

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

On the outset, today's text appears to be a text for pastors. Or, it might seem as if Jesus is talking to pastors, or men that He is sending out as pastors. The list of things he tells them are words worthy of a pastor to keep in mind as he ministers to God's people.

- These men are being sent out as lambs among wolves. Jesus says and does some neat things, but He also has a way of rubbing people the wrong way. It's not that He's being mean or mischievous—He's the Truth, and what He says and does is the truth, and fallen man cannot handle the truth, at least not always. These men are being sent out to proclaim the Word of God, and they can expect to be treated like lambs by wolves. This is a reality for pastors today, too.
- These men are to bring no provisions with them; instead, they are to expect to be provided for by a "son of peace," for "the laborer is worthy of his wages." Where the truth is proclaimed and received by a "son of peace," the reaction by that son is the support of the proclamation. This is, essentially, the opposite of being treated like a lamb among wolves—this is being treated like the emissary of righteousness, life, and salvation. So, these men will be taken care of by those who receive the Word of God. Likewise, this is the case for pastors, today, too, insofar as the sons of peace today are able in some places.
- These men are told to heal the sick and say, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." This is the task for which they are sent. It's all that they are to do, and it's simple. The healings will all be by the power of Jesus; the word proclaimed will be nothing more or less than Jesus. For it, they will either be hated to the point of death, or loved to the point of being cared for, esteemed, and revered. Jesus doesn't ask much of them, though it is a difficult, yet simple, task. The reward, on the other hand, is life for them and for all who would receive them. Once again, pastors today are to do the same thing, administering the medicine of immortality in the Lord's Supper and proclaiming the great day of the Lord in the words of Holy Absolution.

But these men are different; their task is different. Jesus is sending them out as something like pastors, but with a different task. They are sent to prepare His way. He sent them out, two-by-two, to every town and village where He Himself was going to go. And there, they are to proclaim the nearness of the kingdom of God. After all, the King is about to enter that place, and where the King is, there is the kingdom. With the kingdom comes the healing and righteousness they are to do and proclaim.

And here is the power of king Jesus: when these men returned to Jesus to report what had happened, they said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." (Luke 10:17)

Pastors today aren't charged with performing miracles, though demons are still subject to us in the name of Jesus. Nor are they to prepare the people for the coming of the King, at least, not His first coming. The King is come—Jesus was born, lived, died, risen again, and ascended. He now rules from the right hand of Majesty, where He now sits as your Prophet, Priest, and King. As King, Jesus rules over all things for the good of His people—you who trust in Him. As Priest, Jesus intercedes on your behalf before the Father, pleading your case as one for whom He has died and risen again. And as Prophet, Jesus sends men to proclaim that He has come and given to them forgiveness, life, and salvation in His name.

These differences are made more clear by a couple of the other things Jesus tells these men. "Greet no one along the road." "Do not go from house to house." They were to go from town to town, preparing the way for Jesus. Because of that, for one thing, there was no time for idle chit-chat along the way. Such cordial interaction, as normal as it was back then, would also distract these men from the task at hand. They were not to go from house to house in these towns, as if to seek out better accommodations, because they were to prepare the one, move on to the next town or village, and quickly return to Jesus.

Your pastor, on the other hand, is to do the work of an evangelist, speaking the good news of salvation to all who would hear, even along the way, and equip you to do the same. Also, as he is to stay in the one place for as long as he is called there, that could most certainly involve going from one house to another, even in search of better digs, so to speak.

Otherwise, the other stuff applies to pastors. And some of it applies to you, too, dear Baptized. As much as these men were sent out as lambs among wolves, and pastors today are often treated as lambs in wolves' dens, so you, too, can be found a Jesus' little lambs in a world full of wolves. But, by faith in Jesus, you would have it no other way.

It's the same faith that would turn an ordinary, Gentile physician into an evangelist. St. Luke, the writer of today's Gospel lesson, was converted and took upon himself to give a detailed account of the life of Jesus and that of the early Church. By holy inspiration, we are gifted with his volumes: his Gospel and the Book of Acts.

How could a Gentile turn into an evangelist? He was like the people in today's text who heard, "Peace to this house," and became a son of peace. For him, the message of Christ crucified was enough to leave his life behind and become a Christian. And who knows, his conversion might have drawn the ire of his father and mother and siblings, as he wrote when Jesus said,

Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (Luke 12:52-53)

The division he may have suffered from his friends and family was worth it for the sake of the peace that passes all understanding. (cf. Philippians 4:7)

This is your life as a Christian, dear Baptized. You are living in this world of wolves, but you are the precious lambs of Jesus. The world will hate and revile you because of whose name you bear, having been marked by His cross as one He has redeemed. The world hates Jesus, just as it once hated Him to the point of death. And the world will wish the same ill for you because of that.

It can be enough at times to make you want to abandon the faith, to renounce your baptism, and to live with the sinners rather than die with the saints. It could give you pause if you are presented with an opportunity to speak to Gospel of peace in Jesus' name so that you decide to keep quiet instead. In preservation of your life, it's enough to give you cause to deny Jesus if you are give the choice between renounce and live or confess and die.

Therefore, Jesus says, "[D]o not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. (Luke 9:23-26)

Dear hearers, Jesus died your death that would destroy both soul and body in hell. Jesus took up His cross for you. Jesus lost his life for your sake in order that you would be saved for His sake. He was not ashamed to go to the cross for you so that you would not be lost. And it was His death that brought you peace; not peace on earth, not peace as the world can give (cf. John 14:27), but peace between you and His Father in heaven.

That's the message of the men Jesus sent out in today's Gospel: peace. "Peace to this house." That's the message you are privileged to bring to those whom you meet along the road, that they have peace with God for the sake of Jesus Christ. It is the message that your pastor brings to you week in and week out, a message proclaimed in the Gospel according to St. Luke. Your God is come to you in the person of Jesus Christ; He has come for you and brought you peace with the Father through His blood. Peace to this house—peace to you; you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.