



## Research article

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**“PEACE TO THIS HOUSE” (LUKE 10:1, 5-6) AND ITS APPLICATION IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA**

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## ABSTRACT

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Luke 10:1, 5-6 falls within the larger context of missionary mandate in Luke's gospel. The offer of blessing, *eirēnē tō oikō toutō* (Peace to this house), is not a simple form of greeting, but it has a deeper significance of God's presence. Such a peace greeting is rooted in the Old Testament term shalom (Gen 43:23; 1 Sam 25:6). The greeting is actually “an offer of goodwill from God” and is symbolic of “God's gracious offer” or “favour” on those who form this household. It could be wishing for “peace” in a world marred by “wars,” conflict, and violence or it could be a wish for protection from God. The paper contends that peace is therefore not primarily something achieved by force or military endeavour. Rather, it is predominantly peace with God, resulting in the harmonious relationships and well-being of a multicultural community of the people of God. It employs the historical-critical method of biblical exegesis to analyze the text to situate the fruits of the interpretation within an African context. The significance of the paper lies in the fact that owing to a massive rise in conflicts and wars, particularly in Africa, there is a great quest for peace. It provides a responsible and pastoral approach in the presentation of the gospel of peace to a continent torn apart by war.

**Keywords:**

*Peace, war, conflicts,  
Africa, contemporary*



## 1. Introduction

Drum beats of war permeate most parts of the world especially Africa, and numerous strategies have been evolved to bring about peace. The significance of biblical laws in ensuring peace throughout the world does not appear to have received significant attention, despite researchers continuing suggestions and answers to the threat of war, conflict, and violence from various perspectives. Luke 10:1, 5-6 falls within the larger context of missionary mandate in Luke's gospel. Luke's concept of peace is both political and theological, although the theological emphasis takes precedence—peace with God. By using the peace motif, Luke is not giving a theological interpretation of the political category of peace as perceived by the Greco-Roman world.<sup>1</sup>

The offer of blessing in the pericope, *eirēnē tō oikō toutō* (Peace to this house), is not a simple form of greeting, but it has a deeper significance of God's presence. Such a peace greeting is rooted in the Old Testament term *shalom* (see Gen 43:23; 1 Sam 25:6). The greeting is “an offer of goodwill from God” and is symbolic of “God's gracious offer” or “favour” on those who form a household. It could be wishing for “peace” in a world marred by “wars,” conflict, and violence or it could be a wish for protection from God. This paper asks the following questions: What does Luke mean by peace, and what are its effects? What is the significance of the motif of peace in Luke's theological agenda in relation to African context?

The paper contends that peace is therefore not primarily something achieved by force or military endeavour. Rather, it is predominantly peace with God, resulting in the harmonious relationships and well-being of a multicultural community of the people of God. It employs the historical-critical method of biblical exegesis to analyze the text to situate the fruits of the interpretation within an African context. The paper discovers that humans can only ensure peace as they have right relationship with God, fellow humans and other creation. It is therefore recommended that righteousness, fairness, justice, equity, honesty, truth and respect

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<sup>1</sup> William M. Swartley, “Politics and peace (*Eirēnē*) in Luke's Gospel” in Cassidy, R.J., & Scharper, P.J., eds. *Political issues in Luke-Acts* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 18–37.



for human dignity should prevail in Africa and in the world in general for peace to reign. Also, adequate steps should be taken by government, people in positions of authority and every African to ensure good governance and protect the rights and privileges of fellow humans. The significance of the paper lies in the fact that owing to a massive rise in conflicts and wars, particularly in Africa, there is a great quest for peace. It provides a responsible and pastoral approach in the presentation of the gospel of peace to a continent torn apart by war.

## **2. Lukan Peace Motif**

References to the peace motif occur at key points throughout the Lukan narrative. The motif is used either to introduce an important piece of Lukan narrative or to close it. It also sometimes serves as a summary of a substantial discourse of the narrative. To begin with, it should be noted that Luke 10:1–12 is from the Q source used by both Luke and Matthew. It is situated at the climax of Luke's gospel. It is noteworthy that Luke places the subject of peace in very strategic places in his narrative. First it was introduced right at the beginning of his selected material in the infancy narratives, but it is also present at the punchline of his story, in the so-called travel narratives (9:51–19:27).

