

## ASP Commissioning 6-23-19

### Luke 10:1-9

If you don't mind,  
I just want to begin by taking advantage of the fact that there are so many Appalachia Trip participants here to just go over a few things, specifically key things on your packing lists. It's absolutely essential, of course, to bring those tools we talked about -- hammer, tape measure, safety goggles, a utility knife can be good, too, work gloves -- And of course for clothing, long pants for the worksite, t-shirts for the week -- please bring enough socks this year, people -- remember no laundry facilities. Air mattress is essential, sleeping bag, pillow, a couple towels -- and adults - you bring all that and also your favorite tools -- a circ saw is great, drill can be handy, and Sawzalls are the best. Oh, and most importantly -- we don't have a lot of space on the bus so please pack light.

That is, in fact, the oxymoron of our Appalachia Trip. Please don't forget anything and please don't over pack. Or, as one new and somewhat bewildered adult leader put it at our recent leader orientation:  
*So let me get this straight.  
I should bring everything I own.  
And I should fit it in one bag.*

That's right, we said. Bring it all. And travel light.

A bunch of years ago, my family and I figured out how to do exactly that -- bring it all and travel light.

Here's what we were doing:

my parents organized a 100 mile walk through the Highlands of Scotland to include me, my brother and my sister -- the nuclear family reunited. My brother's kids were too young, mine were in school, so it was just us five. And most people doing this West Highland walk carried all their gear on their back, but my parents discovered a service called *Travel Light*.

It was awesome.

The deal was you stayed overnight at these great Scottish bed and breakfasts, and in the morning, as you headed to walk 8 or 10 miles, these nice Scottish people showed up in a van, took all your bags and drove them to the next B & B you'd be sleeping at. So you don't have to carry a thing.

Which for me was particularly wonderful, because I had packed for this adventure in a hurry and had just grabbed everything I could possibly imagine needing.

Which also meant that mine as the suitcase that the Travel Light people were least enthusiastic about hauling to the van.

On Day 5, one of them, a little less cheery than he'd been on day one, said "what on earth did you pack?"

and I said "maybe I didn't really need the combination travel iron and blowdryer."

"*Americans*" he said, rolling his eyes.

My parents, I should mention, do massive treks like this all the time. They just finished another 100 mile walk across northern England a month ago.

And I remember saying to them, at the end of that Scottish hike, "What a fabulous idea you discovered, to have a van take your bags."

"Oh," my mother said, "your father and I always carry our own gear when we hike together. We just didn't think *you'd* be able to manage."

They were right. I needed the Travel Light people.

I am inviting all of you going to West Virginia to Travel Light.

And no, I don't mean that we are offer the Travel Light van service on the Appalachia trip.

You will in fact need to haul your own gear.

I recommend a duffel bag with wheels.

And I'm not suggesting that you leave anything off the packing list.

You do need those hammers. And you gotta have the air mattress.

But I am asking you to *Travel Light* in another way --  
and here's what I mean.

I mean that I want you to go down to Appalachia leaving a whole lot of stuff behind.

I want you to leave behind your preconceptions about who you're going to meet down there, what they're going to be like.

Leave those at the door. Enter into this with no judgment.

I want you to leave behind any doubts about what you're capable of --  
and I don't just mean doubts about whether you can fix a tin roof,  
but any doubt you have about whether you have heart enough for this,  
compassion enough for this,  
strength of spirit enough for this. You do.

I want you to shake loose any feelings of inadequacy,  
and know that God will equip you.

I want you to leave a lot of stuff behind.

I want you to travel light.

There's a story in the Bible where Jesus is sending his friends out on a journey.

Not just any journey.

He's sending them out to do his work, to do God's work. to do the work of love.

He tells them that he's counting on them to care for the hurting, and to heal the sick,

and to preach the Kingdom of hope wherever they go.

He's basically telling them "hey you don't have to be me, you don't have to be Jesus, to do great work --

you just need to be my follower and my friend, and to trust me."

And so his friends, well, they're feeling pretty honored that Jesus is sending him out to do God's work,

and they start getting ready for their big trip,

and they start packing up a ton of stuff that they'll need.

And Jesus says, "wait, wait, I don't want you taking anything with you."

