

Sermon June 6, 2021 – 10:50
By Rev. Bob Long, Senior Pastor
St. Luke's United Methodist Church – Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Sermon Title: "Did you lack for anything?"
Sermon Series: Travel Lighter
Scripture: Luke 10:1-9
Transcriptionist: Sherry L Pemberton

Years ago when Marsha and I were still living in Houston we decided we wanted to take a cruise. We'd never been on a big cruise ship before and so we got with some friends of our - Walter and Susie Anderson - and we began to shop around for what we hoped would be a good deal. We finally found a cruise where we would start out of Miami and go to the Bahamas to a private island and then we would go over to Jamaica, from Jamaica to Grand Cayman, from Grand Cayman over to Cozumel, and then back home to Miami a week from that next Saturday. So we were excited about the possibility and we flew down actually on a Friday so we could be there ahead of time and that way on Saturday get your bags onto the ship and we were ready to go. We sailed over to the Bahamas and went to that private island. They had lots of picnic tables set up on a sandy beach and we went up and were having a lunch there out on the beach and it was, it was lovely. And there was just the four of us and a lady came along and asked could she join us. We said absolutely. It turned out her name was Joann and I said well are you enjoying the cruise and she said well yes its' gotten better now. It started off a little rough. Oh. Like most of us if you're going to take a week off you start working extra hard in order to get ready to take that time off and she had started working late every night, all day long, all day long into the night to try to get ready to go for the cruise and she'd never had time to pack. So now it was Saturday morning and it was time for her to be going and she had to get up early and she's trying to decide, *Do I take this? Do I take that? What about this? What about that?* Then she's now packing like crazy and now she's running behind so she knows she might miss her flight, she jumps in her car and she heads to the airport and sure enough when she gets there to check in they said, *You better run for the gate or you're going to miss your flight. Your bags will not make the flight with you. However there is another flight following where your bags will be on that and they should arrive before the ship sails.* So she goes running down the gangway, she literally walks onto the plane as they close the door and push the gate. But she made it. So she lands in Miami and she starts waiting for the next flight to get her bags and then she receives the word there's been a mechanical problem and that flight is not going to make. She will not receive her bags and instead she will set sail with only the clothes on her back. So she's telling us this and I'm going oh my goodness, I cannot believe, I mean, you don't have anything? *Well they said my bags will catch up with me probably on Wednesday in Grand Cayman.* I said oh my, that's terrible, and she goes, *Well not really. The cruise passed around what was going on. Look at this bathing suit. I've had lots of people give me all kinds of clothes that I'm wearing now.* (laughter) *I have a whole new wardrobe, I mean, it is great.* Okay, okay, so she seemed in good spirits and she knew she'd get her luggage. A couple days later we were pulling into Grand Cayman. Grand Cayman does not have a deep water port. You have to anchor out a way and then you get into a tender - small boat that'll take you up to the dock. They told us all ahead of time, *Be sure and go in, have a grand time, go check out Grand Cayman but be sure the last tender is at 4 o'clock. If you're not on that tender at 4 o'clock we will sail without you.* And so we went into town, we had a grand, wonderful time going all around Grand Cayman, but we took the 3:30 because I wanted to make sure that we were back on that boat before it sailed, and sure enough when the 4 o'clock tender came it got there, they blew the horn, they hauled up the anchor, and we