The whole world is embroiled with violence and many strategies have been advanced to institute peace. While scholars continue to proffer solutions to the menace of violence from different perspectives, the importance of biblical injunctions in ensuring peace the world over seem to have not enjoyed adequate attention. This paper following the example of Professor E. N. Chinwokwu's Biblico-theological endeavours, explored the biblical basis for peace which can serve as a tool for ensuring peace in the world and in Africa in particular. Taking clues from the reading of biblical passages like Leviticus 26:1-6 and Isaiah 32:17 – 18, and referring to other passages and the concept of peace in pre-colonial Africa, the paper discovered that humans can only ensure peace as they have right relationship with God, fellow humans and other creation. It is therefore recommended that righteousness, fairness, justice, equity, honesty, truth and respect for human dignity should prevail in Africa and in the world in general for peace to reign. Also, adequate steps should be taken by government, people in positions of authority and every African to ensure good governance and protect the right and privileges of fellow humans.



The Lukan message of peace has a general scope in that it entails an offer which is extended to every house and town we enter, to borrow Luke's language. Nevertheless, although the proclamation of the message of peace is made to "any house" into which the missionaries enter, peace will only rest on the son of peace (Luke 10:6). The peace which Luke is advocating can be received or rejected. J.B Green presents two possibilities as to what a "son of peace" could refer to: "that is, one whose life is characterized by peace which has already begun to embody the wholeness these delegates of Jesus's mission will communicate, or it can refer to those who are predisposed to welcome these messengers together with their messages."<sup>2</sup> Besides that, the son of peace could also mean someone who already belongs to the eschatological era of peace, that is, a child of the kingdom. Nonetheless, the point is that not everyone to whom the message of peace is preached is a son of peace; only those will accept the gospel, which contains a message of peace (Luke 10:5–6). This conclusion accords with Acts 13:48. Therefore, even though peace is preached to everyone, it does not reach everyone. Commenting on Acts 13:48, D. G. Peterson states that

not everyone is affected in the same way by the preaching of the gospel. God must open hearts to enable people to listen and respond with faith (cf. 16:14; 18:10). Those who seek the Lord from among the nations are those he has already claimed as his own (15:17). Yet, this does happen as God enables some to believe through the proclamation of the gospel (14:1).<sup>3</sup>

Lukan phrase, "peace to this house" (Luke 10:5) is more than just an ordinary greeting. It is the gospel which contains peace with the King who has already announced and inaugurated his kingdom. Moreover, referring to the Petrine speech in Cornelius's house, Joseph A. Fitzmyer asserts that "in effect, even though it is the last great missionary speech that Peter delivers in Acts, it is the beginning of apostolic testimony being borne to Gentiles without insistence on the obligation to obey the Mosaic Law."<sup>4</sup> Hence, peace means everything that the sinner will benefit from and enjoy by virtue of being accepted by God and included in the family of God's people.

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<sup>2</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke. New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 414.

<sup>3</sup> David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles in Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Apollos, 2009), 400.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Yale University Press, 1998), 459.



### 3. Luke 10:1, 5-6: Text And Translation (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup>After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ... <sup>5</sup>Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' <sup>6</sup>And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.

### 4. Luke 10:1, 5-6 In Its Context

The sending of the seventy-two in Luke 10:1, 5-6, has no other direct parallels in the Gospels. There is, however, a structural resemblance to the commissioning of the twelve narrative in Luke 9:1-6 with parallels in Mark 6:7-13 and Matt 10:5-16. Clearly, in these latter passages, Jesus sends his apostles into the mission. The narrative of Luke 10:1, therefore, expands the number and category of those sent to share in this divine work of evangelization. Luke 10:1 from the pericope of Luke 10:1-24, is set in the context of Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem (9:51–19:27). In the broader context, it comes after his ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50) and before his ministry in Jerusalem (19:28-21:38).<sup>5</sup> Geographically, the Lukan gospel sets the city of Jerusalem in sight, indicating an apparent movement towards this significant location. The ascent towards Jerusalem bears a literary and theological impart in understanding.<sup>6</sup>

