**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**June 27th, 2021**

**Already Equipped**

1. The Packing List

I like to think that I’m low key and I roll with what’s going on and I try to take life as it

comes. You might believe that, until you see my list before I get ready to go on a trip. It doesn’t matter whether it’s an overnight trip or eight weeks away, the list becomes some kind of sacred document for me. There’s categories, question marks, emphatic stars signaling that an item MUST be brought. At the end of my packing, there’s often highlighter marks, the paper has been bent and bunched up and it’s a delightful mess.
 I have no idea why that’s one of my few places in my life where I get that intense, but it is what it is. I remember packing my bag up for some trip as a teenager and my anxiety was high as my list was being made. I also remember my mom entering my bedroom, trying to ease my stress levels, and she said, “Becca, if you forget your toothbrush, you can always buy one when you get there.” Poor woman, because I looked at her as if she were out of her mind, I said something like, “But what will the options be? What if I can’t get the right kind?”

 Now, sidebar, let me tell you – when I’m at home, a toothbrush is a toothbrush, I could care less what kind of bristles it has or what brand the toothpaste is…but apparently when I travel, I have particular needs I never knew I had…

1. Don’t Take a Thing

So when Jesus tells his disciples that they shouldn’t pack bread, or an extra tunic, or no

money… I know I would be the disciple that would go up to Jesus and try to bargain, “But, what about the really comfy tunic, can I just…please?” and I imagine Jesus would then try to reassure me, “You have what you need.”

 And then, in any healthy relationship with Christ, I feel like I’d say, “Okay, I trust you, but I’m not totally excited, but yes, you’re right, ok.” And thank God that God loves me enough to love me in my anxiety and gently push me down the road.

1. Already Equipped

I think I’m not alone in my packing anxieties though – it’s human nature to want to be

prepared and plan for any contingency. The toothbrush is going a little far, but generally speaking, preparing well is an act of survival.

 And I’d still say, it’s wise to prepare, it’s wise to know the lay of the land, the culture you are entering, and have a good sense of what to anticipate when you step off the ship or the plane. In the same way, our life of discipleship is similar – it’s good to know our Scripture, it’s great to understand the cultural biases and understandings of Jesus’ time, and it is helpful to know and feel assured of what you believe and what is important to you in your life of faith.

 But I’ll tell you, after three years of seminary and an extra year at a school of theology, I can’t tell you that I’m more prepared for the journey than everyone else. Yes, I have a greater understanding of cultural interpretations, a good sense of Scripture and the dynamics within, and I’ve taken an array of classes on our historical heritage in the Christian faith. And all of that is great, it helps me a great deal, but when I’m out in public, when I’m asked hard questions, I struggle as much as the disciple next to me.

1. Bluegrass Faith

Let me share with you a real life example of this that happened just this past week. I was

visiting one of my friend’s house in the northern rural part of Maryland and she was running late. She lives in this huge farmhouse with her family – her parents, her husband, her children, and this house from the 1850s is absolutely stunning. I tried to wait in my car, but her dad saw me and I had never met him before, and he asked, as he was picking his bluegrass guitar, “Who are you looking for” and I told him and he invited me up to the old wooden porch to sit next to him.

 I knew my friend came from an evangelical background, but I wasn’t prepared for this moment, because when I sat down, he looked at me and said, “Do you believe in Jesus Christ?” And I knew our theologies were going to be very different, so I said, “Yes, I’m a minister” really hoping that would end any further line of questioning. He said to me, “That doesn’t matter. How do you get to Heaven?” And I thought, oh boy, light questions, okay – is my seminary background going to help me in this moment? Probably not, so let’s just hold onto the Holy Spirit and give my best shot, “Well, you believe in Jesus and you love people and you try to help folks because Jesus first loved us.” And he looked at me and said, “Wrong!” And now, I’m just baffled, slighting cursing my friend for being late, but also just not feeling like I’m equipped for this moment. I replied, “Tell me more” – which is always a good line to give a place to pause and let someone dive in further. He said, “It is through Christ’s blood alone, not your good works.” To which I said, “Well, yes – but you do good works because of Christ’s love.” And just as he was going to ask me another question, my friend came up the path, stood on the porch with those eyes that just said, ‘I’m so sorry.’ And I swiftly went inside with her and went on my way. But I asked her, “Does he…does he talk to everyone about Jesus?” and she said, “He only does it with three kinds of people: atheists, ministers, and Mormons.” And to that, I nodded and sat down, completely devoid of any further response.

 But you see, our text is true right here – it wasn’t like if I had an extra toothbrush or tunic or money that I would have been able to answer his questions any differently. The only thing that was going to help me in that moment was trusting in the Spirit to listen closely and entering a space with a level of humility to learn more. And I believe that is what Christ is calling his disciples to do in the text – it seems scary at first, to say – just go, you have everything you need. And yet, it’s absolutely true – in this world, you already have everything you need to be able to be a disciple.

 And that’s because being a disciple and being equipped isn’t about physical attributes, but spiritual ones. It’s about listening to the Spirit, letting humility be your guide, trusting that the right things will happen in due time, and that even if you are disliked or ignored or pushed out of a house like one of the disciples in our story, that you need to be grounded in your faith enough to not let it shake you.

1. Already Equipped

This morning, I hope you trust me when I say that you are already equipped. Maybe it

doesn’t feel like it, but whatever you need is already in your heart. So as you enter difficult conversations or enjoy fellowship with a stranger, may you know you are ready. May God guide you, hold you, encourage you, and inspire you as you seek to live the life of discipleship that we are all called to as beloved children of Christ. Amen.