

St. Luke the Evangelist's Day
Luke 10:1-9
October 17–18, 2009
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church Girard, Illinois

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God in the Flesh comes to redeem mankind, to make for Himself a people who were no people: by healing souls afflicted and burdened by sin, by inviting and welcoming back the rebellious, wasteful sons, by opening His house and table to the Gentiles, the Prostitutes and Tax-collectors, liars, cheaters, the sinners. He sends out seventy representatives with a message of peace and hope: **“The Kingdom of God is here.”** But some do not want peace. His message reveals the thoughts of their hearts. It causes the rising and falling of many. And the anger, the hatred, the betrayal, and the violence He inspires first against Himself and, then, against His followers, pierces St. Mary's soul like a sword. It will pierce your soul, also.

The Kingdom of God is here in Christ Jesus. It is where God rules by Grace, by forgiveness, through His Word. But that Kingdom is a threat to the devil's kingdom. The devil rules by lust, greed, and fear, through coercion, bribes, and lies. No man can be a citizen of both kingdoms, nor can he have two masters. So the devil fights for every soul, wages war against every bearer of that holy peace, turning brother against brother, friend against friend, breaking hearts and piercing souls along the way. He divides the Kingdom by dangling petty rewards, offering earthly glory and honor he cannot give, recruiting traitors and encouraging treason for a fading and unsatisfying moment of fleshly pleasure. And the fatalities are great. Ten thousand fall. The sons of Judas, those self-seekers and promoters, attempt to steal the kingdom for themselves and the devil's lying **“gospel”** of **“peace”** that Jesus did not bring, of **“peace”** without sacrifice or God, of **“peace”** that is no peace.

Where are those noble men of old, who counted not the cost, whose conviction was matched only by their courage and their zeal to proclaim the Truth? Who will stand against the prince of Hell and suffer his abuse? Who will boldly say that God is good?

Where are those who will not turn, who will not compromise, who will not lie to save face or to gain an earthly reward? O Luke, I hope you cannot see the dismal state of affairs on this side of the Church! I hope you do not know our weak, betraying, scheming ways. I hope our fear-laden whispering of the Truth is mistaken in heaven for the soft prayers of the martyrs engulfed in flame. Lord, have mercy. We are not worthy of Your Heritage, of Your Word, or of Your Church.

But the Word is not stopped. It is not driven by our worthiness, but by Christ's! Those seventy preached against all odds, announced the arrival of the Kingdom in God's Son, the Son of Mary. And in some strange and unlikely places, across an ocean and a sea, through the years, that goodly seed takes root and grows and bears a hundredfold! That Word, so carefully researched by Luke, is good. That Word, painfully penned and scratched onto papyrus by Luke, is powerful. That Word, delivered and believed in grace by Luke, changes sinners into saints, converts cowards into heroes, creates confidence in the depressed and worried, and makes ordinary men into Evangelists. For that Word does not fail. It will not pass away. Through St. Luke, that dear physician and brave martyr, God has left unto us that same, mighty Word and revealed salvation. The Kingdom ours, remaineth.

For God in the Flesh came to redeem mankind, to make for Himself a people who were no people: by healing souls afflicted and burdened by sin, by inviting and welcoming back the rebellious, wasteful sons, by opening His house and table to the Gentiles, the Prostitutes and Tax-collectors, the sinners. Come, O you children of the Word, you citizens of Grace, you friends of God and receive the medicine of immortality. Be healed. Feast and live. Make the angels rejoice.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.