

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The thoughts for the sermon today come from these words in Luke 10: “After this 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. And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest... Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you.”

We pray: May the Words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Congregation is seated

In our Gospel reading from Luke our Lord talks about the harvest. Being someone who grew up in the city I never really knew much about farming or harvesting. That is, until I married a farmer’s daughter. Over the years I’ve been married I’ve learned a little bit about farming. And as I have, one of the things that’s kind of surprised me is just how sophisticated farming is.

I’ve come to realize that many combines are more expensive than most all homes in Topeka. And I never would have thought about the high-tech computer system that instantly tracks yields so that farmers know more about what worked and what didn’t when they review their year and plan for the next one. And then there’s the GPS technology which allows farmers to plant their crop in precise rows, spaced evenly apart, and at an exact depth to try to maximize yields. Farming today is a whole lot more sophisticated than what I realized as a child.

However, the Lord takes a different approach when it comes to the way that He farms. The Lord isn’t nearly so careful or precise when He plants His seed. We learn this just a couple of chapters before our Gospel reading for today. In Luke 8 when Jesus tells the parable of the Sower.

In the parable the Sower, the farmer casts His seed all over. It's not precise rows or exact depth. It's not even all planted in good ground. Sure, some of it falls on good ground and produces a yield up to a hundredfold. But this farmer also casts some of his seed on the path only to have it trampled underfoot or to have the birds eat it. And he spreads it among the rock even if the plants will wither away for lack of moisture. And he casts his seed among the thorns where the plants will be choked out. The Sower described in Luke 8 farms nothing like farmers today.

But that's how it is with God. He isn't careful and precise, He abundantly casts His Seed all over, in good ground and in bad ground. This point should not be missed when it comes to the parable of the Sower – the Lord distributes His Seed, His Word freely and all over.

Jesus instructs the 72 to do the same thing when it comes to peace. Jesus tells the 72, "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but, if not, it will return to you."

Notice that Jesus doesn't tell them to share their peace only with people who seem to be peaceful. He doesn't tell them to spend some time getting to know the new town or place. He instructs that the first thing they should do is to say, "Peace to this house!" See how immediately and abundantly peace is shared by the 72.

This stands in contrast to the way of our world. We generally talk about peace only after conflict. On this weekend when we celebrate our Independence, we know that only came after war. That's often how it works with peace for us people. We learned of peace treaties in school that are signed after wars. And when we talk about peace between people, we usually refer to friends or family or neighbors who have made peace after a fight or conflict.

You see, peace for us rebels is not so easy. We're reluctant to share it. And when we do, it's on a limited basis. Oh sure, we might share peace with those we know and like. Or with those who we know will be peaceful toward us. But peace

as Jesus talks about it – freely, immediately, and without reservation? That’s not us.

And it’s not the 72 either. You see, we might think that the 72 were quite special, and they were because they had a special calling from Jesus. However, they were just like us that the same sin that infests us, infested them. Just like we covet, they coveted. Just like we lust, they lusted. Just like we hate and lie, they hated and lied.

So, the peace that they had to share was not from themselves. It wasn’t their peace; it was Christ’s peace. Notice what Luke records in verse one of our reading for today, “After this 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. Where he himself was about to go.”

You see, the peace of the 72 was tied to Christ. It was tied to the one who makes peace with God for us through His obedience in life, His humiliation in death, and His victory in resurrection. As God’s Word declares, “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

And this is what’s delivered to you here fellow redeemed of the Lord. Here you get the peace of Christ when Jesus’ Word of forgiveness is spoken in the Absolution. And it’s the very peace of Christ that you receive in the Lord’s Supper when the pastor turns and says, “Peace be with you.”

This is real peace. Not just what we could work out after a conflict. Not just what we have to give. But what Jesus has to give. And this peace of Christ is freely given, because that’s how it works with our Lord. He is abundantly gracious.

And as He shares His Word of peace with us, He desires that we would abundantly share it with others.

We often talk about stewardship in the church. Stewardship involves acknowledging that which comes from the Lord is His gift to us. And He calls us to use those gifts according to His purposes. Sometimes when we talk about that

we talk about being wise and careful with His resources. We talk about not wasting the money that He's entrusted to our care. And that is a part of stewardship. But stewardship is more than just money. It involves everything that God gives to us, including His Word and His Gospel and His Peace.

And when it comes to these things, the Lord doesn't want us to be cautious about giving these things out. He wants us to give these things out freely and fully, just as He does. That's how we practice stewardship when it comes to God's Word and peace.

Consider what St. Augustine says about the Church's preaching in his commentary on this text from Luke 10, "Since we do not know who is a son of peace, it is our part to leave no one out, to set no one aside, but to desire that all to whom we preach this peace be saved. We are not to fear that we lose our peace if he to whom we preach it is not a son of peace, and we are ignorant of the fact. Our peace will return to us. That means our preaching will profit us, not him. If the peace we preach rests upon him, it will profit both him and us" (ADMONITION AND GRACE 15.46).

The Church is to set no one aside in sharing the peace of Christ. That's true of the pastor's preaching but also of the Christian's speaking. For all Christians have the peace of Christ in the forgiveness of their sins and are called to proclaim the excellencies of God who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

This is your purpose fellow redeemed. The Lord wants you to freely and abundantly give out His Word of peace through Christ. Remember how our Lord farms. He generously and abundantly casts the seed of His Word out.

So may God help us all to proclaim that Word of peace in Jesus' Name.
Amen.

Congregation stands

Now the peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus the Lord.
Amen.