

## “Don’t Take Too Much With You”

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(Luke 19:28-40 NRSV) After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. {29} When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, {30} saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. {31} If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" {32} So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. {33} As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" {34} They said, "The Lord needs it." {35} Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. {36} As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. {37} As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, {38} saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" {39} Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." {40} He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

During this season of Lent, I have tried to emphasize to you that Christianity is a journey! That we travel the road of life moving from one experience to another. One defining moment to another. One Holy moment to another. Each encounter --- each experience --- each defining moment catapults us to the next! Christianity is a life long (eternity long) journey with Jesus Christ. And the point of the journey is THE JOURNEY!

This journey that we are on is a never ending journey --> one that is always changing and growing as we sometimes inch our way along.

Christianity is not a state of being ---> not static description but dynamic action (verb not a noun)

Christianity is not just subscribing to a particular set of beliefs

The point of Christianity is not to arrive at some certain destination, or even a level of knowledge, or even a level of maturity in our faith

The point of Christianity is the continual journey that takes place along the road of life. And every moment of life is one of learning. Don't forget what Dr. John Sylhavey said: "I realize that I don't know anything compared with what I really need to know. My job. and your job. Tomorrow and every tomorrow is to begin to learn what it is that I really need to know in life."

Christianity is that journey that we travel in which we are constantly aware of how little we really know, but how fortunate we are because God gives us the maps that will lead us on that journey.

Two weeks ago, I shared with you Five Rules of the Road for the Journey of Life, and this morning, I want to share with you three more.

Let me first remind you of those that I share already:

1. We are in this together, so please wear your name tag!
2. If you are not sure where you are going, go somewhere.
3. Contrary to popular opinion, maps really are OK. God gives us the Bible as our map for life.
4. Learn patience!
5. Enjoy the detours!

The sixth rule is: WHEN TRAVELING LONG DISTANCES, IT IS BEST TO PACK LIGHT!

When I was a junior in High School, my father got a crazy idea. He thought that a trip of just the Conger men was in order. So he convinced my two brothers and myself that it would be a wonderful experience if we went

canoeing in Quetico Provincial Park in Canada. So we began the process of getting in shape.

The hard part about canoeing is not paddling the canoe (although that is not the easiest task to do for four or five hours every day!) The worst part is when you come to the end of one lake and you have to carry all your "Stuff" to the next lake. One of the things that makes Quetico so wonderful is that there are no motor boats allowed in the Provincial Park. There are no stores, there are no bathrooms, there really aren't any campsites - it is primitive, especially once you get farther into the Park and away from Boundary Waters in Minnesota. So everything that you are going to need for your week long jaunt into nature, must be brought in by you and out by you!

As we started planning for the trip, my father decided that it would be a good idea if we began practicing carrying the canoe on our shoulders and our backpacks. So for a couple of months, we practiced carrying those packs around our neighborhood. I am sure the neighbors all thought that we were lunatics. We worked hard so that we would be in good shape -- BUT

The truth is nothing can prepare you for that first portage. We thought that we had done a good job in limiting what we were taking. After that first day, however, I was convinced that half of what we brought was worthless. For the rest of the trip I dreaded every portage - especially Prairie portage which was about one mile long!

From that trip I learned a basic lesson of life (I only wished I followed it better) and that is: when traveling long distances or for a long period of time - it is best to pack light.

This simple lesson is also true for our Christian journey. Too many of us try to make headway in our Christian lives while still carting around a whole lot of weight!

We overpack, refusing to throw away useless weight, and we find ourselves worn out and beaten down by our Christian journey. Unfortunately, when that happens a lot of people just give up, forgetting that Jesus invites and encourages us to give up some of that weight.

As Christians we are called to pack light. Yet, still, time and time again I hear it. Most of us are so very good at storing away our old hurt, our past sins, so those things become like a mill stone around our necks weighing us down. There is the person who says: "Christianity just isn't working for me. I'm just not loveable." And as they go through counseling what is realized is that those burdens come from their childhood.

Then there is the person who is consumed by their job, they wake up one day to find that their children have grown, their spouse has run off with somebody else. They are overwhelmed with the weight of guilt and shame - burdened by the what of WHAT IF.... what could I have done differently.

To this Jesus speaks when he says: (Mat 11:28-30) "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The point of our Christian journey is the Journey --- and if we are going to survive the journey we must learn to pack light!!

Jesus calls to us -> NO, Jesus pleads with us to drop our burdens at his feet. There is no need for us to journey with the extra weight, the garbage we walk through life with - Jesus will take it — and he promises that he will give us rest!

We must learn to forgive ourselves!

God has forgiven us long before we forgive ourselves. Why are we so insistent on clinging to those old sins? As we journey, why are we so insistent on traveling with weight that is unbearable, unnecessary, and foolish?

Why do we find it so hard to travel light? To lay our burdens at the feet of Jesus - to exchange our yoke of sin and sorrow, which is so heavy, with the light yoke of Jesus?

If God is willing to wipe the slate clean and give us a fresh start, we too, must

be willing to accept ourselves, learn to live with the past - learn from it's scars - and move into the future with strength and determination.

Face it, most of the weight that you and I carry on our journey of life is unnecessary -> and Jesus says to us: give it up, forgive yourself even as I have forgiven you.

Pack light -- Jesus wants not only our stresses and problems in life - Jesus wants our old shames, guilts and hurts as well. For Jesus understands this rule of the road - if we try to carry them with us, we will not get very far.