In the immediate context, the commissioning of the seventy-two is set after Jesus was refused entrance through a Samaritan village because he was on his way to Jerusalem (9:51-56). The pericope is followed by Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, where he taught his disciples about who a neighbor is and how to be a merciful neighbour to others (10:25-37). The rejection by the Samaritan village does not, therefore, exclude them from God's mercies and missionary encounter, since everyone and everything God created is good (see Gen 1:31; 1 Tim 4:4)

It is noteworthy also that, the sending of the apostles into mission by Jesus in the synoptic gospels and their parallels (see Matt 10:5-16; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6), are all preceded by a string of miracle stories which include the healing of Jairus' daughter and the haemorrhaged

<sup>5</sup> Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 226.

<sup>6</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson and Todd C. Penner, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 220.



woman (Matt 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56). The twist here, however, is that, in the Markan account, this healing episode is followed by Jesus' rejection, not by a Samaritan village (see Luke 9:51-56), but by his hometown (Mark 6:1-6). The unbelief of his people amazed Jesus, such that he declared that "prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown and among their own kin and in their own house" (Mark 6:4).

The "sending of the twelve" story is set in the context of miracle stories (healing and feeding the multitude). In contrast, the "sending of the seventy-two" is set in the context of missionary activities, with its goal towards Jerusalem. Although, the missionary mandate of the Church derives from Matt 28:19-20, Luke 10:1-12 expands on this missionary outlook. It presupposes the importance of carrying out the missionary mandate without discrimination, since there is good, even in the least expected places, in this case, among the Samaritans.

### 5. Content Analysis of Luke 10:1, 5- 6

*Meta de tauta* (after this) in v. 1, links the mission of the seventy (two) to the previous passage which contains the radical demands and the cost of discipleship in 9:57-62. It presents a structural pattern similar to the sending of the twelve with the use of the verbs, *anedeizen* (appointed/commissioned) and *apestelen* (sent). The verb *anedeizen*, from *anadeiknumi*, means "to proclaim any one as elected to an office, to announce as appointed."<sup>7</sup> This word means to "show forth, display and hence make public and proclaim."<sup>8</sup> The use of this word by Luke is to show that disciples must count the cost and should be commissioned or elected by Christ for His work. This act of Jesus appointing these seventy (two) disciples in Luke 10 was done to "assign or commission"<sup>9</sup> or give a sense of duty or mission for them to go out to every city and place.

In the Old Testament (OT), *anadeiknum* in its rare different occurring forms appears in the LXX (Greek Septuagint) where it translates the Hebrew verbs *yada* (to know or to make

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 36.

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Luke, The International Critical Commentary* (New York: Edinburgh, 1951), 271.

<sup>9</sup> J. Reiling and J.L. Swellengrebel, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Luke* (London: The United Bible Societies, 1971), 401.



Known-Hab. 3:2; *minah* – to appoint or be counted in Dan 1:11 and *matsa*– to find or to be found in Dan 1:20. In these cases, the verb expresses a revelation of knowledge (Dan 1:20), the need for the Lord to reveal knowledge (Hab 3:2), and the appointment of a care-taker person given all rights, authority, and responsibility with accountability to the person appointing (Dan 1:11).

In the New Testament (NT), the word occurs in Luke 10:1, Luke 1:80 and Acts 1:24 with a common contextual understanding. On the one hand, in the context of Luke 1:80, the nominal form *anadeizeōs* from *anadeizis* which means "to lift, show forth or declare" expresses the meaning of a public appearance, commissioning or installation, a showing forth or an announcement.<sup>10</sup> The aorist imperative *anadeizon*, on the other hand, is found in Acts 1:24 where the apostles prayed that the Lord might *anadeizon* (reveal, show clearly or appoint) one of the two names to join the college of Apostles. In Luke 10:1, the verb *anadeizen* implies "to consecrate or set apart" or "to assign to a task or position". It indicates the showing forth or commissioning in a public sense of revelation and "public recognition of appointed officials." This understanding is expressed clearly in the sending of the seventy (two).<sup>11</sup>

It infers, therefore that it is a superior authority who publicly presents, commissions, or reveals a person or group of persons. In Luke 10:1, it is the Lord who commissions the seventy (two), with the sense of announcing them to the public and giving them the authority to carry out the mandate He entrusts on them.

