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Indiana Jones Puts on his Jacket and Hat

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He is recognized in an instant. This character who was ranked the 2nd greatest hero of all time by the American Film Institute has become an icon known to people all over the world for his sense of humor, his exhaustive knowledge of ancient civilizations and languages, his fear of snakes, and his discoveries of “rare antiquities.” Even though it’s been thirty or more years since we first met this fictional professor of archeology, many of us still thrill at the moment the awkward professor who stammers his way through a lecture takes off his glasses to don his trademark leather jacket, bullwhip, satchel, and fedora as Dr. Jones transforms into Indiana Jones and an adventure begins. Perhaps some of the professors or retired professors here have similar transformations.

One of the things that makes the Indiana Jones franchise so successful is how easily recognizable the character is. The jacket. The hat. The satchel. The whip. We don’t even need to see the face of Harrison Ford, the actor who brought Indiana Jones to life to know it is him. The jacket and hat are so iconic, they are on display at the Smithsonian Museum.

Yet, Indiana Jones, or Indy, as he is known to his friends, is not an original character. According to his creators, filmmakers George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, Indy is based on the old adventure movie serials of the 1930’s and 40’s where a world traveling adventurer clad in a leather jacket, scarf, and hat saved the damsels, discovered treasure, single handedly defeated the bad guys, without ever breaking a sweat or getting his shiny leather jacket dirty. These heroes, portrayed by actors like a young Charlton Heston, were cool, hard men who never took a misstep or made a mistake. They were larger than life and lived larger than life adventures, so audiences could watch and forget their own troubles for a while.

Unlike these flawless heroes, fans of the movies know Indy got his leather jacket dirty all the time. He ran and fell down, he got tangled up in spider webs, sand, dirt, water. And his leather jacket showed it, so did his hat, and scuffed boots. Indiana Jones took the look of the adventurer and made it lived in, and more like the rest of us who can sometimes relate to finding ourselves in situations that proved to be more than we bargained for. One of the appealing aspects of Indiana Jones was despite all his expert knowledge, he was still relatable, and we audience members felt we could go anywhere with him, if only we’d known him, or maybe even be able to stumble our way through the adventures in our lives where we might not end up with the treasure, but did what we could to protect something valuable or at least prevent

it from falling into the wrong hands. Indiana Jones changed the adventurer from being a selfish treasure seeker to someone who was on the side of good, attempting to keep religious artifacts from being appropriated by men and women who would use them for selfish gains. That is one reason why audiences still love Indiana Jones, the character who only needs his leather jacket, satchel, whip and iconic fedora – and theme song written by composer John Williams - for whatever adventure comes his way.

Indiana Jones' iconic outfit reminds me of Jesus telling his disciples how to dress for the adventure he sent them on in our Gospel today. While they don't get a leather jacket and fedora, what Jesus told them to wear, to take with them, and leave behind, was just as significant. Remember, they were to leave behind stuff we might think was important for a road trip: food, money, bag or suitcase, and an extra outfit. Instead they were to put shoes on their feet and have a staff in their hand. That's it: a walking stick, sandals, and the shirt on their back.

While this might sound like Jesus was telling his disciples to travel light, there is some significant Old Testament symbolism going on here. Remember in the Book Exodus when the Israelites were observing the Passover of the Lord, Moses commanded them to eat their Passover meal with their loins girded – that means dressed- sandals on their feet and walking stick in hand; as if they were ready to leave at a moment's notice. Jesus also sent his disciples out in pairs, together, no one went out alone. These symbols were most likely intended to show the world the presence of God's renewed people walking among them.

That is why they did not bring food and money - to show dependence on God and each other, like God's People when they left slavery in Egypt. They were to receive what was given them in the form of shelter and food, trusting God would provide for them when people rejected them. They were to preach Jesus' message of repentance: to turn from the ways of living for self and turn toward God. And they were to listen to the pain of the people they encountered and use the authority Jesus had given them to help make people well again, to cast out or defy their source of pain. Because maybe that is what people needed most of all.

