“With Joyful Urgency”
Mark 6: 1-13

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From the Pulpit
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Have you ever packed for a trip? You may do it all the time for weekly business travel. You may do it once a year for vacation. You may be moved by the spirit for a spur of the moment get-a-way. You make a list, and lay out all those items on the bed before you assemble them in the carefully chosen suitcase or rolling duffle bag. You know precisely what will go in and where it will go.

You buy organizers that help fold and partition your clothes in the suitcase. You pack a collapsible suitcase in the suitcase just in case you buy presents that you somehow have to get home. The original suitcase is already full, so you’ll need an extra one to come home. Smart thinking.

You cram things in the suitcase with precision, or like me, reckless abandon, praying that one last sweater, or extra pair of shoes will squeeze in without the zipper breaking.... Then, frustrated, you push and pull and sit on your suitcase to cajole the zipper along....praying that it all fits. Harrumph!

Have you ever re-packed for a trip? Recognizing that you have one too many t-shirts, one too many pairs of shoes, one too many sweaters, one too many collapsible suitcases, you pull everything out and start all over. You make different
decisions about what you will take...now that you know not all you want to take will fit.

We are notorious for packing too much when we travel. We overestimate what it is that we’ll need. We scoff at and defy the TSA and airline regulations, hoping that we won’t be over the weight limit. We buy bigger and bigger suitcases so we can fit more and more in to take with us...all to figure out that we have tipped the scales and have to open our suitcases at that ticket counter to expose our packing system (or lack thereof) to everyone else waiting in line behind us.

We pack too much because we like to prepare for the “what ifs”? Some may call it defensive packing. What if I can’t get the coffee stain out of my khakis and it’s only the first leg of my trip? What if it’s colder than anticipated? What if my toddler runs out of activities, or snacks, or diapers!!!

True Story: What if it rains during the driest of dry seasons in Africa-will I need a rain jacket? Probably not Emily, but go ahead and pack it anyway just in case.

We pack for the “what ifs”, because we do not want to be without. We want to be prepared. We want to have everything that we’ll need.
In Latin, the word for luggage is *impedimenta*. Impedimenta. The same root for pedestrian, or pedicure, *impedimenta* is weighing your feet down so your feet can’t move. A colleague has a rule for packing, “you take luggage you can hop onto public transportation with at a moment’s notice.”

Luggage – baggage weighs us down. The baggage that carries our belongings and the baggage that carries all the other stuff of our life. (Our troubles, our family issues, our insecurity – claim your baggage). It can weigh us down.

Then, we come to today’s text. After being rejected in his hometown, Jesus calls the twelve disciples together and begins sending them out two by two with authority to proclaim the gospel message. ….and Jesus reminds us that how they travel does matter. Jesus sends out his disciples-Travel Light. *Travel light*. He gives them instructions…take nothing (except a staff). No bread, no bag, no money. No additional clothes. Just the sandals on your feet, the one tunic on your back. You don’t need a lot of equipment for this, he says.
Jesus sends them out with nothing to carry, except a walking stick. Nothing to weigh them down. They are sent with the gospel message to proclaim.

In Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*, this paraphrase of the passage offers us so much. Jesus says, “Don’t think you need a lot of extra equipment for this. You are the equipment. No special appeals for funds. Keep it simple.”

If the disciples are rejected on their journey, Jesus says “shake off the dust from your feet.” Shrug your shoulders. Let it go. Move on. I imagine the disciples were pretty worried about this. They have just seen Jesus be rejected in his hometown. They saw their teacher---FAIL. Jesus bombed. Jesus says, “It’s ok to fail, and then, move on.” Jesus encourages the disciples that they are enough. Enough for the journey, enough for the ministry, enough for the daily tasks ahead of them.

So they don’t carry anything with them. They are the equipment to do all that God is calling them to do and to be. Their hands are open to touch and to give God’s blessing, and their hands are open to receive whatever welcome is offered. They may be welcomed into a house
and stay for quite a while. They also have to be to agile enough in case they aren’t well received and are dismissed.

When groups travel on short term mission trips, like our team that recently returned from Biloxi, they are encouraged to travel light. Travel with the gifts God has given us. Travel with open hands. Open hands to offer blessing. To offer a touch of care and compassion. Open hands to receive the grace that comes from others we meet along the journey. Don’t take too much that will weigh us down, that will keep our hands clenched too tightly around the things that we think matter to us. Go with open hands to be open to what God has in store for us.

We are the equipment. When the disciples went out they preached with joyful urgency... *that life can be radically different.* A life following Jesus is a life radically different than anything else people had known.

The journey of faith the disciples are on is scary. They go out into unfamiliar territory, knocking on peoples’ doors. They share the story of a powerful new way of looking at the world. A powerful way of living a radically new life. We don’t know all that happened to the disciples along their
way. This text doesn’t tell us that. Some were warmly received. Some probably experienced rejection and failure.

This text does share with us how this all got started. How Jesus called the twelve and sent them out for the transforming work of the gospel. They all returned (Mk. 6:30), and they gathered around Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. The disciples were transformed on their journey. Because this worked, the Christian enterprise in the 1st century got started. Travel Light. Be the equipment. Not a bad way to change the world.

Like the disciples, Jesus asks each of us to loosen our grips on our luggage. Travel into our days and on our faith journey, with growing confidence that we are enough! We are the equipment that can share the message of God’s love and grace. We are invited to sense and experience and make known God’s will and work in the world.¹

What would that mean for us? What do we get rid of to free our hands and be open to receive? What would the church need to let go of, in order for our life together to be radically different (programs, structures, building, worship, etc),

¹ www.workingpreacher.org/davidlose.
What would it mean to go out of these doors and into the community (our neighborhood) with open hands to receive what God has for us? To see what we have inside ourselves that we can offer to others and the powerful experience of receiving what our neighbors have for us.

In a few moments, we’ll gather at the Communion table. We’ll share in a simple meal. We’ll share in the meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. The meal that remembers and gives thanks for God’s love and grace for us.

It’s a pretty light meal – not much really – a little bread and a little juice – it won’t weigh us down. It’s light and satisfying, nourishing and lasting. Broken and poured out for us – it’s a reminder that we are enough, just as we are. Whatever we carry with us, whatever we bring with us this day, to this table, we are met here by the One who reminds us that we are enough.

This meal helps us stay agile and ready to go out into the world and be God’s equipment sharing the message of justice, truth and love.

Thanks be to God.

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