

PASTORAL LETTER

Dear Friends

HOLIDAY PACKING

In a recent sermon, I confessed to being an over-packer when going away. For a recent trip to Scotland, in a car shared with 3 others, my bags alone took up one half of the boot space, which didn't go unnoticed!



After the sermon and my confession, someone kindly sent me the delightful poem printed on the next page. The humour of the poem was not lost on me, and nor was the rather painful parallel to my own thought processes. It's the *just in case* thought that fills my bags. The sermon of that day related to Jesus sending out the seventy (Luke 10:1-12, 17-20), and in verse 4, Jesus instructs his disciples "Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals". Excuse me???

It's important to remember that Jesus is a teacher who used hyperbole to drive home a point: for example, He isn't really expecting us to tear out our right eye out, or cut off our right hand (Matthew 5:29-30). So maybe Jesus isn't saying to us "travel irresponsibly, without any preparation and basic provisions". Maybe He is extending an invitation to *travel light*. And not just in the practical sense, but in the spiritual one too.

I wonder if there are other examples of *just in case* thinking going on in our lives?

We pack our days with extra tasks *just in case* we're not doing enough. We rehearse conversations in our heads *just in case* they go wrong. We buy more stuff online *just in case* we don't have enough. We keep scrolling on social media *just in case* there is something even funnier in the next post.

And does *just in case* thinking really serve us? Or can it overburden our minds, as well as the boot of the car? Maybe, by not trying to cover every eventuality ourselves, we can leave some space in our lives for God's grace. And this, in turn, can become a conscious act of trusting God. What if we took small steps to travel lighter: in our schedules, our conversations, our relationships, even our holiday packing?

So here's a gentle challenge for myself, that you may also consider adopting: packing *just a little less*, scrolling *just a little less*, overthinking *just a little less*.

My prayer is that through a practice of *just a little less*, I will come to understand what is *just enough*. And in moving from *just in case* thinking to *just enough* thinking, I will grow and deepen my trust in God Learning to trust that all will be well, even with *just a little less*.

Notice that Jesus didn't send the 70 out unprepared, He sent them unburdened: free to receive hospitality, to depend on the kindness of others, to discover that God provides through strangers and setbacks and the simple grace of enough. And God wants the same freedom for us. For us also to be unburdened, to not be weighed down by the effort of managing every risk or meeting every expectation (or, indeed, by filling half the boot of a Range Rover for a five-day trip!).

So if you, like me, sometimes feel weary from carrying too much (literally or emotionally), let's remember Jesus' invitation:

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28–30).

Let us travel light, trusting in God's grace.
With every blessing, Jacky

Just in Case by Charlotte Mitchell

I'm going to the sea for the weekend,
in a couple of days I'll be back,
so I'll just take my little brown suit and a blouse
and a beret and carry my mac.

But what if the house is a cold one,
the house where I'm going to stay,
no fires after April, no hot drinks at night
and the windows wide open all day?
I'd better take one – no, two cardies
and my long tartan scarf for my head,
and my chaste new pyjamas in case they decide
to bring me my breakfast in bed,
and what about church on Sunday?
I could wear my beret and suit,
but if it were sunny, it would be a chance
to wear my straw hat with the fruit.
I can't wear my little brown suit, though
not with the straw and the fruit,
so I'll just take a silk dress to go with the straw
and a silk scarf to go with the suit.
I'll just take my jeans and that jumper
in case we go out in the car,
and my Guernsey in case we go out in a boat
and d'you know where my swimming things are?

D'you think I should take that black velvet
in case they've booked seats for a play?
And is it still usual to take your own towel
when you go somewhere to stay?
I had thought of just taking slippers,
but they do look disgustingly old,
I'd better take best shoes and sandals and boots for
the church and the heat and the cold.

I daren't go without my umbrella
in case I'm dressed up and it rains;
I'm bound to need socks and my wellies
for walking down long muddy lanes.

I'd rather not take my old dressing gown,
it is such a business to pack,
but s'pose they have breakfast before they get
dressed
I'd have to have mine in my mac.

I'm going away for the weekend,
in a couple of days I'll be back,
so I'll just take my little brown suit and a blouse,
two cardies, my long tartan scarf,
my chaste new pyjamas
my straw hat with the fruit,
my silk dress, my silk scarf,
my jeans, that jumper,
my Guernsey, my swimming things,
my black velvet, my towel,
my slippers (no one need see them)
my sandals, my boots, my umbrella
my socks, my wellies
my dressing gown, no, not my dressing gown,
Ok my dressing gown,
and a beret and carry my mac.

