

7.6.2025 Pentecost 4

Pastor Timothy McKenzie

Isaiah 66:10-14; Psalm 66:1-9; Galatians 6:7-16; Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

“Work for the good and the peace of all”

*Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Every Sunday we turn to God’s word for encouragement and hope. Given the state of our world today, Lord knows we need encouragement and hope. Paul’s words to the Galatians seem to have been written just for us: “*Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow.*”

As modern readers, we have trouble at times hearing the hope in God’s word, yet despite the antiquity of Paul’s words, he is saying something quite true about humanity, about the temptations we face in the world. Human beings are tempted to sow seeds of our will rather than seeking to sow the will of the Holy Spirit. Daily we see and hear leaders around the world seeking to sow and to bend the world according to their own will, rather than seeking to sow a higher vision that encourages and offers humanity hope.

When we sow division and hatred, we should not be surprised that we reap violence, unrest, and war. We say we want peace and yet we continue to live out the ancient Latin words, *Si vis pacem, para bellum* – “If you desire peace, prepare for war.” Instead of preparing for peace, we always seem to be preparing for war. And so, we reap what we sow.

Yet Paul writes, “*But if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.*” The Galatian church that Paul wrote to was, like our world, a place of conflict. The Galatians found it impossible to live in unity as diverse Jewish and Greek speaking Christians. They were divided by ethnicity, culture, language, and religious understanding. They had forgotten the unity we share in the waters of baptism: we are forgiven and adopted as heirs of Jesus Christ. Writing to the Galatians (3:28-29), Paul described what Christ does for us in Holy Baptism, bringing together a diverse humanity of different ethnicities, nations, backgrounds, genders, and identities. Baptism offers unity within our diversity as human beings.

As modern people we struggle with the persistence of evil, asking, “If we have made so much technological progress, why do we still struggle with evil? Despite our modernity and learning, we have forgotten that little three letter word, “sin” – and so we wonder why we never achieve peace. To sin is to be unable to do the good we know we should do. Paul encourages us to see what God has already done for us: sowing the Spirit in us. The path to peace is to sow in the Spirit; it is to never weary of doing what is right; it is to work for the good of all.

When we forget the waters of Holy Baptism, we lose sight of our spiritual unity in Christ. Paul reminds us that to be “*a new creation is everything!*” In baptism, we become, as Paul writes, “the

family of faith” – a new creation. We become the body of Christ, a diversity of people held in unity.

I invite you to think about your own life: what would your life be without Jesus Christ? Paul is describing what he calls a “rule” – a way of living – that when we live for Christ, we also come to live for others. What is the rule of Christ’s Spirit that governs and gives hope to your life?

I think a large part of our struggle with peace is that we continue to link peace with war. We make peace into the absence of war, rather than peace as the living presence of God. The peace that Paul writes about is the peace of “*shalom*.” The peace of *shalom* is always a restoration of a relationship to God and to our neighbor. *Shalom* is a peace that recreates God’s wholeness and image in us allowing us to see ourselves and our neighbor anew. If we seek an end to war and strife, we must first seek the peace, the *shalom*, that ends our brokenness and our war with God.

We underestimate our deepest problem: we are human beings broken by sin, trying to heal ourselves of something that only God’s peace can heal. We are so anxious to recreate the world in our own image that we forget our createdness before God. To sow in the Spirit leads to inner peace with God and peace with others.

In today’s gospel, Jesus sends seventy-two messengers ahead of him with his peace to announce the *shalom* of God in every place he intended to go. What fascinates me is that Jesus didn’t send these messengers with anything of material importance. They were not to announce a gospel of prosperity. Carrying no purse, they carried no money; with no bag, they had no spare clothing or valuables; and no sandals didn’t mean they were to literally go barefoot, rather, in all things, they were to rely upon the hospitality of others for all they needed.

Compare what these messengers did not take to the long list of “stuff” we leave home with every day, and the “stuff” we tell ourselves that we need as a church. Yet Jesus did not send them ill-prepared. They had the one thing they needed most, Jesus’ Spirit and his peace. Daily, we are also sent in Jesus’ name, to be his voice and his hands of healing in this world – to be men and women for others.

Jesus tells them, “*When you enter a house say, ‘Peace be with you.’*” Jesus also gives us his peace so that we might be his peace for others. Jesus teaches them to say, “*The kingdom of God has come near to you.*” In baptism you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ. God’s kingdom and peace dwell within you so you might sow peace and point to the kingdom.

When I was sent as a missionary to Japan, I went with a lot more stuff than I truly needed. I quickly learned that many of my possessions didn’t really help me in my work. The people to whom I was sent helped me to grow in what I needed: to see that the most important thing I needed was already with me – the Spirit of Christ, his peace, and kingdom within me. I learned that the Spirit

and the peace of Christ help us overcome our very human differences of ethnicity, culture, language, and identity. Without his Spirit and peace, it is hard to walk among difference – different towns, cities, nations, and peoples.

What is the most important thing you possess? Wealth, power, or your hard-earned achievements? Is it the resume of all you have done, or is it a realization of what God has already done for you in Christ Jesus, his cross and resurrection? Who would be without the peace of Christ?

Over the years, I've seen a lot of missionaries, pastors, seminarians, students, and church members. What I've noticed is that those who announce peace and never weary of doing good for all, seem almost unaware that God is working through them. In their embodiment of God's *shalom*, they possess an almost selfless humility. They are not always the loudest or the most charismatic, but they are often the most genuine messengers of the Spirit and peace of Jesus Christ.

Today each of you have come into this sacred space seeking the peace and nearness of God's kingdom. We gather again today hear and sense God's *shalom*, God's kingdom, already within us. And Jesus sends you again today with his Spirit to reveal *shalom* wherever you go this week. Jesus sends you to be a sign of peace and hope. In sending you, Jesus goes with you.

Jesus sows the Spirit in you so that you might sow the Spirit in others. Rejoice in what God has done for you in Christ; your names are written in heaven! Jesus sends you to be his voice of *shalom* in this world.

Jesus has given you peace so you might become his peace.

Leave here today to work for the good and the peace of all. Amen.