

## SERMON

By: Gail Fricker

### Packing For The Journey

June 11, 2017

As a high school teacher, the last few days of school were always crazy. It was almost impossible to get students to focus. There was an energetic buzz in the hallways and you felt like you should be humming “*School’s Out For the Summer*”. This week I have had a steady stream of visitors into my office, wishing me well for my journey out East and asking me if I’m ready – although I can assure, that my time in Halifax at college will NOT be a holiday!

But summer is a chance to rest - the warm weather, the longer days, the opportunity to spend time with friends and family – the chance for a summer holiday.

Is anyone here going on holiday this summer? Where to? Is anyone on holiday now and in church as a visitor?

God tells us that we should take a holiday – a rest from our labours. The Bible tells us that God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day – and personally, I think God deserved a rest after all the work of creating everything. In our Gospel lesson, Jesus talks about needing rest from all the worries and burdens that we carry. He said:

*“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*

Sometimes when we go on holiday, we have the chance to let go of some of the things that drag us down and cause stress in our everyday lives. Maybe it’s the change of scenery, or the change in routine. I know that when our family are at our cottage, life just seems to change - it’s a slower pace, we’re more relaxed and we all get along much better. Somehow, we are able to let go of the burdens that might separate us from our relationships with each other, and our relationship with God.

I was thinking, if maybe we could name those burdens, then it might help us in the letting go. So – I have a backpack full of burdens here – (*Ask someone to try it on and see how heavy it is.*) You see, burdens are heavy. But wouldn’t it be good if we could lighten the load by giving these heavy burdens to God?

*(Unpack the backpack full of bricks – one by one read what is written on the brick, and ask a member of the congregation to come forward and place the brick at the altar if that is a burden that they can identify with.)*

A busy job with long hours  
Financial debt  
Concerned about the health of loved ones  
Exams  
Personal health and fitness  
An argument with a friend  
Family relationships  
Moving home  
Parenting a teenager  
A new baby  
Growing old  
Grieving the loss of a loved one  
Redundancy

God tells us that we can bring all these things to God, and leave them there! We don't need to hold onto them and carry them around with us. God doesn't want us to be weighed down with anxiety and worry. We have to trust that God can and will take our burdens from us!

But we do still need to pack for our journey. What might we need to take with us as we travel with God this summer?

I've placed some things among the congregation that might be useful, and I thought the children could collect them one by one to place them in the backpack. Raise your hand if you have an item near you.

*(Each comes forward with the item and says what it is use for and why it is useful. Then reads the scripture attached to it.)*

- A map to help us find our way *(Jesus said, "I am the Way." John 14:6)*
- A Bible to guide us through good and bad times *(The Psalmist wrote, "The word is a lamp to my feet and light for my path." Psalm 119)*
- A torch to light our path *(Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." John 8:12)*
- A bottle of water to quench our thirst *(Jesus said, "whoever drinks of the water that I give him, will never be thirsty again." John 4:14)*
- Chocolate to share with people we meet *(Jesus said, "give and it will be given unto you." Luke 6:38)*

- A tarp to shelter us from the storm (*“Jesus rebuked the wind and said the sea ‘Peace be Still.’ Mark 4:41*)
- A notebook to write our thoughts, and prayers (*The Psalmist wrote, “Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10*)
- A bucket and spade so we can be like children (*Jesus said, “receive the kingdom of God like a child.” Mark 10:16*)
- Sun screen so we can soak up God’s creation (*The Psalmist wrote, “The heaven’s declare the Glory of God and the sky proclaims God’s handiwork.” Psalm 19:1*)

We do need some things in our journey with God, but mostly we need to be aware of what weighs us down. When we give our burdens to God, we are able to travel much lighter. And God wants us to take time to rest. God wants us to allow ourselves some time apart to mend our souls and tend our bodies. Maybe that means building sandcastles on the beach with the family, or spending time singing at a campfire, or B.B.Qing at the cottage, or journeying on a pilgrimage. We have today offered our burdens to God by placing them at the altar. Now we are free to pick up our backpacks and declare a ‘Holy Day’!