

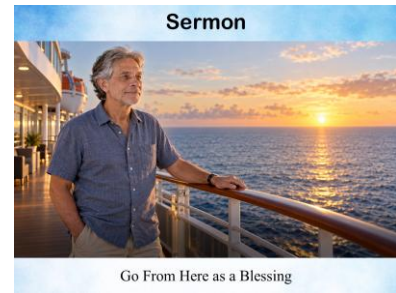
## Go From Here as a Blessing

**[SLIDE 27 — GO FROM HERE AS A BLESSING]**

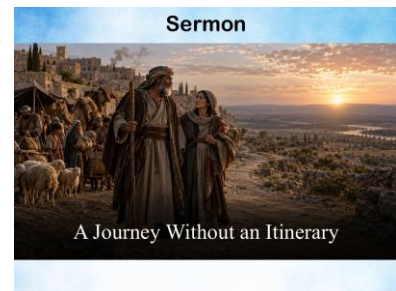
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

It is good to be home with you after two Sundays away.

PJ and I had the joy of traveling with our son Trevor and his wife, Alexis, aboard the Carnival Celebration. Before the trip, we knew where we were going. We had travel arrangements, reservations, an itinerary, and a cabin waiting for us. Once aboard, a captain and crew knew how to guide that enormous ship from one place to another. We could enjoy the journey because many people had already worked out the details.

**[SLIDE 28 — A JOURNEY WITHOUT AN ITINERARY]**

Abram receives no such itinerary. The Lord says, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. “God does not name the destination. There is no route marked on a map, no arrival time, and no cabin number. Abram is asked to leave the places and people that have given shape and security to his life and begin walking toward a place he has never seen. God does give Abram something better than an itinerary. God gives him a

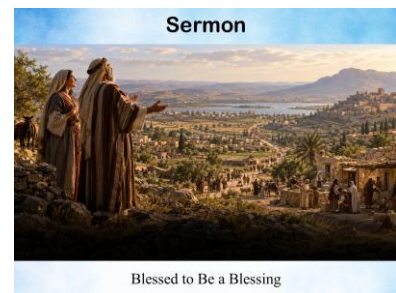


## Go From Here as a Blessing

promise: “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. “The future will not rest on Abram’s ability to predict every turn. It will rest on the faithfulness of the God who calls him. That matters because we often want God to give us the whole plan before we take the first step. We want to know where the journey will lead, how long it will take, what it will cost, and how everything will turn out. We may say, “Lord, show me the destination, and then I will decide whether to go. “God often gives us enough light for the next step and a promise that travels farther than our sight.

**[SLIDE 29 — BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING]**

Abram goes, but he does not travel alone. Sarai goes with him. Lot goes with them. Their household and possessions go too. When God calls one person, that call touches a whole community. Abram’s faith affects



Sarai, Lot, their household, and eventually people they will never meet. Our lives of faith are never as private as we imagine. The trust we show, the mercy we offer, the truth we speak, and the welcome we extend can become part of God’s blessing for someone else. This is the purpose of the promise. God does not say, “I will bless you so that you can become comfortable and admire how blessed you are. “God says, “I will bless you, and you will be a blessing. In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” God’s blessing moves outward. Abram is chosen, not

## Go From Here as a Blessing

because God has stopped caring about everyone else, but because God intends to reach everyone else through him.

That is still how God's blessing works. The food in the FISH pantry becomes a blessing when it feeds someone. The experience we have gained becomes a blessing when it helps someone find the way. The forgiveness we have received becomes a blessing when we stop keeping score against our neighbor. The welcome Christ has given us becomes a blessing when someone who feels forgotten discovers there is room for them among God's people.

Sometimes we hear the word blessing and think mainly of comfort, success, or protection from difficulty. Abram's story will not be easy. He will know uncertainty, conflict, fear, failure, and long seasons of waiting. God's blessing does not spare him from every hardship. It gives his journey a purpose larger than his own safety and comfort. He is blessed so that others may encounter God's goodness through him.

The same is true for us in Christ. At the cross, Jesus enters the deepest uncertainty and suffering of human life. He bears our sin, shame, and death. In the resurrection, God opens a future none of us could have made for ourselves. In Holy Baptism, Christ calls us by name, joins us to his death and resurrection, and sends us into the world carrying his mercy. We don't go because we have the

## Go From Here as a Blessing

whole route figured out. We go because the risen Christ has promised to be with us.

**[SLIDE 30 — JOURNEYED BY STAGES]**

Notice how this passage ends. Abram does not arrive, unpack, and declare the journey finished. He builds an altar. Then he moves on and builds another altar.

Finally, Scripture says, “Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.” By stages. That may be one of the most encouraging phrases in this reading. Faith does not usually carry us from beginning to completion in one heroic leap. We journey by stages. We listen, take a step, pause to worship, we pray for wisdom, and we receive the promise again. Only then do we take another step.

**[SLIDE 31 — A NEW STAGE]**

Some of us are beginning a new stage today. Simon and Tina are preparing to leave this congregation and make their home in West Virginia. We would gladly give them a detailed map for everything ahead if we could. Instead, we give them something better. We entrust them to the God who goes before them. We thank God for the ways they have blessed us, and we send



## Go From Here as a Blessing

them to become a blessing in a new congregation and community. Their address will change, but their place in the body of Christ will not. Tina, your place in the Body of Christ is one of a cherished, precious treasure and that doesn't change just because you move to a new place.

All of us are traveling by stages. A child enters a new school year. A family adjusts to an empty chair. Someone waits for test results. Someone begins retirement or new work. Someone is learning how to live after a relationship has changed. Someone simply wonders what faithfulness will require tomorrow. We may not see the whole road, but we are not walking it alone.

**[SLIDE 32 — FOOD FOR THE NEXT STAGE]**

At this table, Christ gives us food for the next stage. The bread and cup are not rewards for people who have reached the destination. They are grace for travelers along the way. Here Christ says, "My body is given for you. My blood is shed for you. You are forgiven. You belong to me. Now go in peace and become a blessing. "



## Go From Here as a Blessing

**[SLIDE 33 — GO FROM HERE AS A BLESSING]**

Soon we will sing, “Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?”

Abram’s answer was not a speech. Verse four simply says, “So Abram went, as the Lord had told him. “

Faith took the next step. Dear friends, God has blessed us in Jesus Christ with mercy we did not earn and a future we could not create. We may not have the complete itinerary, but we have the promise. The God who calls us also goes with us. So, listen for the call. Take the next faithful step. Pause along the way to worship. Journey on by stages. And wherever God leads you, go from here as a blessing.

May the God who called Abram and Sarai, who raised Jesus from the dead, and who has called each of us by name, guide our steps and make our lives a blessing to all the families of the earth. Amen.

