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"A Kingdom on the Move"
Text: Luke 10:1-20

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

The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. . . . Say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

So you don't go to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God comes to you.

Sounds backwards, doesn't it? Kingdoms are usually places. Stationary. But not with God. For Him, the kingdom is on the move. And it always is. **The kingdom of God comes to sinners, finds sinners, and forgives sinners**. And so the kingdom grows. Because as Jesus told Pontius Pilate, a little after the Gospel we heard today, His kingdom is not of this world. So it doesn't operate like the kingdoms of this world. You don't go to it, it comes to you.

And it keeps showing up in the most unexpected places. It shows up in Ur of the Chaldees, where the kingdom of God comes to a man named Abram and saves him from his idolatry. It shows up in the Sinai desert, where the kingdom of God comes to Moses in a burning bush. It later travels around in a tent, which only God would be audacious enough to call *a tabernacle*. But that is what it was, as the kingdom of God traveled about in the wilderness. Even when David had the great idea to build God a temple - a permanent, stationary, structure - and his son Solomon finally built the thing, God let them, but that was never His idea. Because the kingdom of God is always on the move. **Coming near to sinners, finding sinners, and forgiving sinners**.

So Jesus, too. He never stays very long in one place. Did you ever notice that? Just like the tabernacle. Because the tabernacle was a picture of Jesus. John tells us that. That the Word of God, the Son of God, was made flesh, and tabernacled, or tented among us. He didn't temple among us, stay in one place. He tented. Because He was busy **coming to sinners, finding sinners, and forgiving sinners**.

And *He* keeps showing up in the most unexpected places. You might expect to find Him in Jerusalem, but Samaria? Galilee? Tyre and Sidon? The region of the Gerasenes, as we heard last week? And who's He hanging out with? Not the creme de la creme of society -

the kingdom of God keeps showing up with lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors, Roman centurions, demoniacs, beggars, the disabled and handicapped. All throughout the Scriptures, **the kingdom of God comes to sinners, finds sinners, and forgives sinners**.

So as we heard today, that's what Jesus sends His 72 disciples to do, too. He sends them. Don't *stay* with Him. Go. Be on the move. Go to the towns and villages. **Go to the sinners, find the sinners, and forgive the sinners**. Say to them ***peace be with you***. For that's what the peace of God is - the forgiveness of your sins. For when the sin that separates you from God and the sin that condemns you before God is forgiven, you have peace with God again.

Then we learn this, too: the kingdom that is always on the move not only shows up in unexpected places, but also in unexpected ways. The kingdom of God goes out like ***lambs in the midst of wolves***. It goes out poor - ***no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals***. In weakness and poverty it goes out, not in power and wealth. Like a tent, not a temple. But perhaps this does make sense. The kingdom of God comes in weakness and poverty because it comes for the weak and the poor. For the sick and the downtrodden. For the rejected and the outcast. **The kingdom of God comes to sinners, finds sinners, and forgives sinners**.

You don't go to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God comes to you.

Even here, to you, today. Don't see it? Maybe you're looking for the wrong things. Maybe you're looking for power and wealth instead of weakness and poverty. Maybe you're looking for something high and mighty instead of the rejected and the outcast. Maybe you're looking for good people instead of sinners. But **the kingdom of God comes to sinners, finds sinners, and forgives sinners**.

That was a stumbling block to people in Jesus' day, and in our day, too. We want a church that is powerful and influential, that the world will look up to and pay attention to. We want a church that looks impressive and that people will want to come and see, not one that is weak and poor. We want a church filled with good people, respectable people, not beggars and sinners. That's the kind of church people want to go to.

Maybe so. But you don't go to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God comes to you. And this is how it comes: a baby in a manger. A man who walks about with no place to lay His head. Who rides a donkey into His capital city. Who hangs on a cross as a criminal and dies. Who picks fishermen and a tax collector to be preachers, and who sends them out with nothing but His Word of peace; His Word of forgiveness. And then later, He sends them out with water and bread and wine. And with these His forgiveness, too.

