

Pastor Don Nelson

Sermon: September 22, 2013
Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“MISSION OF SHALOM”

Luke 10:1-12

Time is short. The End is coming for you, for me, for humankind in its entirety.

{Gal 1:4; Rev 1:115} It will occur in one of two ways.

Either each of us will die and enter eternity separately, or Christ will return to bring this “**present evil age**” to a close and “**The kingdom of the world [will] become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah.**”

How much of this life is left to us? Only God knows – and he is not telling.

? The question that we can (and indeed, must) answer is: *What will we do with the decades, the years, the months, the days our Creator has granted us?*

What deeds shall we do? What words shall we speak? What relationships shall we invest in? What causes shall we support?

☐ Please allow these questions to percolate in the back of your mind as we explore our text in Luke 10.

■ Verse 1: “**After this**” – {Lk 9: 51-62} after “**Jesus resolutely [sets] out for Jerusalem**” (and the cross that awaits him), and after three men refuse to go with him because they think discipleship is too costly – “**After this the Lord [appoints] seventy-two others**” (some ancient manuscripts have the number “**seventy**” instead) “**and [sends] them two-by-two ahead of him to every town and place where he [is] about to go.**”

{Nu 11:17, 25} The numbers seventy and seventy-two are noteworthy. During Israel’s Exodus from Egypt Moses chose seventy elders on whom the LORD “**put**” “**some of the power of the Spirit.**” They shared the ministry with Moses.

{Nu 11:26} There were another “**two men... Eldad and Medad,**” whom Moses did not select. “**Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp.**” These seventy men, plus two, were empowered to help lead Israel through the desert toward the Promised Land.

Fast-forward 1,500 years. Messiah chooses and empowers seventy-two disciples to help prepare Israel for the new Exodus, through the kingdom of this world and into the kingdom of God.

This time the goal is not to impose an ethnically homogenous nation-state in one particular place; rather, it is to create a diverse spiritual kingdom that will span the globe in, among, and through Christ Followers. This time God’s people will not take up the sword and remove sinful nations from the land; instead, they will take up the Good News and reconcile sinners to the Living God.

■ To that end, in verse 5 Lord Jesus instructs the Seventy-Two: “**When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If the head of the house loves peace, your peace will rest on that house; if not, it will return to you.**”

“**Peace to this house**” is the first thing they are to say. Luke uses the Greek ἰρενή (irenē). Most (if not all) of the seventy-two speak Greek. But their

mother tongue, the language of their soul, is a Hebrew dialect called Aramaic. If the home they enter is Jewish they will say “*Shalom*.” If it is Gentile they will say *ἰρηνή*. Either way, they will mean “peace” in the O.T. sense of the word.

Shalom is a thicker word than our English “peace.” It has layers of nuance and undertones and overtones.

📖 To be blessed with *Shalom* is to be complete and sound and to live well. *Shalom* includes: a contented heart, a sound mind, and a healthy body; success and fulfillment; shared prosperity; right relationship and social harmony; and, naturally, the absence of war.

Shalom involves three dimensions: vertically, we can be at peace with God; horizontally, we can be at peace with our neighbors; and inwardly, we can be at peace with our own selves.

Shalom is goal and process, end and means, destination and journey. Biblical peace is noun and verb, adjective and adverb. It is a thing to possess, an action to do, and a manner in which to act.

Let’s pause a moment. Humanity is wracked by war, violence, poverty, disease, unrest, and confusion. We are in desperate need of *Shalom* – not only in Syria, not only in the bad neighborhoods, but in our work-places and schools and homes. It isn’t only *them* who are in need, is it?! It is *us*: *our* colleagues, *our* friends, *our* children, some of us in this sanctuary.

Kind and merciful God, we are pleading: Grant us your peace!

{Jdg 6:24; 1 Th 5:23; Is 9:6; 2 Th 3:16} *Shalom* is a gift from God. The Father is “**The LORD Is Peace**” and “**God of peace**,” and his Son Jesus is the “**Prince of Peace**” and “**Lord of peace**.”

{Lev 26:6} There is no deep, abiding peace apart from him. As the catchphrase goes: “**Know God**,” (k-n-o-w) “**know peace; no God**,” (n-o) “**no peace**.” He has declared: “**I will grant peace in the land**.” Not *you* will grant peace, “**I will**.”

But this does not let us off the hook. *Shalom* is also our responsibility. We must seek it, pray for it, work for it, and exercise it in our relationships.

The passage in which the LORD says, “**I will grant peace**” begins with the conditional phrase, “**If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands**.” God’s peacemaking depends, in part, on our peacemaking.

That is from the Old Testament. Still, God’s demand for *Shalom* has not diminished, for he has announced “**the good news of peace through Jesus Christ**” (Acts 10:36). The Savior “**came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near**” (Ephesians 2:17).

Consequently, “**Peace to this house**” is more than a courteous greeting on the part of the Seventy-Two. It is the heart of the Gospel message!

Not only is this word fundamental, it is powerful. “**Peace to this house**” does not merely express hope, or convey an idea; under the right conditions, it accomplishes a purpose: “**If the head of the house**

loves peace, your peace will rest on that house; if not, it will return to you.”

Shalom is divine gift and human responsibility. It is a collaborative venture between God and us.

It follows that the response of the people in **“every town and place where [Jesus is] about to go”** determines the actions of the Seventy-Two.

■ Verses 8-12: **“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you”** – the implication here is that even if their hosts serve ritually unclean food, the Seventy-Two are to eat it.

“Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day” – the day of Judgment – **“for Sodom than for that town.”**

It sounds jarring, and not very peaceable. How can we make sense of this?

First, it makes sense when we grasp reality: to reject Jesus is to reject Shalom.

{Eph 2:14} Not only has Christ facilitated vertical peace between God and humankind, horizontal peace among individuals and communities, and inward peace within the self, **“He himself is our peace, who has... destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.”**

It is possible to achieve a degree of social peace apart from Messiah. Most people can manage to get along pretty well without him, at least for a while.

But authentic Shalom – holistic peace that is founded on reconciliation with the Living God, that breaks down the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female, and that empowers us to create communities of justice and righteousness – that kind of peace cannot exist without the Son of God to mediate it.

May God forgive us if ever we leave Jesus, the Prince of Peace, out of our peacemaking!

Second, it makes sense when we embrace peacemaking as our divinely-ordained mission.

In Second Corinthians 5:18-19 the apostle Paul states that **“God...reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”**

Evangelism is peacemaking. Christian fellowship is peacemaking. Praying for the spiritual and physical needs of our neighbors is peacemaking. Deeds of compassion, by which we meet the needs of the poor and sick, are peacemaking. Acts of justice, by which we strive for liberty and equality and dignity for the oppressed, are peacemaking.

Peacemaking is neither peripheral, nor optional. It is essential to Christian faith and discipleship.

May God forgive us who claim to follow and honor Jesus, if ever we fail to work for peace! May God forgive us doubly if ever we work against peace!

Third, this makes sense when we realize that our time is short.

This takes us back to where we started. The End is coming for you, for me, for our whole species.

{Rev 20:15; 21:2-3} When the time is fulfilled, the King of kings and Lord of lords will return and “**God’s dwelling place**” will be among his people – but “**All whose names [are] not...written in the book of life**” will be excluded from his presence, for they have rejected the Son of God and his peace.

Until then, we will enter eternity separately. Everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you pass on the street, everyone on Earth, will die.

What better way is there to live than to walk closely with Jesus and devote ourselves to his mission of Shalom?

May God forgive us who know the peace of Jesus, if we are wasting precious time!

Luke 10:1-12 is the Word of the Lord.