Why Seventy-Two? Some manuscripts read seventy-two, while others read seventy. Kurt Aland opines that, although the number seventy occurs more frequently in the OT, the number seventy-two does not often appear except in Num 31:38. He strongly argues, for seventy-two, explaining that it is more likely for the copying to change from seventy-two to seventy than *vice-versa*. Nevertheless, on the merits of the importance of the available manuscripts, it is difficult to support the reading of "seventy" over "seventy-two" and *vice*

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<sup>10</sup>G. Abott-Smith., *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark,1999), 29.

<sup>11</sup> Martin M. Culy, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Joshua J. Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 341-342.



*versa*,<sup>12</sup> since they both are well attested in trustworthy ancient manuscripts. While in the NT, *ebdomēkonta* occurs five times with 11 other subordinate variables, in the OT; however, it is used in different contexts. There are seventy members of Jacob's family (Exod 1:5, seventy-five in LXX; Deut 10:22) and in Acts 7:14, they are seventy-five, like the LXX. Jerubbaal's sons are seventy in Jdg. 9:2. The king of Babylon was served for seventy years in exile (Jer 25:11). Yahweh's portion of goods was seventy-two (Num 31:38).

The significance of the seventy (two) can consequently, be filtered from the reference from two main OT passages. First, Yahweh instructs Moses, to appoint seventy elders to assist him in his responsibilities (Exod 24:1 and Num 11:16) and bestows his spirit of prophecy on them (Num 11:24-25). Two other men, Eldad and Medad, not present with the others also received the spirit and began to prophesy in the camp (Num 11:26). This brings the total number of the anointed elders to seventy-two. The other is the "table of nations" recorded in Gen 10. The overall record of nations is seventy in the MT and seventy-two in the LXX. Also, the total number of languages on the earth are seventy in the MT and seventy-two in the LXX (Gen 10:5, 20, 31). The numbering in Luke probably echoes the Table of Nations and languages of the world (Gen 10) and so, "represents and symbolizes the totality of all nations of the earth."<sup>13</sup>

Invariably, the link between the mission of the seventy-two and Gen 10, is the symbol of universality in their mission and the evangelization of the world.<sup>14</sup> Luke, therefore, develops the universality of the Church's mission in the ministry of Jesus. The number "seventy-two" thus encapsulates this mission with knowledge of the total number of elders (Num 11:16-26), table of nations (Gen 10:5-31), and the critical apparatus. The seventy-two would also represent the choice of appointing assistants to help carry out the missionary mandate of Jesus as with the seventy-two elders who assisted Moses in carrying out his work.

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<sup>12</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London – New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 151.

<sup>13</sup> Nathan C. Johnson, "‘Sent into All the World’ Luke's Sending of the Seventy (-Two): Intertextuality, Reception History, and Missional Hermeneutics," *Princeton Theological Review* 18, no. 1 (2015): 9-19, at 17.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, "Sent into All the World," 12.





*Heteros (The Others)*: The term *heteros* is predominant in the Luke-Acts corpus in place of *allos*, which is more prevalent in the other Synoptics. These terms, both translate as "others or another," and indicate the different functions, nuances, and usage by different evangelists.<sup>15</sup> K. Haacker opines that Luke bids to maintain the original meaning of *heteros* as "the other of two" in his distinctions and affinity for *heteros* over *allos*.<sup>16</sup> H. W. Beyer explains that "as an indefinite number, *heteros* denotes the new member of a series distinct from those which preceded (e.g., Luke 14:18; 1 Cor 12:8) ... As a definite number, it is used when two specific things or groups are compared or contrasted, (e.g., Ac. 23:6) .... As a distinguishing adjective or adverb, it denotes something which is not identical with what has been referred to previously. This may involve a more or less pronounced qualitative distinction, in which case the term acquires theological significance."<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, it is also explained as the "other of two, contrasting a definite person or thing with another, "indicating" another, different from what precedes, externally or internally."<sup>18</sup>