And they're like "well, money, thought, right, we have to take some money?" and he says "no, leave your money at home."

And his disciples say,

"but we need to pack, like, a mat to sleep on, right?"

And he says "no, none of that.

No money, no bag, no mat, you don't even really need your sandals.

Nothing."

And you look at this story, and you think - what? *Why?*

Why wouldn't Jesus let his friends take money and an air mattress and combination iron/ hair dryer if they wanted?

What difference would it make?

Instead he tells them to Travel Light. Really light.

Here's why.

Jesus wanted the people he was sending out to do his work to be completely open.

He wanted them to go out with nothing so that they would have to be open to receiving from the people they would be with.

To leave everything behind that would protect them and instead go out vulnerable, hearts wide open.

He wanted them to be ready to give God's love AND to receive far more than they could imagine.

That's why he wanted them to Travel Light.

I'm going to close with a little story about someone what it means to truly travel light on the Appalachia Service trip.

It's a story from a long time ago, so you don't have to look around and wonder who this story's about!

This kid, I'll call him Brian.

Brian arrived on this trip carrying so much stuff.

I don't mean tons of underwear and socks -- in fact, he forgot most of that.

But Brian came into the trip carrying, first of all, resentment.

He didn't really want to go, his parents made him, so he arrived with resentment and a goodly amount of anger.

It had also been a really bad year for him, grades were terrible, and the Fairfield police were, let's say, acquainted with him,

so along with the resentment at being there at all, he was also carrying some pretty real doubt in his goodness and in his own abilities

Brian just wasn't that happy with who he was right then.

There was a *lot* of stuff he brought with him.

And then there was the night Brian danced with a broom.

It was a Tuesday night in the high school gym, and the local bluegrass band had come to play for us.

I looked over at Brian – he was leaning back on his elbows with a “yeah, we’ll see about this” look on his face.

I looked a few minutes later, and saw his foot starting to tap.

Then the band called for everyone to get up on the floor for the broom dance.

None of us had heard of a broom dance before –

turned out everyone was paired up except for one odd man out, and when the music stopped, you had to grab yourself a new partner cause whoever ended up alone had to dance with a broom.

So you know what happened – the music stopped, everyone paired off frantically,

and Brian ended up with the broom, standing in the middle of the gym floor.

“Dance, son!” hollered the band leader, and they launched into a fast-paced Rocky Top.

And Brian danced.

With a goofy grin on his face, and a broom in his hand, that boy danced with abandon.

And then he started to laugh.

And right then, you could see, I could see -- all that stuff he’d brought with him had just disappeared.

All that anger, resentment, doubt in his own goodness.

The rest of the week, he was traveling light.

Working hard, laughing hard, being who God made him to be.

Brian had learned to travel light.

That’s when the Appalachia trip works.

No bag, no money, no sandals.

Leave behind anything that comes between you and the experience.

Leave behind the certainty of self-sufficiency,  
leave behind the stuff that gets in your way and bogs you down -  
preconceptions, old angers, self-doubt.  
Travel light.

What happened to the people Jesus sent out with nothing in their hands?  
The scripture story says that they came back rejoicing.  
They returned with joy, it says. They returned with joy.  
They had found peace and offered it  
they had healed and been healed,  
they had given and they had so wonderfully received.  
They traveled light, found the kingdom of God wherever they went  
and they returned with joy.  
Just like my friend Brian did.  
Just like so many do who return from Appalachia with joy.

This is not just a story for Appalachia trip.  
*Traveling Light* is not just for people headed to West Virginia.  
The truth is, all of us need to travel light.  
Need to enter into every experience without preconceptions,  
need to enter into every encounter with other without prejudgments.  
All of us need to shed the baggage that keeps us from truly experiencing the  
other for who they are.  
All of us need to drop the self-doubt and resentment that keeps from being  
who it is we were created to be.  
God sends us out, each one of us, to travel light into this world.  
to seek and find and share the kingdom of God by leaving behind the stuff  
that gets in the way of really being with people.  
Gets in the way of really being.  
Drop it all, God says.  
Travel light and you'll return with joy  
Travel light and you'll stumble across my kingdom everywhere you go.

Everywhere you go.

That's for all of us to hear. That's for all of us. *Travel Light.*

Amen.