

“The Courage to Go”
Genesis 12:1-4a
Rev. Henry Pascual

Prayer: Source of all life, open our hearts to your Spirit. Let your life-giving water flow through us, refreshing a thirsty world. Amen.

Our reading from Genesis 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...so Abram went, as the Lord had told him’” (Gen. 12:1,4a). Just like that. God speaks, and Abram moves.

It sounds so simple, doesn't it? Like a snap of the fingers. In the blink of an eye, he's gone. Abram's willingness and prompt obedience to God remind us of Dr. Seuss's children's book, *Marvin K. Mooney, Will You Please Go Now!*¹ The book says,

Marvin K. Mooney, will you please go now?
The time has come, the time is now.
Just go, go, go! I don't care how.
You can go on foot; You can go by cow.
You can go on skates, or in a hat...

and so on through other odd or crazy ways he might go. Marvin just goes because "the time had come."

In our passage in Genesis today, it looks the same way. God tells Abram to leave Haran, his home, and head toward a land he's never seen. And off he goes! No questions asked. No long meetings or consultations with family. No process of discernment.

Or so it seems.

At first glance, it feels like Abram doesn't even have time to think. But that may not be the whole story. It can seem abrupt because of the nature of biblical narratives. According to Robert Alter, Biblical writers rarely describe what's going on inside a person's head: why they do what they do, or the feelings behind their speech or actions.² They don't explain the motives, the

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nB0QpwRgV4>

²Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 114.

doubts, the late-night wrestling. Instead, they show what the characters say and what they do. As the story moves forward, we're left to fill in the gaps. We have to imagine the questions, the fears, and the quiet courage that grow out of the struggle.

Abram's "Yes" probably wasn't actually a snap of the fingers. A lot happened in the gap between verses three and four—in that space between God's call and Abram's response. We can imagine Abram sitting under the stars, wrestling with the call. He was likely asking: *Is this really God? Is this journey even possible? Can I actually trust God's promises?*

That's how it happens for us, too. When we face a major life decision, especially those that impact the rest of our lives, we don't just "snap." We reflect. We weigh the options. We seek "discernment."

And for Abram, this wasn't just a career move. It followed a season of deep pain. His brother had died. His father had died. His wife, Sarai, was struggling with the heartbreak of barrenness.

So when God calls Abram to go, he may still be grieving. Still catching his breath. Still carrying the weight of so much loss. Why move when the future is so uncertain? Why move to unknown territory?

But here is the truth: Discernment is the bridge between God's call and our response. It is the process of learning to trust God even when the demands feel too heavy. Often, we feel the weight of life and think, "I can't do this," but discernment teaches us to trust God anyway. What feels like a vast unknown becomes a journey of faith, one step at a time.

It isn't about having a perfect plan. It's about a steady spiritual posture. It means learning to quiet the noise—our ego, our fear—so we can hear the deeper, truer voice of God.

When we shift our focus from our limited strength to God's faithfulness, something changes. We stop relying on sheer willpower. Instead, we trust that God will give us enough light for the next step.

And over time, even our resistance loosens its grip. What once felt crushing begins to feel carried. And we realize the journey wasn't an interruption of grace — it was grace all along.

I have been doing my own discernment lately. As many of you know, I've shared with the Board that I will be retiring next year. I'm getting older, perhaps too old in this fast-changing world. I feel you deserved someone better, perhaps, someone younger.

The Board has started a wonderful process of discernment. A Working Group has been formed to "reexamine how we do God's work in our changing world," to borrow their words. This is our "gap" between verse three and verse four, if you will. This is our time of discernment.

This is exactly where we find ourselves as a church. The world is changing fast. Technology is moving quicker than we can track. We are walking on unfamiliar terrain. We are having to reimagine what ministry looks like. The old phrase, "We've always done it this way," just doesn't carry us anymore. We have to listen for the Holy Spirit again. Because, as our UCC motto says, *God is still speaking*.

So, let's support this group. Let's pray that the Holy Spirit leads them. We cannot do this on our own strength, resources, or strategies. As the prophet Zechariah declares, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

Our passage says, "So Abram went, as the Lord had told him" (Gen. 12: 4). So must we, after we have discerned God's voice.

But when God speaks, will we have the courage to go? I hope so. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Our passage says, "So Abram went, as the Lord had told him" (Gen. 12: 4). So must we, after we have discerned God's voice.

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