



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for Pentecost 4
July 3, 2022

Peace Be to This House!

Luke 10:1–20

¹ 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. ² 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. ³ Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ ⁶ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. ⁷ And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

¹³ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

¹⁶ “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.”

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.”

Peace be to this house. Isn't that what Jesus sends His ministers to tell you? He sent His laborers into the harvest field, instructing them: “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’” So today, the first thing I want to say to you is what Jesus sent me to tell you: Peace be to this house.

But why? Why do you need this? Simply put: because you're surrounded by conflict – in the workplace, in the church, in the home, between husbands and wives, parents and children, even between nations. Our world is in desperate need of peace. And so are you.



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But all the conflicts I've just mentioned are symptomatic of an even deeper problem: our conflict with God. We fight against God, we fail to listen to His Word, we refuse to walk in His ways. We want, in fact, to be our own god, to believe that Nietzsche was right, to decide for ourselves what's right and wrong, and to rest our confidence in our own ability to care for ourselves, instead of trusting in the goodness and direction of God for our lives.

And this has been going on for a very long time. It stems from this thing called sin. And it's a killer. Literally. "The wages of sin is death," Scripture says. So, how can we have peace when we have death looming over us, like the sword of Damocles hanging over our heads by a thread? Sin, death, guilt before God . . . We know the guilt is there, but we tuck it away in the back of our conscience and try to ignore it. But, all the while, it's crying to get out, in spite of all the numbing agents our desperate-to-be-guilt-free society tries to sell us. Deep down, we know that something is terribly wrong between us and God. And there's nothing we can do, on our own, to make that nagging itch go away.

We need something to help us deal with our guilt; we need peace. We need Jesus, we need what Jesus has to offer, for He brings us a peace that resolves, once and for all, our otherwise insurmountable problem of sin, guilt, and death, breaking down the wall of hostility and conflict that stands between us and God. This is the peace we need, the only peace that will satisfy our craving, and it only comes from Jesus.

The thing is, though, when you have this peace, the outward circumstances of your life may not look all that peaceful. In fact, your life may look pretty rough. In our text, Jesus sends out His laborers into the harvest field, but it's no bed of roses. He sends them out like lambs in the midst of wolves, He says. And a lamb doesn't stand much of a chance against a pack of wolves. Being a Christian can be tough going; not very peaceful, at least not outwardly. Even so, there's a peace in the midst of all that turmoil that Jesus gives to those who trust in Him. Ah, but therein lies the rub!

Most of us believe in Jesus and we trust Him for our salvation. We're convinced that through faith in His death and resurrection we're saved from the penalty of our sin and destined to spend eternity with Him in heavenly glory. But that's all future business, isn't it; it's all set to take place *after* our life in this world. We trust Jesus to have taken care of all that. But we don't trust Him to take care of the day-to-day concerns of our life now, our life in this world. For that we tend not to be any different than any pagan outside these walls or the unbelieving neighbor next door. Our earthly future, we believe, depends on us – our strength, our wits, our wisdom, our expertise, and so on. We're always surprised, and – of course, *pleased* – when God steps in and pulls off something downright miraculous, but we never expect Him to, or, if we're honest, we don't really believe that He will. And this erodes our peace.

So, what's the remedy for that? Jesus tells His ministers to proclaim: "The kingdom of God has come near to you." When did it do that? And how did the kingdom come near to us? Jesus, the King of Glory, brought His kingdom to us when He was incarnate of the Virgin Mary. He established His kingdom among us through His suffering, death, and resurrection. We enter that kingdom through baptism in the name of the Father and of the



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Son and of the Holy Spirit. But, for many of us, the kingdom of God is a place we may like to visit, but we don't want to live there, which puts severe limitations on His peace in our lives, for Jesus in our text ties having His peace to living in His kingdom.

Well, if we don't live in Christ's kingdom, where do we live? Jesus frequently contrasts living in His kingdom with living in the kingdom of the world. Luther wrote of the two kingdoms: the kingdom of the left – the world and its societal structure – and the kingdom of the right – the kingdom of God and the Church. If we're not living in the kingdom of God and of Christ, we're living, then, in the kingdom of the world.

You see, many of us are like that prodigal son, who lived in the kingdom of his father. He had and enjoyed all the richness of his father's kingdom, but what did he do? He ran away to live in the world. So many of us come to God's kingdom, enjoy some of its benefits, and then run away to live in the world. We compartmentalize our lives, keeping God and His kingdom just close enough, but not very close. We like the separation, the distance between the kingdoms; it appeals to our carnal nature. But at what cost? Our peace!

How could the martyrs approach their deaths with such confident peace? Because faith in Christ for them was not a secluded element in their lives; it *was* their life! They lived in the kingdom of God. Christ was a regular part of their every-day lives. His kingdom was not a place to visit; it *was home!*

Notice, please, that they did not have to go and pound on the palace door to be let in. "The kingdom has come near to you." Christ has brought His kingdom to you! His Word has created faith in your heart. The water of His baptism was splashed on your forehead. His body and blood are fed into you by the laborers He has sent. Since mortal flesh cannot go – will not go – to Him, He brings His kingdom to you, fills you with His Spirit, and cares for you as His child.

Why, then, do we run away? Why do we – at best – keep the kingdom of God at arm's reach? Why do we visit only at certain times . . . special occasions, holidays, when we're in some kind of crisis? We may as well ask Adam and Eve why they ate the forbidden fruit. Because the devil is skilled at lying to us, convincing us of any number of falsehoods:

- You can enjoy the best of both worlds.
- A little wandering never hurt anyone.
- You can have too much of a good thing.
- A little wickedness makes life more exciting.

And on and on. And there's always just a little truth in his lies, just enough to bait us into running away from home.

Beloved, your Prince of Peace is calling you again today to come home – not just for a visit, but to live. He so longs to give you His peace. He's done everything to gain peace for you. He wants to give you victories over your enemy, the devil; He has, and He



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will. And all this even as you have lived on the fringes of His kingdom. Think what He could do if you came inside and lived with Him!

How? Repent daily of your sins and receive the full and free forgiveness earned for you by Christ. Then live your whole day, every day, with faith in Christ as your first thought and your guiding principle. See everything from a perspective of eternity – your eternity and that of your neighbor. Learn to rejoice that your name is written in heaven and find overwhelming joy at the thought of helping your neighbor to have the same. Remember that it's the kingdom of the world that you're visiting, and it is not your home. Come to your Father's house as often as you can and never forget that you are a child of the King.

May our blessed Lord, through the working of His Spirit in the Means of Grace, assist you in all of this. And may His peace always be upon you and your house. In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen