

“Fear not, speak the Spirit!” Luke 10:1-20

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. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. 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. 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. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, “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.” [...] “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.” The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 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. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Today’s reading is about Jesus sending His disciples to proclaim the Good News. His disciples. It means that to a great extent this text applies to us as well. Perhaps some of things that we will discuss will sound to us as accusations.

How much have we done to proclaim the Good News that the Kingdom of God is near to those who don’t know it? Have we really tried? How much have we done? It’s true, it is not an easy thing to do. Especially if we realize how much is done to prevent us from sharing the Gospel.

We spoke about it already the last Sunday that Satan tries to silence us by all means. He tries to stop us both from outside and from inside. From outside through the society he tries to stop us by bullying us and saying things like ...

... “don’t impose your religion on others”, “catch up with times, and get rid of your middle ages’ superstition”, “stop being so narrow, stop spreading hate against people”, and so on. Recently we hear all these voices more and more.

That’s not a pleasant message. We don’t want to be addressed in such hostile a way. And we become silent. Satan wins. People lose. From inside he whispers in our ears paralyzing lies which again lead to fear.

“You don’t want to look foolish in the eyes of your neighbours, right? You want to look like mature and intelligent adults, not as some kind of religious fanatics. Right? So you better talk with people about what they like, you can serve them and help them, just don’t embarrass yourself and others talking about this Jesus.

No one likes to hear it, it will simply alienate people from you, and you don’t want that, right?” And we fear to be rejected, to be considered simpletons and narrow minded religious fanatics. And we become silent. Satan wins. People lose.

Is any of these things familiar to you? They are to me, that’s for sure. I hear the same voices in our society, and the same whispering in my ears. The thing is, that all of this has very serious consequences.

If we keep silent, if we give in to Satan’s lies that the Gospel message is not to be proclaimed to those who are still far from Jesus, if we fear people and want to please them by keeping Jesus out of our conversations, something terrible happens.

We neglect the most important task entrusted to the Church, and then we feel guilty for not doing what Jesus sends us to do, and then we want to justify ourselves. Yes, we need to get rid of this guilt somehow. How?

We persuade ourselves that this sharing of the Gospel really is not that important. We can be good Christians even if we don’t do this single the most important thing that Jesus commanded, commanded! not suggested to do.

“When Jesus commanded us to bring this message to all nations and to all people, He probably didn’t mean that we actually need to do it. And if He meant us, then probably He thought about pastors, not about me.”

What about us? What does it mean to be a Christian for us? If I don’t share the Gospel, then what makes me a Christian? And the answer that Satan supplies is, – being a good person. Being friendly, being helpful, serving people.

That’s his answer – you are a Christian if you are a nice and friendly person. It is not hard to see what happens next. “If to be a Christian means to be a nice person, then why should I still bother about all this church’s stuff?

Reading and studying the Bible, listening sermons, receiving Sacraments, praying and so on. I am fine, I don’t need to waste my time spending Sunday morning with people who are not even a half as nice as I am, doing some kind of ancient rituals.”

Thus people lose the very heart of what it means to be a Christian and why we are here. They leave the Church. They turn their back to their Savior. And I am afraid that many of them actually lose their salvation.

It is very simple. Churches which have forgotten that we are here to tell others about Jesus, they don’t grow, they die. And on the other hand, churches which live

to share the Gospel with others, they grow. And new and new people are brought to Christ. It happens every day. It happens also in Australia.

If you feel guilty that you have not done enough, that you have allowed the world and Satan to silence you, then hear this, – in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and by His command – I forgive you!

Jesus forgives you, He has taken all your sins upon Himself, He has paid in full for what we have done, and for what we haven't done. You are forgiven! Receive His forgiveness, rejoice in it!

To assure us that He is forgiving God who welcomes us, Jesus eats with the sinners, and He eats with us. Even more, He Himself hosts the meal, and He invites you to eat with Him and to eat and drink what He has prepared for you.

And what a meal it is! He gives you to eat and drink forgiveness and eternal life. Be glad and rejoice, He is forgiving Lord, regardless of how much we have failed Him, even in our most important mission.

Just don't try to justify yourself, don't try to persuade yourself that we actually don't need to share the good news about Jesus. Don't give in to these lies. If we fail, Jesus forgives us, that's for sure, but if we try to justify ourselves, and to alter what He has commanded, we are in a big trouble.

Now, today, as we look at our reading, I want to show you why Satan is so desperate to silence us, and why we need to resist him. If he wants us to silence so badly, there must be something dangerous about sharing the Gospel. What is it?

As our reading is quite long, we'll only look at some of the most significant thing that we need to understand. "The harvest is plentiful...", meaning that there are so many who have been prepared to hear the Good News about Jesus.

This is true. We may know people, or, at least, we may think that we know them. And we may think that it's not even worth to approach them. But what we don't know is what the Lord has been doing in their lives; in joys and in hardships, in dreams and through another people.

Remember, He is God who wants everyone to be saved, this is why He sends us, and this is why Satan opposes us so much, so that we wouldn't proclaim the liberating news about Jesus, and so that people would remain under his spell.

"Behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves." We are not sent to impose our message. We are sent as humble messengers into this hostile world, as our Lord was humble, up till the death on the cross.

The same way as He was rejected and suffered, we also should be prepared to be rejected and to suffer. We are not sent to force someone into the Kingdom of God, as is a custom of some other religions.

However, we come with the greatest power. The power of the Holy Spirit, and this power is able to change people from inside. This power is able to take over the whole person and to make someone from enemy of Jesus, into His faithful servant.

We are sent with the words: "Peace be to this house!" We have discussed it recently in our Bible Studies, and not just once, about how the Holy Spirit comes to us. This is a clear testimony of the Bible, that the Holy Spirit comes together with the Gospel message.

Meaning, when the Good News about what Jesus Christ, the Son of God has done for you, so that you are justified before the holy God, when you stand before His throne of judgment, when this message is delivered, the Holy Spirit comes to those who hear this message.

I'll say it once more, because this is so, so important. When you, when you! witness to someone what Jesus Christ has done for them, what the Son of God has done so that they can be forgiven and have eternal live, the Holy Spirit is given to these people. Remember, faith comes from hearing. Why?

Because when you speak God's message, these are His words that you speak, and the Holy Spirit is given to those who listen. And when people hear your message, they receive the Holy Spirit.

The true faith is created, a new heart is created and they are freed from under the power of Satan. By the power of your proclamation and the Holy Spirit. It is even hard to imagine what an incredible effect such a simply thing as telling people about Jesus has.

When you tell people that Jesus has saved them from God's judgment, that the only thing they need to do is to repent and trust this message and eternal life is theirs, when you do this, they receive the Holy Spirit. How about that?!

Isn't it awesome, it the true sense of this word, awe inspiring. Isn't it wonderful?! What miraculous things our Lord Jesus does through us is such a simple way. No wonder that Satan tries to bend backwards to stop us.

Some will receive you, and some won't. Be ready, that's reality. It always has been this way. But we are sent to deliver the message anyway. Did you notice that in both cases the message is the same? "The Kingdom of God is near."

Meaning, the reign of God, His active presence is among us. He is among us, inviting us, giving us new hearts, making us His children. But those who reject

God's salvation, they have chosen God's judgment. There will be no excuse for them when they finally see the Risen Lord face to face.

Now, listen to these words. For us it may seem a small thing to share the Gospel with others. Who are we? Little people. Insignificant. Lowly. But now listen: "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."

"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." When you share the Good News about Jesus, first, these are not your words, but words of Jesus.

And, second, you don't speak on behalf of yourself. You speak as one sent by Jesus. Please, understand this! When you tell someone what Jesus has done, it is not you sharing some kind of ideas that you find appealing.

You act as a messenger, as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord. This is who you are. We can't be ashamed of the message. We come with the highest authority. We speak on behalf of Jesus, it is as if He Himself was speaking.

See the majesty and greatness of this reality. People who listen to you, meaning who receive your message, in receiving you they receive Jesus Christ. More, they have received not only the Son, but also the Father.

And the same is true about rejection. It is not you who are rejected. Take heart and don't worry about it. It is not you, it is Jesus Christ who is been rejected, and it is the Father. Not you, you are only a messenger. God's messenger.

This is the magnitude of what is entrusted to us. What an unbelievable honor to be Jesus' messengers, and this is who you are. Each of you. Our dear Lord Jesus is good, He has made us a part of His grand plan of salvation. Enjoy it!

Lastly, when the disciples returned they were overflowing with joy. 'Wow, Lord, we witnessed such miraculous things. Wow, how cool was that!' They were exactly as us. We also tend to focus on something that seems unusual for us.

Some kind of miracles, something we can't explain. That seems to be the real stuff. Jesus tells us that this is not so. Anything that may seem surprising to human eyes, is not a big deal. The greatest things tend to look lowly and insignificant.

But they are the ones that matter in God's eyes. "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." What does this mean? When you were baptized, you received a new identity – a child of God. God wrote His name of you, and He has written your name in the book of eternal life!

This is what matters. This is our reason for true joy. Sure it has not been revealed yet, but eternal life is already yours. And you have the Holy Spirit given to you as

a guarantee, and you have the Holy Spirit being given to you right now, as you hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

God doesn't change His mind. He doesn't cancel His promises. They never expire. You may fail Him, as we all do in so many ways, but as long as we hold to Him, as long as we stick here with His family, as long as we do not reject Him and don't leave Him, He forgives you and welcomes you.

He keeps blessing and keeping you with His Holy Spirit, He keeps feeding you with forgiveness and eternal life is His Holy Meal, He keeps speaking to you: "You are my beloved child, with you I am well pleased!"

This is what loving and merciful God desires for everyone. This is what He already has given to you. This is what Satan wants to deny to others, and this is why we need to do our best, with the help of the Holy Spirit, proudly sharing what Jesus has done, and what He has prepared for every sinner, who accepts our message.

This is why we are sent to tell people that "God's Kingdom is among us."

And the peace of God, which surpasses all our understanding, keep your minds and hearts in Jesus Christ. Amen.