This week, we’ve wrapped up the extended 4th of July weekend, which marks the beginning of the busy summer travel season for many. The year AAA has estimated over 47 Million Americans would travel during this week either by car, bus, rail, or plane. Some may choose to go far away from home or a short road trip, while others may choose to stay at home for a “staycation”.

When it comes to travelling, I consider myself a pretty lightly packer…just a change of clothes for each day, nothing fancy, especially if you don’t have to attend any formal occasion. Some people, however, bring a huge suitcase full of “stuff” even for a short 2-3 day excursion. I don’t know how some of these people pack so much stuff even for a short trip. It was mind-boggling.

In the gospel passage that we just read from Mark, we too were invited to travel along with Jesus and his disciples around the Galilee. As an itinerary preacher, Jesus was constantly on the go. He would only go wherever he was welcomed in and if he wasn’t, he would simply shake the dust off his sandals and move on to the next town. Well, that kind of make sense doesn’t it?

In our story today, Jesus turned this into a teaching moment for his disciples and followers by challenging them to travel light wherever they go, as they were being sent out two-by-two. But this story was more than about packing for a roadtrip. It was about the preparation, discipline, and trust of one’s heart for a life-long mission trip.

Speaking of mission trip, earlier this week, a friend of mine posted a photo of his church’s summer short-term mission trip going overseas to Southeast Asia for about 2 weeks. They were showing off how many bags and suitcases that they are bringing for their trip. Seriously?!? For two weeks? But by the look of how many and how big their luggage were, it looks as if they were ready to go for a couple of months. Sometimes we “Americans” have real difficult time of adapting to the local environment even when we are being displaced or traveling outside of our comfort zone. We want to bring along our “comfort” with us wherever we go.

In our story today, as part of their commissioning send-off, the disciples were granted the authority over the unclean spirits and the power of healings. More importantly they were given the gift of courage and boldness to proclaim God’s message and to share their faith story with others. Jesus ordered the disciples not to take anything with them except for a staff, whatever clothes they have on their back and maybe their sandals. That’s it!!! No bag, no food, and no money. No extra personal belongs. No worries. **You go, just as you are!**

God will provide and take care of whatever that is needed. Enter only the houses wherever you are welcomed in. Eat whatever you are being offered. About 10 years ago, I took a group of youth to a mission trip to Taiwan and we were hosted by families who were willing to take us into their home and fed us with whatever food that they eat. We truly appreciate their wonderful hospitality and grace towards us. However, not everywhere you go will be a welcoming place, even if you are doing something good for humanity in God’s name, as Jesus pointed out to them earlier. There will be places where you will be rejected and if so, just shake off the dust and move on to the next town. Just as we read about being persistent with our faith last week with the woman with hemorrhage and the leader of the synagogue. As followers of Christ, we too need to be persistent with our faith and not get discouraged when things don’t go accordingly or when we are faced with rejections.

Even Jesus received a slap on the wrist among those of his hometown. There was no red carpet welcoming for this hometown boy!!! But instead, many questioned and challenged Jesus’s authority to speak and to proclaim God’s message of hope and salvation. *“Who do you think you are? Aren’t you not just a carpenter, the son of Mary, brother of James and Joses, Judas and Simons? We know you growing up with you dad, Joseph the carpenter. You’re NOT God’s son! Who do you think you are? By whose authority are you doing all of these?*”

Jesus warned many of his disciples and of us today the potential hostile environment and confrontations that we might encounter. Be persistent with our faith! **Don’t let others’ criticism and personal attacks dissuade you from doing God’s work.** Jesus’s instruction tests the disciples’ **vulnerability**, **trust,** and **dependency** upon God under whatever circumstances, hardship and challenges. **Travel Lightly as you will be Rewarded Heavily.**

By travel lightly, it helps us to keep our min focused upon our overall mission and the ultimate purpose of what we do. It relieves us from worrying too much about our earthly needs that often hold us in hostage.

Come to think of it, how many of our churches are worrying about the bottomline? (the ABC’s Attendance, Building, and Cash). Many churches worry about whether they will have enough to pay their utility bills or even their staff. In our story today, Jesus kind of reminded us to put aside those worries and focus our hearts on what’s really most important when it comes to doing mission for God’s work, as God ordains and commissions us.

As Jesus taught in one of his parables, as recorded in Matthew and in Luke…*"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?*

*31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**God invites us not only to travel lightly, but to travel IN the “light of Christ.”** God promised that the Spirit will be among us and will go before us wherever we go and where grace and love abound.

On the heel of the *General Assembly* of the *Presbyterian Church (USA)* that just concluded a couple of weeks ago, this passage lifts up a whole new meaning for the church, as the national church was discerning how we must trust in God’s reallocation of resources without compromising our missional priorities. Are we focusing and wasting money on the wrong things, we must ask? What good comes out of spending such enormous amount of money on certain programs? Why are we still funding overseas mission co-workers when we have so much needs in our local churches? These are all important (but not necessarily relevant) questions for us not only nationally, but locally as well for us. Yet time after time, God challenges us to simply *“Go and travel lightly, and you will be rewarded heavily!!!”*

Furthermore, our passage today invites us to a place where we can see ourselves in light of God’s mission and activities in this world, perhaps not in a traditional sense of what we’ve defined as our mission field or ministry frontier. The Rev. Michael L. Lindvall, a recently retired pastor at *Bricks Presbyterian Church*, the largest congregation in our NYC Presbytery, once commented on our text this morning concerning our role as God-sent prophets into this world. Lindvall wrote ***“evangelism is not to get them on our side or even to grow the church, but simply to tell others about the God who has come to mean so much to us. This is an action performed out of love, not competition, out of fear or anxiety. They need not have polished words, sophisticated theology, or fine-tuned dogma to speak of their faith. They are simply called to speak truth in love, from the heart, in their own words, and never be ashamed.”[[2]](#footnote-2)***

Whenever we come before God, we **come by Christ’s Invitation, not because of our own worthiness but because of God’s unconditional grace and love lavished upon us.** When we come, we shall come with full expectations to be filled by the Holy Spirit. We come **hungry wanting to be fed on God’s word**. We come **thirsty wanting to be quenched in God’s truth**. We come with no bags, no fancy cloths, no expensive gifts to offer. We shall leave all of our baggage behind and we shall come just as we are.

Friends, God has commissioned us all to go wherever God is sending us, and where our feet may take us. Trust and know that God does have a plan for each of us. On this extended Independence Day weekend, let us never forget that we live not only as a citizen of this country or of this world, but as citizens of God’s heavenly kingdom that is already here and is yet to come. What we see before us and what we have accomplished with all of our achievements are only temporary. God has entrusted us with this more lasting mission field work among God’s people, in God’s time, and in accordance to God’s will.

As a church, we live in a pivotal time in history when we are being challenged to take a stand to speak with a prophetic voice and to proclaim boldly of God’s grace and love to the world for all humanity. Yes, even those who have disappointed, and failed us in the past. God still called us to love them, embrace them, forgive them, and welcome them with open arms. We need to build more bridges that bind us and unite us together and not wall that separate us. And as Mr. Rogers would say, *“Won’t you be my neighbors? You have made this day special by your just being you.”*

So friends, let us fix our eyes on the heavenly kingdom of what is to come and ultimately in which we belong. Know that we are always welcomed wherever Spirit may be sending us next. Go in grace, and march in the light of God.

Thanks be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Matthew 6:25 – 27, 31-34* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Lindvall, Michael L.* *Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 3,* p.216 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)