

Sermon for: Trinity Lutheran Church, Manilla

7th Week after Pentecost—July 6, 2024

Sermon text: Mark 6:7-13 (Gospel Lesson)

Sermon Title/theme: “Travel Time”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Summer time means “travel time” for many. As the summer began travel agencies predicted a record number of travelers. This extended 4th of July holiday weekend was a travel weekend for many.

Jesus and His disciples were travelers—not for the scenery or social connections but to get to as many areas and audiences as possible teaching about the kingdom, healing the crippled and diseased, and driving out demons.

Jesus was also preparing the disciples to be traveling missionaries. Following His resurrection, Jesus would gather the disciples and commission them, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matthew 28:19). At His ascension, Jesus told the disciples to anticipate the coming of the Holy Spirit and following the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, they would “Be witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth,” (Acts 1:8). A future teacher goes “student teaching;” a future tradesman does an apprenticeship; a future pastor serves a vicarage. Real life experience is always helpful. Prior to their ultimate mission departures, Jesus provides missionary training for His disciples.

In today's Gospel reading, the future apostles (sent ones), are sent on what we might call a "short-term mission trip." The text provides some direction to these disciples and to us as we "travel" together as followers of Jesus and also prepare to be Jesus' witnesses.

1. Follow the Travel Guide

There was only one travel Guide—Jesus. He was the one who had approached the four fisherman and said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." He was the One who invited Matthew to leave his peers of "tax collectors and sinners" and to follow him. Others had left family and other vocations to travel with Jesus.

While they may have followed this Messiah in anticipation of earthly kingdoms and personal gain, they heard Jesus say, "My kingdom is not of this world." They were told to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow Him.

Eleven of the twelve disciples would follow Jesus to His passion and ultimately see His crucifixion. When they assumed that their Guide was forever in the tomb, their hopes were dashed, and they feared that the journey together was over. However the resurrected Jesus comes to them again and greets them "Peace be with you." He travels with them for another 40 days assuring them of the absolute truth of His resurrection and providing final instructions.

With a destination in mind, we follow a travel guide. The paper map that many of us once valued has given way to the travel app on the phone or the screen on the car dash. Got an eternal destination in mind? Follow the Divine Guide. Follow the One who went to the cross and came out of the tomb. Follow the One who ascended to glory promising that He was going to prepare a place for us. He has given us the guidance of His Word. He has given instructions

as to how to read the guide and to believe it. The Apostle John reflected on His travels with Jesus and pointed the readers of His Gospel to the Guide, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing you may have life in His name," (John 20).

Trinity is about to travel into a new era of ministry. As you travel, let Jesus be your Guide.

2. Travel Together

The parent directs the children at the amusement park or other setting, "Make sure you stay together." Jesus' disciples were to "stay together." Jesus sent them with a travel partner: "He began to send them out two by two," (vs. 7). If we find ourselves in an uncertain situation, it's a relief to have a family member or friend say, "I'll go with you."

The travel partner provides support and security. The travel partner provides some accountability. It's harder to get lost if we are with someone else. As disciples of Jesus, we are blessed to travel together as a church with those who follow Jesus with us. If a fellow traveler is lost or confused, we provide encouragement or direction.

While human travel partners may be unsure and unpredictable, we are blessed to have Jesus as a constant partner. When Jesus commissioned His disciples, he added, "And lo, I am with you always!" Again, we consider Trinity's travels into the future. As you "travel" with Pastor Staehr, travel together with him and one another. Find your unity in a confession of faith and the mission to be His witnesses to this community and into the world.

3. Travel Lightly

The youth leader of the teenage travel group gives the instructions, “You can only take 1 suitcase.” Jesus, the travel Guide said, “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money; wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.”

There are two reasons for Jesus’ directions. First of all, “Don’t let earthly things be a distraction.” There are earthly necessities. Traveling with Jesus and a large crowd following them, the disciples reminded Him, “Where are we going to find food to eat?” The 4th Petition of The Lord’s Prayer reminds us that God provides all the aspects of our daily bread. However, too often there is a difference between what we need and what we desire.

Secondly, Jesus’ directions also teaches the disciples and us to “Trust God to provide.” As Jesus’ traveling missionaries, the disciples’ main focus was to point others to the greater needs of the kingdom—forgiveness of sins and a relationship with God. Earthly needs were secondary to spiritual needs. God would provide what they needed. Jesus traveled unencumbered with concerns for His physical well-being, “The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head,” (Matt. 8:20). The disciples could trust that the food, clothing, lodging and everything else they needed would be provided. We too continue to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” trusting that God will provide not necessarily what we want, but what we need.

God has faithfully provided for this congregation in the past. He has again provided a pastor/shepherd. May you continue to be faithful stewards of what God has provided for you, so that through you, the mission and ministry of Trinity is well provided for.

4. Anticipate detours

It's frustrating to be traveling and to come upon the sign that states, "Detour ahead." (With the recent flooding in northwest Iowa, there were many detours.) The traveling disciples would come upon detours, "If any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet." The disciples would receive a course of direction. In most cases, they were directed to go to "the house of fellow Israelites." There they would share that they were fellow travelers with the Messiah. If they got the chance to share the message of Jesus and His kingdom, many would immediately question and even reject that message because they were looking for an earthly deliverer.

We already know that life has detours. The high school graduate goes off to college and finds that the college isn't a "fit" or the choice of a major changes. Sometimes the detours are dramatic or tragic: the marriage doesn't work; the spouse dies, the friendship is strained, the company closes and the job is lost.

As Pastor Staehr joins you and leads you in ministry, there will be detours. Perhaps an expectation you had or an idea he has will not work. Prayerfully and cooperatively you may be led to travel in a different direction. We look forward to travel times and travel destinations. You look forward to your ministry travel time with Pastor Staehr. While we travel together here, we are always mindful that our earthly travels, even as a congregation, are temporary. Our ultimate destination is to be with our Lord eternally. We are on the way to heaven.

It's travel time at Trinity! May God bless our travels, fellow disciples and travelers, in Jesus' name. Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.