

Sermon on Luke 10:1-11, 16-20
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, July 4, 2010
Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
By James Erlandson

Next weekend some of our children and youth from Redeemer are going camping for two nights at a local campground. In preparation, they have received a list of what to bring on the trip (in case they haven't been camping before). The list contains the usual reminders to bring a sleeping bag and a pillow, a change of clothes, soap and a towel, bug spray, a flashlight, sturdy shoes for hiking, etc. But the thing is also NOT to bring TOO MUCH! No i-pods or electronic toys are needed, no boom-boxes, no more than two days worth of clothing. If not reminded of this, most of us would be tempted to over-pack, and bring a carload of possessions to help us survive this weekend in the wilderness of Eagan with some of our customary creature comforts! So one of the benefits of going camping is discovering how few of those possessions we really, truly need not only to survive, but also to enjoy our time "away" from home, with others, at a campsite outdoors.

Today in the gospel, Jesus gives his disciples their "packing list" for the journey he was sending them on, to bring the good news of God to people living in the towns and villages around them, as they travelled through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem (and the cross). They were to travel light, because they were going to rely on the hospitality of the people in the villages along the way. So Jesus said, "Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one on the road." No money, no clothing, not even extra shoes for the journey! Just the clothing they had on their backs, and the sandals they were wearing, and no coins to buy food or drink. No idle chit chat on the road, just go to villages. The people whom they visited would feed and house them, or they would move on to the next town, Jesus said.

Now if I am going on a trip, I prefer to travel fairly light, but not THAT light! I usually bring one extra pair of shoes, and enough socks, underwear, shirts and pants or shorts to last 4 or 5 days at least (thinking I can wash them somewhere). And if I'm tempted to take too much, I remember the wise traveler's advice to throw out the clothes and take more money (or have a good credit card). This gives you an excuse to buy some clothes on your trip! But Jesus told his disciples to TAKE NOTHING! This was not a vacation! This was a missionary journey to share the good news, and a necessary part of the equation for the message to "take root" was a receptive home, where the visitors (the disciples) were greeted and received warm hospitality. Their task was simple: say "peace to this house" when they entered a home, eat what was set before them, cure the sick who are there, and say to them "the kingdom of God has come near to you." That's it! Stay where they were welcomed, but move on if they were not.

For it was not always a receptive audience that the disciples would encounter. Jesus prepared them well for rejection. Some people and villages would not welcome them, let alone listen to their message. When this happened, Jesus told them to wipe the dust off their feet and go to the next town, and not take it personally, because HE was being rejected, not them.

What was the result of all this? When the disciples returned to Jesus they were exuberant and joyful: “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” People heard the good news, the sick were healed, and evil spirits exorcized. The laborers whom Jesus had sent returned with an abundant harvest for God.

So what lessons can we learn from this? The most obvious lesson is to “travel light”, and keep it simple. If you and I really want to serve God and follow Jesus as disciples, we don’t need to bring a lot. For discipleship isn’t really what you and I bring to the table, it’s the actual coming to the table that is important! We don’t need a lot of “stuff” – we don’t need to bring our laptops, or our libraries of books, our closets full of clothes, our toys, our cars, and our many possessions. Jesus just wants you and me, to come to him with our hearts, our minds, our souls and our strength and energy – with trust in God and a willingness to serve.

Some mission experts in evangelism have called Jesus’ sending of his disciples out two-by-two into the villages ahead of him a brilliant mission strategy. Perhaps it was. Variants of this “grassroots” strategy has been used by missionaries, church mission developers and political campaigns ever since (although today we don’t find many going barefoot without purse or bags!). It certainly was an effective strategy to get the word out about Jesus and his message about the kingdom to people along the road to Jerusalem, and probably helped build the crowd that “turned out” on Palm Sunday to cheer him on. But that’s not why Jesus sent his disciples out.

Jesus sent them out to share his teachings about the kingdom of God with a wider audience, and to teach them (and the people they visited) about the community of the faithful that God was building through him. A community of believers who were willing to travel light, trust in God and rely on the hospitality of others to provide their daily needs. A community that shares the peace of God with each other, and provides care and healing for the sick.

You know, sometimes we make things far too complicated! The most simple camping trip can become overwhelming when we try to think of every little thing we might need for any circumstance. So we pack too much, driving an RV (recreational vehicle – with stove, refrigerator, and tv’s all included) to a campsite, when a simple backpack, tent and sleeping bag will suffice. It can be the same with church. Sometimes we think we need impressive buildings with stained glass windows, million-dollar organs, choirs with 100s of singers, or a praise band with amplified instruments. Sometimes those things are great, and we like to have

them, but they certainly aren't needed in order to praise God. All we really need to be the Church is to gather people together in Jesus' name, read and hear God's Word, sing songs and hymns of praise to God, pray for one another and for the world, and share the body and blood of Christ with bread and wine in our Lord's Supper. Maybe even light a candle, or play an instrument to add to the experience. It's very simple! And sometimes we lose the point when we try to make it "too much"!

The same can be true with following Jesus as disciples. Sometimes we make too much of that as well, and think we don't "have enough" to serve. But really, Jesus had called each of us, you and me, to follow him. We have been baptized, and called to follow. To gather with others in worship. To pray for one another, and for the world. To receive our Lord's supper. To share with the poor. To teach our children about life following God, and share the good news of God's love in Christ Jesus with the world – one person at a time. Jesus invites us to sit with each other, sometimes one-on-one in each other's homes, to share what we are learning about the joys and challenges of this life following Jesus. What guidance we are receiving from scripture, and how we can learn and share from each other. That's all it is.....often God is just calling you and me to share simply with one another, one on one, the peace of Christ. This gospel is a powerful thing, and it can change the whole world. It already has! We don't need the internet, or Facebook, to communicate with others the grace of God (though these can be effective tools) – what we really need to do is take some time to talk to each other! And talk with God! And listen! And share hospitality, in Jesus' name.

So I leave you with a challenge today. Next time you travel somewhere, pack lightly. Seek to live more simply. But most importantly, take some time each day for prayer, to read your Bible, and to have one conversation with another human being that includes God or your faith in Jesus – whether it's a challenge you are facing or an issue of concern for you as a Christian. Or call up somebody from this congregation, to say hello and wish them well, or ask how they are doing these days. Visit someone who is sick or homebound. Or, invite someone to your home and share your hospitality, in Jesus' name. **THIS IS THE WORK OF THE CHURCH**, and these are simple ways for you and me to express our faith as followers and disciples of Jesus. Maybe your first step can start today, during coffee hour here at Redeemer! Well, it's a start! So let's practice that art of Christian hospitality, prayer, and sharing our lives with one another. For isn't this what Jesus is calling you and me to do? Amen.