
“A Stringent Carry-On Policy”

A SERMON on Luke 10:1-11, 16-20 for the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C
Preached 6 July 2025 by the Rev. Matthew Emery, Lead Minister
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If you’ve ever been walking out the door to leave on a trip—whether a simple overnight at the home of a friend or a week or more away for work or vacation—and were filled with that nagging feeling that you’d forgotten something... well, then, perhaps you can imagine how much more so that feeling was for me as I was getting packed to spend over 7 weeks in Europe back in the fall of 2017. How does someone pack for 7 weeks, anyway, especially in only one suitcase and one carry-on? I did the best I could: I had a decent supply of clothes that I could mix and match to dress-up or dress-down. I had all the charging cables and international power adaptors. And, of course, I checked oh so many times that I had my passport and rail passes. Despite the gnawing, anxious worry, I believed that I was prepared. And besides that, I was headed to cities in *Europe*, after all, not trekking off into the Siberian tundra. If I did forget something, chances were pretty good I could buy it there.

I had not expected it would be *shoes* I needed to buy only five or six days into the trip, as it turned out, basically right after I got into Cambridge, England. Had I forgotten to pack shoes? Of course not. If anything, the airport luggage scale might have argued I had brought along too many. But, alas... none of them were the *right* shoes. As some of you know, the big thing I did for the three weeks I was in Cambridge was sing with one of those iconic English collegiate choirs. And, of course, when singing in such a choir, one dons the proscribed uniform: **<display photo slide>** the stereotypical ‘English choirboy look’ consisting of a black cassock and white surplice. And *black shoes*. **<slide off>** This last bit I had been specifically instructed about ahead of time, when I’d asked if there was anything specific I needed to bring. “Just the requisite pair of flat black dress shoes that every good liturgically aware [clergyperson] or singer already owns!” wrote back the director.

Now, I would consider myself a “liturgically aware clergyperson and singer.” But alas, truth be told, in mid-2017 I didn’t ‘already own’ a pair of black dress shoes, at least not ones that were in good shape. So, a few weeks before the trip, I went and bought a pair... *this pair* right here, in fact. **<hold up shoes>** I’d packed them up, flown them across the Atlantic, and lugged them around from Edinburgh, Scotland, and down to Cambridge, all safe and sound. After getting into Cambridge and successfully completing the audition I had still needed to do to be admitted to the choir, I was given a packet of materials to orient myself to what I would be doing there, with schedules, music lists, policies and procedures, and so forth. Among those materials, I found *this...* **<display shoe guide slide>**—the official guide to acceptable black shoes.

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And so, the next day I was off to the shopping district in central Cambridge to find *these* **<hold up other shoes>**. Not too shabby for only £25 (or about \$40 Canadian at the time).

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Jesus, on the other hand, does not care whether you have black shoes, much less any specific type of black shoes. In fact, as we heard just a few moments ago in today’s reading, at least at this point in the gospel’s storyline, Jesus admonishes those he sends out ahead of him not to bring along *any* shoes. (Or, well, to be more precise, to “carry ... no sandals.”)

At this point in Luke’s gospel, as I noted last week, we’re meeting up with Jesus “on the

road”—or at least “on the road” in a much more intentional, purposeful, determined way than he had been before. In the earlier parts of the story, Jesus had arguably been a bit of a wandering beach bum who does a bit of healing and exorcism along the way. With the portion of the story we heard last week, though, Jesus makes a turn. “He set his face to go to Jerusalem,” we are told. And with that, his path pivots. No longer is Jesus just some itinerant preacher, teacher, and healer; rather, he is a man on a mission, a mission to go right into the centre of power and protocol, a mission of challenge and conflict, a mission of sacrifice and, ultimately, as we who live on this side of Easter proclaim, a mission of victory—a victory that is still unfolding in this broken world right down to this very day.

That’s getting a bit ahead of ourselves in the story, however. There’s still a lot of ground to cover between Jesus and Jerusalem. So much ground, in fact, that Jesus decides to send messengers ahead of himself “to every town and place where he himself intended to go.” Two-by-two they go, like all those creatures carried into salvation on old Noah’s ark. But instead of seeking salvation through *escape* from the world, these 35 pairs go out *into* that world, *themselves* carrying the word of God’s shalom, God’s peace.

Jesus offers them some instructions on how they are to go out, instructions that admittedly go a bit against the sensibilities that many of us have about being prepared and equipped. “Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals ... eat[] and drink[] whatever [your host] provides[s].”

You can go out without such preparation, without carrying *everything* along with you, when you *trust* that whatever it is you’ll need is going to be there when you need it. You know, I didn’t need to pack cold medicine when I headed off to Europe because, indeed, people in Europe get colds, too. And they have pharmacies there, too. So I trusted that if I ended up needing some—which, in fact, I did—I would be able to get it.