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were out of there. And then they came on the loud speaker system and said, *We warned you if you are not back to that last tender you will be left behind. Well we've left behind one of our passengers. They did not make it back to the last tender and so they are still in Grand Cayman. The good news is there is another sister ship that is going to pick them up and they will rendezvous with us in Cozumel.* It was a little later that we got the word, the person they left behind was Joann. (laughter) Her bags were finally on the boat (laughter) but Joann was now on another ship. (laughter) And all she had now was her swimsuit and a cover up and that night was supposed to be the Captain's Dinner when everybody dresses up all fancy and really gets decked out to go to dinner. Well we learned later that the crew passed the word around. Before long Joann had a nice beautiful evening gown, shoes, jewelry, the whole nine yards, she had new clothes. The Captain had heard about what was happening and felt so sorry for her he invited her to sit at his table. So they sailed to Cozumel, we got to Cozumel, and finally Joann got back on her ship with her bags on the night before we came home to Miami. So the next night as we're sailing we had a big gathering there in the lounge or a place where they put on all the shows and Joann was such a good sport and she let them tell her story and so she was there and they're going through the story that we already knew and had met her and they're going through all these different details and when they came to the end there was something we didn't know and they said, *What we want you to know is what Joann does for a living. It turns out that she is a lecturer and author on stress and time management.* (laughter) We laughed so hard till we cried. She's up on stage and she is again just going with the flow having a good time with it and it's perfectly okay and finally she has a chance to speak and she said, *I've got to tell you losing my bags was a great thing, I mean, I got to be on two ships - not just one - I had brand new clothes the whole time that I travelled, I got to eat with the Captain. No I discovered that the journey is far more enjoyable if you travel light.* (laughter) I think that's what Jesus was trying to tell His Disciples this morning in our Scripture lesson: The journey can be better if you travel light. Jesus said to the Disciples, *Do not take a purse or bag or sandals. Go.* Talk about travelling light. What we're looking at is a Scripture where Jesus sent the 70 out into the world, to go prepare for Him to come. They're on their way to Jerusalem and Jesus is going to go to people's homes, into these little villages all the way to Jerusalem, and there proclaim the Kingdom of God is near, and He wants these people, these 70, to be sent out by two's to go to all these homes, all these towns, and proclaim the message of God's grace and proclaim the message that the Kingdom of Heaven has come. So they're going to be heading out in this kind of a time to do such an important thing as to prepare the way but Jesus asked them to travel light. This morning I want to start a new sermon series that will go for four weeks and I want to talk about travelling lighter because one thing's for sure, we are all moving back into reality in a new way, a new day, and we're starting to travel. I know because it was during the pandemic Marsha and I did travel, we took a flight, we went out to the airport, we had on double masks, we put on gloves, we had our wipe downs, we wiped down the seats and the seat backs and our seat belts and we didn't drink on the plane, we didn't eat in the airport. We really went out of our way to be careful and I have to tell you it was great. No one was there. It was easy to be social

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distanced. There might be ten people on a whole plane. No one was in the airport. I felt incredibly safe. I went back out there a week ago and I flew to Houston to go visit with my brother and I don't think I've ever seen so many people at the airport. I mean, the lines were queued up to go through security, every plane was completely packed. In fact our plane - they were oversold by 12. It was like people are travelling. I was calling to talk to people all about right now, what's going on, our coming to the different concerts, I spoke to six different families and every one of them said, *We're going to be gone this weekend. We're travelling.* Nope, we're starting to travel, and so I thought you know, right now's a good time for us to rethink how do we travel. Maybe we need to travel a little lighter. And I'm not talking just about your bags; I'm talking about the journey of life, that maybe there are things that we need to leave behind, that maybe we need to lighten the load, that I'm hoping that as you and I've gone through the pandemic we've had a chance to be examining our lives and realize that the journey is far more joyful if you travel light, if you leave some things behind. So we're going to start looking at that today and what Jesus asked out of the Disciples and I believe what is being asked out of us and I want to share with you three ideas.

First of all, I believe Jesus was asking these 70 Disciples to leave behind guilt and shame and to travel in grace. It says He's sending out the 70. That's the key here. You see, the 70 was the significant number. We know that there were the 12 Disciples and you and I think that's who followed Jesus. There were many who followed Jesus. There were many women who were significant in supporting His ministry. But when He says He's sending out the 70 anybody in that day would read that and immediately go, *I got it.* You see when Moses was leading the people of Israel through the Wilderness he chose 70 people to help be the leaders, to help guide the people through the Wilderness. When they got to the Promised Land they established the Sanhedrin, the group - again - that would kind of rule for the people of Israel. And how many people? 70. If you had 70 people you had the leaders, you had the best, you had now authority. Jesus is sending out the 70 two-by-two. What it says is He's sending out those that He believes got it, they understand the message. If they're going to go to people's homes and heal the sick and proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven is drawing near then they got people who have experienced the grace of Christ and they get it, to leave behind guilt and shame, they tend to weigh you down and make the journey so very difficult. I remember getting together with a group of dads one time. We were back when our kids were in high school - our teenagers - and we were all just visiting about raising teenagers and them starting to drive. You need to hear this Trent, this is really important for you right now. (laughter) As you're getting these teenagers up and they're all starting to drive we kind of started sharing all of our war stories and you've heard me tell my war story with my daughter Kelly - wonderful lady. She was in high school, she was getting gas, forgot to take the handle out of the car, drove off, it pulled over the pump, it exploded, set the gas station on fire. (laughter) True story, true story. Now when I tell that with the dads and the competition I always win for the best story. (laughter) But there was another dad - Rick - and I'll always remember his story because his daughter was a friend of my

