

Proper 9 C  
St. Luke 10:1-11 16-20  
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St. George's Bolton  
Fr. Chris

## Keep It Simple

*"Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. **Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.**"*

Don't carry any extra baggage through life. Travel through life lean. Don't worry about hoarding money or valuable property. Don't stop and be distracted from you goals by chatting along the road! ***Keep it simple!***

When I first heard these words in this Gospel passage, they sounded quite alien to me. O.K., this is embarrassing. You see, I have plenty of baggage I drag around with me, literally and figuratively. A glance inside my car will verify this. I have stuff tucked away to do ministry, including my emergency sacramental kit and tons of reusable heavy-duty grocery bags for Mobile Foodshare. I have a collection of compact discs. I have winter gloves and a snow shovel. A hiking staff. I have a hammer and a tape measure. I have a yellow rope. I have a large bag of contractor bags. I have disinfectant. I have a special rubber seat cover, for when I transport people. I have 5 bottles of hand sanitizer. I have two high power flashlights. I have a spot-light I can plug in my d/c outlet on the dashboard. I have a set of good binoculars, tucked away in an ammo box, along with one of my high power flashlights. I have a second set of binoculars, small, portable, up front in the console. I have sunglasses. I have an emergency tarp. I have an emergency first aid kit to die for. I

have a tote full of lifesavers and Ricola cough drops and I have five baseball caps in the car. I have spare pens. I have index cards. I have a copy of the latest Forward Day by Day. I have two umbrellas. I have 2 blankets. I have two coolers, though they are small. I have too much stuff!

Jesus is right to tell his followers to travel light. I am embarrassed just listing all the stuff in my car. I would be even more embarrassed listing the stuff up at my camper and the things in my condo. Duplicates. Extras. Unnecessary stuff. Buying extra things to stock up on extra things I have already stocked up on. Dare I tell you how many rolls of toilet paper I have on hand, or how many shower soaps, or how many cans of my favorite shave cream in case they stop making it? (*And they did! ...But so what?*) The idea of stocking up on stuff we use or eat regularly is spurred on by those huge warehouse stores. Who really needs 60 rolls of Charmin tissue? *Come on!* And it also fits the *prepare-for-a-disaster* and *Armageddon* mentality which is prevalent today.

We have been taught to fear scarcity. We learn to feel secure when we are like the wealthy man who built extra barns to keep all of his stuff: [Remember the passage in Luke 12:16-20]  
*"And he told them this parable: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'"*

Indeed, our preparations may be superseded by the intensity of the calamity for which we are getting ready. The hurricane might wipe us out. Rogue mobs might take our lives so they can take our hoarded food supplies. Or worse yet, God might take back our life even before the calamity ever happens. Being prepared for the worst is very tempting. Perhaps it is also wise. But it will not yield happiness or a stress free life. In actuality, *Preppers* find that they can never be fully prepared for come what may. Only prayer does that.

Jesus was unconcerned with the stress of worldly goods. He possessed little, just what he needed, no more. He suggests the same for those who would follow his way. Not only does he suggest it in word, he lives by it in deed. He suggests that if someone would take your coat from you, give them your cloak also. "*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.*" [Matthew 6:19] All these things lead to stressful living. The simplicity which Jesus lived and preached is the antidote.

Collecting stuff is a defense against our mortality. The more stuff we have, the more indispensable and independent we are from God. It is as though we are building safety zones and walls around us with our stuff to protect us. But with lots of stuff comes the worry of it being misappropriated. Then there is the worry of the cost of maintaining your stuff, both physically and financially for the upkeep, not to mention the taxes you will pay to acquire and keep your stuff. A lot of stress, if you ask me! Is having more money and things really the goal of life? Will winning the lottery really make you happy?

Collecting stuff is also a way of filling up those empty voids in our lives. We feel lonely, so we start filling those lonely spaces by

collecting things. But things are things and people are people. Instead of friends, we have tchotchkes, and these are our porcelain and glass and plastic friends. Instead of a life, we live the lives of others vicariously through hundreds, if not thousands of movies we collect. And so on. A life does not consist in filling up our living spaces with stuff. This will not erase the void we may feel inside. And don't think this applies only to the cliché lonely single person: it equally applies to married people, who very often find themselves lonely and empty also. Evidently, the usual answers the world provides to loneliness, happiness and success do not resolve the problem of the human condition. We feel cheated and disappointed, depressed, after years of trying, and still we do not discover the elusive happiness for which we have searched all our lives.

Filling our cars with stuff is a yet another way of procrastinating about really traveling in life, instead of being burdened and weighed down by our things. My car is so full of junk, I needed to get a grocery carriage that my condo provides, and I filled it up to the top, overflowing, and brought it in my house, so I would have space in the car today for the luggage of my friends I am picking up at the airport after today's service. How sick and foolish is that? I guess this sermon is also directed at me.

It is so true, the more stuff you have, the more complicated and stressful your life becomes. The less stuff you have, the more simply you live, the less stress you have. That should make living simply very desirable! Luke 12:15 says, *"Then he [Jesus] said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.'"*

*"So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.' He said to his disciples, 'Therefore I*

*tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these."*

I am afraid if I say much more, I will complicate a sermon on the virtues of simplicity. Suffice it to say, live simply. Travel light. This is the wisdom of Jesus. AMEN