

The 4th Sunday after Pentecost
“Rejoicing in God’s mission to save all people!”
Luke 10:17-21
July 6, 2025
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 4th Sunday after Pentecost is from
Luke 10:17-21.

“17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” 18 And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” 21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

So far the text:

Did you see anything in the sky this weekend on Friday, July the 4th? A light show of drones, maybe? We don’t always go out and find a fireworks display because, well, you can see them just stepping out your front door, but this year we went to Louie’s backyard on the island and watched the show on the bay. Impressive to say the least!

We were treated to 20 minutes of non-stop colorful explosions of beauty with patriotic music simultaneously playing in the background. One of the songs I heard a little bit of was the Battle Hymn of the Republic. It’s a favorite of mine.

The first stanza lyrics speak of the battle which our Lord waged against evil.
*“Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on.”*

The disciples in our text returned from their missionary trip rejoicing because of the victories that God had given them over evil spirits. And Jesus told them what He saw in the sky – Satan falling like lightning. Now that’s a sight like none other. That’s the best light display ever! For that’s the lightning of His terrible swift sword of judgement upon the devil...trampling out the grapes of wrath!

Why did Jesus see this? Because His message of the Gospel – “Peace to this house” was being proclaimed by the 70 He had sent out. And where this message of peace – true peace – forgiveness of sins in Jesus – the Office of the Keys – was received in faith by those in the home – there was freedom! True freedom and peace for troubled consciences – troubled by the accusing hand of Satan pointing out the sinner’s transgressions.

When the message of peace and reconciliation with God through Christ is received, there is peace in the believer’s heart. And when that happens by the power of the Holy Spirit, Satan falls like lightning, over and over again. The Gospel of peace releases one who is born captive in sin, in Satan’s dominion, into freedom of life.

And there is rejoicing! Rejoicing by the angels in heaven over one sinner who repents! There was rejoicing by Jesus to hear of the victories that the Good News of the Gospel was working in the hearts of those who heard it.

“I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

This is all God’s work. From those who believe they are wise and able to achieve salvation on their own, the Gospel is hidden. But on those who completely despair of one’s own strength and trust only in the gift of salvation, on babes that is, the Good News is revealed...Christ crucified.

So we heard Paul say in our epistle reading from Galatians 6:

“God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

God’s work 100%...Christ crucified to me! That’s our boasting! That’s our joy!

Well, the 70 came back rejoicing, but Jesus had to put things in the right perspective. For the disciples were focused on the works that they had done. Jesus had given them power to drive out demons and they were captivated with themselves that even the demons were subject to them in Jesus' name.

They were focused on themselves. Isn't that always sinful man's problem? Our problem? Sinful man gets caught up in himself or herself and sees one's service not as one's duty, but one's glory. What does Jesus say?

“rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

Our works of faith do not and could never earn our salvation. To focus on oneself is the very slippery slope of pharisaical deceit that I am the cause and effecter of my eternal glory.

No, Jesus reminded them and us as well that we don't write our names in heaven, but that they are written in heaven. That's the passive tense. That means that God wrote our names in heaven by His good and gracious work of sending Jesus to die and rise again for me and give me this gift by faith.

That's where my rejoicing lies! 100% in the work of the Triune God!

Jesus said in Matthew 7:

“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

I never knew you for there was no faith, only outward actions that the many relied upon. Jesus never knew these many by name for their names were not written in heaven by trusting in Him as babes. These acted as wise to themselves.

So on that last day, there are the 5 unwise virgins who didn't have the oil of faith in their lamps and pound of the shut door to heaven. Jesus says to them, **“Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.”**

Jesus goes on to give another illustration in Matthew 7:

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.”

And indeed there is sadness when the rains descend and floods come unexpectedly in this life in Kerrville as we heard. Children at a camp and adults lost their lives. Families are broken hearted. But, though earthly lives were taken at a young age, these were children at a Christian camp, and we pray that by God’s grace they had heard and believed in Jesus and that their names are written in heaven. And there is rejoicing even in the midst of such sadness. It is the only rejoicing that is possible.

It is the very reason that Jesus sent out the 70 and continues relentlessly to send forth workers into His harvest...because He wants all men to be saved from eternal destruction. Jesus wants all people to believe in Him who is the Rock of our Salvation and spend an eternity with Him in heaven.

We take much comfort in the words given to Isaiah in chapter 43 where our God says:
“But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. 3 For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;”

We are all passing through different waters and rivers in this life, but we have the assurance that our Lord, the Holy One of Israel, our Savior is with us.

When Jesus was crucified for us, Satan fell like lightening. He no longer can accuse us. For in our baptism, our sins were washed away and we were united with Christ. The devil fell like lightening. That was a fireworks display that the angels beheld in heaven. In Christ, we are victors over the devil. He has brought us out of death into His glorious Kingdom of grace.

So, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:

“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Yes, like Job, we will go through trials in this life, but the Lord will deliver us from them all. So we read in 2 Timothy 4:18:

“the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!”

God receives all glory for what He has done for us! So our Psalm 66 declares:

“Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men.” What has He done? **“who keeps our soul among the living, and does not allow our feet to be moved.”**

This is the cause of Jesus’ rejoicing. His people being comforted by the Good News of the Gospel as we heard in our Old Testament lesson.

“Rejoice with Jerusalem, And be glad with her, all you who love her; Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; 11 That you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom, That you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.”

And Jesus’ rejoicing is that He extends His mission to all people...to the Gentiles as Isaiah continues to say:

“Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. Then you shall feed; On her sides shall you be carried, And be dandled on her knees.”

The flowing river of the Gospel to all people! To you and to me!

As it flows to you and me, it also flows from you and me to others as we share the peace of Jesus and rejoice in His work among the nations!

The final verse of the Battle Hymn of the republic captures this thought so well.

“In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea, with a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me; As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free! While God is marching on.”

The Gospel of Jesus truth marches on through you and me and Satan falls like lightning when hearts believe this truth. Freedom, true freedom is given and names are written in heaven. We rejoice with Jesus! Amen!

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)