

**Traveling Light**  
**By Rev. Todd Farnsworth**  
**Mark 10: 17-28**



**7** As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”**18** “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. **19** You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’<sup>[a]</sup>” **20** “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” **21** Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” **22** At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. **23** Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” **24** The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is<sup>[b]</sup> to enter the kingdom of God! **25** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” **26** The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” **27** Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” **28** Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

Martha and I had a great vacation a couple of weeks ago. It feels like years! We visited with friends and family in MA and CT and NY. We got to go on a great walk around Rockland Lake. We spent an afternoon at Kitten Academy...wahooooo! Oh, that was good. But as most of you know, any journey requires some packing. Do you do this? We figure out how many days we'll be gone, check the weather where we'll be traveling, add clothes to match those hoped for days, and then a little bit more, just in case I spill coffee on something! Even an overnigher can require two shirts and two pairs of pants. Martha's sister jokes that we're "moving in!" when we arrive at her house for a couple of nights.

Our friends (Bob and Sue) took a 6 week journey on the Camino De Santiago. It was really a pilgrimage. They traveled about 500 miles over those weeks. All by foot. All with their "worlds belongings" on their backs. Preparing for that trip took the better part of a year. They trained. They found the right shoes. They balanced their packs and tried to guess what they would need in all kinds of weather. It turned out they underestimated the amount of foot salves they would need. They overestimated the kind of foot gear they would need. At one point in the trip, Sue left her favorite pair of hiking boots hanging on a fence because the shoes had become too much of a burden to carry...and she wasn't really wearing them anyway! She said it was a tough decision, but necessary to carry on toward her goal of completing the journey.

Today, we begin a journey through Lent with Jesus. We are on the road toward Jerusalem. A pilgrimage of 40 days (not counting Sundays) that will eventually lead us to...as we hoist our baggage up onto our shoulders, a young man approaches our little group of sojourners, and asks to join.

The conversation is cordial. He seems like a nice fellow. By the looks of things he'd make a good member to our team of pilgrims. Very self sufficient. Able to take care of himself (and perhaps a few of us in a pinch!). Even Jesus seems to love him...Jesus does love him...and Jesus says, You are lacking one thing necessary to get to eternal life.

The young man quickly runs through his checklist of supplies. He is pretty sure he has what it takes to make the journey.

Faith? Check.

Food? Check.

Socks? Check.

Money? Check.

His spirit is in the right place. He's ready to go. It is certainly how I feel as we embark upon our Lenten journey. Maybe you do too. And so suddenly the story shifts and we become the young man. Confused. Maybe hurt.

We're ready to go...right? We've got the essentials to make this pilgrimage with Jesus. What's in our packs? What are you bringing for the journey?

I've got courage, and faith, and a tank full of gas that's ready to go wherever Jesus is leading.

What have you got?

So, like the young man that Jesus loves, we're ready to go...and yet Jesus says, "not quite."

Jesus says "Take the thing that is most important to you, the thing you depend on to make this journey, the thing that may even define who you are and what you're about, the thing that gives you access to all kinds of other places, take that thing and give it away. Get rid of it."

Jesus says, "that thing may have been helpful in the past, it may help other people, but where you are going, it will only get in the way."

And we look at our lists. We look at the thing we are bringing that we count on the most...whether it's our faith, or our courage, or our wisdom, or our money, or our socks...and we have a decision to make.

Jesus is asking us a big thing, not because he is trying to trap us or trick us or punish us. Jesus is asking this big thing of us, because he loves us.

The author of Mark equates Jesus with the Way to drawing closer to God.

The author of Mark equates Jesus with eternal life.

The author of Mark recognizes that unless we are willing to rely on Jesus instead of our own "stuff" we will not be able to make the journey. He emphasizes this by reminding us of how much the disciples have given

away to be with Jesus! They have left their families, their work, their homes. They are living on the toga tails of Jesus...for the most part. They are reliant on him for their very welfare: for the food they eat, the places they sleep, the people they meet...mostly. They stray here and there and Mark is quick to show us their moments of self-dependence. But they are *pretty* close to him...because of what they were willing to sacrifice to be with him.

I think Mark records this story to ask future generations of followers, “what will you sacrifice to draw closer to Jesus?” “In what ways will you travel light, in order to become more dependent on the One who can bring you eternal life?” Clearly Jesus requires more than our piety and faithfulness. He wants our lives.

It is interesting that the young man, like many of us, cannot give up the stuff that he relies on. He turns and sadly, walks away.

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Given the tone of Jesus’ conversation with the young man, I can imagine that Jesus’ heart is breaking for the young man. Jesus’ has compassion for

him and I believe, holds the door open for when and if the young man is able to part with his things. Like the father in the story of the Prodigal Son, I believe that Jesus will welcome the young man, and any of us who are struggling to let go, with open arms. In fact, like his closest disciples who are wondering how they got in, perhaps even a step in the right direction would gain the young man the closeness he needs to find more courage for the journey. Maybe like my friend Sue, who hung her beloved hiking boots on a fence along the Camino de Santiago so that she could continue the pilgrimage, we could hang symbols of our burdens on this cross over the next weeks leading to Easter.

I invite you to bring those symbols in during the week or on Sunday morning as you find the strength to let go of some piece of you that you've relied on, so that you can be more dependent on Jesus to provide for your needs.

I was thinking about what that would look like, and I have brought a bag of bittersweet chocolate to place on the cross, because sometimes I harbor bitterness in my heart as a shield against future hurt. I want to give that up to Jesus so that I can be more open to whatever healing he has in store. I realize that may involve more hurt...more bitterness...but I want to try to let Jesus take care of that for me. I want to rely on him to counsel me, care for me, heal me, guide me, when the bitterness of daily living begins to well in my heart and soul. (*attach chocolate to the cross*)

If you decide to hang something on the cross, you don't need to give an explanation, just do it as an expression of your willingness to travel

light...your willingness to walk in the Way with Jesus as your guide.

Remember as you enter into this agreement with our Lord, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” I pray you will join me in letting God be God as we try to give away the things that keep us independent of the One who loves us most.

Amen.