

“Travel Light”

Mark 6:7-13

Series: STEPS Week 6

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“Are you packed yet?” “Are you packed yet?” Why do people always ask me that before I go on a trip? I feel like they are trying to get rid of me. Before the last trip I led to the Holy Land, the travel agent gave us a Packing List. It contained 96 items. I counted them. Then the travel agent told us we can only take one suitcase. Almost 100 items packed into one bag. And some of the stuff worried me: motion sickness medicine, pain reliever, antacid, antibacterial wipes, antihistamine, anti-diarrhea and laxative. Imagine lugging all that stuff around. Maybe that’s why Erma Bombeck said about travel, “When you look like your passport picture it’s time to come home.”

When traveling around the Holy Land, Jesus tells his disciples to do the opposite: Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Mark 6:6b-9

Talk about “traveling light.” The good news is you will breeze through security and you don’t have to fight for space in the overhead compartment.

Jesus wants you to take a trip and He wants you to travel light. Our God is a sending God. Throughout the Bible He is always sending people. He sends Abraham and Sarah to start a nation. He sends Moses to free that nation. He sends Elijah and the Prophets to warn that nation, Ezra and Nehemiah to rebuild that nation and Esther to protect that nation. Why? God’s plan is to send that nation, His Chosen People, to bless all the other nations on earth (Genesis 12:1-3). And He keeps His promise. The Father sends His Son to be a Child of that nation, to bring salvation, to bring love, joy and peace to all nations.

So far in our series STEPS, Jesus has been training His followers for this mission. When it comes to training Jesus uses a show and tell method. He tells them what to teach and shows them what to do. He teaches, preaches, heals and drives out demons. For five chapters they watch Him and help Him. Now, in chapter 6, He sends them to do the same. Why? This is preparation and practice for a bigger mission. After He ascends to heaven and sends the Holy Spirit, Jesus sends them to “go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Jesus is sending them and us to bless and save people from all the nations.

If you follow in Jesus’ steps, you discover **Every Follower of Jesus is Sent**. After Jesus rises from the dead he says to the disciples hiding in the Upper Room, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” (John 20:21) There are no sitting disciples. You can’t follow someone by sitting. This isn’t Social Media where you follow

people by simply reading their posts. The Lord does not save us so we can sit in a pew or seat. He saves us to send us. Now please understand, this does not mean He is sending you to a foreign country. He might. But He begins by sending you to serve in this area. This is how he trains the twelve. The Holy Land is about the size of New Jersey and Galilee, where Jesus' ministered, is the size of North Jersey, my homeland. (See: New Jersey *is* the Holy Land). Jesus sends them locally. This is where He starts.

Jesus is sending you to your street to share with your neighbors and friends His faith, hope and love. There are marriages that are struggling. There are families falling apart. There are teens who are troubled. There are youth and adults who are addicted to drink and drugs. You have friends who have lost hope and do not know why on earth they are here. You have friends who have lost their faith and can't find their way back to God. You have friends who have lost love and need to know there is a God who put His life on the line just so they can get a life and a love that lasts forever.

If you go to your neighbors, what do you do? In Luke, Jesus gives a fuller description of how to share the Good News.

When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a person of peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. Luke 10:5-7

Notice a few key instructions. Jesus does not say, "When you go to the church, synagogue or house of worship" but when you enter a *house*. He doesn't even say, "Your house." It's *their* house. Now you can take this literally. I've been invited over to the homes of seekers to share about Jesus. Yet it can also mean their "home turf," their hang out. Why is this important? There are spiritually hungry people who are not ready to step into a house of worship. If the only way we share the Good News is within these four walls, they will not hear or receive it. We can't wait for seekers to come to us where we are comfortable. We have to go to their home turf. I received this invitation this week:

Anyone interested in a private jet flying to Las Vegas for Super Bowl? Still looking for 3-4 more people to join us. We will leave Saturday from Philly to Vegas, stay through the game on Sunday and fly back. Please reach out to me. Preferably someone who has a private jet and tickets to Super Bowl. Otherwise we can't go.

There are many strategies the 49ers and the Chiefs will employ to win Super Bowl. There is one sure way for both teams to lose it: if they don't travel to the turf in Las Vegas for the game. Why is the Church declining in Europe and America? We are waiting for seekers to come to us, where we have home field advantage. We need to go to their homes field – where they live, work and play.

Next, Jesus tells us to say, "Peace to this house." We are not bringing condemnation and judgment. We are not trying to start an argument. We bring a message of peace – peace with God and peace with one another. Now Jesus prepares us for the reality that some will receive the gift of God's peace and some reject it. Don't be

offended. Don't take it personally. Above all, the worst things you can do is get into a war with them about God's peace. Keep sharing God's peace until it rests on someone. Then comes the good part – share a meal with that peaceful person. Jesus used meals to make friends, teach truths, heal hearts and form His Church. That Super Bowl party you attend tonight may be the perfect opportunity to begin sharing God's peace.

Finally, Jesus says, "Don't move around from house to house." By this He means it takes time to build relationships and share the Good News. Don't be in a hurry. How do you know God's peace has taken hold? When your person of peace passes the peace to others. Stop for a moment and think: who is my person of peace? Who do I know who would likely be receptive to God's gift of peace?