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daughter and she'd gotten her driver's license, she had a truck, and very responsible kid. She had a younger sister and the two of them got in the truck to go drive. And you know the hard thing when you're first learning to drive is how to push on the gas pedal, you know, you hate to push on the gas pedal because you know you're afraid of the gas and so you kind of real lightly and the car just kind of creeps and you finally realize you're got to step on the gas to make it go and so you tend to press too hard and it throws you back, it's hard to learn how to gauge, how you press on the gas pedal. Well anyway, this girl was in her garage in the truck, she took the time, buckle the seat belt, adjust the mirror, make sure the seat is correct, had the car going, looking over her shoulder, put it in gear. She thought she put it in reverse but she put it in forward and then she stepped on the gas. (laughter) She drove right through the garage wall which was a shared common wall with the breakfast room, crashed into the breakfast room knocking over the china cabinet before she could hit the brake and stop and now they were sitting in the breakfast room. And these two girls were sitting there quietly not saying a word, just kind of like they're trying to process what just happened and so they're sitting there quietly trying to figure out - *We're in the breakfast room* - and the youngest one looks over to her older sister and simply says, *You're dead*. (laughter) *You're dead*. Thank goodness she had a father who was very loving, very understanding, and it was all okay, but it made me think about then the story that I have always loved about a boy named David Leroy. He was much older than me but I loved hearing him talk, he was a man of great wisdom and a wonderful story teller. David Leroy was 11 years old back in 1928 and his father was a grocer and he had one thing he wanted and that was a 1928 Buick. He saved and saved and saved and finally was able to buy this 1928 Buick brand new. They lived out on some land and it was his father's pride and joy, man, he kept it in the garage most of the time. He wanted it to be taken care of. Now they did let David Leroy get in the car and since they were on this private land and drive it and maybe to a tree and maybe move it under the shade of another tree or bring it around front if the family was going to go somewhere and one day it was his mom who said, *David Leroy I've got to go run some errands. Why don't you bring the car around front?* And so he was excited, he ran into the garage - that's where it was now - and he started the car and was going to bring it around front but he was so excited he forgot and didn't close the door and he stepped on the gas way too hard and made the car really blast off, the door swung open, got caught by the garage, it ripped the door off the car. His mother heard all the commotion, she came out and saw the door lying on the ground ripped from the car and she simply looked at him and said, *You're dead*. (laughter) *You know your father loves this car, he has worked and saved, it means everything to him. I don't know what he's going to do to you*. Well David Leroy discovered that when it came to dinnertime he didn't have much of an appetite. He didn't want to be in the room when his father came home but he did want to hear what his dad had to say and so he got on the other side of the door to listen as his mom began to explain to his dad what had happened and how the car - the door - had been ripped off and now it was damaged and he was very sorry about it and he said his dad didn't say a word, he just kept listening. Finally he said, *Well Ruby, it's just a car and we can get it fixed and I'm so glad that nobody is hurt, but I have a feeling that David*

