

Sermon for the Festival of Saint Luke October 18, 2026 jj
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Where's the peace? We talk about peace, we wish it for our world, we speak to our fellow Christians, "Peace be with you," but still, complete peace at all times, seems to evade us. It can be very frightening now to step out into our world from which peace has fled. Even elementary school campuses are not safe, as we see the horrible images on the news. Europe has now been overrun by a Muslim invasion that had been dreaded even back in the days of Martin Luther. In the US, state after state allows and promotes one degradation after another. It's hard to tell which card in this hellish deck does the worst damage to peace: is it gay marriage, assisted suicide, insurgent Islam, rampant divorce, abortion, transgender rights, or outright persecution left and right of Christian beliefs and values? Peace and goodwill to men are hard to find, so that we question whether it really does exist after all. Where is this peace we so love to talk about? Where are we to look for it?

Saint Luke was a Christian like you and I; he also, like us, desired the peace that God had promised to the Church. He probably did not himself get to see Jesus during his lifetime, but in spite of that, the Holy Spirit moved him to make a diligent search for accurate historical testimony of our Lord's ministry, and then to write it down in masterful order so that believers themselves could travel along with Jesus, hear the actual words from His mouth that established a heavenly kingdom, and then commune together with other baptized Christians in the same faith and be filled with a purified, holy love for God and each other. Simply put, Luke found peace. He knew it came

from Jesus, and he was inspired by God to write it so that all people of all times would receive this lasting, permanent peace.

The mission of our Lord's seventy-two servants, other than the Twelve disciples, and divided into 36 teams of two, is a part of the grand Jesus history that you'll only find in the Gospel of Luke. These heralds had a specific, narrow job description: first they proclaim peace to the house where they'll stay, then they eat whatever they're given. Once they heal the sick with the powerful Word of Jesus, then they finally are to announce: "The kingdom of God has come near." Did Luke include this event just for us to listen to it, then say: "That's interesting. I wonder why Matthew didn't write about that." No. There was a specific reason, and the Holy Spirit wanted you to see yourself and your role in Christ's holy Church as you reflect and meditate on this passage. We are to consider how the Kingdom of God has also come near to us, today, here in this place. Where are the "sons of peace" in and around the Ancient City Saint Augustine in the year 2026? How do we have the same peace among us now, as those 72 heralds had in their lips and in the towns where they went?

If we are going to face the facts, we will have to acknowledge that there is going to be no peace without violence. The very Son of God Himself had the power to say, "Let there be peace!" and there would have been peace, right then and there. But just like in the human world, peace will not reign until evil is defeated. At first, Jesus' battles didn't look bloody and violent. They were very

one-sided. He would appear, the demons would shriek, but they had to leave upon His command. Sickesses and disabilities had to obey His bidding and instantly unbind their victims. Bread and fish even had no choice but to multiply themselves once the Savior broke the bread and prayed. Hunger was banished. Yet Jesus was very clear with His disciples, especially with the Twelve closest to Him: the Son of Man will be handed over to be killed, then rise again on the third day. That's the violence that would bring peace. It had to be that way. The sacrifice of Jesus' precious blood was necessary because mankind, including you and me, violently turned against our God and we have sinned against Him in thought, word and deed. We tired from hearing the Word, and neglected to hold it up for ourselves, our family, or our world as the Holy Word of God that it is. We exalted ourselves and lifted our desires ahead of God's or our neighbor's.

When you hear your pastor's word of forgiveness, however, you are hearing peace in the face of violence—both the violence of sin that you suffer from others, and the violence against God that you have done. The kingdom of God has come near to you, not that you see anything different, but it still is here, announced and handed out in this very place. You can say Peace be with you to your neighbor, that means you forgive them, too. And so, Jesus has promised to be right here, building His kingdom, even though we look around and on a given day we tend to see more space in these pews than we would like. Be not discouraged, for whether we are a few, or the Lord blesses us with many more friends to join us, Jesus still has won the violent battle that guaranteed you peace. Will He heal you from what is currently bothering you, or will He allow you to suffer some

more? Be not afraid, for His precious Word is all that you need, and the rest He will provide according to His loving will. Remember, Luke was a physician, yet with all his scientific learning and knowledge of the body's abilities, he had to know that the most important healing was a healed heart, forgiven and made clean and new by the Blood of Christ.

Beware that you simply take it easy, though, because forgiveness doesn't work like that. Temptations to sin will constantly attack and entice you. The Church is always going to be a lamb among wolves in this world. There will be opponents to the truth who will succeed at doing you great harm—like what happened to Paul. But they will never succeed in reversing Jesus' victory or His peace. Paul's confidence is the same as yours; he said: The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. He also said, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness. What a comforting thing that will be for you, too, since you will get to say that for yourself! Jesus fought the good fight, and therefore peace, true and lasting peace, is yours. You didn't have to prove yourself worthy of it, you did not have to make yourself good enough. You simply loved Jesus and hated your sins. He did the rest.

How did you get this healing? Where's this peace for you? Just ask Saint Luke. The Peace of God that passes far beyond our human understanding is found and actually obtained when you hear the announcement from Christ's appointed man, the pastor: The Kingdom of God has come near. You may

recognize that announcement better as:
Upon this your confession, I by virtue of my office as the called and ordained servant of the word, forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. That's where your peace comes from: forgiveness. In Baptism you are bonded with Him. In Communion you eat together with Him as well as with all who are bonded together in one, unified and agreed confession of faith. In a common mission, you the entire church have a role to play as you are sent out in your own callings into the world to serve your neighbors, loving them in place of and instead of yourself. Is this going to instantly make our world a safe place and shield us from suffering of all types? No, but we are assured that our Lord of peace will be with us always, and at the very end, that is, at the final appearing of Jesus at the end of the world, all this that has gone awry in our world will be set right. The present world, with which many unfortunately are in love with all its temporary pleasures, will one day pass away and we will finally see the great kingdom to which right now, you and I belong as permanent citizens.

Like Luke, and Saint Paul too, be filled with eagerness to get more and more familiar with the Bible, the Holy Scriptures. Notice the interesting detail in Paul's letter to Timothy—I think it is fascinating. You can understand why he would want Timothy to bring his cloak when he comes to meet him in prison, since he is bound with chains as though he were a criminal. There would have been no other way he was going to keep warm. Paul also wanted his books, and then this—above all the parchments. The animal skins that have the more recent writing on them. These are by all accounts truly one of a kind documents. I have

wondered whether or not this tidbit might be mentioning the first records of Jesus and His disciples that would eventually be written as the Gospels. Maybe Luke, who is there with Paul, would be interested in including what Paul has in mind in his two volumes that would be preserved up to this very day. But whatever those precious writings were, you have writings just like them preserved and translated for your use right there in your own Bible. Thanks be to God that He gave faithful, dedicated disciples like Luke and Paul to write the Lord's words down for us to heal us with forgiveness and give us unending peace. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.