

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

February 15, 2026. "Prepping for the trip: what am I taking with me?"

I Intro.

We're plowing through winter— waiting for spring. We hope you're having a good year so far. You'll want to keep up with everything that's happening at NCC. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

Lent begins this Wednesday. Lent is our journey preparing us for crucifixion Friday, Holy Saturday, and then Resurrection Sunday— Easter. Lent gives us a path, journey, of specific things we can do to prepare us for our destination of Easter. So, we're using the familiar idea of taking a trip, and all the things we have to do, to make that trip the best one possible. Think about any kind of trip you've taken. Vacation or just a day trip. **What did you have to do to prepare for that trip?**

Choose a destination. Decide what NOT to take. Decide what to take. Then actually leave on the trip. The work of preparing ourselves mentally, spiritually to get in the mindset for that spiritual journey, we're finding truths and wisdom from actual trips to help us do the work of Lent. The first week our emphasis was, choosing and committing to a destination. In the context of a personal spiritual journey asking; **Who do I want to be? Am I willing to do the things to become that person?**

Last week we asked; **What do I need to clean out, let go of, get rid of, that will only be a hindrance on my journey?** Most of you know. Letting go, getting rid of, cleaning out, 'depacking', is infinitely more difficult than deciding what you're going to take. Today, the work of deciding what to actually take with you on your journey.

III Sunday.

So— you've chosen a destination. Or at least, beginning to form, cultivate, an understanding of who you want to become. Hopefully you're giving some thought to the never ending work of cleaning out the unnecessary stuff that weighs us down.

Now it's time for the next questions.

What do you take with you? What do you pack for your trip?

I want to start by seeing what kind of person you are. My guess is this will for the most part fall along gender lines. **What kind of packer are you?**

1. Overpacker- these people like options. (A "What if...?" packer) Several outfits for each day. Just in case something unplanned comes up. It's basically your closet in your suitcase. Have to sit on the suitcase to close it. Hanging bag, and an extra smaller bag.

2. Minimalist- less is more. The underpacker. It's like you're traveling to Europe. Just one or two of each thing. You can always carry on. Often you're asked to pack one or two things for someone else.

3. Last minute- you don't care what you bring, you're just throwing random stuff into your suitcase from each drawer. You can always buy it if you need it. When you open your suitcase it looks like someone has already been through it.

4. Artisan- Tetris master. Highly compartmentalized and scarily OCD neat. Half your things are 'rolled'. You like a lot of separate compartments in your bag. And there are hybrids (combining two) and variations of these. Make the hard switch from packing for a practical 'going on a trip', to understanding; ***What do you need to take with you on your spiritual journey?***

What you pack in your suitcase is solely determined by where you're going. Family reunion, beach, big city, etc. I had a job interview after I graduated from seminary and we didn't find out until we got to the church that we had forgotten our hanging bag. All the clothes you need for a proper interview. Janet still cringes at this one 40 years later. We all know how important it is to pack the right things for your trip. It's the same approach to what to take on our spiritual journey through Lent, towards Easter. Think figuratively and spiritually as we read this passage.

Colossians 3:12-17. *Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.*

Passage is loaded with great specifics of what we should pack. It begins with a really cool restatement of what your destination is. ***"Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves..."*** If you didn't say this on the first Sunday when we talked about choosing your destination— this is your destination. Your identity in God is where you're headed. Holy people who live into, and ooze the love of God. Paul spells out exactly what your destination is. Now we'll look at the specific things we take with us on our spiritual journey. Things we need to pack in our suitcase. And when we put them on, others will know who we are. Answering why we're heading to the destination we are. More importantly— WE know who, and whose we are.

These are essential for us if our destination is to be; ***"God's loved holy people."***

1. Compassion and kindness. (v 12) (These are your shoes) This is how you move through the world. The imprint, trail of your life, you leave wherever you go. How you are received. The impression you leave when you encounter other people. This is walking through life not doing any harm, but leaving a trail of good. Similar to when you go hiking. Your goal is to not destroy the world around you. How you treat others will have a greater impact, and will matter more than how right you are. Be a sneakerhead. Be all about those shoes. But sneakers of compassion and kindness.

2. Humility, gentleness, and patience. (v 12) (This is your inclement weather gear)

This is how you handle 'bad weather'. Difficult times. Unplanned situations. These often aren't flashy, noticeable or often appreciated 'at the moment' gear. But everyone notices when you don't have these. These are very functional, and help you when you face unexpected things. People will watch how you respond when things don't go your way. We often take these behaviors for granted. We don't prepare ourselves for the tough moments in life, so we often don't have these packed with us when we move around our world. Always carry these because they keep us kind when our environment gets harsh. And a lot of times those things we face just aren't predictable.

