



# Devotion Week 21: Numbers 4 August 19, 2020

Bible Reference: [Numbers 4](#)

## What Are You Carrying?

Now comes the fun part for the tribe of Levi...work in the tabernacle. I bet they were expecting to do exciting, important stuff. What do they get? We read in Numbers 4 that Moses and Aaron divided up the tribe of Levi to carry parts of the tabernacle. What? How is that exciting and important?

I've told you before that I knew I wanted to be a pastor from a young age. I was excited to get to work! I remember for my confirmation writing my faith paper like a sermon. My mom's cousin, who was also my pastor, did some major editing before I could share it. In college I remember jumping on my buddy's back asking why we can't just be pastors—right now. As a fieldworker I remember being frustrated with the limited work I got to do and being so excited to get to vicarage so I could start preaching. I remember preparing sermons to help my home church, only to have them highly critiqued by my home pastor. Then when I finally got ordained and called to a church, some of the initial ministry was tough. I can only imagine how the tribe of Levi felt to be called to lead people in worship, only to find out their responsibility was to carry stuff.

Sometimes our excitement can be stifled by reality and it takes patience to get to where we thought we would be. I can only imagine what it was like for the people who chose to worship in person at Mt. Calvary to have to sit in church with a mask on. Not to mention all the signs throughout the building reminding you of what you can and cannot do, and having someone follow you to the bathroom to sanitize it as soon as you're done. Worship was nothing like what they left in March. One reason I was okay with delaying our reopening was that I knew this place would still feel weird and not like home. For 8 years I have walked through the church halls, the sanctuary, and the big room and they have never been so silent—and so weird. I have gotten used to it, or at least come to accept it, but it was not what I or many other pastors envisioned when coming back to worship. Originally the pastors in my circuit talked about doing a big Easter service no matter what time of year it was, but none of them were able to do it because there were still too many rules to follow to make it an Easter celebration like they envisioned. It is going to take time to get to what they've dreamt about, and now they are carrying the burden of not being able to give the people what they want—church like normal.

There is an interesting verse in today's reading:

*The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, "Let not the tribe of the clans of the Kohathites be destroyed from among the Levites..." Numbers 4:17-18*

The Kohathites were tasked with carrying the holiest parts of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies. That is the section where only the high priest is allowed to enter, and even then, only at certain times. Part of the challenge of carrying these things was that they could not touch them or look at them lest they die—literally! The Lord, knowing exactly what the Kohathites have to carry, tells Moses and Aaron to protect them and watch out for them.

I want you to know that the leadership of Mt. Calvary is working very hard to care for every one of you. We know some of you are carrying stuff that is hard and it will take patience to get to whatever our new normal will be. We know that this “normal” will be different from the last. A pastor friend and I were talking, and he thinks we won’t shake hands for a long time. When will I be able to stand in the back of church and greet people after the service? Not sure. That kind of uncertainty is tough to process and carry.

For years the stories of Exodus and Numbers had been told to the people. Then Jesus came and the promise was fulfilled, but it was weird. Jesus brought the salvation they needed, but in a weird way; definitely not the way they expected. Now they had great anticipation of being with Jesus forever, but again, they would have to wait. To make matters worse, the church during the waiting looked different. That is what Acts and our current sermon series is all about. After Jesus returned to heaven, the tabernacle was gone, in a matter of speaking, and the Apostles were leading church in homes. Church was weird. What Acts doesn’t talk about is the grief people carried because it was weird.

Some of you are carrying that grief now, grief that the church is not what you envisioned. Please, know that as your pastor I want to be here for you. Honestly, the leadership is thinking about you and the vision of our church. And while this time has allowed for some exciting & creative moments in the midst of the weirdness, we still know many of you are grieving. I have learned over the years that grief is messy; you go through cycles and phases, and it takes time to carry it and adjust. Anytime there is an expectation or a thought of what was going to be that didn’t happen, there is grief. So take time to grieve, but also reach out to share it. Deaconess Gayle leads a Good Grief group. She understands grief well. And like I said, I am always willing to listen to what you are grieving because it is weird.

Our Lord knew exactly what the clans of Levi were carrying, and He stops to remind Moses and Aaron. Jesus knows exactly what you are carrying. As your pastor, I am praying for you. If there is any way we can help carry the load of grief, pain, suffering, weirdness, loneliness, or whatever it is, please tell us because we love you. Most importantly, Jesus loves you and He will never let you carry it alone.

God’s Peace,  
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