

When God Says Go

Hespler, June 7, 2026 © Scott McAndless – Communion, Second Sunday after Pentecost

[Genesis 12:1-9](#), Psalm 33:1-12, Romans 4:13-25, [Matthew 9:9-13](#), 18-26

The promise that God gave to Abram was amazing: **“I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”** It was a high calling – an exalted and holy mission not only to find the potential in himself but also to have a fantastic and positive impact on the whole world.

But apparently, this promise could only be activated in one way. **“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”** And, as Abram looked around him, that seemed a little bit easier said than done.

Reasons to Stay

He had lived here in Haran for a very long time. He had put down deep roots, had developed a circle of friends. He had business contacts and connections throughout the area.

And then there was his father’s house. His father, Terah, had recently passed away at the ripe old age of 205. You think that King Charles had to wait a long time for his mother to die and to get the job he’d been waiting for all his life? Well, Abram had had to wait several lifetimes to inherit this house. How could he just leave it behind now?

More than just the house, though, he had his country, his national identity, his gods and his kin to think of. These were all the things that he would lose contact with, maybe forever.

Vague Promise

He also had a family that depended on him. He and Sarai did not have any children (something that had always been a sore point), but they did have an entire household of slaves, freedmen and clients. They all looked to him to provide for them. Was he really supposed to disrupt all of their lives for the sake of a promise?

But worst of all, the promise wasn’t specific. God wasn’t even telling him where he was going or what to expect when he got there. He was supposed to give up everything he knew for something he knew nothing about.

All these thoughts ran through Abram’s mind in the moment he received the call from God to go. He had every excuse in the world to stay exactly where he was. But what did Abram do? Did he let any of those considerations get in the way of the adventure that his God was placing before him? No, he did not.

“So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother’s son Lot and all the possessions that they had gathered and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran, and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.” And the world, my friends, has never been the same since.



When God
Says Go

Matthew's Enterprise

Matthew had built up quite a business for himself over the years. He had been able to bid for the tax-collecting franchise around Capernaum. Basically, he had promised the Roman agents that he would extract a certain amount of wealth from tolls, tariffs and taxes. And so long as he delivered, they really didn't care about anything else.

Anything he was able to raise above what he had bid for the franchise was his to keep. And he could use whatever methods he desired. Extortion, theft, threats to break people's legs or to send them to sleep with the fishes at the bottom of the Sea of Galilee – the Romans didn't care so long as they got their cut.

So, Matthew had done well. It was true that everyone hated him for it. They knew that he was part of a corrupt system that was designed to squeeze every last coin out of their pockets. But he had made peace with that. Let them hate him; he knew that he and his family would remain secure. And that was what mattered, wasn't it?

Follow Me

At least, he thought he had made peace with it until one day Jesus passed by his collection station. Now, we're told that when Jesus called the fishermen, Peter, Andrew, James and John, he had a quip that he used to refer to their jobs. **"Follow me,"** he said, **"and I will make you fishers of people."**

But apparently the only thing he said to Matthew was, "Follow me," which seems to me to be a great lost opportunity. Why not at least say, "You can count on me"? Why not say, "Follow me and even in the most off-balance-sheet activities, your deferred impact liabilities will be fully amortized into equity of change, ensuring a positive net present value on humanity's statement of affairs."

That's how you talk to an accountant, am I right, Vern?!

A Response

But amazingly, all Matthew needed to hear was two words: follow me. Maybe he was less reconciled to being a mere leech sucking the life out of his countrymen than he had thought. Maybe he hadn't quite given up on himself.

He had no idea where Jesus was calling him to go or what he would do. There were no long-term actuarial forecasts or business plans. He was just supposed to follow.

And did Matthew hesitate? He immediately dropped everything that had given purpose and meaning to his life up until that point. He left his tax records and lists of people who owed him money. He abandoned all of the people who relied on him to get them rich, and he followed Jesus. And the world would never be the same again.

A Rich History

The people of Knox Preston Presbyterian Church had invested so much into their common identity, their building and their sense of mission and purpose for generations.

They had so many reasons to hold onto what they had built. Their congregation had given them a sense of identity and a purpose. For many of them, the most significant events of their lives had happened in that place and among those people: their weddings, the baptisms of their children, their mourning for loved ones.