In telling these messengers, these delegates of his who will go ahead of him, not to carry anything with them, he’s inviting them to practice their way into trust. Trust in each other. Trust in human community. And, ultimately, trust in God. Perhaps they did not have a lot of prior evidence to go on, but Jesus is inviting them to try on such trust anyway. We can always make the choice to live and to act like we do believe, like we do trust, regardless of whether we completely do. And, in the living, in the doing, in the practicing, we discover our way into knowing that we *can* believe, you *can* trust.

So, I’m quite sure that Jesus was inviting these followers-turned-forerunners, these seventy messengers... that he was inviting them onto a journey of trust. God will provide all that you need, and even more.

I wonder if there isn’t something else to be heard here, though. I wonder if Jesus sends out messengers with no purse, no bag, no sandals—in other words, no preparation, no provisions, and no program guide other than God’s peace and news of God’s kingdom... I wonder if he sends out messengers this way because, the truth is, in fact, you can’t ever truly be prepared. In fact, you can just as easily be *mis*-prepared. You know, just like you can show up somewhere... without the right shoes... and actually be *burdened down* with the extra weight of having to haul around the *wrong* shoes.

I think about the world in which we find ourselves today, as individuals, as communities, and as the church of Jesus Christ. I know that few, if any, of us feel prepared right now for all that we are facing in this world. The regression happening and the outright evils being perpetrated in the United States—none of us expected these things to be happening now, right?! Or with climate change due to global warming... by now we ought to have expected it, but we still are struggling to know how to prepare for the worst of its impacts.

Here in the life of the church, we likewise face changes in society and culture for which we

are not particularly well prepared. For decades now, we've been wrangling over the right or wrong style of music or trying to come up with the most entertaining programming, when the world around us is wondering about why to engage with Christianity at all. (Or any religion, for that matter.) After all, you can find good music and fun activities a whole lot of other places—oftentimes places that will do those things better than we can, in fact. And, of course, in our individual journeys, we face loss and trauma and brokenness for which our best preparations feel inadequate. Collectively, we lug around our heavy suitcases jammed full of the wrong shoes for the situations in which we find ourselves.

Here's the thing, though: All those preparations, all those things we *think* we need, they are, in fact, inadequate. The 70 disciples who Jesus sends out into the towns and villages along the way, they could weigh themselves down with all those other supplies. But that would create all the more temptation to trust in their own readiness rather than in God's faithfulness. Jesus has given them the presence of his peace and the good news that God's kingdom is near at hand, and those things are enough. More than enough, in fact.

Jesus gives those same things to us, too. We feel oh-so inadequate in the face of what's going on in our world today... at least I do. I mean, I am inadequate. But God is faithful. And that is enough. More than enough, in fact.

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I wonder, as we once again ourselves join up with this motley crew of followers who Jesus sends out ahead of him into all the towns and villages where he will go—places like Cloverdale and Langley and New West and Vancouver—how might any one of us phrase the proclamation?

I want you to take a moment now and think about each of the two proclamations Jesus gives. How might you put into your own words Jesus' proclamation, "The kingdom of God has come near"? You know, you don't have to capture all the theological heft or biblical nuance here. Just make it your own, however partial or imperfect. "The kingdom of God has come near." How might *you* say that, in *your own words*, in your life and your world today? Perhaps it's as simple as telling someone "I can see God's love in your life right now." Or simply affirming, "God is at work in all of this"... or perhaps in some situations it'd be more like "God is at work in spite of this."(!). I don't know what it is for you... but take a moment with it. "The kingdom of God has come near." How do you say that yourself, today, in your life? I'll give you a couple moments to think about that...

And now, the same with the other proclamation: "Peace to this house!" How might you say that in your own words into a place in your own life. How would you enter into a place, or into a situation, and proclaim peace... make real, and audible, and visible, some token of peace, God's peace...? I'll give you a couple of moments to think about this one, too...

And now, finally, I want to offer you a challenge. This coming week, I invite you to now actually make one such proclamation in your own words once a day for this whole week. Maybe you offer it to a family member, a co-worker, some anonymous person you encounter at the store or on the bus, perhaps even to yourself. Once a day this week, actually say something to someone that proclaims to them peace in their midst or that the kingdom of God has come near.

And I'm not going to give you any other tools or tips or tricks, other than the message itself, my friends. Because you don't need them. After all, probably if I tried to do so, given my history, whatever thing I gave you would probably be the wrong colour or style anyway!

God is faithful. That is enough. More than enough, in fact.