There might be another reason Jesus sent his disciples out the way he did. It might be because of a type of wandering preaching philosopher in Jesus' day called the cynic. Cynics had strong beliefs and were not afraid to live them boldly in public. They embraced a life of extreme poverty, hard labor, and freedom from institutions and conventions like religion, politics, business, citizenship, marriage and family life, and any other aspect of culture they believed prohibited them from living what they believed was the virtuous life of reason, self-sufficiency, and freedom. They believed because they lived in extreme poverty they were beholden to no one, and therefore

could speak frankly against what they believed was the ridiculousness of life, its silliness and viciousness. Cynics often put on public displays of obscene behaviors in order to shock or cause offense to those living what they believed was an unvirtuous life. And while it might look different today; there are still Cynics among us. Cynics are known for pointing out what they believe is wrong with the world in ways that are snarky, blunt, and frank. But they do not believe the world is redeemable. The Cynic responded to the pain and injustice of the world by hopelessly turning their back on it, told others to do the same, and called that virtue and freedom.

In contrast, Jesus sent his disciples out into that same hurting world with very little not to show self-sufficiency, but to show vulnerability and dependence on God as God's renewed people. And as God's renewed people, his disciples were to go into the world hearing God's prophetic call to turn to God while at the very same time to live in the world that is full of beauty and pain. They were to be a type of crossroad, where the people of the world can see and be invited to live with the disciples the ways of God's love, a way that brings healing not cynicism sort of like how the Indiana Jones movies can make audiences feel they could share his adventures and through those adventures learn to do what is good instead of what is selfish.

The message of today's Gospel is as relevant for us as followers of Jesus as it was for the disciples back then. Jesus didn't come to do all the work of proclaiming the good news of the presence of the kingdom of God himself. Like he sent the disciples to share in his mission, he's inviting us into that mission with him. And if we are to listen to Jesus' command, we have to consider how to go into the world that has just as much pain and just as much cynicism in it now as it did then. This is one of those passages in scripture where I'm pretty sure taking it literally would not do us much good; for if we were to go walking around in sandals, with a walking stick wearing a tunic we'd be treated pretty much the same as if we all wore leather jackets and fedoras. So, then, what do we wear and bring and leave behind, if we are to follow Jesus and live the love of God.

That question was addressed in the opening statements of our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry at the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church happening right now in Austin Texas. Every three years all the Bishops and deputies who are lay and ordained people from every diocese in the Episcopal Church gather to discuss the mission and do the business of the Episcopal Church. In his opening remarks, Presiding Bishop Curry said he met with some youth who asked him how do they live the love the God. His response to them and his challenge to all Episcopalians is 7 words.

TURN. LEARN. PRAY. WORSHIP. BLESS. GO. REST.

Turn. Turn toward Jesus. The PB has challenged us Episcopalians around the world to take a few moments every morning to read the words of Jesus. I know that sounds like a lot, and we are all busy people who just don't have time, but when you reflect on whose words you do take time to listen to or read every day: politicians, or pundits or comedians, late night talk show hosts, reporters, or presidents or world leaders, whether you agree with them or not is not the point: its who do you spend time listening to, perhaps you will reconsider that if you can make time to listen to them, then perhaps it won't be so hard to make room for a few moments to look at your Bible or daily devotional like Forward Day by Day and read the words of the one you follow. **Learn.** Learn more about our faith as much as we learn about current events. **Pray.** To engage in conversation with God. No matter how you pray. **Worship.** Participate in a worshipping community and worship God – which means giving ourselves to God - not whatever preference we might have for hymns or eucharistic prayers. **Bless.** This might be my personal favorite; it means to be a blessing in this hurting and cynical world by caring, showing compassion and empathy even to the folks we might disagree with or dislike. **Go.** Go out of our comfort zones and be vulnerable for that is where connections are made. **Rest.** Even Jesus took naps, or retreated from activity for a while, that is how we are refreshed and renewed, and resist being overwhelmed or burnt out. We've been challenged to put on or practice 7 words. Turn. Learn. Pray. Worship. Bless. Go. Rest.

If this sounds like a lot, then maybe just pick one word and work on it for a week. Or two. Consider how to put each word into practice and make each practice part of your life. Will doing so bring an immediate end to the tragic events and injustices in the world and make it the kind of world you want it to be? Of course not. But embodying these practices could do something much more important: they could empower us – if we do them - to become a type of crossroad as recognizable as a leather jacket and fedora where God's love is present in the midst of this world of beauty and pain and when we are courageous enough to share that love of God without judgment, without fear, that is when healing happens and something that is far more powerful than fear or cynicism that can help bring positive change to the world is born: hope. And hope is a way to transform this world into God's dream for all people.

Turn. Learn. Pray. Worship. Bless. Go. Rest. As God's renewed people, together, let begin the adventure of hope today.