

# Just Pack the Joy of Your Salvation

## Luke 10:1-11

(For the preceding Children's Address, Pastor Neville used a "suitcase" — really, an antique hat box travelling case — and talked about packing for a trip. He contrasted this with Jesus' instructions to his disciples to take nothing with them on their mission journey.)

So, if I do name this suitcase a Mission Suit Case, what would I pack? I've heard Jesus' call to mission in our gospel reading today. It sounds pretty urgent, so I'm going to use this time to pack my mission suitcase. Now what am I going to need? Mmm, let me see. Well, I need God's Word for sure, so I can pack my Bible. And I'm planning on going to other parts of eastern Melbourne, so I'll need to pack a church building, won't I? Mmm, no — that's a bit hard. Well, how about a school, or an aged care facility: I could pack one of them. No, I don't think that's going to work either. Well, mission sounds pretty scary. Lambs among wolves. So I'll pack our Pastor Brett or maybe Dean Eaton (and welcome Dean, by the way [the LCA's Church Planting Mentor and Mission Facilitator, Dean has just joined St Paul's]). They'll know what to do. Mmm, but they can't do everything on their own. OK, what about a few extra-gifted pastors? Yeah, that'll do it. Maybe I should pack a lot of money. No, I don't seem to hear Jesus talk about taking a purse for the journey. Well, at least I'll pack some clothes, lots of clothes, because I could be gone for a while. But it seems that Jesus says that don't I need more than I have, and am, already? I wonder what God has to say? Let's open the Bible and read Luke 10:3. "Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road." Today Jesus says, "Go!" That is all I need. Jesus' Word. You are like me. Lambs among wolves. Yes, expect opposition from the evil one. Expect rejection. But go. "You're sent with my authority." That's a given. The mission is urgent. Don't waste time packing your suitcase. Don't get sidetracked by all physical things you'll need. Don't stop along the way and get sidetracked. Go! Now! With my authority and with my Word, go with my story in your story, and as you share your hope, you will show me. "Whoever listens to you, listens to me."

My friends, is it any different today? Are we called on the same urgent mission? Are we given the same authority by Jesus? These are important questions for us to answer — for each and every one of us to answer. Are we called by Jesus on the same mission road? Is this not the road that leads to — and leads from — 1207 Riversdale Road, Box Hill South? Is this not the path that God has made to and from your heart? Now he calls you to touch the hearts of people who are without Jesus, without life. It is a challenge! No doubt! (Yesterday about 50 of us participated in a Mission Connect Workshop with Dean Eaton here at the church. One of the things that sticks in my mind is that, of all denominations of the Christian church, Lutherans have about the lowest percentage of growth by external conversions, people outside the church who join through our evangelism.) As we make the move to Riversdale Road, we'll find that the new church and surrounds will not be the world we've known here at Station Street over many years. It will be different. So, too, the world around us... rapid discontinuous change means that the society in which we're placed so quickly changes into a world which we no longer know. We don't change our fundamental understandings of God who comes to us in grace; but we are challenged to bring this grace, this good news to a world we often don't know and understand. That's the challenge.

Well, the 70 return full of joy. “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” But their joy and their focus are misdirected. Their joy has come from the fact that they think they have done something. But Jesus puts them and their mission into perspective: he says, “Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you. But rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” So the mission road we’re called on is to share our joy in God’s salvation. “Always be ready to give the reason for the hope you have... the joy of the Lord’s salvation in you.”

This is the mission to which we are called by our Lord. The mission-urgent road to which we are called as individuals and as a community of 70-plus involves the joy of our salvation. Jesus sends out workers into his harvest not by the law of an ogre (“Go or else...”), but by the gospel of good news. We can’t help but bounce! Mission is motivated by assurance of Christ for us who are saved. Mission is the response, the natural response of joy and certainty of us who are saved. Mission is urgent. Mission seems scary. But my friends, only one thing is needed. That is the focus of faith. This ain’t rocket science. We don’t need to be a platinum frequent flyer with a huge baggage allowance. Jesus is all we need, in the places where we are already are, and with the people we are already with. Our Lord Jesus Christ who is the reason for our joy.

You know, I sometimes think that we have become so uncertain that we’ve become frozen as a church. But there is a part for all of us. Maybe we won’t necessarily be the upfront people. Maybe ours is a mission call to hospitality, to pray to the Lord of the harvest, to care for and encourage others, to help with the administration or lead the study of the Word. Each gift and call is vital for the journey we make together. And together we are the body of Christ, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Sometimes I think that we never quite get around to going and showing the joy of our salvation, or showing that the source of all our joy and hope is Jesus Christ. We never quite get round to saying or showing that the source of our joy, the reason for our joy that our names are written in heaven because Christ died and rose for me. We think we need a mission suitcase full of buildings, full of money, full of this and full of that. We get so carried away with packing the bag or talking about packing the bag that the train has long since left the station. Jesus and his Word is all we need to go. And we’re on a journey together to connect. Can Jesus really do what he promises? Is his authority real? You know. I know. We know the answer is “Yes”. We see it and we hear it on the cross and the empty grave. We receive it as pure gift. It’s ours, and it’s ours to take on the journey and give. Rejoice, then, that your names are written in heaven. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field and pray boldly, “Here I am Lord, send me.”

Mmm, well maybe I don’t need this mission suitcase at all. All I need is a heart of faith and thanks and joy, and knees bent in prayer to the Lord of the harvest. Amen.