

6th Sunday after Pentecost C (7/4/10 – *When satan Falls Like Lightning*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

The Word of the Lord we will consider this day – the *Sixth Sunday after Pentecost* in the life of the Church ... *Independence Day* in our secular lives – is the *Holy Gospel Lesson* ... especially the last verses. *The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your Name!” And He [Jesus] said to them, “I saw satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your name is written in heaven* [LK 10.17-20]. Thus far the text.

Our Savior sent out the seventy-two to proclaim the Gospel. These were seventy-two **other** disciples – not numbered among the Twelve Apostles. They went ahead of Jesus, *two by two, into every town and place where He Himself was about to go* [10.1]. In this way, they were like the Twelve in the previous chapter of LUKE’s Gospel. They were also like John the Baptizer before them. They were sent before the face of the Lord Jesus Christ to prepare His way [LK 3.4; 7.27]. The Lord sent them as His ambassadors – *as lambs in the midst of wolves* [10.3]. They would be gentle – armed only with the Word of Christ. The enemy – satan ... the world ... even our own sinful flesh – would be a ravenous, roaring lion seeking to devour them ... **and us** [1PET 5.8]. They were not to weigh themselves down with earthly burdens. *Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals* [LK 10.4a]. They were to *greet no one on the road* [10.4b]. This is all simply to say that the mission they have from the Lord is urgent ... very urgent – indeed, life and death urgent.

The Gospel must go out. That is why our Lord urges us to *pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest* [10.2]. But this urgency does **not** mean that they – we – may use any means, any message, whatsoever. Christ gives them the message they are to proclaim.

It is the same message the Church must proclaim today. This means that they may **not** alter the message. They dare not water it down until it is pleasing to the masses. Some will receive the pure message of the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ alone. Others will reject it. But they must bring it just the same – just the same to all people ... without prejudice or partiality. For the Son of God brings forgiveness, life, and salvation – *peace* – for all people alike. It is for the religious and the not-very-religious, for the pious and the thief, for the sinner and tax-collector just as much as for the Pharisee and Sadducee. It is **for you** and for me.

Sometimes – too often – we reject the Word God’s messengers bring to us. We find ourselves caught in transgression [GAL 6.1a]. Yet we refuse to turn from it in repentance – even when God would *restore us in a spirit of gentleness* [6.1b]. And whenever we refuse to acknowledge our sin, whenever we refuse to heed and receive God’s Word, we place ourselves in a spiritually dangerous position. For it is just at such times that satan would try to devour us. Like a serpent, he has his venomous fangs at the ready. Like a roaring lion, he is crouching at the door ... ready to pounce. And if we continue in our impenitence, we even run the risk of hearing: *Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you* [LK 10.11].

Therefore, do not sow to your own flesh [GAL 6.8a]. That is, do not plant the seeds of rebellious pride and sin in your daily life; *for whatever one sows, that will he also reap* [6.7b]. Do not cultivate transgression in your life. If you plant sin and strife in your life, that is the corruption you will also reap. Do not give in to the temptations of the evil one ... or satan’s deception and lies. *Do not grow weary of doing good* [6.9a]. As you *have opportunity ... do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith* [6.10]. *Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ* [6.2]. That is to say, fulfill the love of Christ for all mankind.

Test your own work [6.4a]. Have you lived according to the Word we have heard this morning? Do you speak the truth in love to your fellow

Christians – and to your family, friends, and neighbors? Have you born their burdens? Or have you sown to the flesh – indulging in only your own, selfish desires ... even sin? Then repent ... and receive the Gospel-Word of *peace* that the Lord sends His messengers – even me – to proclaim.

And know this: whenever the message of Christ comes by way of His messengers, *The Kingdom of God has come near to you* [10.9b]. That truth applies to those who heard it in our text. It applies to those who have never heard it before, but now hear it for the first time. It applies to those who have heard it before and fallen away. It applies **to you** here today.

Christ your Lord and Savior *has come near to your*. Christ, the embodiment of the Kingdom of God – your Lord and King and Savior – comes near to you today! He comes in His Word and in His Sacrament. He comes to bring to you the *peace* He won for you on His Cross. He comes to comfort you with His tender lovingkindness [ISA 66.13]. He comes to bear you up and encourage you in the midst of your trials and tribulations. He comes to cause your heart to rejoice ... your soul to *flourish like the grass* [66.14] in the abundance of His forgiveness, mercy, and love. His *peace ... like a river* [66.12b] He pours out upon you here today and always ... *like an overflowing stream* [66.12c]. The LORD comes to make known to you, His servants, the hands that won your salvation when He stretched them out upon the Cross [66.14c] and took away your iniquity.

Moreover, Christ your Lord promises you that He will provide for your needs – both physical and spiritual. Christ promises that by your Baptism into His death and resurrection, He has made you a new creation in Him [ROM 6.3-6; GAL 6.15]. The Holy Spirit is sown in you; and *from the Spirit* you *reap eternal life* [GAL 6.8]. This eternal life is yours **already**. And still, this life is **yet** to be revealed **to** you ... and **in** you more fully – when you are brought to heaven ... and again on the Last Day.

In the mean time, be sure of this: that the power of the enemy shall not be able to hurt you permanently ... much less snatch you from your loving

hands of your heavenly Father ... and your Lord Jesus Christ. ***Your names are written in heaven*** – so rejoice ... even in the midst of difficulty. Even when life seems a struggle, you may ***boast ... in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ***. For by His Cross – and through faith in Him Who willingly hung there, bearing all the burdens of your sin to take it away – ***the world has been crucified to you, and you to the world*** [6.14].

And whenever this Gospel of your forgiveness by means of Christ and His Cross is proclaimed – whenever it is read ... taught ... preached ... shared – then ***satan Falls Like Lightning***. Whenever Absolution is declared – the forgiveness of all your sins for the sake of Christ – that is ***When satan Falls Like Lightning***. Whenever a child – or adult – is baptized, ***satan Falls Like Lightning***. Whenever we pray the Lord's Prayer ... whenever we confess the Christian faith using the summarizing words of the Creeds, that is ***When satan Falls Like Lightning***. Whenever the Words of Our Lord are recited in the Sacrament of the Altar – and the Body and Blood of Christ are distributed to repentant believers for the forgiveness of sins – that is ***When satan Falls Like Lightning***. Whenever a sinner repents, the angels of heaven rejoice – and ***satan Falls Like Lightning***. Whenever a believer dies in the faith, and the soul is swept up into the eternal glories of heaven – though the body rests in the dust of the ground until the Day of Resurrection – that is ***When satan Falls Like Lightning***.

And on the Last Day – when Christ raises your bodies from the dust of death and gives us perfected, immortal, and glorious bodies – then, on that Day, satan will ***fall like lightning*** and be forever cast into the lake of eternal fire [REV 20.10] ... never to plague or bother or tempt you again. And we – on the other hand – shall rejoice eternally in heaven. ... where our names are already now written in the Book of Life of Christ, the Lamb of God, Who has taken away our sins ... and the sins of the whole world ... to bring to us the everlasting ***peace*** of the very near ***Kingdom of God***.

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]