



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Today our Gospel text is in Chapter 10 of Luke. In the previous chapter we heard how the 12 disciples were commissioned and sent out on a mission of proclaiming the kingdom of God and healing. Today is another story of 70 others who are commissioned to go out and share the peace of God with anyone who will receive it and to proclaim the nearness of the kingdom of God. They are given their marching orders right from Jesus. But with those orders Jesus also gives them a few hints, or actually more than hints about what they should do and what they might run into. They are to go in pairs, two by two. We all know that having a partner in difficult mission helps our perseverance.

The first thing Jesus tells them is that the harvest is plentiful, and the laborers are few. This gives us a few insights. The scope of the mission of Jesus is expanded vastly with the large number of 70 instead of just the 12. It also signals to us that there is some urgency in the metaphor that Jesus used of a harvest. When the crops are ripe, they must be picked, or they will be lost.

Jesus also tells them that they will be like lambs among wolves. WOW. What a mission. Defenseless lambs into the midst of hungry wolves. Sounds like something that I want to do, right? Well, this is a warning to the 70 that things might not be easy. In fact, it might be downright dangerous to go proclaiming the kingdom of God. And at the least it might be uncomfortable. And then He instructs the 70 what they should do, "Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals." They are to only trust God to provide for their needs and are not to encumber themselves with possessions.

Then they are to go out and not get distracted by people they meet on the road. Their mission is urgent and as we all know now, Jesus could return at any time to signal the end of the world and the final judgement. The Word of God and his kingdom cannot be kept secret. This good news must be spread throughout the land. And the best way to do that is to go to the towns.

At their arrival at a home, they are to first say, "Peace to this house." The peace of God will then rest on the person or people, and they will invite you to stay with them. If not, the peace will return to you, and you move on to the next house. Remaining in the house where God's peace is

accepted will give you a place to stay and whatever you need. Remember hospitality was on a whole different level than it is in our country or community today. And then Jesus tells them to remember that they deserve to have food and shelter because they are laboring in God's kingdom.

And then another rule. Do not go in search of a home with better food or lodging. That means that you eat what is put before you and are accepting of the accommodations. Disciples can expect their needs to be met but should not expect luxury. Remember that these 70 missionaries will be working among Gentiles and Jew so their own personal dietary laws might not be observed. Guess I would make an awful laborer on this one as I am sure that there would be lots of gluten, bread on the table! At any rate, effective witness is more important than the disciple's personal sensibilities.

These 70 new disciples are then told by Jesus to heal the sick. This is a wonderful way to show compassion and certainly draws attention to the message that the kingdom of God has come near. It also does another thing. The combination of compassion and proclamation is really a kin to word and deed ministry. It creates a very powerful witness. And the one who experiences healing and who hears the Word of God, then needs to make the decision as to whether to follow Jesus. The decision is in their court, to accept or reject the message. God will hear the rejection and so must the community. Jesus said, "But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you.'" This is the warning the 70 are to give when they and their message are rejected. God will know because it is true that the Kingdom of God has come near to you. For if the 70 are rejected so is God rejected.

And so, this is how it will go as the 70 travel to nearby and far away towns to do their ministry. And then we hear that the 70 have returned, all 70. Good news there. These men found out that even the demons were in submission to them. What power they were given! Power that came through the authority of the name of Jesus. It was power that showed evil weak in the world. And they found that nothing could hurt them, not even snakes and scorpions. And much more than that, the snakes and scorpions were symbols of evil in Jesus' day. They needed that power so they could not be hurt while on their mission. People would of course witness that as well as the peace of God that they shared.

But then in this story, there is one final warning. "Do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." They themselves and those who shared in their mission are now citizens in the kingdom of God, which is way more important. It is the greatest gift anyone could possess. Much more important, shall we say, than just having a bit of power over evil.

I wonder what in this story you can relate too. I found that for me, it was this peace of Christ that the 70 were to first share as they entered a home. "Peace to this house!" So, what exactly is this peace of Christ? And how do I make sure I get it today in 2025. I doubt that any Christian will come knocking on my door saying, "Peace to this house!" So where do we go to get it and why is it so important? Think with me about that for a few minutes.

On the night of Jesus birth in Bethlehem, the heavenly angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, PEACE among people." On the night of his arrest, Jesus said to his disciples, "PEACE I leave with you; my PEACE I give to you. I do not give you as the world gives." After Jesus rose from the dead, the first words from his mouth when he met his disciple, were, "PEACE be with you." Jesus is the prince of PEACE.

There is a peace that only comes from Christ. St. Paul tried to explain that it is a peace that is different than the worldly peace. And in fact, it is beyond our comprehension. He wrote, "The PEACE of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and you minds in Christ Jesus."

In our earthly context, peace is something external. It can be when no wars exist. No conflict and trouble free would-be good synonyms. This peace depends on our circumstances, when we are free of stress, and we feel secure because the world around us is, at least for a moment, in harmony. Whereas the peace of Christ is internal. It does not depend on our surroundings and can be with us even in times of sorrow, threat or even war.

Truly, the peace of Christ is internal and secure and cannot be compromised. As in its name, Christ is its source. The peace of Christ gives us the ability to endure in bad situations and gives us an inner calm. We feel that God will see us through our situations. It will even replace our fear and worry, even though we cannot explain it.

Jesus is the prince of Peace and when we acknowledge that, we receive peace that is from a source that is out of this world. The peace of God comes through the resurrection of Jesus. It cannot be snuffed out like a candle. It overcomes death. Remember, I just said that Jesus greeted his disciples with "Peace be with you", after his resurrection. Peace is realized in the power of the resurrection. What a declaration that is.

And this peace of God contains the bottomless grace of Christ's love. It is a love that can overcome all obstacles. When these obstacles are out of the way, we are one with God. Reunited if you will, with our Father in heaven. This reunion is new life. And it is a life where the divine love has the power to heal. God's love has the power to put back together what is broken. God's love gives us reassurance that no matter what happens, God is at work through all things. And no matter the outcome, God is in control. It declares his ultimate love for us by making all things new. His peace within us will never be eradicated or even be reduced. It can, however, be multiply and shared. This is the peace that God sent the 70 out into the countryside to share. If it was accepted, great and if not, it returned to the disciples. They were sent out to be agents of the peace of God.

And folks, we are sent out too. We are God's agents as well. We are a community of His peace. The peace within us, remains with us! Wherever we go, whatever we do, that deep seated peace that surpasses human understanding is in us. It is what sets us free to be the hands' and feet of Jesus on the streets of Park Falls and yes, even Springstead. God's peace works miracles in us all.

We don't have to work at getting God's peace. It is already in each one of us. We need to recognize it though, for what it is. A peace we may not always understand, but one we have deep inside.

I did look in the dictionary to see what it said about peace. I had to get to the 7th definition before I got close to what I think God's peace is like. It is a state of tranquility or serenity. And then it went on to say a state or condition conducive to, proceeding from, or characterized by tranquility. Let's add proceeding from our God to that definition. Peace comes from the Father in heaven. It is a gracious gift, given by his endless love for us, his people. It is a calm that comes from being loved and cared for. Our Father in heaven has promised us His peace and that will be enough to overshadow all worldly concerns. We are so blessed to be loved, given His peace that gives us the reality that our sins are forgiven, our life on earth is abundant, because he is with us and our eternity is paid for by the death and resurrection of his only son, Jesus. There is no strife in the world that can take away God's love and peace. Nothing is stronger than His peace and love.. As our Scripture text concludes, we should "rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Peace be with you all! AMEN