Have you ever wondered or prayed about your calling in life? I am not talking about a specific career or a job, but something even more meaningful that is far more important than accomplishing personal goals. We think about our calling when searching for meaning and purpose because we care about how we contribute to making the world better and what we will leave behind us for our children and their children. In this sense, our calling is not about doing something to get what we want but finding ourselves becoming something that leaves a legacy long after we are gone.

So, what are you leaving behind? Have you found your calling? Do you care about it? If think you are too young to worry about it, you are not. The sooner you know your calling, the better life you will experience. Or, if you think you are too old to think about your calling, this message will prove you wrong. Regardless of where you are in your life, the same question prevails: What are you doing today that will last long after you are gone?

To explore these questions and others as we move along through Lent, we are beginning a new series of messages to study how God calls people and what it means to be called by God. Every Sunday, we will look at a different character from the Bible to learn about God’s calling.

For today’s message, we will look into Abram’s calling story. Part of his story is found in Genesis 12: 1-4. Here is what it says,

“Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 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.” So Abram went, as the Lord had told him…”

Before I get into the subject of the message, here are a few facts about Abraham.

I do not know if you notice, but in this Scripture, Abraham’s name is actually Abram. Abraham’s story begins in the previous chapter, where he is introduced as Abram, the son of Terah. What is the difference? In Hebrew, the name Abram means “exalted father,” and Abraham means “father of a multitude.” God changed Abram’s name to Abraham in Genesis 17 because God promised him to make a great nation of his offspring, as it says, “I will make of you a great nation…” This great nation is Israel. He is their father.

Abraham is also the first person in the Bible to be called “a friend of God.” In fact, he is called a friend of God three times in the Bible (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). Can you think of anything more wonderful than being called a friend of God?

Furthermore, Abraham is a central figure in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. In the book of Genesis, his life spans twelve chapters. He is mentioned four times in the New Testament (Romans, Galatians, Hebrews, and James). He is called the father of all those who believe (Galatians 3:7), and he is considered the founder of three religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Abraham is married to Sarah, with whom they had their only child named Isaac.

Now that we know a little about who Abraham is, let’s get into the subject of today’s message: his calling.

To truly grasp the significance of the Scripture we read today, we need to know the context in which it is taking place.

God called Abraham many years after the flood in Genesis 6-8. In that story, we are told that the earth was so sinful that God destroyed it and started over with Noah’s family. However, even Noah’s descendants became sinful. By Genesis 11, his descendants gathered to build the Tower of Babel, declaring, “Let us make a name for ourselves.” Like Adam and Eve and Satan before them, they became proud and wanted to bring glory to themselves instead of God. So they decided to disobey God’s commission of spreading all over the earth and decided to stay in one place and build a tower for their honor instead. Because of that, God confused their speech and they scattered according to the language each one spoke.

After this, when God saw how far away from him people were wandering, he chose a family through whom he could interject to save humanity. This is where Jesus comes into the picture. Jesus is Abraham's great, great, great, great… grandson. So, the promise of God to make a great nation out of him to bless all the families of the earth meant Jesus was coming out of his descendants. The blessing was the gift of life through faith in Jesus.

With this in mind, here is Genesis 12:1 again, “Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”

This was the calling of Abram: “Go.” God spoke to him in a very definite way. This was an unambiguous call. But that does not mean that it was easy or even clear. Imagine being asked to leave your country, family, and home security and start a new life somewhere else that you don’t know where it is. On top of that, you are in your old age at 75 years old. What is happening here is that God was calling Abram out of everything he had known to a new beginning apart from his ancestral roots. And this was because God was not going to build on the old, but he was making everything new.

What would you do if this happened to you? Do you remember ever moving to another house? I do, but I do not want to remember. It is such a big challenge and, is messy and annoying, takes too much effort. I mean, just think about the decisions you must make about what you can take and must leave behind. Then there is all the sorting of stuff that was never meant to see the light of day again, but now you need to pack it up.