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Leroy is really hurting right now so I'd better go love on him to love him through this. And David Leroy said, *You know I'd grown up in church, I've been going to church all my life, I was 11 years old and that day I understood the meaning of grace, that grace is about forgiveness and you don't deserve it, you didn't earn it, but it's freely given to you. That day I understood the meaning of God's grace.* Because they didn't kill him he grew up loving church and loving God and decided to become a Methodist Minister and no longer go by David Leroy but to go by D.L. and Dr. D.L. Dykes was the Senior Pastor at First Methodist Church in Shreveport, Louisiana. He was a giant of a man, such a leader. In 1955 there was this new medium called television. He was one of the first in the country to get his church on television believing it was a new way to share the Gospel throughout all of Louisiana there and into East Texas. He was a man who wanted to work for Civil Rights and bring people together, was a leader and a forefront of helping to work with the struggles of the '50s and the '60s. He has long since entered the Kingdom of Heaven but I loved D.L. Dykes and just sitting and simply listening to his stories and I can tell you he never got tired of telling you how he came to understand the meaning of God's grace. I hope as you and I have gone through the pandemic we've had time to examine our own lives to re-center ourselves spiritually and maybe - just maybe - we can leave behind some of the guilt, leave behind the shame, and walk in grace discovering that it is freely given, you don't earn it, you don't deserve it, it's God's gift to you, and if you travel in grace you travel far lighter and it's a much more enjoyable trip.

So that, secondly, you're able to be the person who goes and proclaims, *Peace be unto this house.* That's what they were told to share, to go to the homes, *Peace be unto this house.* These Disciples were supposed to be going out and preparing the way for Jesus to come, the Kingdom of God is drawing near to you. They were trying to set aside the anger, the suspicion, and truly create an environment so Jesus could come and share the message of God's grace: *Peace be unto your house.* They were the peacemakers and you know it's so much easier to be a peacemaker when you're walking in the gift of God's grace. Some of you may have seen the story recently here about a friend of mine, Imad Enchassi. Imad Enchassi is the Imam at the Mosque here in Oklahoma City. He is the Imam at the Greater Islamic Oklahoma City Community. He takes care of his congregation and the thing about Imad - he is such a man of faith and he is such a man of great humor. He loves to be able to laugh and laugh at himself. But he was telling me about how not long ago he was actually out in the yard there at the Mosque and he was working there in the flower beds and he was dressed in this gym clothes and had a hat on and a car pulled up and a young lady - a teenager - got out and came over to him and said, *I'm looking for the Imam.* He said, *She obviously thought I was the gardener.* He said, *So I tried to look as holy as I could and said I'm the Imam.* And she goes, *Well I have an envelope for you,* and she handed him an envelope and it turned out it had \$80 in it and she said, *I know you have members in your congregation who are from Gaza and I wish you could use this and get it to a family in Gaza and tell them this is from a young Jewish girl who is babysitting to raise this money because she wanted to be able to say that she cared about them and she loved them.* And Imad was so taken back, I mean, you know that right now there

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has been such an outbreak of anti-Semitic attacks on Jews as this struggle is going on between the Palestinians and the Israelis and so many of her faith are suffering just as many of the Muslim faith have suffered. And yet here was this girl, a young Jewish girl, and he said, *What's your name?* She wouldn't tell him. She didn't want this to be a story about her; she wanted it to be a story about the gift from a Jew making a gift to the people of Gaza. And it wasn't going to change the world and it wasn't going to bring peace in the world but she was doing her part in her sphere of influence. She was doing what she could and what it reminds me is that each of us has a sphere of influence and you and I aren't going to stop all the wars in the world and bring peace but you know something? You can bring peace in your part of your world, in your sphere, by what you say and what you do. And if we're the people who walk in grace we can be the people who also are the bringers of peace, setting aside the anger, suspicion, the hatred. There is so much of that in our country right now. You and I can set that aside. You travel lighter. You become the bringers of peace. Peace be unto this house.

