

July 5, 2015  
Mark 6:1-13

Proper 9b  
Traveling Light

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.*

Many of you know by now that a week ago Saturday my family and I arrived back from our long summer trip to St. Louis and Alabama. The first week I was gone, I was sitting in a classroom at Concordia Seminary with three other pastors from across the country talking about how doctrine is important in the life of the church. The second week, I was on vacation in Gulf Shores, AL. I would recommend that place for vacation. While you are there, you can attend St. Jude by the Sea Lutheran Church in Gulf Shores. What a joy it was to be with family, even though it was very stressful at times, especially with two small children who are out of their routines and schedules.

I can tell you one thing though, as we loaded up the van when we left Fisher and when we were traveling back to Minnesota, we didn't travel light. There's no such thing as traveling light when you are headed 1500 miles away with two children for two weeks.

I've had some time to reflect on our travels and adventures and even more time to reflect on where we are as a nation on this Independence Day weekend and even where we are at as God's people. I think of travel, nation, and church as we look to our text from Mark 6 for this morning. Most notably I want to focus on the last half of the text: verses 7-13. Here Jesus is giving traveling instructions to His disciples! Jesus is going to be sending them out two by two to share the Good News of Jesus in Galilee.

Traveling is not easy, sometimes it can be very tiresome and stressful. And then there's all the work when you get home...both at home and at work. It feels like I've been going nonstop since I arrived at home, and maybe that's because I am.

This journey that Jesus is sending the disciples on is not going to be easy. They aren't even supposed to take money or food to eat. That seems a bit outlandish. I can't imagine going on a trip without snacks in the car for the kids, let alone myself. They were only to wear the cloths on their backs and the sandals on their feet, nothing more, nothing less. This journey wasn't going to be easy. Jesus even alluded to the fact that they would probably be rejected along the way. This journey wasn't going to be easy.

As they were being sent, they were being sent with as little as possible, so they could travel light and have no material hindrances weighing them down. Jesus is telling them that they will be taken care of.

As I've said traveling is never easy, and the disciples soon learned this. They were rejected, even as they preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins. They were even given the authority to heal diseases and cast out demons. My fellow redeemed, as the lives of the disciples continued they learned how hard being a disciple was, and how much of a difficult journey it was, but yet they remained faithful to the end. They remained faithful to the law and the gospel. They remained faithful in preaching a

repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Yet the world didn't look at them that they probably wanted.

Sounds exactly where we are today. We all know what happened on July 4, 1776 through History. The Declaration of Independence was signed. That was 239 years and 1 day ago. Some 200 years later we are in a nation that is on the downward slide of the moral code. They are even ignoring natural law. It's okay to murder unborn children and now it's okay to have same-sex "marriage". Should we be surprised? Absolutely not. Our faith journey is not going to be an easy one. For quite some time, it was easier to live out your Christian life. It's never been easy, but now it's very hard. The devil is making his claim on society and now he's going to work extra hard on the church.

Before we go there, let's think about how Americans view America. They think she should be the one to solve of their problems. They think America should bend to their own thinking. They think America should be the America they want. And when politicians and activist judges rule on one side of the fence, they get angry. And when they rule on the other side, others get angry and respond. Many Americans think that this nation should be our Savior from all of the world's problems.

Guess what! America is not the Savior. America is run by leaders who are sinners and fall short of the glory of God. America does not have anyone perfect in leadership. As I've said, Satan has the culture, he has society as a whole. So now he is going to work on the church and he does it through the very blessings God has given to us.

Remember, Traveling isn't easy. Remember, we are called to travel light. We are called to travel with Jesus as our head and the Holy Spirit as our guide. We are called to trust in Jesus. That's not easy though. As members of the body of Christ, we too buy into the lies of the devil. IT's the devil using deception to get his way, much as he did in the Garden of Eden. I have seen to many rainbow colors on people's profile pictures on Facebook to make me queasy. I know what that means and that mean's people are falling for the devil's lies. I've seen many people throw around the phrase "love wins." Has it really? It's not just those sins that we see being legalized. Sins have been legal for millennia upon millennia. The church has stood, because Christ is the head

Yet the devil looks to get you to fall. He'll use God's good gifts to entice you. Whether that be the very debate this country is in right, our human sexuality – it's not just the homosexual agenda, but it's also the troubles of living together before marriage, pre-marital sex, pornography, and so much more. Other good gifts that get us are food, money, families, work, sports (especially hockey in these parts), the boat, the cabin at the lake, or our own travels. If you were honest with yourselves, we've all used each one of those things as a crutch, well as an idol, as something that we put in the place of God.

