

Readings

[Psalm 85](#)

[Amos 7:7-15](#); [Ephesians 1:1-14](#), [Mark 6:7-13](#)

Have you packed for your summer vacation yet? Usually when I am packing to go away, I find it best to make a list. If you are going to the beach, remember you need suntan lotion, your beach chair, some of those beautiful beach towels, the right number of shorts and tops, sandals, flip flops, portable cooler, hat, bathing suit and maybe something nice to wear in the evenings if you are going out.

Depending on what kind of packer you are, the list can go on and on. I wonder what it would be like if Jesus was overseeing our packing. If it would be anything like what he instructed the disciples to take as they set out on their journey, we wouldn't leave with much at all.

Jesus' instructions for the disciples are very sparse, Jesus says no bag, no bread, no money – don't even wear 2 tunics. Bring a staff and wear sandals. That's it. We would be having a very strange summer vacation, if we went by these rules. But the disciples are not going on summer vacation.

They are going out to spread the good news. They are going out to continue Jesus' ministry – to preach, to teach and to heal. Jesus tells his disciples to take nothing for their journey, and perhaps they didn't have much to take. They were fishermen who might not have had two tunics or money to take with them. They were probably not educated - not as the religious leaders of the time were.

They were probably afraid. How were they going to do what Jesus did? Shouldn't they have a back up plan, some insurance? What did they know anyway? They were simple fishermen. But Jesus sent them. They were simply to go out and proclaim the Good News - totally relying on God.

I wonder how many of us feel like the disciples - totally unqualified to go out and continue Jesus' ministry. Most of us have not had a seminary education. Most of us don't think we have the proper words, a detailed knowledge of the Bible, the charismatic speeches of the preachers on TV, or the ability to persuade people into following in God's ways. After all it is how we are taught to operate in this world. We prepare. You don't become a lawyer unless you have had the training.

An MBA is a good thing to have in the business world. You don't become an opera singer without a lot of voice lessons. We even prepare carefully on a day to day basis. We go into a meeting at work with a strategy so that we can be prepared from whatever angle the opposition is coming from. We carry wallets and purses with ID, credit cards, cell phones, tissues and cough drops. We try to be

prepared as we can for whatever we might meet. But when it comes to going out and spreading the Good News, things are a little different.

Have you ever had a time when preparation seemed to get in the way and did no good? This was what I experienced over and over when I did my hospital chaplaincy in seminary. In many ways I was being sent out to spread the Good News. I was a chaplain, someone who tried to help people discover the love and support of God in a difficult time in their life. I found I had to let go of expecting a visit to a patient to go a certain way. In our preparation with my supervisor, I and the other chaplains had all these discussions about how to be with a patient. We were to listen, to ask open ended reflective questions. If there was a proper opening, we were to ask where God was in their lives at this point in time. We were to ask if they wanted to pray. I went in with this program in my head and as you can imagine, that's not how it went. When I tried to follow "the plan", I felt stilted and artificial. The times that I felt I was being helpful were when things went completely differently. I remember one visit where I had this wonderful polite conversation, and when I felt it was time to go, I ended with a prayer. The prayer brought forth tears from the person I was talking to, and then the visit which I thought was about to end, really began. It was the visits where I was most inarticulate and had no idea what to do, that I left feeling that I had actually helped. It was when I showed up with nothing, when I let go of all my preconceptions and planning and just was present that the Spirit seemed to be able to work.

This is Jesus message for us, take nothing. When it comes to spreading the Good News, being prepared, having the right words and the right thoughts in our minds and the right equipment and knowledge is not what it is about. Jesus sends the disciples out with nothing but the authority he has given them. And they manage. They more than manage. They found out that they could call people to repent. They could even cast out demons. They anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them. We too are sent out – to preach, teach and to heal. It may not be in the way we think or envision. We don't have to be hospital chaplains or ordained minister. We are sent. We are sent in our ordinary lives. We are sent when we step out of our doors, when we are home, when we are mowing our lawn or when we are vacationing on the beach.

God sends us out and all God asks us to do is to be present with people, love them and when it is right, share who you are with them – share your experiences of life, of God. Share how being part of the Epiphany community has formed you and held you up. Your stories, the faith stories that we hear once a month from you are one of the most powerful ways of spreading the good news that I have

encountered. Your stories tell how God is present our lives today and how we can be changed.

God is still with us giving us what we need to preach, teach and heal in this world. All we need to do is to rely on God.

The message of this morning gospel is to go out and to spread the Good News and to take nothing. Jesus is telling us that we don't need to take our things and our plans when we go out to spread the Gospel. We go with God. All we need is the story in our hearts. All we need is to say how we have experienced God, how God has been active in our lives. - How God has loved us and carried us through the worst times of our lives. All we need to know is that Jesus will give us the words and the wisdom to know when and to whom to say them.

Many of you probably know about Street Church which is sponsored by Epiphany. Every Tuesday, we go to Franklin Square Park at the corner of 14th and I for worship and lunch. We just had a great article about Street Church in the Washington Window, the Episcopal diocese newspaper. This week we had several new volunteers who had read the article and wanted to be part of Street Church.

One of the people who showed up this past week was a priest who is at Atonement out in Northeast, and as we walked towards the park, she was looking around and asked me how people who have no home carry all their stuff around. She was looking at a gentleman who we were walking past and saw that all his stuff that was laid out on the bench and the sidewalk. I said people carry it anyway that they can. Some people have shopping carts and others have rolling luggage. Sometime people store their belongs in a locker at the shelter but very often their things get stolen when they are away or sleeping and they have to start all over again. The gospel this morning is difficult. Jesus says to take nothing – nothing ----- . How can we take nothing? Those of us who have little, try to take something. We try to carry with us at least a change of clothing, identification, our important papers, money – there are so many essential things for survival in this modern world. Jesus' disciples didn't live in a world where identification was required if you wanted simply food and shelter – never mind a bank account. Our society tells us that we need a lot with us and yet Jesus tells us we need nothing. What about food? What about clothing? What about money? Jesus tells us we need nothing to proclaim the Good news. It is completely opposite to what the world tells us. The world tells us that we need ID, money, clothing, references, papers that say that we are who we are. Jesus says we need nothing. You don't need ID to spread the word of God. You don't need to be specially educated. You don't need to have a lot of money or have a TV show where you proclaim the Word of God. The disciples were poor fishermen who weren't educated, who didn't know much, and Jesus sent them out. Jesus sent them out to preach the word of God, to heal and to cast out demons – and they did.

It doesn't matter what you have or in what state you are, you too are sent out to proclaim the word of God. Jesus is counting on you to share your story, your troubles and your tribulations, and to share how God has been with you and how God has carried you through and how God is carrying you through. God is calling all of us to talk about how God is working in our lives – how God is renewing us or how God is sitting with us in the worst of times. Right now I ask you to share that –to share how God is with you right now. How are you experiencing God? How is God getting you thought life today – this morning, last night. I ask you to share this. I ask you to share this with the rest of us who are here today so that we might get a glimpse of what is happening in God's kingdom – so that we might know that we are not alone in whatever situation we are in. Is anyone willing to share how is with them where they are today? How God is with you in your life? How God is holding you up this morning this morning? God sends us out. Jesus sends us out, just as he sent the disciple out and he

says – Take nothing – no bags, no money, no second tunic. God send us out just as we are, to love and to spread the love of God. So go out into the world. By the world's standard it may seem as if you have nothing. By God's standards, you have everything. Go out and spread the love of God that tells us that all of us are the beloved of God in this world.