Today’s gospel can be summed up with two words:

Travel light.

But I have a confession to make:

I don’t.

For me this is a very hard gospel lesson. I have a lot of stuff.

And I don’t mean jewels and fancy cars. Those I do not have.

I mean stuff.

I have a garage full of boxes, and many of the boxes are full paper. Lots of paper.

I worked as a newspaper reporter for 25 years, so a lot of those boxes are filled with old newspapers with stories I wrote that I have long forgotten.

And I have a further confession to make. Some of those boxes moved with us to the East Coast ten years ago when I became the rector of a church in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The boxes were lodged in the garage in Charlottesville and never opened.

When we moved back to Sacramento, the unopened boxes came with us, and are back in the garage, and the boxes are still unopened.

I don’t travel light.

So, yes, I know, my summer home project is cleaning out the garage.

Maybe some that stuff will go the choir rummage sale – there’s a plug for the choir fund-raiser later in July.
So, as I say, today’s lesson from the Gospel of Luke is hard for me: Travel light.

In the story, in what might be the first instance of community organizing, Jesus sends forth 70 disciples to go into the countryside. And, yes, there are a lot more disciples than the 12 whose names are recorded.

Jesus tells them to take nothing with them: Travel light.

“The harvest is plentiful,” Jesus assures them. “Go on your way” and you will find all that you need.

I would imagine those 70 folks are pretty nervous about this. Where will we eat? Where will we sleep? What if it rains? What if we don’t know what to do – isn’t there an instruction manual we should take?

No. Everything you need, you have. “Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals,” Jesus tells the seventy. Lighten up and travel light.

Jesus is not just talking about material possessions.

He is also talking about other things, less tangible things – the things that can weigh us down — our attitudes and prejudices, our grievances and grudges.

Who, or what, is renting your brain for free?

Open those unopened boxes that you’ve been hauling around for years — old wounds, old hurts, old guilts. Lighten up. 

Maybe there is bad habit or an addiction that is grinding you down. Get rid of it. Travel light.

Over and over, Jesus assures us that God has given us all that we need for life and health. All within us and all around us. What we don’t think we have, God will provide through others.

Cast off what is dragging you down. If you don’t know how, find help. Travel light.

Saint Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, says much the same thing, from another angle:
“You reap whatever you sow,” he implores. “If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit.”

But back to the story with Jesus:

The seventy disciples go – and they come back astonished. What Jesus described would happen, is exactly what happens – and more.

“Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” the seventy tell Jesus.

The Spirit brings surprises if we are open to watching for them.

And sometimes the surprises are stunningly simple. Lighten up and you might see them. This has always been true from ancient times.

We hear of this in the Old Testament lesson, and the story of Naaman, a mighty warrior who suffers from leprosy, which in biblical times was a catch-all phrase for all sorts of skin diseases.

The prophet Elisha tells Naaman to go wash in the River Jordan seven times and he will be cured.

But Naaman is pretty grumpy about that advice. He could have washed in any river – doesn’t Elisha know that?

Naaman goes away angry, but his servants tell him: Oh, Lighten up.

“If the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it?” they tell Naaman.

So Naaman washes in the River Jordan, and to his astonishment, his disease is cured.

There are many lessons here today for each of us as individuals, and lessons for as a cathedral congregation. All we need is already here, and deep within us. We are brimming with God’s blessings, and it really isn’t that hard to see them.

Sometimes we make things so complicated we don’t see what’s in front of us. Travel light, keep it simple, and see the abundance we enjoy.
Each of you brings many, many blessings to this cathedral: your gifts include caring for each other and caring for strangers; some of you bring the gifts of music and the gifts of hospitality; and some if you bring the gifts of leadership; and many of you share your financial gifts.

But richest of all, you bring your gifts of prayer.

All of this adds up.

We are entering a new chapter in the life of Trinity Cathedral, and a new chapter in the life of this diocese.

Indeed, we have already entered this new chapter with the consecration and seating of our new bishop, Megan Traquair, a few days ago.

There will be a new Dean of the Cathedral later this year or early next.

This is an exciting time of opportunity for us, but also challenge to us to be open to new ideas, new ways of doing things. We will be challenged to travel light.

But know this: The Spirit is with us, guiding our path. Everything we need – everything – is already here, and already deep within each of us. “The kingdom of God has come near,” Jesus promises.

So be open to the surprises that surely will come, and “rejoice that your names are written in heaven!”

And travel light.

AMEN