

**The Lessons Appointed for Use on the
Sunday closest to July 6
Proper 9 Year B
Ezekiel 2:1-5, Psalm 123, 2 Corinthians 12:2-10, Mark 6:1-13**

I know its time for a trip in the Adzima Household when the check list comes out. As most of you know, as I'm married to an engineer, this list started as a spreadsheet and has many different versions between the two of us, a toddler, two dogs, and two cats along with the different type of travel we're doing- road trip, camping, plane. Food. Clothing. Supplies. Our list is pretty long when we consider ourselves pretty minimalistic with stuff. But none of us could hold a candle, when compared with what the disciples were called to- go on a journey with nothing but a staff. That's it. That's the list in its entirety. We know this passage well and this process of discipleship well. It's a scene played out across the Synoptics, with only minor differences between Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The sending of the 12 disciples. They had been called by Jesus. They had been named. And now, it was time for them to be sent.

Often times when we hear something so familiar, we return to those same old thoughts and doubts about it working today. Our society and culture aren't like back then. Jesus talks about hospitality and staying in places where people open their doors to them. While we're unkind to strangers on the internet, let alone people who knock on our doors. We're afraid of the rejection that might ensue when we open up our doors or knock on others. We pack and we overpack because we're scared that we might not have enough. We live in comfort with our security blanket of many things.

How would this really work today? Our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry is going to help us out with this one. You see, while he's been preaching the Jesus Movement since his installation 3 years ago, people have been asking him, how do I participate in the Jesus Movement in practice? The theme for our church's triennial General Convention happening right now is, "The Way of Love." At the first Eucharist of the Convention this past week, Bishop Curry shared the story of the creation of the Way of Love- practices for a Jesus centered life. He got together with a group of people at the airport in Atlanta and they put their heads together and came up with a rule of life that can help all of us connect more deeply with God.

There are seven steps in the Way of Love. Ancient spiritual practices which mimic the calling and sending those disciples and every disciple afterwards. Those steps are: turn, learn, pray, worship, bless, go, rest. Turn- turn from your old ways that aren't working and reorient your lives to Jesus. Learn- reflect on the scriptures every day, especially learn and relearn about Jesus' life. Pray- dwell with God daily. It is balm to a weary soul. Worship- gather in community to glorify God. Bless- Share faith and unselfishly give and serve. Go- cross boundaries, listen deeply. Rest- receive the gift of God's peace and restoration.¹

You might be saying, well these aren't really new. And you're right. These are age old, well-worn spiritual practices that we've had as a part of our tradition for millennia. And that's the point of the Way of Love. The group that created this felt that we didn't need a new program, but rather we needed to draw on the traditions that have been a part of who we are for centuries. Think of the sending of the disciples we heard today. This wasn't the beginning of their story. Jesus called them by name, and they turned to follow him. They choose to live a new life. They learned. They soaked up like sponges all of what Jesus said and did. They watched and took it all in. They prayed. They literally dwelled with God Incarnate daily. They worshipped. As a community in the synagogues, in house churches. They blessed those around them by taking the risk to share this new and budding faith. They went. They went two by two, in pairs, into parts unknown. They healed, and cast out sicknesses. And then, they rested. Well done, good and faithful servants.

It's time to Pack Light. To simplify. To release the things that we carry that no longer serve us. Strip it down to the basics. The necessities. What do you pack on your earthly journeys? Jesus calls us to take nothing for the journey. In taking nothing but ourselves, we learn to rely on others. And we become more aware about the unnecessary burdens we've taken with us. And once we're there, Jesus invites us to stay there until we leave the place. We stay and we take the time to get to know people and build relationships. We stay and we celebrate with one another and we weep with one another. And in these journeys, when we find disappointment, we don't have to dwell on it or rejection. But rather, shake the dust off and look ahead to the next thing.

¹ www.episcopalchurch.org/explore-way-love

Because with Jesus, there's always a next thing. Jesus spoke about more than just sending the disciples out. He gave us all a framework for how to be disciples, for how to live and move and have our being on this earth. We will make missteps. We will pack too much. But when we engage with these spiritual teachings of Jesus, when we engage with the teachings passed down to us through our church, we find true joy. We're on a lifelong journey. There is time to tell the story. A whole lifetime in fact. We don't have to get everything in at once- it's not an all or nothing all the time journey. While our individual journeys take us different ways, our lives of faith connect us. Turn, learn, pray, worship, bless, go, rest. Well done, good and faithful servants.