Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two, giving them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing on the journey but a walking stick….NOTHING BUT A WALKING STICK!

Can you imagine yourself taking a trip with only a walking stick. Most of us like to think we travel light but when it comes right down to it we tend to throw into our suitcases those extra few things, just in case we need them. However we also know how those few extras can add up and not only weigh us down through the airport but also these days it can cost us extra money.

The pioneers who traveled in the Conestoga wagons across the prairies and over the mountains in the west learned that lesson too. They would begin their trips with their wagons full of things for their new homes, not only house wares but even musical instruments, fancy rugs and fine china.

If they were lucky they would travel like that for months until they reached the Rockies in late summer and it became clear that they needed to lighten their loads, if they were going to get over the mountains before snowfall. And so in order to travel more swiftly, the families would throw off the extra weight leaving many beloved, but unnecessary items behind on the trail. I understand that this happened hundreds of times and these old treasures are still, occasionally, unearthed along those old trails. Travel light was the rule.

That was Jesus’ message to the disciples too. Travel light, don’t get weighed down with unnecessary baggage. Take only what you need and rely on God and God’s people for the rest.

That’s Jesus’ message for us too. Travel light. Let go of our extra baggage.

It would be good for all of us to consider the extra baggage in our lives. What unnecessary stuff do we hang onto that no longer has value for us? Things we could easily share! What do our garages, our attics, our closets look like. Really, it is amazing how much stuff accumulates over the years. Even when we are forced to downsize, we end up saving more than we require. How much time do we spend cleaning and organizing stuff we don’t really need? Travel light.

Of course the same could be asked about our finances—are we freely sharing our financial resources? What do our financial accounts look like? Travel light

Or are our lives filled with unnecessary busy-ness? Do we fill every empty moment with one more activity and then we don’t have time to pray or worship or help a friend or chat with a stranger. What do our calendars look like? Travel light.

Or have we filled our minds with unnecessary excuses or fears or prejudices or grudges? Have we filled our hearts with damaging anger or hostility…or guilt? Is there room in our lives for God’s love and grace and forgiveness? What is our faith life like? Travel light.
It is good for us to let go of the baggage…and as we do, we let go of the illusions that we are self-sufficient and in control.

Instead we can begin to acknowledge that, …our strength, our worthiness, our control and our hope…come not from what we have or what we do but from our identity in Christ as God’s own loved children.

That’s the crazy thing about the gospel.
- When we let go, we receive;
- when we are powerless, we are empowered;
- when we are empty we are filled up;
- when we are weak, we are strengthened;
- when we are alone, God gives us each other so that together we can accomplish what we could not do on our own!

So go ahead let go…let go of some of that baggage…TRAVEL LIGHT!

However, it is interesting that the disciples were not left empty handed.
The disciples were allowed a walking stick.
And that’s significant, for at least 3 reasons:
- a walking stick is for WALKING, not sitting. The disciples were given an itinerant ministry, a walking-around ministry, a meeting-people where they are ministry.
  Jesus didn’t say go find a tree to sit under and let the people find you; no, they were to go out.

This is a good reminder for us, too, as a church.
We don’t just open our doors and hope people will find us we go out into the neighborhood and world.

Also as Christians, we aren’t just faithful here in our congregation, with friend in Bible study but out there in ever interaction and decision we make in our lives:
at the farmers market, along the borders of our yards, in break rooms, with other parents on the sidelines of a soccer game.
We are to be disciples wherever life takes us.

- Walking sticks are important for endurance and to help us deal with rocky paths. So they could be a good reminder that God helps us negotiate the rocky times in our lives and certainly gives us the support and to continue on.

- Finally throughout the Bible the walking stick—the staff, the rod, the scepter—were a symbol of power and authority, protection and comfort.
  - In the Old Testament, Moses and Aaron used a rod or a walking stick to perform miracles.
  - David had a staff when he faced Goliath
  - Psalm 23 declares that God’s rod and staff will comfort us.
  - And in the New Testament, Jesus was given a staff before his crucifixion that then had it taken away from him before he was given his big walking stick, the cross. This cross becomes a sign of God’s power and authority in the hand of God!
Maybe we should all be given a walking stick at Baptism or at Confirmation. What do you think?

Many of you know that we are in the midst of 5 weeks of Bible passages about the Bread of Life. Vicar Ed got most of them and I was due for one today but guess what, I changed the preaching text. I did that because today is Vicar Ed’s last day of his year-long internship with us and so I thought I would talk about Jesus sending out the disciples 2 by 2.

I really like the story and I think that what Jesus was really doing was sending them out on their internship.

Vicar Ed and I have been traveling 2 by 2 all year long and now it is time for him to go back to school. We will miss him and we want him to remember his time with us and so I am presenting him with this walking stick as a reminder that God will forever be his “walking companion.” (Sat. night)

It’s true for us too, this is the good news of the gospel!

(Sunday) We also gave Vicar Ed “Here I Stand” (a quote from Martin Luther!) flip flops and a “Saint and Sinner” (another quote from Martin Luther!) shirt, to represent sandals and tunic.

Sorry Ed the text says, “No Bread”