

Isaiah 66:10-14
Psalm 66:1-8
Galatians 6:1-16
Luke 10:1-11,16-20

Proper 9C
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The Rev. Karen Haig

Take Nothing For Your Journey

In 1953, Mildred Lisette Norman took the name Peace Pilgrim, and set off on foot to walk for peace. She took with her no purse, no bag, no coat, no walking stick, no food, no credit cards, no money. For 28 years, she walked, keeping her vow to "remain a wanderer until mankind has learned the way of peace, walking until given shelter and fasting until given food."¹ A deeply spiritual person, Peace Pilgrim had had a mystical experience of her Creator's unfathomable love – an experience so profound that the only possible thing she could do in response was to make God's love known. For her, that meant giving away everything she owned, and setting out to advance the cause of peace, one step at a time. In the end, she walked tens of thousands of miles, speaking and teaching the way of peace. She often said "In order for the world to become more peaceful, people need to become more peaceful."² She didn't walk to find peace, she walked to help others find peace.

In 2009, Daryl Watson, a young, up-and-coming New York playwright took a bus to Cape Henlopen, Delaware, checked in to a motel, and sent a mass email to everyone he knew. In that email, Daryl told them he was giving away everything but the clothes on his back, that he would spend 6 months walking across the United States on a pilgrimage for peace, and from that point forward, would be known as Peace Pilgrim. He tore up his driver's license, wiped his computer clean of everything he had ever written, and left a note for the cleaning staff leaving them his computer, ipod and phone. In the morning he got up, put on the t-shirt he'd spray painted with the words "Peace Pilgrim" on the front, and "Walking coast to coast for peace" on the back, and set off for California, one step at a time.³

Take nothing for your journey.

I have to tell you that whenever I read this passage it really stops me in my tracks.

Take nothing for your journey.

On Thursday I will go to Sunriver to vacation with my sister and her family. I already have a list of things to take with me. Sunglasses, extra sunglasses, sunglasses reading glasses, glasses – oh, and extra glasses. I'll want to pack flip flops and hiking shoes, kayaking, walking and out to dinner shoes. I'll need the little backpack for bike-riding, the bigger backpack for hiking, the picnic pack, the water bottle, the commuter mug and the cooler for all the food we'll be bringing. Of course I'll need my knives and lots of spices and rubs, two pre-made batches of "Sleep Over Coffee Cake," the garlic press, panini grill, mortar

¹ *Peace Pilgrim: Her Life and Work in Her Own Words Compiled by some of her friends.* Copyright © 1982, 1991 Friends of Peace Pilgrim

² *Peace Pilgrim: Her Life and Work in Her Own Words Compiled by some of her friends.* Copyright © 1982, 1991 Friends of Peace Pilgrim

³ From a story by Elna Baker, told on *This American Life Episode 483: Self-Improvement Kick* broadcast on January 4, 2013

and pestle, standard condiments and perhaps a couple of cookbooks to read. I'll need my phone and phone charger, the ipod, my toiletries, a purse, clothing, my prayer book and a bible, a book to read for fun, my computer so I can work on my next sermon, the scarf I am knitting for a friend for Christmas and many, many other things I'm sure I haven't even thought up yet.

Take nothing for your journey.

But I am going on vacation and that requires specific accoutrements! I can't possibly take nothing for my journey. Or can I?

What would happen if I showed up at Sunriver without all that stuff? Would there be knives in the kitchen drawer? Could I kayak in my flip flops? Would the sweet sound of high-desert birdsong and the gentle rippling of the lazy Deschutes River be music enough for my soul?

Take nothing for your journey.

This isn't the first time Jesus says those words – he said them to the 12 the very first time he sent them out to spread the good news of God's great love and bring peace to all the world. Luke tells us that when Jesus first gathered them together, he conferred power and authority on them, and only then did he send them out on their mission for God.