And third, if you want to know the reason that Jesus told these Disciples to travel light you actually have to leave the 10th Chapter here of Luke and go over to the 22nd Chapter of Luke. And if you go to the 22nd Chapter of Luke in the 35th Verse you will now find Jesus on the night of the Last Supper and there He's kind of wrapping everything up, He knows He's about to be betrayed, He's going to be taken away from His Disciples, and so He is now trying to, to prepare the Disciples: *How are you going to go live in the world?* And on the night of the Last Supper Jesus says, *Do you remember when I told you to go out without a purse or a bag or sandals?* He refers back to the sending out of the 70. *Do you remember when I told you to go out without a purse or a bag or sandals?...Yes...Did you lack for anything?...Nothing...Ahh, that's what I wanted you to discover, that if you walk in grace, you walk in peace, your eyes will be open to see God working in your life and in your world and you're going to discover you really have everything you need. It's not everything you want, it's not that you get to escape anything difficult, but you're going to find wherever you are in life God is there watching over you. Did you lack for anything? Nothing. Ahh. I'm going to be sending you out again. You don't have to be afraid. You don't have to be afraid.* I don't know if you saw the announcement that Gavin McCloud passed away. Some of you will recognize the name Gavin McCloud. He was 90 years old, his real name was actually Allen Gregory See but when he decided to go into acting he didn't feel like that was a good name and so he changed it to Gavin McCloud. He chose McCloud because that was the last name of his Drama Teacher and it was his Drama Teacher who really encouraged him to pursue his dream and so he always wanted to remember that encouragement and that teacher so he changed his name to Gavin McCloud. Like all actors when he first started off it was tough, he had little bit parts here and there, just little things, trying to get to catch on. He had a very little part in "McHale's Navy". If you remember "McHale's Navy" you're saying something about your age. I remember "McHale's Navy" and watching it and a little bitty part but it was in 1970 he got his big break and he was given a part of "Mary Tyler Moore Show". Played the part of Murray. It was all about a newsroom and he was the lead news

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writer. He had Ed Asner was on there, Mary Tyler Moore, Betty White, and now Gavin, I mean, it was the Number 1 show from 1970 to 1977, huge success. When he got through he thought, *You know I'm going to kind of step away from TV for a little while.* Before he could step away Aaron Spelling called and said, *I'm starting a new TV show and I want you to come star in it and it's called "The Love Boat". I want you to be Merrill - Captain Merrill Stubbing.* And so his agent had called him and he said, *Have you read the script?* And he said yes. *What do you think about it?* He said, *It's terrible, hate it, it's going to bomb.* Well Gavin McCloud read it and he said, *You know there's so much pain in the world. This seems to be a story really about love and happy ending. I think people are going to like it.* So he took the part and for the next nine years it was the Number 1 show on TV, it was playing in 90 different countries, I mean it was a huge success. Well along the way - 1982 - he was now caught up in "Love Boat", such great success, you know he had had an up and down life, he had had his struggles, but in 1982 he decided to divorce his wife Patty. Later years people would look back and say, *Why did you get divorced?* And he said, *You know looking back it's because I was so busy with my career I didn't have any time for her. I was so selfish, it was all about me, and about my career and my success.* So they got divorced. Three years later in 1985 it was his mother who got cancer. It was brain cancer. They weren't sure that she would survive. It was such a struggle and he was so afraid he really started praying. He was Roman Catholic growing up but had drifted from the faith and now as he started praying for his mother and as he started connecting again to the faith it's like he heard a voice saying, *Call Patty.* And so he did. Hadn't spoken to her in three years, called her up, what he didn't know was Jerry Lewis' first wife had invited her to a prayer breakfast - a prayer group - and she had begun a great spiritual walk in her own life and he called her up and said, *Look can we just be friends?* She said, *I've always wanted to be your friend. Why don't you come over for dinner...Great!* He showed up for dinner and she opened the door and she said, *I'm afraid your dinner is cold. It's been waiting for you for three years.* (laughter) They came in and began to visit. She told him about her spiritual journey, he started telling her about his, and felt so inspired, and suddenly faith became such an important part of his life and they got remarried. They'd be married for the rest of their lives but for Gavin it was a huge change. He wanted to now give himself into television and movies that had values that he believed needed to be proclaimed through the Christian faith. He was the Ambassador for Princess Cruise Lines but he would always say, *My greatest job is being the Ambassador for Christ.* His faith became so important in his life through these last 30 years of his life and what a change it made for him. He wrote a book and in his book he entitled it *This Is Your Captain Speaking* and he talked about all the things he'd learned, the ups and the downs and the good and the hard and now where he was in life, reflecting back on life. I want to read you what he said: "Even if you don't believe it, even if you're not fully appreciative of it, God is there, watching over you, always." *Remember when I told you to go out without purse or bag or sandals? Did you lack for anything? Nothing. Ahh. Do you understand? Go out and walk in grace. Go out and walk in peace. You're going to have everything that you need because God is watching over you. It really is better to travel light.*

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It's in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let each of us lift up our own silent prayer.