

Jesu Juva

“Luke’s Gospel of Peace”

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

Note: Today we were privileged to have John Wolf and his family with us, new missionaries to Africa. That is why the play on the word “wolf” later in the sermon. It was such a happy coincidence that they were with us on this day of the Commemoration of St. Luke, for I cannot imagine a more apt Gospel for the day than the one we had!

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

The commemorations of the saints in the church is like getting an old photo album out at home and remembering your ancestors. It is to look back at those who have gone before us and remember them, and give thanks for them and how they were an important part of your life.

Today we do that with Saint Luke the Evangelist, the Gospel-writer. And yes, as Christians, he is an important part of each of our lives. For his is the Gospel which tells us so many things that the others do not. It is Luke that gives us the fullest and richest account of Jesus’ birth, of Bethlehem, the angels and the shepherds, and no room in the Inn. Luke alone includes the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan, and only he records those words of Zechariah, Mary, and Simeon that would become the great hymns of the Church called the *Benedictus*, the *Magnificat*, and the *Nunc Dimittis*. Only Luke teaches us about the rich man and Lazarus, the “wee little man” named Zacchaeus, and the penitent thief on the cross. Luke’s Gospel singly tells us that one of the things Jesus said while hanging on the cross is: *Father, forgive them* (Luke 23:34). Words I know I can never hear enough. Without Luke, our ancestor in the faith, we would be without all this, and we would be poorer, indeed.

What we also know about Luke is that he was a physician (Colossians 4:14). We heard that in the collect prayed earlier, how Jesus called Luke the physician to be an evangelist and physician of the soul. Yet that seems to spiritualize it a bit too much for me; makes it too abstract. Rather, I would say that Luke was changed from being a physician of bodies, *plural*, to a physician of the body, *singular* - the Body of Christ, His Church. That was Luke’s patient now, and who he would tend to, as he is still doing today through his Gospel and the second volume of his writing, the book of Acts. And the medicine for this Body is the Word of peace he proclaims, which heals this Body from the disease of sin. Because peace with God comes only in the forgiveness of sins.

That Word of peace is what we heard today as we heard from Luke. Jesus sends out seventy-two of His disciples, two-by-two, to go into the towns and villages ahead of Him.

And they take nothing but what Jesus gives them. They take nothing of their own: *no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals*. They take only the Word of peace Jesus gives them. This Word of peace which brings healing because with it, *the kingdom of God has come near to you*. *The kingdom* because the King, Jesus, is present and working in His Word. And, Jesus tells them, while some will rejoice it that Word of peace and welcome it, sadly, some also will reject it. And it seems as if more rejected than welcomed it, for Luke tells us in the first chapter of Acts that when the Church got together to determine a replacement for Judas, *the company of persons was in all about 120* (Acts 1:15). That's only 48 more than the 72. Not even 1.5 per team. Luke later tells us, though, in Acts, that the results got better after Pentecost, after the Holy Spirit came upon the Church, when on that day the twelve baptized some 3,000 people (Acts 2:41).

But it wasn't going to be easy. *I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves*, Jesus told those 72. And so it was not only then, but even after Pentecost as the Church was persecuted, all but John among the twelve martyred in some horrific way. Luke, too, is believed to have been a martyr, which is why our parament color today is red, for blood. And we heard that from Paul today too, writing to Timothy while in prison, that his life, he wrote, *poured out as a drink offering*.

For this Word of peace, this Word of Jesus, this Word of Jesus' death on the cross for the sin of the world, for the life of the world, will be opposed. At every turn. In every way. The satanic wolf trying to silence it. And it seems by Jesus' own words that it's not much of a contest, for a lamb that goes up against a wolf doesn't stand much of a chance. To my knowledge, in all those contests, the wolf is undefeated.

The tradition of the Church tells us that Luke was one of those 72 Jesus sent out that day. That he was one of the ones that heard that - that they would be like lambs in the midst of wolves.