The seventh rule of the road is: WHEN LOST ON UNKNOWN ROADS, IT'S NICE TO HAVE FRIENDS ALONG!

Face it we need each other. As much as I don't like to admit it, I have found myself lost at times. I hate being lost -> And I bet most of you can identify with that feeling.

There are moments on our Christian journey that we feel utterly lost! We have no clue as to where we are, where we are going, or how we are going to get there!

Listen to what Paul has to tell us from his letter to the Romans:

(Romans 12:9-21 NIV) Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. {10} Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. {11} Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. {12} Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. {13} Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. {14} Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. {15} Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. {16} Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. {17} Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. {18} If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. {19} Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. {20} On the contrary: "If your

enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." {21} Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

It's here. It's in this place - in the Body of Christ - the church - that we can in our times of loss, in our times of doubt, even in our times of joy - find friends!!! People who will help us find our way — people who will be supportive - people who will hold out lights in the darkness — people who will help us keep perspective on our current journey.

Remember, us who sit here this morning- we have got to always remember: We are the Church (I am not the church) and it is to the Church that hurting people come in their time of lostness and need.

In my book there is only truly one kind of hypocrisy that the church must really be concerned about. And that hypocrisy is not that we are Christians and yet still sinners -> because that is the reality of why we are here, if we were perfect we would not need to come. No the hypocrisy that I am concerned about is when we turn our backs on those who are lost, on those who need love, on those who need compassion and support. Don't ever forget what Paul says: "Be devoted to one another in... love."

The eighth rule is this and it flows from the seventh: TAKE ALONG SOMEONE WHO KNOWS THE ROAD!

A friend of mine tells the story about a time when he and his family were white water rafting. On this trip there were four boats. Now normally each boat has it's on guide - someone who knows the river, knows the best way to get down the river and where all the trouble spots that need to be avoided.

When they got ready to go, they were told that one of the guides were sick - and they asked if someone would be willing to steer the boat down the river. They said that this person's job would be simple to follow the other guides.

Needless to say, my friend volunteered. And as he would tell the story, he was a good guide (at least for most of the trip!) While they were heading into some pretty good white water, he was dutifully following the other guides in

front of him and shouting out the paddling orders to the other members of his boat.

Suddenly, there was in front of them a boulder that had to be navigated around. Proudly, he says that is exactly what he did - yet little did he know, but right after that big boulder was a second smaller boulder that also had to be maneuvered over. He did pretty well, most of the boat missed that little rock - actually the only part of the boat that caught that rock was the exact spot where he was sitting - and the result was predictable.

Once he fell, instinctively he grabbed the rope that encircled the boat - he said that the water was so cold that he could not talk, nor even scream. It wasn't until the others noticed that he wasn't screaming out orders that they even realized that he had gone over. Fortunately they helped him get back in the boat and get it down the rest of the rapids successfully.

The point of the story is this: without a guide to lead us --> someone who is experienced in the journey that we are taking -> the results can be tragic. We need someone to help guide us along the way.

As Christians that guide is none other than Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God's chosen disciples.

Have you noticed how Jesus went about preparing people to become guides. He didn't say: "Go do it yourself" No, what Jesus always did is say: "Follow me." And then, once we have followed we can help others along the journey that we have first hand knowledge of.

When we think that we can become the primary guide --> that we can be the trailblazer the result is often the tragedy in Guyana with Jim Jones, or in Waco with David Koresh. The Heaven's Gate cult group . . . and the list can go on and on.

Paul always was busy trying to teach others, to show them the way first and then, and only then to let them become guides along the way, under the direction of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

All too often we travel along on our journeys and we lose sight of who it is that is our Ultimate guide.

All too often we travel along on our journeys and we forget to enlist the help of our guide!

All too often we travel along on our journeys and in our bull headed nature we say - the heck with the guide, I know a better way --> and it never fails, but we find ourselves thrown from the boat!

Christianity is a never ending journey -- and you and I are on that journey! It is impossible to make the journey without a close and personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The journey that we are on is at times long and hard, and it has far too many obstacles for us to travel on without an experienced guide!

Jesus Christ is the only one who fully knows the way, and is the only one who can be the trailblazer!

PLEASE, please take someone along with you who knows the journey.

find a prayer partner

find a study partner

find a friend in Christ

Over the last couple of weeks I have shared eight simple, yet I believe profound rules that will make our journey more successful and more fun.

1. WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER, SO PLEASE WEAR YOUR NAME TAG
2. IF YOU ARE NOT SURE JUST WHERE YOU ARE GOING-> GO SOMEWHERE!
3. CONTRARY TO POPULAR OPINION, MAPS REALLY ARE OK!
4. JUST WHEN YOU THINK EVERY THING IS GOING SMOOTH AND YOU WANT TO SHIFT INTO HIGH GEAR -> THERE IS ALWAYS A CAR DOING FORTY IN THE PASSING LANE! To say it another way; LEARN PATIENCE.
5. ENJOY THE DETOURS, YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU WILL FIND!
6. WHEN TRAVELING LONG DISTANCES, IT IS BEST TO PACK LIGHT!

7. WHEN LOST ON UNKNOWN ROADS, IT'S NICE TO HAVE FRIENDS ALONG!
8. TAKE ALONG SOMEONE WHO KNOWS THE ROAD!

Christianity is a journey ---> a journey through this life, experiencing God and all that God has for us. Let us try to remember these rules as we go through our life.

Only you know what you need at this moment on your journey  
courage to start  
direction  
patience  
lessening of the burdens that you carry with you  
friends

Only you know. Bring those before our Lord and receive his blessing and guidance!