# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

**“When God Calls”**

**Genesis 12:1-3**

**June 5, 2022**

This morning we begin our summer sermon series, “Walking with Abraham,” from the book of Genesis, and I invite you to turn with me to chapter twelve where we will read the first three verses. Abram’s name has not yet been changed by God to Abraham.

The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

It was a couple months before I was to graduate with my degree in Chemical Engineering. I was in the cafeteria with others from my graduating class, and the topic was, as usual, our future prospects. How many job offers did each of us have, and what salary and benefits were the engineering companies offering. When it was my turn, I said: “Lauri and I are going to work with Junior High students in our church.” By the looks on their faces you would have thought that I had declared that I no longer believed in the laws of thermodynamics. They were incredulous. Finally one of them spoke up and said, “Why would you do that?”

Why *would* we do that? Why would Abram leave his homeland, his culture, and most of his extended family, and go to a place that hadn’t even been revealed to him? Lauri and I went and Abram went, because we trusted God when he called us to go.

At this point I want to be very clear about something. When God calls, he does so uniquely and personally. My call to Junior High Ministry was very different from Abram’s call to go to an unknown land. So it will be with God’s call in your life. It may have nothing to do with moving anywhere, or with your career. The commonality of God’s call on your life and my life lies not in the similarity of our circumstances but in the character and purposes of God.

God may be calling you to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with a friend or neighbor or family member. God may be calling you to be the first to apologize so a conflict can be addressed and healed. God may be calling you to take the gifts of time and talent and material resources with which he has blessed you and to use it on behalf of someone in need. God may be calling you to spend daily time with him in his Word and in prayer for yourself and others. Will it cost you something? Probably. The person with whom you share the gospel may reject both it and you. Your apology may be ignored. The person in need may be ungrateful. The time you spend with God may mean less time for reading the paper or watching TV. But, what you leave behind is of little worth when compared to the blessings of following God when he calls.

When God calls, he calls us to trust that he will be with us. When God calls, he calls us to trust that he will bless us, and that by following his call he will use us to be a blessing to others. When God calls, he calls us to trust that in leaving something behind we will be able to more fully embrace God’s ongoing plan for our lives.

Jim Elliott was an American missionary who in 1956, together with four fellow missionaries, followed the call of God to share the gospel with an Indian tribe in the interior of Ecuador. All five were killed by the Indians. “What a waste,” some said. “Surely God wouldn’t ask someone to do that,” claimed others. Less than two years later, Jim’s wife Elizabeth Elliott, together with her daughter and the sister of one the other martyred missionaries returned to that Indian tribe, and many accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior. Since then, many believers have heard the story of Jim and Elizabeth Elliott and been inspired to share the gospel with those who don’t know Christ. In his diary, parts of which were later published, Jim had written before going into that Ecuadorian jungle: “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose.”

Every year, members of our church family are called to serve on the Board of our church. Together with their fellow Board members, they seek to follow the call of God upon our congregation by discerning together where and how the Lord would have us minister in his name. It has been the tradition of our church to pray for those who are about to begin their three-year term of service, but due to COVID restrictions we have been unable to do so these past two years. So, this morning, we will have the opportunity to pray not only for our incoming class of Board members, but also for the past two classes. Their names are listed in your bulletin on the panel between the two worship services. They are all women and men of our church who have responded to the call of God through the voice of the congregation, to serve God and to serve this church. I invite those who are present in this service to come forward so that we may thank God for you and pray that you hear God’s call for our church.