And so when Luke wrote his Gospel, he includes not only that account, but wrote so that you would know this above all else: that in this contest of lambs and wolves, this contest that doesn't seem very much like a contest at all, but more like a slaughter! There was, actually, one time when a lamb won. One time the wolf sunk his sharp and deadly teeth into a delectable lamb, pouring out its blood, and taking its life . . . only to have that lamb come back triumphant and victorious over the wolf. And that was, of course, the Lamb of God. The One Luke's Gospel, from first to last, from His story of Jesus' birth to His death and resurrection, is all about. The Lamb of God who took on the wolf, and won. So when Jesus sent out those 72, Luke came to realize, it was a picture of what He Himself had come to do. And He would be with them. That's why they needed nothing else.

And so it is still today - the Lamb is with us, taking on the wolf and winning. For He has won each of us. **Baptism** washes us in the blood of the Lamb poured out from the cross. **Absolution** gives us peace with God in the forgiveness of our sins. And the **Body and**

Blood of that Lamb is given to us, to make us what He is: victorious. That our wolfish ways be put away, and we be healed, by the One great, heavenly and eternal, physician. That as Isaiah said, our blind eyes be opened to see our Lord with the eyes of faith; our deaf ears be unstopped to hear His Word; our mute tongue be loosed to confess both our sins and our Saviour; and the Highway of Holiness be the way that we walk. Our homes and lives no longer sand burning with sin, ground thirsty for forgiveness, and wildernesses lacking love, but places of peace, of refuge, and of rest. Places where the Lamb is victorious over the wolf, still today.

And then so that this Word of peace, this Word of Jesus' victory and triumph, continue to go out into all the world today, that as we sang in the Introit, *repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations*, Jesus said: *pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest*. It is our privilege to do that, and to rejoice when we see those prayers answered and fulfilled. Answered and fulfilled as Chris and George and Brodi have gone to the seminary to be laborers in the harvest, and answered and fulfilled with Chris and his family now in China, and answered and fulfilled with the Wolf family - here with us today - accepting that call as well, to go, hopefully soon, to Africa.

And notice this too: how powerful is this Word of God, this Word of peace, that we proclaim? Well, Jesus sent the 72 out as lambs in the midst of wolves, *but yet today we have Wolves in the midst of lambs* and yet we are not afraid. For this Word of God - in the flesh and in His Word proclaimed and Sacraments given - takes wolves and makes them lambs; makes them His. Born again from above. New creations. All of us beastly offspring made into divine children, by Jesus. To live new lives, victorious-lamb-lives, even in the midst of a lot of worldly wolves. So while Paul bore in his body the marks of Jesus (Gal 6:17), you, John, bear the mark of Jesus it in your name! You are a **Wolf made a lamb** through the Word and peace of Jesus.

And so it is for us all, and that's what Luke wants you to know above all: the powerful and transforming forgiveness and love of the Lamb of God for you. The forgiveness and love that changed his life, changed the lives of those he wrote about, and now also changes you. From sinner to saint. From devourer of one another, to devourer of His Body and Blood. From someone whose life will end in death, to someone whose death will end in life. That where Jesus is, there you will be as well. That as *the kingdom of God has come near to you* here and now, so you will live in that kingdom forever.

Until that day, repent when you act the wolf you no longer are and receive Jesus' lamb-making forgiveness. Here in His Supper especially. And pray for laborers, pray for the wolves out there, and even speak that forgiveness yourself - you never know when those words will open blind eyes or deaf ears. And rejoice, for even in the midst of wolves as the 72 or in prison like Paul, Luke, your ancestor in the faith, wants you to know: *you are not alone*. You are a lamb of God in the Lamb of God. The kingdom of God has come to

you and He *will never leave you or forsake you* (Hebrews 13:5). So as he went that day, so Luke is still announcing today: ***Peace be to this house!*** And there is. In Jesus. Now, and forever.

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