And for those looking for something bigger and better and brighter, this kingdom and

these disciples and this message are rejected. Jesus told them it would be so. *Just move on,* He says. Because the kingdom is always on the move.

But to those who reject this kingdom coming to them, who don't want to be sinners but want to be known as good people, who don't want their sins called out but accepted, who don't want to repent and receive forgiveness, there is a word for them, too: not peace, but ***woe***. Reject **the kingdom of God that comes to sinners, finds sinners, and forgives sinners**, and Sodom - the place that got destroyed by fire and brimstone! - is a place you're going to wish to be! And rather than finding the exaltation you want (and maybe you'll get in this world and life), you'll find yourself in the end brought down to Hades.

For the peace, the forgiveness, the disciples speak, that's *Jesus*' peace and forgiveness that He gives them to speak. For, Jesus said, ***the one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me***. Yes, it is through the word of peace, the word of forgiveness, and that word in the water that washes away your sin, and that word that makes bread and wine much more than bread and wine, but the Body and Blood of Jesus - through these words of peace and forgiveness, **the kingdom of God comes near to you**. Then, and now.

And it does. The disciples find that out. They had to have been worried when they first left, didn't they? I mean, ***Lambs in the midst of wolves*** usually doesn't work out well for the lambs. ***No moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals*** usually means a rough and difficult time. So those first few steps they took must have been hesitant and slow.

But after some time, they return to Jesus, *how*? Running back to him and filled with excitement, it seems. And they report to Him how awesome the peace of God is. They say: ***Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!*** The demons want no part of this kingdom. It comes and they beg for mercy. It comes and they flee. *Depart unclean spirit and make way for the Holy Spirit* we say when a person is baptized. And it is so. The unbeliever is now believer. The captive is set free. For ***He who hears you hears me***, Jesus says. Authority, Jesus calls it. ***To tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy***. And how is that done? Forgiveness. Forgiveness is the heel that crushes the serpent's head.

If the 72 are surprised at this outcome, Jesus is not. Of course the demons are subject to you. I gave you that authority. ***I saw satan fall like lightning from heaven***, Jesus says, and now you see it, too. And he's going to fall again and again and again. Because this mobile kingdom is coming to him and plundering him. Taking his prey, his sinners, away from him and his kingdom. Saving them and giving them life. Planting them in a new kingdom. For **the kingdom of God comes to sinners, finds sinners, and forgives sinners**.

But the real reason for joy? Not that ***the spirits are subject to you***, but that ***your names***

are written in heaven. That is, rejoice that the kingdom of God has come to you. Rejoice in the fact that you're not a good person, but you are a forgiven one. Rejoice in the fact that you didn't find God, He found you and came to you. Rejoice in the fact that you didn't write your name in heaven by what you've done, your good works and spectacular life, but that your name was written there by Jesus in His own blood. Because of what He has done. And **the kingdom of God that comes for sinners, finds sinners, and forgives sinners** . . . well, He's coming back again to do something else, too. *Take* sinners - repentant ones, forgiven ones - to be with Him forever.

So repent. And know that when you hear *I forgive you all your sins*, that's Him, not me; you hear not me but Him who sent me. And ***the kingdom of God has come near to you***.

When you hear *I baptize you*, that's Him, not me; you hear not me but Him who sent me. And ***the kingdom of God has come near to you***.

When you hear *this is the Gospel of the Lord*, that's Him, not me; you hear not me but Him who sent me. And ***the kingdom of God has come near to you***.

And when you hear *this is My Body, this is My Blood*, that's Him, not me; you hear not me but Him who sent me. And ***the kingdom of God has come near to you***.

Hear those words that way, because the demons still do. *Your* demons. And they are still shrieking and fleeing. For they are still subject to the Word and name of God. And that name has been put on you, and that word has been given to you. For the kingdom of God is still on the move. **Coming to sinners, finding sinners, and forgiving sinners**. Here. In your seat. And the seat next to you. That wherever you go this week, whatever you face, whoever you encounter, whenever you worry and doubt, and however it goes with you, that ***peace be with you***. Because Jesus is with you. The one who casts down demons, your demons, and forgives your sins. The Jesus who tabernacles with you.

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

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.