



Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

July 4, 2021

* *Please stand if you are able*

Prelude: "For the Beauty of the Earth"

arr: Alexander and Stevens

Gathering

WELCOME & LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Acolyte: May the Holy Spirit unite us in worship, point us toward Jesus Christ, and inspire us to love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with God. Come, let us worship God.

* CALL TO WORSHIP

Liturgist: We sing to the Lord a new song; we sing in our world a sure hope:

All: **Our God loves this world, God called it into being, God renews it through Jesus Christ, God governs it by the Spirit.**

Liturgist: God is the world's true hope.

Our Song of Hope – Prelude

All Singing: 575 "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"
Singing verses 1, 2, and 4

GOD'S GREETING

GOD'S PEOPLE GREETING ONE ANOTHER

All Singing: 26 "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"
Singing verses 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6

Children ages 4–7 may come forward for a blessing before they leave for "Children in Worship."

CHILDREN'S BLESSING

Children: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also, with you.

Reconciliation

Liturgist: We know Christ to be our only hope.

All: We have enmeshed our world in a realm of sin, rebelled against God, accepted inhuman oppression of humanity, and even crucified God's son.

Liturgist: God's world has been trapped by our fall, governments entangled by human pride, and nature polluted by human greed.

Our Song of Hope – Stanza 2

Silent Confession and Lament

All Singing: 639 "Lord Have Mercy"

Liturgist: Our only hope is Jesus Christ. After he refused to live in the image of God, he was born of the virgin Mary, sharing our genes and instincts, entering our culture, speaking our language, fulfilling the law of our God.

All: Being united to Christ's humanity, we know ourselves when we rest in him.

Liturgist: Jesus Christ is the hope of God's world. In his death, the justice of God is established; forgiveness of sins is proclaimed.

All: On the day of resurrection, the tomb was empty; his disciples saw him; death was defeated; new life had come.

Liturgist: God's purpose for the world was sealed.

Our Song of Hope – Stanzas 3, 4

Soloist: "Your Peace Will Make Us One" Audrey Assad
Congregation joining on last refrain

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord
You are speaking truth to power, you are laying down our swords
Replanting every vineyard 'til a brand new wine is poured
Your peace will make us one

I've seen you in our home fires burning with a quiet light
You are mothering and feeding in the wee hours of the night
Your gentle love is patient, you will never fade or tire
Your peace will make us one

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Your peace will make us one

In the beauty of the lilies, you were born across the sea
With a glory in your bosom that is still transfiguring
Dismantling our empires 'til each one of us is free
Your peace will make us one

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Your peace will make us one

Liturgist: As citizens we acknowledge the Spirit's work in human government for the welfare of the people, for justice among the poor, for mercy towards the prisoner, and against inhuman oppression of humanity.

All: We must obey God above all rulers, waiting upon the Spirit, filled with the patience of Christ.

Liturgist: We hear the Spirit's call to love one another, opposing discrimination of race or sex, inviting us to accept one another, and to share at every level in work and play, in church and state, in marriage and family, and so fulfill the love of Christ.
Our Song of Hope – Stanzas 10, 12

Proclamation

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

* **All Singing: 859 "Be Thou My Vision"**
Singing verse 3 in unison

Scripture: Mark 6:1-13

Minister: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon: "Traveling Lite"

* **All Singing: 423 "Give Me Jesus"**

Dedication

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Sending

BENEDICTION

Minister: God will renew the world through Jesus, who will put all unrighteousness out, purify the work of human hands, and perfect their fellowship in divine love.

All: Christ will wipe away every tear; death shall be no more. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, and all creation will be filled with God's glory.

Minister: Come, Lord Jesus: We are open to your Spirit. We await your full presence. Our world finds rest in you alone.

