

“In Jesus Name, We Tread on Serpents, Scorpions, and His Enemies”

(Text: Luke 10:1-20)

St. John Lutheran Church, Massillon, Ohio, July 3, 2022 – Pentecost 4

Who would ever envision a soldier sent out to war without a weapon? Who would ever envision a soldier sent out for war without some kind of armor? Who would ever envision a warrior sent out into battle with just a Bible in hand? Who would envision a soldier defeating the enemy with words of peace, healing, and the proclamation of the kingdom of God?

But this is how Jesus sends us out! No human sword or armor – only his peace and the sword of his Word. This is how Jesus sends us out in his name. He sends us out as lambs to tread a path of peace, healing and proclamation. He sends more than seventy-two with his Word. He sends all believers out in his name to tread a path into heaven for all those who call upon his name and receive him.

Along the paths we tread, there will be wolves, scorpions, and all the powers of God’s enemies ready to attack. But don’t worry! Those who are sent out in Jesus’ name, will tread on serpents, scorpions and his enemies.

At the beginning of our gospel lesson, Jesus sent out 72 of his followers – two by two. And he said, as he was sending them out, that they’re as lambs in the midst of wolves. Now wait a minute! This doesn’t sound right, does it? Who would win in a one-on-one battle; the lamb or the wolf? I don’t know about you but my money would be on the pack of wolves. The odds for the lambs to take out the wolves is as slim as the Cleveland Browns making the Super Bowl!

“This is a terrible sending out Jesus!” Sure, if we’re talking about a physical battle. Jesus doesn’t even want them to carry a sword, money, knapsack, and shoes. What? Aren’t these

essential for traveling? Doesn't Jesus know that robbers and all kinds of threats are ever present along the ancient highways and byways? You need to be armed! Doesn't Jesus know that you need money to get to places? Does he know that it costs a lot of money nowadays to fuel your vehicle? How can we be sent out if we don't have any money for gas? Where are we to sleep if we don't have a knapsack to sleep on? And what are we to put on our feet if not a pair of shoes? Head scratchers if you ask me.

This seems like strange instructions. And it will be if we don't understand that his ways aren't our ways. None of these instructions makes any sense in the natural mind. It doesn't make sense because we are deprived of spiritual discernment. We think that Jesus sends us out in his name to take over the wolves, serpents, scorpions, and the powers of his enemies by our own efforts, weapons, and might. We don't realize that God's kingdom comes near to others through the Gospel of peace. That's why Jesus said not to take sandals along their journey. These man-made sandals will not be able to tread peace. But if our feet are equipped with the Gospel of peace, we will tread peace where ever we step. As we tread the Gospel of peace, we also tread over the wolves, serpents, scorpions and all the powers of his enemies.

This Gospel of peace is the healing of all households. Peace is made between God and man through the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. Christ's kingdom of peace and healing has come by his sacrificial death upon the cross, **“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”** The Gospel of peace heals the fractured relationship between God and man. You come to the Lord sinful and unclean before him. You confess and have been forgiven. And after this you hear the words, *“The peace of the Lord be with you*

always.” Sins are forgiven, and peace and healing has been given. Indeed, God’s kingdom of peace and healing has come for those who receive it!

Dear friend, the one who hears his Word hears him – Jesus Christ. Christ sent his Word of peace and healing. Do not reject it. If you reject it, you’re not only rejecting his Word, but you’re rejecting Christ himself. And if you reject Christ than you reject God – the Father who sent him. Do not reject his Word that proclaims the kingdom of God and the peace and healing he won for you. Do not welcome the wolves, serpents, scorpions and powers of the enemy into the house of God. Do not welcome them in your own homes. These things rob you of the peace and healing you have in Jesus’ name. Receive Christ and his Word of peace and healing into the home of your heart. Receive and welcome the kingdom of God.

In closing, remember– you who’re sent out to tread a path over serpents, scorpions and all the power of the enemy – along the roadway of your life, don’t greet the things that steal, rob and destroy, or anyone who would take away the peace and healing you have with your heavenly Father. Do not rejoice in sticking it to the devil, the serpents and the scorpions by treading on them – but keep treading a path in Jesus’ name that leads people into heaven. For when you focus upon the enemy, you can be swayed off the road. You run the risk of trying to negotiate a deal and compromise the mission that God has called you to.

Keep treading a path that leads to his kingdom that has come to earth. Keep treading on the path that leads to the source of peace for all nations and households. Keep treading the path of peace and healing that leads to the Prince of Peace.

Keep treading the path of peace and healing that leads people to the waters of baptism. For there, one is given a new name. It's a name that is written in the book of life which is found in heaven.

And rejoice that the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, has brought down heaven to you. He has brought down his kingdom of peace and healing in his Supper. For through his shed blood and his broken body, you have peace, healing and life in his name. On your way to your Prince of Peace, do not greet anything along the way. Tread on those things that come to rob you and destroy you. Don't listen to any wolves that will be hell bent to eat you alive.

Don't listen to the serpents with their forked tongues. They will speak lies to you, just like the serpent in the garden. Don't listen to them when they say to you, *"Jesus really didn't mean to say that what you partake of is his body and blood. No, no, no. He simply meant that it symbolizes his body and blood. He never meant for you to think that what you eat and drink is forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. You're to simply remember what he did on the cross. He can't truly be here. How can that be when he is at the right hand of the Father in heaven? Jesus can't be in two places at the same time."* Friend – keep on treading to him. Tread right over the lying serpent. He is defeated and only the Word of Jesus remains. *"This IS my body. This IS my blood."* Receive these words in faith.

Friend, don't be frightened of the scorpions who try to strike you with their venomous tails. For even if they do, you will not be harmed. You have healing in Jesus' name. He heals you with his broken body. You're healed from the disease of sin and death because what you partake of is his pure, holy and life-giving resurrected body. And you are healed from the sickness of sins as you drink his blood under the wine. His blood cleanses and heals you of all ailments.

And friend, don't fear the powers of the devil and death, the ultimate enemies of God. For Jesus brought forth peace, healing and God's kingdom by treading on the devil's head. Though Christ's heel was bruised, the head of the devil was crushed to nothing, rendering him of all power. Don't fear death for Christ has taken the sting out of death's mighty tail. In Jesus' name, you're healed. Though you die, you will be raised again on the last day, fully healed in body and soul. On that day you will tread along the road that leads to the full and complete kingdom of God in heaven. Come, receive peace and healing in his name.