Of course, if you are excited about the new place you are moving into, all that chaos may not even bother you because you know where you are going and want to get there. But this was not the case for Abram and Sarah. Obeying God meant more to them than trading homes. Abram was not just moving from one town to another. He was also giving up his settled lifestyle. He was willing to leave the comforts of the city of Ur, with its well-built drainage system (critical!) and libraries, to live the rest of his life as a traveler living in a tent. Why was he willing to do that, to sacrifice so much? Because when you know in your heart what is right and trust God, the concern of challenges shrinks as your passion for following your calling increases. A calling from God is unshakeable, meaning you can’t shake it off because that is part of who you were born to be.

That happened to me when I first realized God’s calling. I did not know where I was going, but I knew who was with me, whom I was following, and for what I was born. As I searched for discernment, God gave me direction and understanding to know what I was supposed to be and do. Soon after that, I went immediately (meaning, I was obedient to what God was speaking to my heart), and all the blessings came pouring into my life, like meeting Evelyn and the churches where I have served. You see, often we think of blessings as the stuff we get, but more often than not, blessings are the things that happen to us that make us who we are and the people we meet along the way that love us.

So, Abram didn’t know where he was going; he just knew whom he was going with. His journey did not start with a map or an address but with God speaking to his heart, revealing a higher purpose and calling him to go after it.

We can see clearly through Abram’s calling story that God’s calling comes with challenges but also great promises. We know that when God calls us or moves in our lives, he often doesn’t explain everything plainly, give us reasons, or explains himself. He may not answer questions like, “Why?” or “What for?” Sometimes he doesn’t even tell us “Where?” or “How?” but he always gives us promises.

For example, our text says, “Go from your country,” that is the calling. But then it says, “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.” That is the promise, as I mentioned before, to bless him to be a blessing to many. But there is an important lesson here for all of us besides knowing the purpose of the promise. I think it is fair to say that Abram’s promises in this text were contingent upon his obedience to God. “If you go, I will bless you in these ways…”

Does this mean that God’s blessings for us are contingent upon accepting and following his calling for our lives? Of course, God’s love, grace, and forgiveness are not conditioned, “you want it, you can have it.” But there are also blessings that we can only enjoy when we act on our faith. It is not that God withholds those blessings from us, but that they are not something we receive but something we encounter along the way as we go. In other words, unless you go, you will miss out.

I believe this is why many people feel stuck in one place, hungering for more from God and his blessings, not because they don’t have enough faith or there is something wrong with their church or even themselves; it is just that they have not assumed their calling. Unfortunately, this means that there comes a point in our lives where unless we “go” as Abram did, we will just go through the same motions without any meaningful growth and transformation in us.

Let’s make this clear: Abram’s call included faith and trust. But also obedience. When God said, “Go to the land I will show you,” he went. However, God did not reveal where he was going after Abram left his country. This is true for us as well. The reason why we do not know what God is up to or don’t understand what God is doing is probably because we are unwilling to trust by taking the first step. But once we take that first step in obedience, God reveals the path, and everything starts making sense soon. Think of Moses and how he had to walk into the water before the Red Sea opened before them so they could pass through it and escape the Egyptian army chasing them. The fundamental idea here is that we often have to take the leap of faith before God justifies the leap of faith. And that holds true for almost all the major decisions we face in life, including our calling. This is the life of faith.

This is how the Book of Hebrews 11: 8-12 describes Abraham’s faith, trust, and obedience,

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance, and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith, with Sarah’s involvement, he received power of procreation, even though he was too old, because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”

Do I need to say more? This sums up Abraham’s calling. Believing, trusting, and obeying.

Now, we don’t have time to do this right now, but if need help discerning your calling, please let me help you with that. We can pray, talk, and discern together what God has placed in your heart to do and become. Just don’t wait until it feels comfortable or safe because you will miss out.

I leave you with something to help you in your discernment process: Are you willing to step out in faith to serve in a ministry and stretch the blessings so wide that many others can enjoy them too? Is God calling you to teach children, other men or women? How about a couples’ ministry? Perhaps your calling is more missional and you want to reach out to new people to share with them the good news of Jesus Christ.

We can’t discern our calling by only chasing after stuff. We need to find ourselves in God to know our purpose. So, the invitation and good news today are to begin to pray to God for your calling, knowing that you have one already as a child of God, you just need to be aware of it. So, let’s “Go.”