And then what happened a couple of years ago? God came along and said, “Go, go from your congregation and your church family and your ancestors’ building to the place that I will show you.”

Did God Call?

Now, I know that there are some who might dispute that and say that it wasn’t God who said that. It was the Presbytery who said that. Or it was certain individuals who were given a position of authority who said that. And of course there is some truth in that.

But you see, it is rarely immediately obvious when a message is coming from God. There are always other ways that you could explain it away. Perhaps, Abram might have explained to himself, he was just depressed following the death of his father. Maybe it was just his own wanderlust that he was hearing, not the voice of God.

And when Jesus came up to Matthew’s tax office, for all Matthew knew, he was a nobody. How could he know for sure that this Jesus was speaking for God? No, when God is calling, that is something that you have to figure out. And the people of Knox Preston, despite a great deal of grief and loss and a few other difficult emotions, did discern that God was calling.

And what did they do? They went. And they went above all with good will, accepting that this was part of God’s plan for them. They went not knowing what on earth they were getting into. I mean, they’d met some people who had made some promises, but that was it.

But still, like Abram and like Matthew, they got up and went. And they became a part of this new thing that God was creating – a new amalgamated congregation. And the world would never be the same again.

How God Does It

You see? That is how God does it. We may have our personal plans and visions. We certainly have things that make us feel comfortable and secure. And God, it seems, has a habit of calling people out of that comfort and security and into radical trust.

So I ask you all today where that call is coming into your life. And let me ask you first of all as a congregation. As I just said, there are several people here who recently went through that process of leaving behind what was familiar and comfortable to become a part of this congregation. They have demonstrated their courage and their faith to us all.

Call to St. Andrew’s

But, if they were called to become a part of this new thing, weren’t we all? Let’s ask what God came along and said to the people who were part of St. Andrew’s Hespeler before all of these conversations started. What did God ask us to leave behind?

“Go from your concept of a congregation that is totally based on things happening in this one place in the village of Hespeler. Leave behind your comfortable cliques and familiar ways of getting things done. Abandon the familiarity of a church that used to be to fully embrace this new congregation with the same courage and faith that those who have given up so much have shown.”

And do note that God is asking us all to do this even though we still don’t know all that this new congregation will be. All we have is a promise from God that God will let us know when we get there. It’s only the same promise that he gave to Abram and to Matthew, and look how those promises turned out.

It is a question that all of us have to ponder, and not just those who came from a particular place. It is a call that God places on congregations from time to time, and we definitely seem to be in a season when many congregations are pondering such calls.

Call to Individuals

But I would be remiss if I didn't put the question to you as individuals as well. I think all of us have to pause from time to time and ask what new and courageous thing God may be calling us to do.

How might God be speaking to you and calling you to some new adventure of faith? Do not expect to hear some divine voice booming from heaven with instructions for what you are to do. I don't think that happened for Abram, and I'm sure that it didn't for Matthew.

Expect God to speak in various ways. Sometimes it is when we learn to quiet our busy minds through the practice of meditation that the voice of God (that has been speaking to us all along) can finally break through. With quiet whispers, God may direct you in a new course.

But God may also speak through the passions and concerns that drive us. Have you found in your heart a new concern for some disadvantaged group? Has your creativity been stirred with some crazy idea for how a problem could be addressed?

These are experiences of inspiration, and they can absolutely come directly from God. We do also have to practice discernment about them. We need to pray and meditate over them, and we need to talk to the trusted voices of the people that God has placed into our lives. God speaks through them too.

Stepping Into the Unknown

But do not dismiss the thought that God may be calling you to step out by faith into the unknown. God has done it before; why wouldn't God dream of doing something amazing through someone like you – especially someone like you.

Abram was a nobody. God could have called many similar men wandering around Mesopotamia at the time. For all we know, God did. Perhaps the only thing that was unique about Abram was that he listened and that he went.

Matthew wasn't unique either. The land was full of tax collectors. And, for all we know, Jesus stopped by the tax offices of dozens of them before Matthew dared to do what Jesus said and get up and follow.

God isn't looking for people who have got it all together. God certainly isn't looking for people who know how it's all going to turn out. God is looking for people who are faithful. God is looking for people who can hear the words leave, go and follow as calls to adventure.

And, yes, God may be looking for you.