When Jesus sends you, He doesn't stay behind. He actually is out in front of us preparing the way. Lisa and I love having our 5 grandchildren over but let me tell you, they are exhausting. They love to chase me around the yard, the kitchen, the couch almost the entire time. The fastest one is Lily and she's one. But I notice something interesting. If I run so fast that I wind up behind her, she stops and takes his place following me. Jesus sends each of us. But the truth is, we are always following Him. Wherever you go to share His peace, count on Him to already be there preparing the way for you.

What does He do there? **Jesus Gives Power to Heal Body and Spirit.**

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:1-2)

For some reason, there are churches and denominations today that only focus on healing the body and others that only care about healing the spirit. Some missionaries are into social activism, education and healthcare. Other missionaries are into sharing the Good News and making disciples. Which one is Jesus into? Both. He gives the disciples the power to heal bodies and save souls, to drive out demons, cure diseases and make disciples. If we want the power of God to flow through our work we need to do both.

When you travel overseas one of the first surprises is the electric outlet. Depending on the country you may find two round holes, two slanting blades, three blades. Without the right adapter, and a converter, you're not getting any power. Yet all these outlets have at least two pins or blades. If you don't plug into both holes, there's no power. For Jesus' power to flow through our work, we need to heal both body and spirit.

One year ago Debbie Huddleston, my wife Lisa and I traveled to Lusaka, the capital of Zambia in southern Africa. We witnessed great faith, hope and love. We also were moved by the challenging conditions – especially in the schools of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). One school in the neighborhood of Mandevu had a leaking roof, warped desks and concrete floors pocked with potholes. We later learned how cholera is spreading in the community and they need a safe, clean source of water.

Woodside – both the church and the preschool – heard and responded to this call through your gifts, through the annual preschool walkathon, and through the Walk for

Water. Today the roof, floors and desks are repaired and the water system is being installed. I received this email from the Director of all CCAP schools about Mandevu:

The whole building almost collapsed. It was a danger to learners and teachers. They're several impacts with the renovation of the School.

1. It is now a safe learning environment.
2. Since government schools have few spaces, more learners receive an education.
3. Less children will be on the streets of the Mandevu community.
4. Human rights compels us to make sure no child is left behind in education.
5. We are sharing the Good News since all learners are cared for at this school.
6. We will now finish the water tank which helps fight the cholera situation.

Thank you for your support and the continued assistance to the community schools as well as the children. It is my prayer that this will go a long way.
Mabuchi Ndhlovu, CCAP Community Schools Coordinator.

God's power flows when bodies and spirits are healed and transformed.

Third, Jesus teaches us to **Travel Light**.

These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Mark 6:8-9

Why did Jesus tell them to take nothing? He wants the disciples to depend on the people they serve. This is a crucial lesson. It is hard for humans to be humble. Even when we serve others, it's too easy to unconsciously pat ourselves on the back for doing such a noble thing, to fall into a state of subtle superiority, to create an unhealthy dependency. This is why Jesus tells them to start by being guests in someone else's house.

Sometimes our helping actually hurts people. Sometimes we offer a hand out instead of a hand up. Sometimes we decide what's best for other people instead of listening to their needs. We may form superficial judgments, enable destructive behaviors, do just enough to make us feel better but not enough to make a difference. Let me show you five stages of serving.

1. Do Nothing – You are not interested, you're too busy or too afraid. There are all kinds of reasons but in the end it's the same result – nothing gets done.
2. Give a Check – This is a good first step. Many missions need financial support. But there's no personal connection with the people in need.
3. One Time Visit – Now you are getting involved. You meet the people you serve. You give your time and skills as well as your money. You see first-hand the burdens some bear and you may even help lift those burdens...that one time. Yet there is still a distance between you and the one you help. And there's still a lot more to be done.

4. Mission trip – This is a step farther. You give up a week, ten days, maybe even a month to live with those you serve. You learn their names. Build friendships. Get a small taste of their hardships. You lose some of your assumptions, judgments, even prejudices. You begin to see the situation through their eyes. You start to change.
5. Partnership – At this final stage you begin to break through the superior/inferior attitudes which still linger. “Us and them” becomes “we.” We work together to serve the community. We realize all of us are beggars, all of us are needy, all of us need Jesus who is the only one with the power to truly heal body, mind and spirit.

Jesus trains the disciples to rely on the hospitality of strangers. He wants them to realize we all depend on the Lord. He also wants them to multiply the Good News. This is why, later in chapter 6, He uses a little boy’s lunch to feed more than five thousand, to show He can multiply the little we bring if we rely on Him. Jesus will make you a miracle.

I am witnessing Jesus doing a miracle of multiplication right here in this church. When Linda Marr first came up with the idea of hosting the Alpha Course during Higher Ground we thought 25 might attend. We’d be thrilled to get 50. That’s how many meals we told Tom Fowler to make at first. Then sign ups started rolling in and we adjusted the number to just under 100. That’s what we told Tom. On Sunday, January 21, the kick off for Alpha, we had over 200 show up and it’s been growing to near 250 – sharing a meal, making friends, and learning about the peace Jesus wants to give each of us. I do not believe this is the result of our clever marketing. This is a work of the Holy Spirit. This is the power of Jesus Christ.

And when Alpha was done that night, I witnessed another miracle. All those tables and chairs were quickly moved away so we could set up 60 cots to feed and shelter our homeless neighbors with Code Blue.

That’s Church. And if Jesus can do that in here. Imagine how much more He can do through us out there. Are you ready to go?