses is the one who prophesied about Jesus.

John 5:45-47: Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”

- But Moses does more than prophesy about Jesus. He promises that another prophet will arise like Moses:

Deuteronomy 18:15: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren—him you shall heed.

- We know that Jesus is this prophet, because he behaves like Moses.

Deut 34:10-12: And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, ¹¹ none like him for all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to

Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, ¹² and for all the **mighty power and all the great and terrible deeds** which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel.

Acts 2:22-24 (Speech of Petter at Pentecost): “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with **mighty works and wonders and signs** which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

- The Apostles are empowered with the Spirit, through Jesus, to continue this same ministry:

Acts 3:29-31: And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, ³⁰ while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, **and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus.**” ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

Acts 5:12ff: Now many **signs and wonders** were done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. ¹³ None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high honor. ¹⁴ And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, ¹⁵ so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at **least his shadow might fall on some of them.**

Luke 8:44: She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased.

"Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!"

Notice: the demons are subject to them **“in your name.”**

Our work in the Church is always in the name of Christ, not in our own name. This gives our work incredible dignity and incredible value, but it is not a value that we should expect to give us earthly praise or power. We need to be bold and unyielding in our defense of the faith and in our proclamation of the faith. But it is not OUR teaching. It is God’s.

There is a healthy sense in which we should be glad to do something great for the Church or to serve God, but, we must always hear the admonition

of Jesus in today's Gospel: "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

- This is important, because it always reminds us that we are stewards of something that is far bigger than us, and we cannot casually change it to suit our needs, or to satisfy our egos or own desires.
- Also, if we want Christian families, healthy parishes, healthy relationships, they come from not just pursuing those things in and of themselves, but by grounding them in Christ – live moral lives, pray, be forgiving, be generous, etc. THEN take these values and practices to your relationships.
 - Icons and chanting on Mt. Athos

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 4:5-11, 14-18

Brethren, conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one. Tychicos will tell you all about my affairs; he is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, and with him Onesimos, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of yourselves. They will tell you of everything that has taken place. Aristarchos my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions if he comes to you, receive him), and Jesus who is called Justos. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. Give my greetings to the brethren at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea. And say to Archippos, "See that you fulfill the ministry which you have received in the Lord." I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my fetters. Grace be with you. Amen

- The Epistle reading is also chosen to honor the feast day of St. Luke

"Luke the beloved physician"

There's a lot of alleged medical language. Is there? 4:38: high fever; contrast Mk 1:30
Luke 4:38: Peter's mother in law is ill with a great fever: συνεχομένη πυρετῷ μεγάλῳ
Mark 1:30: ἡ δὲ πενθερὰ Σίμωνος κατέκειτο πυρέσσουσα,

The Companion of Paul: the “we” passages in Acts

Acts 16:10ff: And when he had seen the vision, immediately **we** sought to go on into Macedo'nia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. ¹¹ Setting sail therefore from Tro'as, **we** made a direct voyage to Sam'othrace, and the following day to Ne-ap'olis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is the leading city of the district^[a] of Macedo'nia, and a Roman colony. **We** remained in this city some days...

Acts 20:5-15

21:1-18

27:1-28:16

Hymns from Matins: As *a beloved physician* and disciple, O Luke, with *mystical surgery* heal the passions of my soul and body alike, and grant me to enjoy complete health. May I joyously honor your solemn feast, and shower your holy and all-honored body with tears instead of perfume. For it is an engraved monument of life in the marvelous church of the Apostles, and it proclaims to all, as you did before when you wrote it, the Gospel of Christ our God.

You mastered the *medicine of souls* * even better than of bodies; and, inspired by God's wisdom, you appeared adept in both. * *Healing souls and bodies*, * O all-blest Apostle Luke, * you call us all to spiritual knowledge, every day and lift us up * to the heavens, to the love for God; * and you pray Him * for all those who honor you.

Hymns referring to Luke as 1 of the 70, and an apostle of both Jesus and Paul:

With hymns, O believers, let us praise * the divine Apostle Luke. * He was a wise Gospel writer, a disciple of the Lord, * and a living image * of the Chosen Vessel Paul, * he publicized the wonders of God. And now all churches honor him. * He enlightened us who dwell on earth, * through divine grace, * with rays of theology.

