



*Jesus Has Called Us To Go Fast And Light*

*A sermon on Mark 6:1-13*

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First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois

The Rev. Zachary T. Lysdahl

There are two methods of climbing a mountain. The first, and older of the two, is called “Expedition Style.” “Expedition Style” tries to control an environment that is naturally chaotic, uncertain, and complex. This way of climbing is super slow and takes tons of gear. The way it works is, a base camp is established at the foot of the mountain. Then, from there, other camps are setup, each higher than the last. All the camps are stocked with supplies. The climbers have to make many trips partway up and down the mountain to get all the gear to the right place. In between in each is a series of fixed ropes. Climbers clip onto the ropes, which act as guides leading them from one place to the next. The classic example of this type of climbing is Mount Everest. In 1953, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay were the first to people to each the summit of the highest mountain in the world. To get to the top took five years of planning, 362 porters (people how carried the supplies) to carry the 10,000 pounds of supplies to the base camp, 20 Sherpas (high altitude porters) and seven weeks of climbing. It was a long and slow process. As the thought went, all that stuff placed at the various camps would help them get to the summit, but more often than not it only worked to slow them down.

The other way to climb a mountain is known as “Alpine Style.” This way of climbing is all about “fast and light.” Instead of trying to control the mountain environment, climbers go with the ebbs and flows of the chaotic, uncertain, and complex environment. A great example of the “Alpine Style,” the “fast and light” style of climbing is a person named Ueli Steck. Ueli was known as a the “Swiss Machine” because he climbed faster than anyone else. He climbed the north face of the Eiger Tower in under 3 hours. He climbed Annapurna in less than 28 hours. The benefit of fast and light is that the climber spends less time up in the danger zone, because they have less stuff to carry, which increases their chances of success and decreases their chances of injury or worse.

The disciples also lived in an environment that was filled with chaos, uncertainty, and complexity. In chapter five of the Gospel of Mark there is a story about the disciples having a near death experience. One day after talking with a huge crowd, Jesus suggested they all hop into a boat and go over to the other shore. They did just that. While they were sailing to the other side a fierce storm popped up. Rain poured down into the uncovered boat. The waves crashed over the sides and soon the boat began to sink. They woke Jesus up and told him of their plight. He calmed the storm and they made it to the other side. After they reached the shore they were informed of more trouble. Herod Antipas, the king, had beheaded one of Jesus' other disciples, John the Baptist. The disciples' future was uncertain, and they knew it.

When Jesus told them in verse eight "take nothing for their [your] travels expect a walking stick - no food, no money, no travelers bag, or change of clothes" the disciples would have been caught off guard. They would have probably liked some safety stuff deposited along the way like expedition climbers to give them a sense of security: some rainy day cash, or a disguise so that they could change their look if someone was coming after them, or even a bag full of food so they had a backup stash. Jesus told them to go fast and light, but that wouldn't be easy considering their circumstances.

We also live in a world of chaos, uncertainty, and complexity. There are fires burning in California and Colorado right now that threaten to consume family homes, businesses, and national forests. There are also families here, in the United States, that are being torn apart, children forced to live in makeshift camps while their parents are shipped off to another country. With everything going on we want some extra "just in case" stuff stockpiled up like the expedition climbers. We want to know we are secure so we gather up all kinds of things that we think will keep us safe. However, that stuff only works to bog us down. We know this to be true because every spring and summer there are countless garage and rummage sales to "get rid of all the junk."

In verse seven Jesus called to his disciples and told them to go fast and light. It was not something they took up on their own. If they had they had it their way the disciples would have brought everything with them, including a kitchen sink, like Edmund and Tenzing did on their adventure. Jesus had chosen them and charged them to go fast and light, proclaiming the truth to the world. What truth is that? That Jesus came to this world not to condemn the world but to save the world. That was a huge task for the disciples. One so large that no person could do it all by themselves. In divine wisdom, knowing the limitations of humanity, Jesus sent the disciples out two-by-two. In other words, Jesus intentionally created a community with the expressed purpose of sharing the truth: Jesus came to save the world.

Jesus has also called us to go fast and light in the environments which we live, and sharing the truth: Jesus has come to save the world. Telling the world about this truth is a large responsibility. One we cannot do all by ourselves. It is something we do two-by-two, in community. In one week, the Life Together Center is going to be transformed into a island oasis for Vacation Bible School. More than 65 children will attend. They will hear the good news that Jesus has come to save the world. Hosting VBS isn't something just one person can do. It takes an entire community of disciples. If you have been on the fence about whether you want to help out or not, we invited you to embrace the call Jesus has placed on your life. Please join us as we go fast and light, sharing this truth with the children of Peoria: Jesus has saved the world.

Edmund, Tenzing, Ueli were all mountain climbers. Of the three, Ueli understood what it mean to go fast and light. When Edmund got to the summit of Everest he was carrying at 63 pound backpack. When Ueli got to the summit of Annapurna his backpack only weight 30 pounds, because he didn't care with him an bunch of extra stuff. Jesus has called us to go fast and light, to share the truth: Jesus has come to save the world, but we cannot do it alone. It takes an entire community to do so. Together, as First Federated Church, we will share this truth at VBS in one week and we will share it with all people in all places and at all times.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.