**SERMON PLAN: Date:**

**Series Theme:** Thank God, I’m a Methodist.

**Sermon Title: Saddlebags**

**Sermon Purpose: Everyone has a responsibility to share the Good News of Jesus Christ – you don’t have to own a horse.**

**Scriptures: Major ideas**:

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| --- | --- |
| Matthew 28:16-20 | Go, make of all disciples. |

**Intro: Better make terms with us while you can!**

**The TEXT : Jesus sent his disciples into all the world. A Charge that Methodists have always taken seriously.**

**1. The Role of the Circuit Riders**

a. Not the English Preachers – in established towns.

b. Literally following the westward expansion, where the were no church buildings

c. They traveled through terrible storms and the hot summer days when “Nothing moving today but Crows and Methodist preachers.”

**2. Life of Hardships**

a. Most were young men, single, uneducated, & called.

b. One horse, one suit of clothes, one book, no food.

c. Half died before they were 30 – worn out from the trail. 2/3’s died before they could preach 12 years.

**3. Famous Preachers**

a. Peter Cartwright – 1785 – 1872. Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, – 20 years a circuit rider. 30 years a Presiding Elder – Ran against Lincoln twice (out polling Lincoln the first time, losing the second). Revival camp meetings – baptizing over 12,000.

b. Jason Lee – 1803 – 1845 Oregon Pioneer, legislator, established Oregon as a viable state, lobbied Washington to include it in the Union.

c. Thomas Fletcher Royal – 1821 – 1911, Oregon, Washington, Idaho. Saddlebags

**Conclusion: We are a people of evangelistic zeal. We are a people who build up their whole community. We are a people who educate everyone. We should be proud to be United Methodists.**

Pastor Nolley introduced himself to the settler and was greeted with tremendous disgust as the settler burst out, "Another Methodist preacher! I left Virginia for Georgia to get clear of them. There they got my wife and daughter. So I come here, and here is one before I can get my wagon unloaded!" Nolley drolly replied, "My friend, if you go to Heaven you'll find Methodist preachers there; if you go to Hell, I'm afraid you'll find some there, and you see how it is on earth, so **you had better make terms with us and be at peace".**

In the earliest years of the US, Methodist preachers were assigned to travel around specific geographic territories to minister to settlers and organize congregations. Methodist clergy could be appointed to circuits wherever people were settling. Because of the distance between churches, these preachers would ride on [horseback](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horseback_riding). They were popularly called **circuit riders** or saddlebag preachers. They traveled with few possessions, carrying only what could fit in their saddlebags, often just their Bible, hymn book and Wesleys Sermons. They traveled through wilderness and villages, they preached every day at any place available (peoples' cabins, courthouses, fields, meeting houses, later even basements and street corners).

Methodist circuit riders were always on the move. Many circuits were so large that it would take 5 to 6 weeks to cover them. Between 1770 and 1820, American Methodists increased in number from fewer than 1,000 members to more than 250,000 and rose from a dozen ministers to more than 4,000. Largely as a result of the zeal and passion of these 'saddlebag preachers', radical Christianity was firmly planted at the frontier of the infant United States of America.

Circuit riders had to be young, in good health, and single (since marriage and a family forced preachers to settle in one area and leave the traveling ministry). Methodist circuit riders did not have to have a formal education. Leaders of the new church wanted educated, trained circuit riders, but they wanted even more to spread their ministry to people on the frontier who needed Christian guidance.

The life of a circuit rider was physically grueling.  They traveled, usually by horseback, with little more than the clothes that they were wearing through all kinds of weather.  On the frontier where conditions were primitive, there were stories that preachers sometimes declined the offer of a bed and slept out of doors to avoid the fleas and bedbugs.   Illness and accident were constant perils.  At the beginning of the 19th century, about one in six of the circuit riders died on circuit.  After several years on circuit, preachers might meet an available woman and marry, which usually led to their giving up their assignment and “locating.”  There they often became preachers who performed Sunday services for an area and worked otherwise for a livelihood.  At the height of the circuit riding ministry, this was considered a second class status within the church.  But as towns grew out of settlements and church buildings sprang up, the stigma slowly evaporated.  In a few cases, new wives supported an itinerant career from home or traveled with their husbands.

Such was the reach of this system that within a generation of the end of the Revolutionary War, a visit by the Methodist preacher was considered to be a normal, and expected, part of daily life in America.  Thus it is hardly surprising that Methodism’s growth outpaced by a large margin other denominations.  Young men who became circuit riders saw this not as a career choice, but the highest possible calling to which they could aspire and the best possible thing that they could do with their lives.  This vision permeated their work.  It made the American experience of religion unique and gave it its special character.

Rev. Thomas Fletcher Royal’s

“Ode to my Saddle Bags”

"These old saddle-bags have a new interesting story to tell, though very old they are not my first pair, for they entered the itinerancy only 50 years ago, and were the successors to a pair which was utterly worn out by hard service. These, I know, look old and wrinkled enough to have seen a century's use. If you would know where the wrinkles came from, ask the stormy winds and pelting rains ; ask the black, spattering mud of Southern Oregon and the overhanging dripping brush of Coos Bay trails; ask the snow-drifts on the summit of the Cascade Mountains and the lone juniper trees of the Goose Lake country, which gave the itinerant slender protection from the frosts of the elevated plateau and have furnished a pillow for the tired head during many nights of bivouac; ask the man who hauled them out of a pile of drift sand in the South Umpqua River, where they had lodged after being washed from the back of the preacher's horse while swimming a swollen stream.

"If these stories of buffetings are not enough to explain their super-annuated looks, inquire concerning the service which they have rendered. They were the traveling preacher's library and wardrobe and often his larder; sometimes the bin for his horse's oats, a peck at a time; outward bound they were always loaded with Bibles, Sunday School libraries and other books from the "Concern"; inward bound they came loaded with ham, a flitch of bacon, a "chunk" of fresh meat or a dressed chicken or turkey; they have conveyed all kinds of dry goods, groceries, boots, shoes, hardware and, more than once, an assortment of Christmas toys. These bags have been stretched to their utmost capacity with vegetables of all kinds; they have ventured to cargo such explosives as eggs by the dozen, gallons of sauerkraut, often a whole cheese and once a gallon of soft soap, and many a time fruits — fresh, dried, canned and preserved. All of these were usually counted on "quarterage" — the term used then for the Pastor's "support".

"Nothing ever strained their seams or tested my horse

more than the numerous zoological specimens and Indian art relics in stone and in basket- weaving for the cabinet of the Umpqua Academy, and which may now be seen in the museum of Willamette University. To the itinerant's wife the saddle-bags were like a pack of Providence and to his children their open- ing was like the coming of Santa Claus every four weeks. Those faithful receptacles always brought some happy surprise for the whole household.

"Dear old companion, you and I are not looking so young as we once did. Twentieth-Century folks consider us relics of an ancient day. But, if we are fossils of a past age, we bear hieroglyphic wrinkles in our faces, in which could be deciphered a story of mingled tears and laughter, with some comedy and a touch of tragedy and of mighty triumphs."

**Scripture**

## Matt 28:16-20

## The Commissioning of the Disciples

## 16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. 18And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’