When Jesus told those 70 friends that they were to take nothing with them – not a walking stick to help them when the terrain gets rough; not a suitcase containing holy scripture books so that they could preach and teach with authority; no food to eat, and no means to purchase any of these things – that was because he had already given them everything they needed. They'd been watching him for a long time, awe-struck by his miracles, captivated by his parables, spellbound by his teaching. They knew who Jesus was, they knew the love God offered, and they knew they had a part in bringing God's kingdom to bear. Jesus knew they were ready, that they'd been given everything they needed, because what they really needed was to rely completely and utterly on God. It's what Peace Pilgrim knew, and it's all we really need to know too. The Kingdom of God comes among us through God's extravagant love. As it turns out, the very existence of the Kingdom of God depends on conveying God's love. We offer God's love to one, who offers it to another, who offers it to another and another and another and each time we do that, the Kingdom comes a little closer. Every time we offer mercy or kindness or forgiveness, every time we stand against injustice or hatred or falsehood, every time we are brave enough to be vulnerable, transparent and true, every time we are willing to go where we are sent and pay attention when we get there so that we can offer God's extravagant love in a way that is recognizable as God's beloved to God's beloved, the Kingdom comes a little closer.

That's what the original Peace Pilgrim did, you know. She walked around in the world vulnerable and transparent and true, and everywhere she walked, she offered God's extravagant love by proclaiming God's profound and deep peace. As for Peace Pilgrim number 2? On the third day of his walking, he

wrote his first and last blog post. It was only seven words long. It said "Peace Pilgrim down. Repeat. Peace Pilgrim down."⁴

Daryl had gone walking to find peace, not to offer it, to find himself, not to offer himself. To find God, not to proclaim God. And while those are all admirable quests, Daryl left before he was ready. He had wanted to emulate the original Peace Pilgrim, but he didn't have what she had. She knew God and her deeply prayerful life brought her into such communion with God that she was permeated with peace. She became Peace. But Daryl, Daryl hadn't come to that prayerful place, and he hadn't found the peace he so desperately wanted to offer. But you know, the funny thing is, on day three, when Daryl gave up trying to live someone else's calling, noble as it was, when he called his mom and told her how cold and tired and sad he was, when he told himself and the world the truth, when he finally became vulnerable and transparent and true, he finally began his journey toward peace. When Daryl set off on his walk with nothing more than the clothes on his back, a compass, map, toothbrush and a bottle of hand sanitizer, he looked like he was vulnerable and transparent and true. But as it turns out, Daryl was hiding from himself. He was hiding behind someone else's idea of what it is to live into the glorious life God has given him. While it took some time, Daryl returned to the life that was his own. And instead of trying to figure out the meaning of his life, he just started living it.

See, I am sending you out as a lamb among wolves, but you'll be ok because you have one another. Don't bother with the things you think will protect you, those things you've always thought would keep you safe. Your money can't protect or save you. Being prepared with a change of clothing won't save you. You can't possibly carry enough food to keep you fed for this mission. And your walking stick? That isn't what you need to lean on and it won't protect you from the wolves. Instead, take a brother or sister in Christ with you. Go two by two, proclaiming "Peace be with you." If people don't like it, shake it off and move along. Don't be distracted by those who would dissuade you from your work, from what you know to be true, from what you know you're being called to do. Never-mind the wolves...

"Take nothing for your journey," Jesus says. Don't worry about finding your way. I am the Way. Don't worry about seeking out the truth, I am the truth. Don't worry about being a lamb among the wolves, I will care for you, for I am Life itself. Stick together. Keep your eyes on God. And don't mistake arming yourselves with money or possessions or status or even weaponry for being safe. It's not safe out there, but that isn't what you need to be concerned with. Stick together. Keep your eyes on God. Don't be distracted from what really matters. And don't be afraid. The God who knows you and loves you and calls you and sends you has promised to be with you always. Amen.

⁴From a story by Elna Baker, told on *This American Life Episode 483: Self-Improvement Kick* broadcast on January 4, 2013