3. Forgiveness. (v 13) (Just making sure you've packed the right things)

Callback to last week. Pack the ability to continually be aware of when you've possibly picked up things you don't need. The more you carry, the heavier your suitcase will be. Sometimes even after you pack, you have to go back through your suitcase and take out the things that you don't need and are weighing your suitcase down. So, you learn to forgive. For others. But especially for yourself. It's not about forgetting— it's choosing freedom. Carrying a lighter load on your journey.

4. Love. (v 14) (Suitcase you carry everything in)

All of these other things we've mentioned are held together by this— love. **Do you have a soft suitcase that has an expansion zipper?** It allows your suitcase to carry more without breaking. Your love needs to be big and strong enough, to be able to expand. It needs to be able to expand as the things you are taking grow. Love is what others will see and experience from you. The above things you're taking with you will feel different if they're not carried in love. Without love— everything else falls apart. Live a life that grows your love to be expansive and strong.

5. Peace. (v 15) (Your compass/GPS, boarding pass)

What you use to guide your actions, and where you need to go. This will help your discernment on your journey. Remember the tension from last week. There is going to be a conflict when you may disrupt things while still working to bring peace. This is the constant connection and communication with God letting you know if you're on the path you need to be on. **Do you feel deep, real, peace in the choices you're making?**

We all have had that little sense of something's not quite right. Can't put our finger on the choice or decision we're making, but we just know when we're not at— PEACE. You just know when there's an issue with the relationship of someone that matters to you. There's no peace. The palpable presence of peace will help you know if you're on the right path.

6. Gratitude. (v 15, 16, 17) (Gratitude is all the medicine you take with you)

Paul mentions being thankful three times. So, it must be important. This is what will keep you going when things get tough. When things don't go your way. When you hit roadblocks, detours, frustrations. This is developing the ability to notice all the things, especially the little gifts from God. It's packing the ability to be grateful, thankful, trusting that in those moments being thankful will get you through the tough times. True gratitude is the best medicine for everything that ails you!

7. The story of who you are. (v 16,17) (Your identity and purpose) Remembering who you are, your identity, what was said at the beginning. It's a constant reminder to stay true to yourself, and your calling. People will see what was important to you, what mattered. What you valued and gave yourself for. Packing this will help you appreciate the sacred little moments on your journey.

Remembering who you are, the story you're writing, your purpose, will cause you to see things differently than the average person. It's like the glasses you wear. You'll notice things you previously missed. Remembering your story will allow you to see God in everything. Your trip will just feel different because you've constantly kept who God has called you to be, and what your purpose is, front and center. This will help make all the choices you make clearer and understandable.

IV Challenge.

This is the part of your trip that you have the most control over. Choosing a destination can often be affected by what's happening in your life. We're saying; *"I want to be this person— to live towards becoming this person"*, but life gets in the way, and we get sidetracked. We get detoured. And in constantly making choices about what not to take with us on our trip, we're always picking up things we don't mean to or intend to. So, we need to be constantly shedding stuff. Things take on value, importance, meaning, as we head to who we want to be, and we end up just holding onto unimportant things. We have to learn how to, and continually practice letting those unnecessary things go. We also have to be so deliberative, thoughtful about what we do take with us. Pack only the things that will help us on our trip. Nothing unnecessary or unuseful. When we open our metaphorical spiritual suitcase and see that; shirt of righteousness, pair of pants of truth, the socks of... You get the 'armor of God' point. Those are always there, you're deciding if you're going to put them on or not.

This part of ***"prepping for the trip"*** is doing the work of putting things into place that will help you on your journey to your destination; ***to be the holy people he loves.*** You won't be a certain way just because you put a certain outfit on. Being in a nice suit or fancy dress won't automatically make you act a certain way. But these will remind you of who you are.

It's not just having these things on. It's wearing these things. **You know the difference between having something on and WEARING it don't you?** Some people have on nice clothes...and they just have on nice clothes. And— others have on nice clothes, and they just wear them differently. It literally changes who they are. When you pack these traits from Colossians, they have to fully become who you're being transformed into being. To *"clothe yourself"* is a uniquely specific understanding of what to take with us in life. These are so essential on your journey to living fully into the holy people God loves. They will serve you well. So, pack them, and wear them well.