Although *heteros ebdoumēkonta (duo)* can translate as "another seventy-two" or "seventy-two others" like *allos*, the interpretation and function of *heteros* here differ with regards to the content of the seventy-two to include the Twelve or not. On the one hand, "seventy-two others" implies seventy-two disciples as different from other messengers, and "another seventy-two" implies a second set of seventy-two. On the other hand, reflecting the Lukan affinity for "dramatic contrasts and contrasting pairs," the mission of the seventy-two can be viewed as a close parallel to the sending of the Twelve (9:1-5) with the understanding that the seventy-two are different and does in no way include the Twelve as *allos* would have indicated.<sup>19</sup> The clarification of *heteros* meaning "another of a different kind and *allos* meaning another of the same kind" intends that, the missionary proclamation of the kingdom

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<sup>15</sup> Raymond Brown et. al., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ:Prentice-Hall, 1990), 701.

<sup>16</sup> K. Haacker, "ἕτερος," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament. Translation of: Exegetisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Balz, H. R., et al., vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 65-66.

<sup>17</sup> H. W. Beyer, "ἕτερος," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. eds., G. Kittel, et al., (electronic ed.), 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 702.

<sup>18</sup> W. Arndt, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 315.

<sup>19</sup> Haacker, *EDNT* 2, 66.



is not the sole business of the Twelve but extends even to a larger group of missionaries, the seventy-two other than the twelve, who also form part of Jesus' disciples.<sup>20</sup>

The Lord Sends them into Mission: The verb *apostellō* means "to send forth or to send out" with focus on the purpose and goal of the mission and the completion of the given assignment. Although the subjects of *apesteilen* can either be human beings or God, the one who sends, in this case, is the Lord (*Kyrios*), who desires to communicate a message to the recipients (the cities and places where He intends to visit). The "the seventy-two", the objects of *apostellō*, are ready to serve as willing and obedient messengers like the Apostles (Mark 3:13–19; 6:6f.; Matt. 22 10:1ff.; Luke 6:12–16; 9:1ff.; 10:1ff.).<sup>21</sup> In Luke 6:13, Jesus named the twelve, Apostles (*apostolos*), an official designation for those whom He called and sent to be his emissaries. Although the seventy-two are not named apostles, they are nevertheless sent (*apesteilen*) with the same apostolic mission, to declare peace to households (Luke 10:5, see also Mark 6:10; Matt. 10:12-13; Luke 9:4), cure the sick and proclaim that the Kingdom of God is near (Luke 10:9, see also Mark 6:7; Matt 10:7-8; Luke 9:1-2).

The assignment given to the seventy-two reveals the universality of the ministry of evangelization. This ministry is not limited to the exclusive group of the Twelve. It is accommodative of a more significant number of willing and obedient messengers called to execute the apostolic mission of spreading the words of Christ to places He intends to visit.

He Sends them 'two by two' (*ana dyo*): The idea of sending two by two presents "an intersubjective significance as proof of witness."<sup>22</sup> Deuteronomy 19:15 presents the need for two or three witnesses to make credible evidence of accusation for a case, instead of a single witness. This concept of pairs in sending the disciples out two by two served multiple functions such as providing "companionship, protection, and the [added effect of a] double

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<sup>20</sup> Virginia R. Sandiyagu, "ΕΤΕΡΟΣ and ΑΛΛΟΣ in Luke," *Novum Testamentum* 48, no. 2 (2006): 105-130.

<sup>21</sup> J. A. Bühner, "ἀποστέλλω *apostellō* send forth," *EDNT1*, 141.

<sup>22</sup> Dormeyer, "dyo two" in *EDNT1*, 360.



witness.”<sup>23</sup> The concept was not “merely to provide mutual comfort and help, but also to give attested, binding testimony which indicates that their task was a mission, rather than the arranging of hospitality.”<sup>24</sup> Two as an isolated word does not carry much significance but in this text it proves valuable and important as one of the key functions was to preach peace.

