

Are We There Yet? WEEK TWO July 11, 2021

Two years ago I bought a new piece of luggage.

My old suitcase had a broken wheel, plus it was large and bulky.

I decided that whatever I bought had to be durable, lightweight and small enough to carry on an airplane.

The first time I packed my new bag,

I discovered it could hold everything I needed for a one week trip.

Now, I probably pack lighter than the average traveler.

I have a friend who always brings one huge suitcase that needs to be checked.

He says he wants to be prepared for any contingency.

But having watched him struggle with all his luggage makes me appreciate the importance of traveling light.

SCREEN: Are We There Yet? main screen

This is Week Two of our message series titled, Are We There Yet?

In the gospel readings Jesus is inviting us to take a trip with him - the journey of discipleship.

In the passage we just heard,

Jesus was literally sending his disciples on a journey.

His packing instructions for their trip were really specific and pretty unusual.

Now, before I talk about those instructions, let's get the lay of the land.

Jesus was sending his apostles out on their own for the very first time.

Up til this moment, they'd never left his side.

But that's what disciples do - they learn from the master.

For months they'd listened to Jesus preach.

They watched as he cast out demons and healed the sick.

Then the day came when Jesus 'pushed them out the nest' so to speak and said, *"Now it's your turn. Go do what I've been doing."*

That would have terrified me.

Not to mention that they would be traveling into

unfamiliar terrain to meet strangers.

Oh, and their mode of transportation was walking.

Which they'd be doing for miles, everyday, under a hot sun.

And here are the packing instructions Jesus gave them:

SCREEN: take nothing for the journey

but a walking stick—

no food, no sack, no money in their belts.

They were, however, to wear sandals

but not a second tunic.

What's so unusual about this list is that it would have gone against every instinct the Apostles would have.

Two thousand years ago in Palestine, no one would travel like this.

It would have been considered dangerous!

No food?

No money?

No change of clothes?

Packing light is one thing, but this was extreme.

It sounds risky, even foolhardy.

Why would anyone travel this way?

Was Jesus proposing a game of chicken between his Apostles and God?

Let's test the Lord to see if he comes to your rescue!

No, that's not why Jesus gave these instructions.

He was giving them a lesson in trust.

Trusting that God would provide for all their needs.

I don't know about you, but I never sleep well

the night before I take a trip.

My mind races with lots of 'what if's'.

What if my alarm doesn't go off?

What if I forgot to pack something?

What if the traffic is bad on the way to the airport?

What if my flight is canceled or delayed?

I wonder if Jesus' disciples did the same thing
the night before their mission began?

Running through in their minds everything that could go wrong.

What if we die of hunger or thirst?

What if we get robbed?

What if, what if?

Some of this is understandable.

It's healthy to have these concerns about travel.

But don't we also do this about bigger things in life?

*What if I get sick, or lose my job, what if my child doesn't get accepted
to the right school, doesn't make the team?*

All the worry and fear and doubt, all the negativity and 'what if's'
can overwhelm us - can literally make us sick.

And as disciples, at its core, these 'what if's'
can be a lack of trust in God.

Not believing that God will provide.

Not believing - as you've heard me say so often -

that God is with you, God has a plan, and God is in control.

The disciples discovered this.

They let go of their fears and doubts and were open to their mission.

And because they were, God could use them as his instruments
to share the Gospel and build Christ's Kingdom.

God provided for their needs.

We heard that at the very end of today's reading:

SCREEN: they went off and preached repentance....

they drove out many demons,

they anointed the sick and cured them.

They followed Jesus' instructions - they packed light.

But not only did they leave all the physical baggage behind,
they also let go of their emotional and spiritual baggage
about themselves, others and God.

If you are going to fulfill your mission in life,
you need to follow the example of the Apostles.

So here's a question I'd like you to answer for yourself:

SCREEN: What baggage do I need to leave behind?

What baggage do I need to leave behind?

And by 'baggage' I'm referring to something that
is weighing upon you and has you emotionally frozen in place.

Something that affects how you see yourself, others or God.

Something you need to let go of

so you can journey with Jesus.

What baggage do I need to leave behind?

If you're not sure what it might be for you,

I'd like to offer a suggestion of something that so many people
are carrying around these days.

SCREEN: "I'm really angry about...."

And that thing is anger.

Anger about all the disruptions of the past year and a half.

Anger about all the changes to routines and plans
and hopes for the future.

Anger about the state of our country and our world.

Every person I know has said at some point in the past 16 months,

"I'm really angry about...." something.

Nowadays it seems to be the default response to
every disruption or disappointment in life.

What are you angry about?

Fill in the blank.

It would be unusual to not feel some anger after all we've been through.

But anger that festers leads to deep resentments
and bitterness that can destroy one's peace of mind.

Extreme anger leads to wrath,
which is one of the seven deadly sins.

It can destroy relationships and kill one's faith.

Ask yourself if there is something you are really angry about.

And if there is, name it, claim it, and then take it to God in prayer.

Ask Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to help you let go of your anger

so it stops being a heavy burden that keeps you from

the life God wants for you.

SCREEN: Are We There Yet? main screen

Today and this week, take some time to reflect and pray

about the baggage that you are dragging around.

Baggage that is holding you back or slowing you down.

Be willing to face whatever it is so you can move forward

on your journey of discipleship. Amen. +