

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Pentecost 4C - Proper 9C
July 3, 2022
Luke 10:1-20

How to Make Satan Fall Like Lightning

17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" 18 And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:17-20 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

Oh, what a world we live in! With each passing day, it seems that the devil is gaining an ever stronger foothold as everything seems to be turned on its head. What used to be bad, or sinful, is now said to be good, even praiseworthy. What used to be good and praiseworthy is now considered bad, or evil. Reason, natural law, and plain old common sense no longer have a say in what is done. Speaking God's Word, or trying to live according to it, is rapidly becoming harder and harder to do. And yet, as God's chosen people in Christ, we do not lose hope. No matter what the devil, the world, the culture, or society throw at us, we have a Savior who has overcome it all so that we might be His people and live with Him now and forever.

For Jesus came into such a world as ours to save it from sin and death. At the time of our text, He had "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" where He would be crucified and die for the sins of the world. On this, His death march, He sent preachers ahead of Him to prepare His way. He sent them "two by two, into every town and place where He Himself was about to go." And as we hear our Lord's instructions to these preachers, we hear how God brings His Kingdom near. And where the Kingdom of God is, Satan falls.

First, Jesus tells them to "pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." And before they can pray, Jesus answers by sending them into that harvest. Yet, they and their message would not always be welcomed. For Jesus sends out those preachers "as lambs in the midst of wolves." They are sent on a dangerous mission. To see how dangerous it is, one need look no further than the prophets of the Old Testament, or even the Lord Himself. Those who preach what they are given by God to preach, don't always receive a warm reception. In fact, many of those so sent were abused or killed for the sake of the message they were sent to proclaim. And it continues today.

And what was that message? "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.'" Now this is no ordinary greeting when spoken by preachers sent by Christ. For this

peace is not as the world gives. It is a peace beyond all understanding, for this peace finds its counterpart in the proclamation that "the kingdom of God is near you." For where Jesus is, there is the Kingdom and there is His peace. Remember the song of the angels to the shepherds outside of Bethlehem: "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (Luke 2:14). Peace is on earth that night because Christ is on earth that night, cradled in the arms of Mary. What does Simeon sing as he embraces the Infant Prince of Peace? "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word." (Luke 2:29). Simeon faces life and death with confidence: he has peace with God because he has held the Word-made-flesh in his arms. Jesus is there, so Simeon can depart in peace. What do the crowds cry out as the Savior rides into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday? "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Lk. 19:38). The peace in heaven is also riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey that day, on His way to Calvary to secure that peace for eternity.

Five days later, Christ secures eternal peace for His people by His death on the cross. Sin, death, and the devil - that unholy trio of God's enemies - are all defeated that day. For the people of God, enmity toward God is gone as their sins are forgiven; all that is left is peace.

Of course, the victory looks anything but peaceful. The Savior dies - a tortured, bloody corpse - and nearly all His followers have abandoned Him. The seventy-two are nowhere to be found, and even the twelve have fled into hiding. At the moment of Christ's sacrifice for their sin, they have run away in horror.

Two days later, the Christ, the King rises from the dead - the grave not able to hold Him. That evening, He confronts His disciples in a locked room, suddenly appearing in the midst of them. And when He speaks to these fearful, less-than-faithful men, note His first words to them: "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). Peace be with you. He is not risen to condemn them for their sinful abandonment, fear, and unbelief. He is risen to forgive them - to take away their sin. To grant them peace.

Yes, my friends, the Kingdom is near you because the King is near, and the King is near to bring peace with God. It was true for the 72 and it's true for you as well. For Christ continues to send preachers to prepare His way. He continues to send preachers as "sheep among wolves" to proclaim "Peace be to this house" and "The Kingdom of God is near you." And every time that glorious message is proclaimed, every time sins are forgiven, Satan falls like lightning.

Yet, it will not always seem to be so. For Christ's peace is received by faith and seems to be at odds with everyday circumstances. You see, when Christ makes you His by His grace, His enemies are now your enemies; and though they are defeated and subdued, they make a lot of noise as they wail and rattle their chains. They will do their best to lob misery your way, so that the last thing you feel is a sense of peacefulness. But despite anguish, grief, and tumult, by faith you know better: You are at peace with God. Why? Because He who has died for you says so.

So, my friends, the Kingdom of God has come near to you. For Jesus is near you to forgive you all your sins and give you peace. In the waters of Holy Baptism, Jesus is there and He washes your sins away and makes you His child and heir. There, He clothes you with Himself, with His own righteousness. You are no longer an enemy of God, for your Old Adam has been drowned in that water and Word. In fact, some of the first words that a pastor says to the newly-baptized are "Peace be with you." Peace is there because Christ is there.

Christ is present in His Word, as it is preached, heard, and sung in the liturgy. Therefore, we sing with the angels of Bethlehem, "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." Peace remains on earth because Christ remains here, present in His Word to forgive our sins. We pray "Thy Kingdom come," trusting that our King comes here today to bring us His Kingdom of grace and life. Thus we rejoice to hear the pastor declare in the benediction, "The Lord...give you peace;" for the Lord, who is present, gives you peace by coming into your midst and taking away your sins.

Of course, the Lord is present in His Supper, giving His people His body and blood for the forgiveness of their sins. It is because He is there that the pastor declares, just after the Words of Institution, "The peace of the Lord be with you always." Peace is there because Christ Himself is there, for the forgiveness of sins. And because you receive His body and blood there, you sing with Simeon, "O Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace."

This peace is no lifeless sense of calm; it is no mere feeling of pause in anxiety. This peace is Christ; this peace is life. Therefore, this peace is real comfort and hope. And with such peace, we struggle against the sin which besets us. We strive to live in the peace He gives us by loving and serving each other, especially in Christ's Church.

Yes, where Jesus and His peace and Kingdom are preached, where Jesus is forgiving sins, where sinners are baptized and the Lord gives his Body and Blood to eat and drink, demons are cast out. Let us rejoice and be glad that Jesus is here and that Satan falls like lightning. For this is all for you so that you may rejoice that your name is written in heaven. So, despite, and in the midst of, the sorrows and troubles of this life, rejoice in Christ for He brings peace to this house and "the Kingdom of God has come near to you." Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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