In verse 5, “Peace” as metonymic for “salvation” is well attested in the Third Gospel, where the Greco-Roman notion of “peace” as the absence of war, social discord, and sedition has been shaped by the expanded presentation of peace, *shalom*, in the OT as communal well-being: euphoria, security, plenty, and the like. The Israelite greeting, whether in correspondence or in conversation, was a wish for peace. In the same vein, Jesus’ followers are instructed to convey the greeting upon entering a household.<sup>25</sup>

Verse 6 suggests that more is at stake. Peace is portrayed not merely as something one might wish for another, but as an entity that can be transmitted and possessed or returned. Inasmuch as peace is the gift of Yahweh (e.g., Num 6:26; Isa 26:12; 45:7; Luke 2:14), the nature of Jesus’ directive is to identify these sent ones as persons capable of extending the peace that is God’s to others. “son of peace”—that is, one whose life is characterized by peace—then, is capable of more than one nuance. It can refer to one who has already begun to embody the wholeness these delegates of Jesus’ mission will communicate, or it can refer to those who are predisposed to welcome these messengers together with their message. Importantly, one does not predetermine to whom God’s wholeness is transmitted; the division that results from the communication of peace is without human premeditation, but arises through its acceptance or rejection.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew, Mark, Luke* by Walter L. Liefeld (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 937.

<sup>24</sup> Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 415-416.

<sup>25</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke. International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 413.

<sup>26</sup> Green, 414.



## 6. Application of “Peace to this House” In Contemporary Africa

Re-reading the Gospel of Luke 10:1, 5-6 is a process of contextualizing theology in Africa. This is not merely an *acta cognito* [intellectual exercise], but an accountability of faith, an *acta credo* of African Christians.

In the Gospel of Luke, the vision of peace is the primary message of the proclamation about Jesus, the king of peace. The Lucan narrative begins with the story of His birth, the armies of heaven reciting the praise ‘glory to God in the highest and peace on the earth among people who are pleasing to Him’ (Luke 2:14). The song fulfilled the message that the angel had originally brought to Mary that Jesus who was born was a king of peace; and in our pericope, he called and commissioned the seventy-two to bring peace to everyone who is a “son of peace”.

The phrase, “peace to this house,” is more than just a greeting in Luke. Traditionally speaking, in Jewish culture it is the host who will extend the “peace be with you” to the guest. This assures them that security and safety and everything which contributes to their well-being will not be jeopardized by their peace. In Luke, however, it is those who enter a house or a town, that is, the disciples, who stand in the position of host. They ‘host’ the gospel and invite everyone to submit to the King and be part of the community of faith. The Lukan message of peace is therefore the gospel, an urgent message which announces the presence of the king and must be rightly received by faith and repentance. No one has ever submitted to this message and remained the same. It radically changes the way one views others (see Peter and Cornelius). It brings people into a fellowship and communion with one another.

Hence, applying "Peace to this house" in the context of witnessing in contemporary Africa calls for:

*Conflict resolution:* Africa has experienced numerous conflicts and wars that have caused immense suffering and loss of life. Implementing "Peace to this house" can involve efforts to promote peaceful resolution of conflicts, either through negotiations, mediation, or peacebuilding initiatives. The Christian, therefore, must recognize that the basis of his/her confidence rests entirely on God, for only God can enter men's hearts and illumine their



minds with the radiance of truth."<sup>27</sup> Luke 10:1, 5-6 can inspire individuals and groups to actively work towards reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing processes.

*Interfaith harmony:* Africa is a culturally diverse continent with numerous religious traditions. Implementing "Peace to this house" can encourage a spirit of religious tolerance, acceptance, and coexistence. It can inspire dialogue and collaboration among different faith communities, fostering a peaceful environment where people of different beliefs can live harmoniously together.

*Community development:* Africa faces various challenges such as poverty, inequality, and lack of access to basic resources. "Peace to this house" can be applied by working towards social justice, providing humanitarian aid, and promoting inclusive development. It calls for addressing systemic issues that lead to conflict and creating conditions for peace and prosperity for all.

