



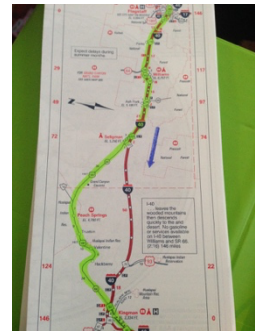
**Grace Lutheran Church**  
**June 26, 2022: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**“Traveling Without a TripTik” [Luke 9:51-62](#)**

Not long ago I came across a paper map as a giveaway. It brought back happy memories of the cross-country trips our family took when my brother and I were young. Every other summer we’d drive from Cucamonga, California

to Great Barrington, Massachusetts, and spend three months there with our other grandmother. We always took different routes—through Canada, through the Texas panhandle. Our glove compartment would be stuffed full of maps of every state we’d be going through on those long trips, and I remembered how my brother and I would spread them out on the motel floor and pore over the names of cities and towns, imagining what life was like in all those places.

From paper maps the world graduated to the TripTik, a favorite of Bill’s parents on their travels. Before every car trip they would visit their local AAA and have the agent plot out their entire route.

TripTiks eventually gave way to the computer age and MapQuest, which I always found hard to fathom. Finally that yielded to GPS. Now we don’t have to think at all – our phones tell us everything, right down to the lane we need to be in at any given moment.



We’re thinking about trips because today we find ourselves at the point in Luke’s gospel where Jesus is beginning his long journey to Jerusalem. Only for this trip, there is no map and there is no itinerary, only the destination. There is no route. There are no roads Jesus must stay on, or exits he must be sure to take. What matters on this trip is not the where but the HOW. Since the purpose of this journey is to prepare Jesus’ disciples for his departure, meaning his crucifixion, the question is how they are to follow him. What is required of them as disciples?

We find a clue in today’s Gospel about what that isn’t, in the predicament of those three would-be followers.

The first offers to follow without waiting to be called. Jesus dampens his enthusiasm by pointing out that the man has no idea what he is talking about. Given that Jesus is homeless and himself has nowhere to lay *his* head, has the man thought through how this following is going to play out for him?

The second wants to bury his father, as is the custom under the law. But Jesus points out that his discipleship cannot be restricted by any earthly legal system. If you are bound first by law rather than by your commitment to follow, you are dead, Jesus says. Let the dead bury their own dead.

The third, like the first, thinks he can design his discipleship on his own terms, as if it were a career he had decided on. The third is bolder than the first in laying out his own terms, but these conditions throw up a barrier between Jesus and himself. This is not discipleship, but a program that he has devised.

Do WE have what it takes to follow Jesus?

There is no better manual than this, a TripTik for the life of faith, than Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book "The Cost of Discipleship." Bonhoeffer's main point is that discipleship is a total lifestyle—a very difficult lifestyle, one that is too challenging for the average person, but not too difficult for a saint—saints being those whose lives are centered in Christ at their baptism. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us, and now we have been made holy through him in our baptism.

Beyond this, our discipleship hinges on the acceptance of what Bonhoeffer calls costly grace, as opposed to cheap grace. Cheap grace is forgiveness without repentance, absolution without confession. It is thinking that going to church makes you a Christian rather than the kind of life you lead. It is saying, "Why should I stop sinning? Why can't I just do whatever I want? God will still forgive me."

Costly grace, though, means that God's mercy, God's undeserved favor, comes at a cost. It costs us our life, our old life, but at the same time it gives us new life in Christ. Our old self-centered way of being in the world is given up in service to the call to follow Jesus. The disciple drops their nets and leaves all that they have—not because they believe they are doing something worthwhile, but simply for the sake of the call. Such grace is costly because our old life is completely surrendered and new life in Christ taken on.

Let's continue with the travel theme: On this journey to Jerusalem, the journey of discipleship, what do we need to pack, and how? In my carry-on I use zip-lock bags to save space and keep things organized. So how about these ideas for packing our carry-on for following Christ?

- Seal up your **humility** in a gallon zip-lock bag. Humility requires that we serve Christ without ulterior motives. Selling all your possessions and giving the money to poor, for example, is not something you would boast about.
- Use another gallon zip-lock bag for **suffering**, not as in tolerating pain but accepting that we will be mocked, rejected or even persecuted because of our discipleship, and that this unites us with Christ's own suffering on our behalf. You might label the outside of the bag with Romans 8:17: "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."
- Use a quart bag for **self-denial**, meaning that we let go of our attachment to and dependence on material things and stay focused on what's essential.

- Use a quart bag as well for **pacifism**, in the sense of loving others and treating them with kindness even when they treat us with hostility. Christ loved us enough to die for us, even when we were hostile toward him.
- How about a sandwich zip-lock bag for **poverty**? This points us toward treasures in heaven rather than the accumulation of wealth on earth, the idea of treasures in heaven also embracing the richness of life here and now, in that all we have is dedicated to serving Christ.
- And finally how about a snack bag for **fasting** -- not in the sense of extreme dieting, but the larger picture of self-discipline. It takes great control to overpower selfish desires so that you can be open to the Holy Spirit and do the will of Christ.

If this sounds like a tall order, it definitely is. I can only speak for myself, but I fall down in each of these ways literally every day. Without God's grace, how could we make it, bloodied and battered, from one day to the next? Each time as we lie there bleeding by the side of the road, Jesus picks us up again, heals our self-inflicted wounds and makes us whole so against all earthly odds we can continue the great journey of discipleship.

[Sung a cappella:]

1

I have decided to follow Jesus;  
I have decided to follow Jesus;  
I have decided to follow Jesus;  
no turning back, no turning back.

2

Though none go with me, I still will follow;  
though none go with me, I still will follow;  
though none go with me, I still will follow;  
no turning back, no turning back.

3

The world behind me, the cross before me;  
the world behind me, the cross before me,  
the world behind me, the cross before me;  
no turning back, no turning back.

Amen.