

“Go...”: Responding to Our Uprooting God

Covenant Church
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Sunday, March 3, 2019

Genesis 12:1-4 (NRSV) 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; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

1. Introduction

2. Christian life as a journey

a. Importance of Abraham: Faith as trust/going

- Josh 24:3 ([God] took...Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan)
- Neh 9:7 ([God] chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans)
- Acts 7:2-4 (Abraham left his country in response to God’s call)
- Heb 11:8 (Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place...and he set out, not knowing where he was going)

b. God tends to uproot his children

- Noah (Gen 7:1: Go into the ark...; Gen 8:16: Go out of the ark...)
- Abram/ Abraham (Gen 12:1: Go from your country...; Gen 22:2: Go to the land of Moriah)
- Isaac (Gen 26:2: Do not go down to Egypt; settle in the land that I shall show you...)
- Jacob (Gen 31:13: Leave this land at once and return to the land of your birth...; Gen 35:1: Go up to Bethel and settle there...)
- Moses (Exod 3:10; 4:12: So come, I will send you to Pharaoh...Now go...; Exod 4:19: Go back to Egypt; Exod 6:11: Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his land...; Exod 33:1: Go, leave this place...and go to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...)
- Gideon (Judg 6:14: Go...and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian...)
- Saul (1 Sam 15:18: Go...and fight against [the Amalekites] until they are consumed...)
- David (1 Sam 23:2: Go and attack the Philistines...; 1 Sam 23:4: Go down to Keilah...)
- Isaiah (Isa 6:9: Go and say to this people...)
- Jeremiah (Jer 1:7: You shall go to all to whom I send you...)
- Ezekiel (Ezek 2:3: I am sending you to the people of Israel...)
- Jonah (Jon 1:2: Go at once to Nineveh...)
- Joseph (Matt 2:13: Get up...and flee to Egypt...; Matt 2:20: Get up...and go to the land of Israel...)
- Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John (Matt 4:19, 21: Follow me...)
- Matthew (Matt 9:9: Follow me...)

- The twelve (Matt 10:6: Go...to the lost sheep of the house of Israel...; Matt 28:19: Go...make disciples of all nations...)
- The young man (Matt 19:21: Go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor...then come, follow me)
- Ananias (9:11: Get up and go to the street called Straight...)
- Peter (10:20: Now get up, go down, and go with them...)
- Paul (22:21: Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles...)

c. Christian life as a *journey*, discipleship as *following*

Gal 5:7 *You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth?*

Gal 5:25 *If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.*

Gal 6:5 *For all must carry their own loads.*

Phil 1:6 *I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.*

Phil 2:16 *It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.*

Phil 3:12-14 *Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.*

“They say Aslan is on the move—perhaps he has already landed,” [said Beaver].

“My conversation was a way of saying to myself that I knew I was trying to go someplace and that I would spend the rest of my life trying to go there and try not to let myself get distracted by side trips, excursions that were not to the point.” —Dorothy Day¹

“We all profess one and the same faith, but the strength to fulfill it differs in each of us. One has more and another less of it. One has advanced much in the true path of life, while another is only just beginning it. In front of us all stands Christ with his life, and we all try to emulate him and see our welfare in that alone. Some of us, like the Elder Cyril and his wife Pelagia, are leaders, others stand behind them, others again are still farther behind, but we are all following the same path.” —Pamphilus, in Leo Tolstoy’s “Walk in the Light While There Is Light”²

3. “I will bless you”

Matt 19:27-30 (see also Mark 10:28-31; Luke 18:28-30) Then Peter said in reply, “Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

4. Turning things around

¹ As recounted in Robert Coles, *Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1987): p. 64.

² Leo Tolstoy, “Walk in the Light While There is Light,” in *Walk in the Light and Twenty-Three Tales* (trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude; Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing House): p. 9.

“The biggest mistake, sometimes, is to play things very safe in this life and end up being moral failures.”
—Dorothy Day³

[Being “securely oriented”] is a situation of equilibrium. While we all yearn for it, it is not very interesting and it does not produce great prayer or powerful song. It consists in being well-settled, knowing that life makes sense and God is well-placed in heaven, presiding but not bothering. This is the mood of much of the middle-class Church... [Such an equilibrium] is a minor theme in the Psalms and not very provocative. The Psalms mostly do not emerge out of such situations of equilibrium. Rather, people are driven to such poignant prayer and song as are found in the Psalter precisely by experiences of dislocation and relocation.⁴

³ Coles, *Dorothy Day*, 40.

⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit* (2d ed.; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books): pp. 2-3.