*Healing and reconciliation:* Africa has endured traumatic experiences due to colonization, civil wars, genocide, and other violent conflicts. Applying "Peace to this house" can involve initiatives that focus on healing and reconciliation at individual and societal levels. This may include establishing truth and reconciliation commissions, providing counseling and support to victims, and fostering a culture of forgiveness and understanding.

*Building strong families and communities:* The text emphasizes peace within individual households. Applying "Peace to this house" can involve promoting strong family values, healthy relationships, and peaceful parenting practices. Unlike Matt 10:5-6 where Jesus gave the twelve, clear instructions to "go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," the Lukan text of the sending of the seventy-two (Luke 10:1), expresses a universal dimension instead, to the places "where Jesus himself would go." this means that those sent are to share the content of the message they carry, which includes "peace". Consequently, for the Church's mission in Africa to have integrity it must be inclusive and bring *eirēnē* (peace) to everyone especially the marginalized. As Mary Oduyoye observes: "to be church in Africa is to have 'good news' for the motley crowd of humanity who pursue fullness of life without ever

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<sup>27</sup> Benedict XV, Apostolic Letter, *Maximum Illud* #29, 30 November 1919.



achieving it the poor, displaced, deprived, rural /urban poor.”<sup>28</sup> This can also encompass initiatives that empower women, protect children's rights, and address gender-based violence, as promoting peace within households contributes to creating peaceful communities.

## 7. Conclusion

Peace is central in Jesus' proclamation as contrary to the darkness of violence and hostility that exist in the world. The greeting, “peace be to this house” is “an offer of goodwill from God” and it's symbolic of “God's gracious offer” or “favour” on those who form this household. It could be wishing for “peace” in a world marred by wars, conflict, and violence or it could be a wish for protection from God.

Luke 10:1, 5-6 provides inspiration for Christians who are called and sent by Jesus Christ to continue to bring and struggle for peace in continent bedeviled with all sorts of conflicts and strife. The Lukan peace is therefore not primarily something achieved by force or military endeavour. It is predominantly peace with God, resulting in the harmonious relationships and well-being of a multicultural community of the people of God. This peace with God incorporates a social peace, peace of mind through the forgiveness of sins, which each individual member of the kingdom of God (son of peace, Luke 10:6) has personally received.

Coming thus far, this paper makes the following recommendations:

i. Follow Jesus' example: Christians should read and meditate on the teachings of Jesus, particularly his teachings on peace, love, and forgiveness. The more they understand and embrace these principles, the easier it will be for them to genuinely bless others with peace.

ii. Pray for peace: Harbingers of the Word are to develop a prayer routine where they intentionally pray for peace and blessings upon people, houses, and places they encounter. They are to ask God to pour out His peace on every household and neighborhood.

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<sup>28</sup> Mary Uduyoye, “The Church of the Future in Africa: Its Mission and Theology” in, *Mugambi J. N. K. (ed) The Church and the Reconstruction of Africa* (Nairobi: AACC, 1997), 57.



iii. Speak words of peace: Christians are to be intentional about speaking kind, encouraging, and peaceful words to others. Their words have power, and they can uplift and bring peace to those around them.

iv. Demonstrate acts of kindness: Show acts of kindness and compassion to those in need. This can be as simple as offering a helping hand to a neighbor, volunteering at a local charity, or providing emotional support to someone going through a difficult time.

v. Show forgiveness: Christians in Africa are to practice forgiveness in their interactions with others. Holding onto grudges only causes discord and disrupts peace. Forgive others genuinely, just as Christ forgave us.

vi. Be a peacemaker: African Christians are to seek opportunities to resolve conflicts and promote harmony within their communities. Offer to mediate disagreements, listen actively, and encourage open dialogue instead of resorting to hostility or aggression.

vii. Be a vessel of God's peace: Ultimately, remember that true peace comes from God, and Christians are called to be vessels of His peace in the world. Those called and sent are to allow the Holy Spirit to work through them, guiding their actions, thoughts, and words towards promoting peace and blessings.

By following these recommendations, Christians in African can actively spread peace to the houses and people they encounter, thereby, reflecting God's love and mercy in a continent torn apart by conflicts, violence and war.

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