

*“Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to represent Jesus Christ. You will be sent to places you’ve never been before. You will meet people who reject the Savior. As the heavenly Father sent Jesus to bring you back to God, so you will be sent by Jesus to bring people to His love.”* That’s not **exactly** how it happened for the twelve apostles. But...

Mark reports in our Gospel that Jesus **did** send them out on a mission. And this, right on the heels of Jesus Himself being rejected in His own hometown of Nazareth. And now, the **disciples** are to go out on a mission, a seemingly **impossible** mission, just as they are, with basically no provisions, to share Jesus’ message and do the work their Savior had been doing. If they were afraid of the uncertainties about the unknown, Mark doesn’t tell us, but I’m sure they must have had their share of questions.

How would **you** respond to that mission, that command? Jesus sends the Twelve out around Galilee to spread the news about Him and His Kingdom. Jesus also sends **us** out into the world today as His representatives. That means we can think of our Christian life being like a trip; a trip filled with all kinds of unknowns and uncertainties. So, it’s natural to ask: What’s it **like** to travel for Jesus?

Let’s start to answer that question by asking another: If you were going on a trip for Jesus, what would you take in your suitcase? What would you pack for this spiritual trip? A Bible? A Catechism? A Hymnal? What about your daily necessities? Extra clothes? Your favorite pillow? A toothbrush?

Well, if we were following Jesus’ instructions for the disciples’ trip two thousand years ago, we certainly wouldn’t use a big suitcase like this (*show suitcase*). We wouldn’t even grab a smaller bag like this with a shoulder strap (*show gym bag*). We’d just take the clothes on our backs, plus a walking staff: Jesus “charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics” (vv. 8-9). Talk about traveling light!

In today’s reading from Mark’s Gospel, we see that when we’re “on the road” for Jesus, we take just what we need. In other words, we travel light. And our text explains four reasons why.

I. “But wait!” you’re probably thinking, “That’s not the kind of trip- a spiritual trip- I want to take right now!” After all, it’s the middle of summer. I’m ready for a **vacation**! How about you?

A pastor once told how people from cities on the East Coast would retire near his church in upstate New York . . . and frustrate him. These were talented

Lutherans who had been active in their old congregations. But since they had retired from their jobs, they wanted also to retire from being active in church, too—their old church **as well as** their new church. They were ready to journey for Jesus—so long as it was a vacation and not a business trip!

I understand that. Sometimes middle-aged as well as veteran members need a break from years of serving in the church. But I don't think, from God's viewpoint, this means we go on vacation as Christians. If we want to take a long-term or permanent break working for Jesus, that probably means we need to go back to the basics: being in worship and Bible study. When you *use **this hymnal or this Bible** (show books)* to grow as a Christian, you still are traveling for Jesus.

Even if we're tired, we still can serve in ways that take less time or energy or work. Even if our work seems simple—like praying for others—we are working for Jesus. We still are sharing His love, the love that sent Jesus to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. We can share that love until the day we enter eternal life. So, reason number one that we travel light, then, is because our focus is that ***we have a job to do.***

II. No, we don't need a lot of luggage for this spiritual journey. Neither did the disciples. Jesus tells them to depend on God to provide a place to sleep each night. That's what the part about not taking a "second tunic" means. People of Jesus' day would add another piece of clothing like this one (*show a tunic-like piece of clothing*) in case they ended up sleeping outdoors. Jesus expected His apostles to be guests of the people they visit. In effect, He says, "Don't take food. Don't take money to buy food. Don't worry about shelter. Trust God to provide for you."

Trusting God to provide is tough as we journey for Jesus. If we respond by saying, "I don't travel anywhere overnight without making motel reservations," we miss the point. Jesus wants us to use our brains and experience when we live as His representatives. What Jesus ***doesn't*** want us to do is to put together a backup plan in case He doesn't come through the way He has promised.

That's why the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews wrote, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (11:1). Martin Luther said that faith first of all is depending on God to come through with His promises. When we travel through life with faith, we are turning control over to God. We serve to the best of our ability, but the Holy Spirit is making all the real travel arrangements. ***We travel light because we travel in faith.*** That's reason number two

III. In verse 11, Jesus warns His disciples about rejection when He says, “If any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you . . .” We twenty-first-century Christians may be closer to knowing firsthand about rejection than our parents or grandparents. These days we almost assume that many people won’t welcome us sharing our faith. They simply don’t want to hear anything about Christianity. They may not want to admit they’re sinners who need a Savior.

For many people, other parts of life are more important: family, work, sports, the boat, the cabin at the lake, or traveling. Of course, all these are blessings from God. But people who make these blessings more important in their lives than God will not welcome messengers like us who say that God needs to be number one.

Because Jesus talks about the disciples experiencing failure, we can know that we too won’t always succeed. But we can be like Thomas Edison, who is remembered for many inventions. Probably most of all, for the first *commercially successful incandescent lightbulb*. Edison failed thousands of times before his laboratory got it right. He said that if he found thousands of ways that didn’t work, each failure still was a step forward to the solution.

We’re better off than the famous inventor. Not only can we learn on our spiritual journey for Jesus when we don’t succeed, but we also have God’s promise that the Holy Spirit will use even our failures to get His will done. The third reason we can travel light is because ***rejection does not equal failure***.

IV. That message is Good News for you and me, because we are sinners. Our text reminds us that we sin when we don’t obey Jesus’ command to share His Good News, whatever the reason. But God’s Son trades our imperfection for His holiness on the cross. We receive His forgiveness and promise of never-ending life as a free gift.

More than that: this love of God—which makes our life worth living—is a gift we can share with others so they can know their lives ***also*** are worth living. That’s why we are sent. Even though it’s not Christmas, like the angels at Bethlehem, we have “good news of great joy” (Lk 2:10).

As we travel through life, sent by Jesus, it’s not what we carry in our hands that’s important. What matters most is what we carry in our hearts . . . and share through our lives: the love, forgiveness, and peace of Jesus. **Because Jesus sends us with that Good News to share, we can travel light.** Amen.

“Lord, give us courage to share Your Word to a dying world in these uncertain times. Open hearts to repentance and faith in the Gospel. Amen.”