Our Song of Hope – Stanza 20 and Prayer

* **All Singing: 833 "There is a Redeemer"**

Postlude: "Postlude in C Major"

J. Rinck

Worship Leaders

Prelude Pianist: Charlotte Lydon
Pianist / Vocalist: Erin Pacheco
Organist: Lynn Hollender
Vocalists: Lisa Dykstra
Karis Dykstra
Moriah Dykstra
Minister: Roger Nelson

Acolyte: Gloria Pacheco
Liturgist: Jackie Archer
Prayer: Arlo Compaan

Worship Note: Our liturgy is shaped this morning by “Our Song of Hope.” This contemporary statement of faith was approved by the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America in 1978. While not having confessional status, it is meant to give a hymn-like expression of faith within the heritage of the three Reformed confessions, especially addressing the issues that confront the church today

Hymns are from *Lift Up Your Hearts* (Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2013)
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Text: Mark 6: 1-13
Title: Traveling Light
Date: 07.04.21
Roger Allen Nelson

For many a summer I've gone with friends to canoe and camp in the Boundary Waters – the vast wilderness straddling the border of Minnesota and Canada. There's no cell reception, electricity, or creature comforts. It's off-grid, idyllic, adventurous, primitive, and soul cleansing.

You have to carry everything in and everything out. By shoulder and by paddle you have to transport whatever you need or want. So, given all manner of eventuality, the question is: What do you pack?

One friend is a minimalist.

He prides himself on a small pack, no new gear, and traveling light. The goal is to leave no trace, therefore he won't even pack environmentally safe soap and shampoo because it might leave some residue. Portaging, and getting in and out of canoes, requires a couple pairs of boots or shoes. He wears only flip flops. He's ripe and earthy after a week....

Another friend is maximalist.

He loves new gear and anything that makes the experience comfortable. Our best cook, he lugs in a chopping table, pots and pans, seasoning, the fixings for secondary and tertiary dishes, comfy camp chairs, a spacious tent, clothing for the heat of day and the cold of night, books, and a collapsible portable toilet seat. The load is heavy, but you are thankful that he's along....

I'm somewhere in the middle. When packing I consider what I'll need to stay dry, comfortable, and safe. What's essential and how much does it weigh? What should I take? What should I leave behind?

When Jesus sent out his first disciples, he gave limited instructions about what to take, but he gave clear instructions about what to leave behind. So, dear friends, on this mid-summer morning I invite you to consider travel, packing, and the instructions of Jesus as an image for the life of faith.

What's essential for the journey?
What do we need to carry as disciples of Jesus?
What can we leave behind?

Our text details the first "mission trip" in Christian history. Jesus gathers the twelve disciples and sends them out two by two. Now, mind you, in the first five chapters of Mark's gospel all that these disciples have done to distinguish themselves is:
Fail to understand Jesus' parables and need explanations. Know "fear upon fear" when they realized who was in the boat with them. And, question Jesus for wondering how they should know who touched him in a jostling crowd.

But here, after Jesus is rejected in his home town, he sends them forth to preach repentance, heal the sick, and cast out demons. In preacher-speak, this is proof that “God doesn't choose the qualified but qualifies the chosen.”

What's remarkable (at least to me) is that Jesus sends them out to be dependent on others. Without satchel, coin, or bread they will need to rely on others for a place to sleep and a meal to eat. Without cloak or comfort, they will be at the mercy of others. He sends them out in need of the people to whom they're being sent.

It is an odd command, but it is also a form of travel that was familiar to Jesus. A babe in a manger is unmistakably dependent on those to whom he or she is delivered....

Jesus came needing to be fed and changed and bathed.

Jesus submitted to the care of others.

Jesus was born dependent on the hospitality of humanity.

Jesus died dependent on the rejection of humanity.

And, Jesus sends out his disciples in a similar fashion.

D.T. Niles, a theologian from Sri Lanka, writes of Jesus:

He was a true servant because he was at the mercy of those whom he came to serve...This weakness of Christ, we his disciples must share. To serve from a position of power is not true service but beneficence.

Therefore, dear friends, in some sense the instruction to travel without bag, bread, or money-belt, is in keeping with the self-emptying way of God in Christ. To be a disciple of Jesus is to follow the way of servanthood, of shedding place, of letting go of power, of being vulnerable. Jesus calls us to travel lightly even unto death....

A little aside: It strikes me that in “mission” we often go with our hands full rather than our hands empty. We bring food, medicine, technology, clean water, education, and cultural expectation. We bring our great strength to other's great need.

I don't know any other way, but it certainly fixes a relationship of power, or it encourages pride in the giver and dependence, or gratitude, or humiliation in the receiver. And, I'm not sure that tension is quickly resolved by assigning it simply to a question of attitude.