The Gospels as spiritual medicine

St. John Chrysostom and narratives of healing and consolation:

St. John Chrysostom, *Letters to Olympias*

Robert G. T. Edwards, *Providence and Narrative in the Theology of John Chrysostom*, Cambridge University Press, 2022, 5-6

John finds that by rightly narrating the events in one's life, one can be consoled and led to perfect virtue. This consolation does not come in the form of a banal 'everything happens for a reason', nor does it allow one to see 'in eternal perspective'. The consolation that comes from providential narration is so powerful because (like the narratives of Socrates and Palladius) it is concrete: by turning to the narratives – the *historiai* – of Scripture, Chrysostom points to actual circumstances, on a small scale (within a human lifetime), in

which God has proved his care for his saints. In the concrete narratives of Scripture, John finds many discrete instances of God's providential care, which together furnish an overarching vision of how God has always cared and will always care for humanity.

Indeed, John's vision of God's providence over his own life is shaped profoundly by what he reads in Scripture, especially its narratives. He sees the narratives of Scripture as windows onto divine providence, through which human beings may correct their vision of events and thereby be consoled and led to virtue. The recognition that God's goodness and providence govern over our experiences, and the knowledge of what is in our own limited human power, play a significant role in forming the virtuous self. Because John himself has done the hard work of correcting his own vision through his reading of Scripture, such that he interprets adverse events in the light of God's good providence, in his pastoral office he seeks to do the same for his flock. For John's goal in his preaching and teaching is to paint – even to etch – the narratives of Scripture, and their virtuous characters, onto the walls of his listeners' minds (Edwards, 6)

St. John Chrysostom: Therefore, let none of the things that are happening disturb you, but give up calling upon this or that person and chasing shadows (for this is what a human alliance is), and continually call upon the God whom you serve just to incline his head, and everything will be resolved in a single moment. But if you already did call upon him, and they haven't been resolved, such is God's custom (ἔθος): not to bring terrors to an end in the beginning (ἐν προοιμίῳ) – here I take up my previous discussion – but when it is brought to a head (κορυφῇ), when it has increased, when barely anything of the enemies' evils are left, then, all of a sudden, he changes (μεταβάλλειν) everything to tranquillity, and leads all of these events to unexpected (ἀπροσδοκήτους) conclusions (*Ep. Olymp. 7.2b*)

Here again Chrysostom explicitly provides the deep structure, naked of particulars: first, the saint is afflicted; this affliction becomes extreme; at the very point when this affliction has reached its summit and salvation is despaired of, then immediately God intervenes for a radical and positive change of circumstances (**Edwards, 69**).

For wasn't he able from the beginning (ἐκ προοιμίῳ) to keep the three children from falling into this trial? But he didn't want this, amassing for them abundant riches. Therefore, he allowed them to be handed over to the barbarians, for the furnace to be kindled to an extraordinary heat, for the king's anger to be kindled more dangerously even than the furnace, for their feet and hands to be bound with great violence, and for them to be thrown into the fire. And when all those who were watching despaired of their salvation from it, then, all of a sudden and against all hope (ἄθρόον καὶ παρ' ἐλπίδα), the wonderworking (ἡ θαυματοποιΐα) of God – the incomparable artist – appeared and shone forth exceedingly. For the fire was bound, and the bound were released; the furnace became a temple of prayer, a fount of pure water more revered than a royal court, and the nature of their hair overcame that all-consuming substance which prevails over iron and stone and overpowers all matter (*Ep. Olymp. 7.2c*).

In this deep structure, Chrysostom finds a narrative pattern – a habit (ἔθος) – according to which God has providentially intervened in the lives of the saints in the past. As seen in this cluster, God consistently operates according to this pattern throughout history. While it is not the case that we can thereby predict the future, this habit and other habits allow us to interpret our own experiences according to the same narrative structures and therefore to judge concerning God’s providence in our lives. These are not merely narrative patterns; they also demonstrate the way God has worked in the past and how he continues to work (**Edwards, 73**).

- ***Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions if he comes to you, receive him),***

Interestingly, this same passage refers to John Mark.

Acts 15: And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Come, let us return and visit the brethren in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”³⁷ And Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphyl’ia, and had not gone with them to the work.³⁹ And there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

- ***Give my greetings to the brethren at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.***

Romans 16:23: *Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you*

1 Corinthians 14:23: *If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind?*

1 Cor 16:19: *“The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house greet you warmly in the Lord.”*

Rom 16:5: *Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus,⁴ and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.⁵ Greet also the church in their house*

Phlm 1-2: *To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker,² to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house*

- *And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea.*

- Apocryphal Letter to the Laodiceans: “Paul an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, to the brethren which are at Laodicea...”
 - Sounds just like Galatians 1
 - no Greek text
 - Latin Vulgate, codex Fuldensis (546 AD)
- Is it Philemon? Philemon mentions many of these same names.

	Philemon	Colossians
Archippus	1	4:17
Epaphras	23	4:12
Mark and		
Aristarchus	23	4:10
Onesimus	10	4:9
Demas and Luke	24	4:14
Jesus (Justus)	23?	4:11