It's the material things that get in the way of being true disciples. It's the material things that lure us of the traveling light with Jesus. We've all been on vacation and have not looked for the nearest LCMS church or if you were in a part of the country where those are slim, any church. We've all given up our Sunday Morning for something we deem more important. As we do this, we lose what it is to be part of the family of God traveling through this World and our living out our faith in an active way. As we look to the material things, the things God has given to us as blessings, as more important our trust in God goes away. We lose our foundation, who is Jesus Christ.

We aren't just traveling as individuals, we are traveling as a church, as a body of believers. With the Supreme Court's decision to legalize gay marriage, what will that look like for the church, I don't know yet. We will be talking about those very things as leaders of the church. Will the laws begin to force the church to perform same-sex marriages, perhaps. We are not there yet! Will pastors and other leaders be threatened with fines and jail time, perhaps? We are not there yet!

The church will be tossed to and fro in the waves as we travel, but yet our captain of the ship, will guide us safely through the stormy waters to the end when the new heavens and the new earth will be here.

Traveling is difficult and it will continue to grow even more difficult as we speak out and proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People will reject us for what we speak, because they don't want to hear themselves being called sinners. As the church we are called to speak the truth in love. On this journey as disciples we are called to bring the message of salvation to the whole world and part of that is preaching repentance, calling people out for their sin. And then sharing with them the gospel message of Jesus Christ crucified and risen for them.

As the church and individual Christians traveling through this life. I want you to know this, America (or any other country) cannot save you! It won't happen. The institutional church as strange as this may sound cannot save you. However, the Church does offer you Jesus. Jesus is the only one that saves. During this troublesome days that we now live in, in a day and age where people throw around rainbows and phrases such as "love wins", where people are demanding things for themselves and calling Christians bigoted, we will have many questions, some even without answers.

One is: where do we go from here? Where do we travel to? Travel to the cross! Travel to the place where you receive forgiveness of sins. Travel to God's Holy Word where He shows us how to live our lives and gives us His message of salvation. Let's go to the cross together, let's see the empty tomb together. Let's travel together in bible study and prayer. Come often to the Lord's Table to receive forgiveness. Those amazing gifts of God are for the good of those who have faith in believe. These things strengthen us and forgive us when we fail in our God-given vocations. They these strengthen and forgive us when we fail in our vocation as disciples.

Dear family of God, fellow redeemed, know this. America is not the great Savior. Jesus Christ is. America will not give you what you need. Jesus did. Jesus gave His everything for you. Jesus also made a journey, from birth to cross to grave to life again. Christ's journey was not a light journey by any means. He carried the biggest weight on His shoulders as He journeyed to the cross and grave. He carried the sins of the world on His back, even as He Himself preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He was rejected by man, and man killed him. Yet, He sacrificed Himself for us, so that we can have the promise of life.

Jesus Christ did not travel light. He carried your load and mine, so that we don't have to. He left it there on the cross and came out of the empty tomb alive. HE rose so that you can live again someday soon in body and soul for eternity. Not the broken body you have now, but a renewed body.

Jesus Christ, the foundation of our faith, the one who lives and reigns for all eternity is the one who sees the end of all things, and the ones who will win at the end are the ones that believe and have faith in the Supreme Judge, the Savior of the World Jesus Christ. My fellow redeemed that would be you. We can be comforted even as we live in a world that is broken. We can rejoice even as we mourn the decisions of man.

We can do this because we have faith in a Savior that forgives our sins and who bore our weight so we can travel light. We can be comforted and rejoice because Christ gives us the Holy Spirit to guide us throughout our travels. No matter what the world throws at you, dear Church, you have eternal life. The kingdom is yours as Luther writes in His famous hymn:

The Word they still shall let remain  
Nor any thanks have for it;  
He's by our side upon the plain  
With His good gifts and Spirit.  
And take they our life,  
Goods, fame, child, and wife,  
Though these all be gone,  
Our vict'ry has been won;  
The Kingdom ours remaineth.

Our victory has been won through Jesus Christ and we have the perfect liberty in Christ. Dear Church, even as we celebrate our nations Independence this weekend, we celebrate our independence every week when we gather in church, independence from sin, death and the devil.

May our prayer be this:  
O Christ who called the Twelve  
To rise and follow You  
Forsaking old, familiar ways  
For ventures bold and new:  
Grant us to hear your call  
To risk security  
And, bound in heart and will to You,

Find perfect liberty!

Find perfect liberty in Christ, liberty in the forgiveness of sins. You have liberty and the kingdom dear Church, now and forevermore. As you travel light, you travel light because of Christ, and you will travel light to the eternal kingdom.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.*