But, back to the idea that to follow the way of Christ is to travel light.

Sometimes life will help you unload extra baggage.

Sometimes circumstances conspire to strip us down to the bone.

Sometimes we shed things because we have no other choice.

I saw a man before open heart surgery. He was surrounded by the finest doctors in one of the best hospitals, connected to the latest medical technologies, and had access to the top shelf of the medicine cabinet. He was a take-charge-guy, who was always sure that he was right, and he'd done everything right to prepare himself and his wife, and yet...

And yet, in the surgery prep room he squeezed his eyes into knots fighting back tears and said that he was scared because all he had left was his trust in God. And he wasn't sure that his faith was strong enough. (As if God had a measuring scale....)

He said over and over again that it was in God's hands now. He had done everything he could and now knew that whatever happened, come death or healing, all that was left was God's mercy. He was stripped down to some base trust. He couldn't carry anything more.

Or, a good friend reminded me recently that the beginning place of recovery for an addict or an alcoholic is the recognition that they're powerless....

That all of their answers, schemes, and solutions were found worthless and wanting. The first hint of recovery is an empty hand. There is nothing left to trust but a higher power. There is nothing left to carry – no satchel, no flask, no strength.

Sometimes we need to shed things and sometimes the circumstances of life will do that work for us. Sometimes life strips us down to nothing but an essential trust in Jesus.

That is not to consign God to fiddling with the details in order to teach us lessons, but it is the recognition that faith is not a matter of adding more things, faith is often unloading things, until we are left with nothing but Jesus.

I don't know what you're carrying this morning.

I don't know what baggage is slung over your shoulder.

I don't know what weighs you down.

But underneath all of our work and worry can we also be encouraged to trust Jesus? May God give us such mercy, that we would set down what clutters and trust that ultimately, we belong to Jesus.

The story is told that Peter Bernadone wanted to pass along his business empire to his two sons, Francis and Angelo. But, Francis – after lavish youthful indiscretion – became increasingly dissatisfied with his life. Business did not capture his imagination and hedonism did not capture his heart.

Instead, he began to divest – giving generously to the poor. And eventually, believing that he was following the will of God, he took his inheritance and some of his father's wealth and began a project to restore the crumbling chapel in San Damiano, Italy.

When Peter Bernadone learned that Francis was squandering the family estate he dragged him home, beat him, and chained him in the basement until he came to his senses.

(Clearly a different approach to parenting than taken by the father in the parable of the prodigal son.)

But, when his father was gone, Francis convinced his mother to release him and he returned to San Damiano to continue his mission. Of course, when Bernadone returned, he was enraged and he appealed to the Bishop to intervene – because surely the church wouldn't condone this abuse of wealth.

At a hearing before the Bishop, Bernadone recited his litany of complaints. The Bishop turned to Francis for his response. But Francis withdrew to a room in the Bishop's palace, disrobed, folded his clothes into a neat pile and returned to the piazza – completely naked. He walked up to his father, handed him the clothes with a bag of money on top, and announced:

Listen to me, all of you, and understand. Until now, I have called Peter Bernadone my father. But, because I have proposed to serve God, I return the money and all the clothing that is his, wanting to say that from now on, "My Father who is in heaven," and not "My father Peter Bernadone..."

And with that Bernadone stormed home and Saint Francis of Assisi pursued a life without bag, bread, or money belt in service to God.

Dear friends, I doubt that Jesus' instructions to travel light are to be taken literally by all disciples for all time. But we can proclaim that our essential trust
is not in our good and tidy lives,
it's not in our theologies or philosophies,
it's not in what we do or what we don't do,
it's not in the strength with which we carry a load,
it's not in getting things right.
Our essential trust is in Jesus.

I'm not sure that scripture, faith, or Jesus intend to answer to all our questions about science, economics, politics, grooming instructions, or packing plans. I'm not sure that scripture intends to offer answers for every modern ethical dilemma. But!

But what is essential, what is finally of ultimate concern, is that Jesus has defeated every expression of sin and death. And therefore, if there is any judgement, if any last word, then all I've got is Jesus. When everything is stripped away, that's all I've got.

May we learn to travel lightly with that sure and certain hope.
Amen.