

**KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2025
SERMON: DROP THE BAGS
SCRIPTURE: LUKE 10:1-11, 16-20
JACOB FARMER-RYLANDS**

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20 (NIV)

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. **2** He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. **3** Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. **4** Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. **5** “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ **6** If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. **7** Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. **8** “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. **9** Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ **10** But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, **11** ‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’

16 “Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.” **17** The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” **18** He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. **19** I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. **20** However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Sermon: Drop the Bags

Will you pray with me? May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, O God, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Good morning, church. I am honored to preach the Good Word for you here in this exciting season for Kailua Christian Church. Abigail, Lance, Marina, Safiyah, and I have officially entered month two of our summer internship, and Keiki Drama Camp is coming—ready or not. Scripts, sets, snacks, schedules—our minds are full, and our calendars are fuller. It has truly been a pleasure to explore my call to ministry within these walls, because this church lives its faith in motion. You show up for IHS. You search for ways to revitalize your

congregational community. You welcome interns like us. And you carry ministry with compassion and care.

But today's Gospel starts elsewhere. As we enter Luke chapter 10, Jesus has just performed great wonders for the people of Roman-occupied Judea. He has cast out demons, sent the Twelve to proclaim the kingdom of God. He's fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish, Peter has declared Jesus "The Messiah of God." And Jesus has foretold his death and resurrection to his bewildered followers before appearing to them in radiant glory at the Transfiguration. You know, light work for the Savior of humankind.

Now, having assembled seventy-two* "others," as the Gospel writer of Luke puts it, Jesus sends them out in pairs to prepare the way for him. Their instructions are simple, but strange: Travel light—no purse, no bag, no sandals. Speak peace—let that be the first thing they hear. Receive hospitality—let others provide for you. Announce the nearness of God—that's the message. And later—don't root your joy in success. Root it, instead, in being known.

This isn't a command to be impressive, but rather a call to be present. Jesus is focused on *presence*. "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" That's it. And that remains the heart of the mission even now. None of us gathered here is the main act. We, like these seventy-two, are part of the preparation. Because Jesus is already on his way.

As I prayed over this passage in preparation for this morning, the first of Jesus's instructions tugged at my heart: Travel light. So often, we don't go lightly. We carry bags—emotional, spiritual, psychological—that weigh us down. Bags that make it harder to prepare the way for what God is already doing. We carry control because we're afraid to trust others with our full, messy selves. We carry pride because we're unsure we're enough. We carry a need to be certain so we won't have to risk being wrong. We carry guilt, fear, shame, grief—some of it old, some of it fresh. We carry perfectionism because if we get it *just right*, maybe it will matter, maybe we will matter.

But these bags, they weigh us down, they crowd out peace, and they close us off from joy. They make us hesitant to share the very thing the world is hungry for: Jesus. Jesus, who says: Drop the bags. You don't need them where you're going. Drop the bags—and lean in. Lean into one another. Lean into community. Lean into Christ.

The message sounds simple. But let's be real. Dropping your baggage at the foot of the cross—when that baggage carries decades of fear, doubt, pride, and pain? That's anything but easy.

When Aunt June picked me up from the Honolulu airport back in May, I had more than two suitcases. I carried self-doubt. *Would I be good enough for this role? Am I good enough to minister to others?* I carried the grief of a calling I haven't yet claimed. *Am I called to be a pastor or a lay member, a shepherd of souls or a beloved member of the flock?* And I carried fear—the fear of getting it wrong. *What if I make a mistake? What if I'm bad at being a chaplain?*

And truthfully, I didn't just drop those bags. Some I've had to set down slowly. Some I still pick back up again. Because dropping the baggage of fear or striving or shame isn't always a single act—it's a daily practice. Sometimes it's a prayer you whisper before you even believe it. A kind of holy un-gripping that happens over time. And here's the miracle: even in the unburdening, Christ walks with us. The Spirit takes time. Grace—it doesn't rush us.

Little by little, God has asked me to release what I have been gripping too tightly. To breathe again. To learn from my mistakes. To let go of the belief that if I worked hard enough here, I could prove something—to the church, to God, maybe even to myself—because Jesus had already arrived in this place. And this community, you have made space for that blessed wrestling. You have offered welcome and love without demanding polish or performance, just *presence*. And in that welcome, I have remembered what it feels like to belong, even in the most uncertain of times.

So today, as I stand among you and speak peace to this house of the Lord, I do so not because I've earned the right, but because peace has already been given to me. Indeed, I did not bring Jesus here from the Boston University School of Theology. I met him here.

And so I wonder, not just for me, but for all of us: *What are we carrying that's keeping us from speaking peace?* Is it the pressure to get everything right? The exhaustion of holding a church together through seasons of change? The fear that if you stop—even for a moment—it might all fall apart? What if you put it down? What would open up in your spirit? What might God grow in the space you finally cleared? “Peace to this house. The kingdom of God has come near.” That's the message. That's the calling. That's what the world is aching to hear. But we can't speak it with our hands full. We can't speak it while clinging to fear, or control, or the myth that it all depends on us. We can't speak it if we're still waiting for a Savior who's already arrived.

So drop the bags. Lean in. And then—walk on. Walk into the kingdom that's already unfolding around us. The good news is: we don't have to carry God's kingdom into the world—we only have to clear the way. So lay it down. Drop the bags. Let peace speak through you. Jesus doesn't send us to do it all—he sends us to make space, to open the way. So let go of the need to hold everything together. Let go of the fear that it all depends on you. Let go of the story that says you're only worthy if you get everything right. Because you were never meant to

carry it all alone. Even the call to prepare the way is not a solo journey. Jesus sent his disciples two by two for a reason—because courage, faith, and peace are cultivated in community.

Church, you don't have to carry this burden alone. Jesus encourages you to carry God's Word together. Even the Savior sent his disciples in pairs. He knew the journey couldn't be made alone. And this very church, it was not founded in isolation. When tragedy shook this community in 1956, it was two women—not pastors, not professionals—who showed up with nothing but compassion and faith. They leaned in. They opened their homes. They gathered in living rooms, in borrowed cafeteriums, wherever space could be made. And through grief, through loss, through the slow work of hope and healing, Kailua Christian Church was born. That history still shapes us. This congregation named its purpose clearly just a few weeks ago in a Vision Meeting with Pastor Noelani Jai: *What do we do? We nurture faith and belonging. Why? So that we can live out God's love for all. That is the legacy you inherit. That is the vision you carry forward in this place.*

In two weeks, we will welcome dozens of children into our midst, many of whom have never stepped foot inside a church. Some will carry fear, insecurity, silence. And Jesus does not ask us to meet them with perfection, but with presence and peace. And we can offer that—because Jesus is already showing up.

So before you write a name tag, hang a backdrop, or print a handout—drop the bags. Let go of the worry. Let go of the need to prove yourself. Let go of the belief that it all depends on you. Open your heart to joy. Open your spirit to peace. Trust that God is already moving. As we prepare to gather at the table this Communion Sunday, I can't help but think—this is what spaciousness looks like. Grace poured out. Peace extended. Christ meeting us and feeding us—the hungry, the tired, the hopeful travelers we are. We come to the table not to impress or to earn, but to lay down what we've carried and to receive what only God can give.

We're not carrying the kingdom. We're walking into it. Drop the bags. And go.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**In Luke 10:1, the number of disciples Jesus sent out is debated, with some manuscripts stating 70 and others 72. The difference stems from variations in the ancient Greek manuscripts, with some favoring "seventy" and others "seventy-two."*