

Go simply, go lightly

(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on July 4th, 2021 Mark 6:1-13)

You may have recognized the music at the beginning of the service which is from the film 'The Mission'. In the film, a group of priests are travelling through the Amazon to reach a tribe. They need to scale great cliffs and waterfalls in order to get there. Obviously the less you carried with you the better. However, one of the main characters believes he needs to be punished because of some past action, and as such, carries an enormous load of baggage with him as his penance. As he is pretty fit, he copes remarkably well, but as they proceed further into the jungle, it is obvious, that his load is slowing them down and making the journey unnecessarily hard for him. In one of the most moving scenes of the film you see him, after scrambling up a waterfall, finally remove his knife and cut the huge bag of unnecessary clutter he has carried. You watch and listen as the bag tumbles down the waterfall and he is set free.

Jesus knows a bit about carrying baggage. Today we have heard how he was rejected in his hometown by the people he grew up with. At first, they were pretty impressed at his preaching, but then it turns to contempt. How could this tradie be so eloquent? Were they jealous? Do they remember what he used to be like? Was this a bit of the tall poppy syndrome – we know about this don't we? How often do we write people off that don't fit our expectations? Did they not enjoy the challenge of what he was saying? The expectations of others can be difficult, either to live up to and down to those expectations. The baggage they are putting on him is a it heavy. How does he respond, he remembers the saying about being accepted in your home town, shakes the dust from his feet and moves on to places where he can be more effective. He doesn't let their response get him down.

As he and his followers move on, he gives them a mission. They are to go and preach the message, but he gives them some advice, a way of doing that. They are to go in twos – for company, and so they each have a witness. They only need to take a staff (a walking stick – a sign of being on the move). They don't need extra clothes, money or food. They don't need extra baggage. People will welcome them and he tells them to accept such hospitality when offered. If, they aren't welcomed, then they just need to do as Jesus did, shake the dust off their feet and move on – don't take on their baggage. Go simply, go lightly he says.

In our second reading we find Paul also knows about some excess baggage. Here he is warning people about boasting and the kind of strife you can get into in order to live up to the boast. Boast only of weakness, if you must, because it is in weakness that the real power of God shows through. Setting yourself up with standards that you may not be able to keep, in reality sets you up for a fall, and it is unhelpful in getting your message across. Don't carry that kind of extra baggage, in fact the only baggage you need is God's grace, it is sufficient.

So, what is the message for us as we go about sharing the good news with those around us.

- Let us not get bothered by the expectations that others have of us
- Let us not get bothered by the unkind things people say
- Let's only take what we need to share the message – our very selves
- Let's offer and accept hospitality
- Let us adopt a simpler lifestyle not weighed down by possessions
- Let's be ready to be on the move, to be mobile, going to the places God calls us
- Let's rid our selves of baggage that gets in the way of this task – our past history, our past rejection, our past resentment, our past guilt, our insecurities, those negative voices that often seem so loud, the expectations of ourselves or others, the old ways of doing things, any power we think we have
- Let's not reject others who do not fit into our scheme of things
- Let's create space for God to move amongst us, calling us on, encouraging us and equipping us for the task

Returning once again to the film 'The Mission', it was only after the young man cut himself free from the baggage that he was truly free to minister to the people to whom he was sent.

It was only after Jesus got rid of the baggage from his hometown and the people who thought they knew him, that he could be more effective.

Paul tells us that God's grace is sufficient and that our great strength comes in weakness.

So let us go lightly, unencumbered by the past into the future to which God is calling us.

Go lightly, go simply, go with what you have.

Go in God's grace. Amen.