

March 1st, 2026

“Stepping into the unknown.” Genesis 12:1-9

“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. And 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 him who dishonors 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. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Have you noticed that there are those events and teachings in the Bible which we know quite well, but we still somehow manage to comfortably ignore them. Today's meditation is about one such event and its significance for us.

Genesis 12. The call of Abraham. Almost every Christian would have read or at least heard about what happened with Abraham. Still, we kind of tend to forget or at least neglect what our God teaches us through this event.

What happened to Abraham? God Yahweh intruded into his life and said: **“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”** Interesting... Would you like to swap places with Abraham?

“Leave your country, your community, your relatives, step into the unknown and go where I’ll tell you to go.” Isn’t that an exciting invitation?! We live in our countries and that’s our environment; we know how to live there.

We live in our communities, and our communities provide for us, there is everything we need for our lives. We live in our families, and they are our closest support network, we trust we can rely on them if anything happens.

Sure, we all have our problems, but living in your own country, your community and your own family we can usually manage quite well. We know where to look for help, who can assist, how to solve our problems, etc.

But then imagine this voice: “Leave everything! Step into the unknown!” See how radical that request was! “Leave everything that you are used to, and now – trust me that I will provide for you everything that you may need. Just follow me!”

So outside of our comfort zone. Why would Abraham agree to something like that? Seems like foolishness. The answer is – for God’s blessing. “Abraham, do what I say, and I will bless you and you will be a blessing for many.” That was the promise – “I’ll

March 1st, 2026

“bless you and you will be a blessing for many.” Now it begins to make sense, doesn't it? Who doesn't want God's blessings?! But what usually comes to mind when we think about God's blessings? Good, healthy, comfortable, peaceful and prosperous life.

Those all can be called God's blessings, of course. But is that what God Yahweh had in mind when He called Abraham and promised to bless him? Just consider the life of Abraham! Sure, he had some good things going on.

But so often he was in danger, in far lands, among strangers, in war, not having an heir, then ongoing tensions with his wives, God testing him harshly with Isaac, and so on. We may wonder, what did God have in mind when He said, “I will bless you”.

What do you think? He was talking about the greatest blessing that any human being can have, and it is – God's own presence with us. “Abraham, leave everything, trust me, and you will experience my presence as never before, and you will learn that if I am with you, you don't need anything else.

And I will make you a blessing to others.” That was the promise. And that was what Abraham got to experience so abundantly. Especially in the midst of His most challenging circumstances.

Okay, that's what Abraham got, but how was he a blessing for others? Did he make others prosperous and give them a peaceful and comfortable life? Not exactly. But wherever he went, he worshiped the true God, and he proclaimed the Name of this gracious and merciful Creator and Redeemer.

The blessing that Abraham brought to all people was infinitely greater than simply prosperous life. As he followed this God, and as God Yahweh walked with him, Abraham brought to others God's very presence, forgiveness and eternal life.

These are the greatest blessings that any human being can hope to receive – God's presence, forgiveness of all our sin and eternal life. And these are the greatest blessings that we could ever hope to give to others. This much about Abraham.

Now, let's talk about us. Do you think that this event has any significance for us as Christians 21st century, or is it just an event of the past? I already asked you earlier – would you like to swap places with Abraham? Of course, we can't do that.

However, when Jesus sent you the Holy Spirit, when He made you His disciple, He did call you, each one of you, just as He called Abraham: “Come, follow me!” On the one hand, Jesus doesn't ask all of us to leave our countries, communities, families and to go who-knows-where.

But on the other hand, His call to you to follow Him is as real and as serious as His call to Abraham. Yes, it is! What do you think, what exactly does it mean for us here in Oshawa, in GTA in 2026? What does the Triune God expect from us?

First, let's clarify what He doesn't expect from us. Let me ask you, are you sure about your eternal fate, where you will end up? Do you know what Jesus Christ will say to you on the Last Day? You should... **“Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”** (Mt 25:34) This is what He will say to you.

March 1st, 2026

But how can you be so sure? Because you are baptized. Because in your baptism you were united with Jesus. Because He has taken upon Himself all your sins – past, present and future, because He has promised to have you with Him in the age to come. Because that is God's promise to you. Unshakable. Irrevocable.

This makes it clear that what Jesus expects from us when He calls and sends us is not about our salvation or about earning God's favour. God's favour and eternal life are yours already, as God's gifts, as they were gifted to Abraham's as well.

Then what does He expect from us? It is about leaving our comfort zones, about stepping into the unknown, so that God can bless us with His presence and make us a blessing to others. Let me share something with you.

A while ago I had a conversation with a pastor who had lived in different continents and witnessed how the Church Universal grew. Reflecting on different aging and shrinking churches in the Western countries he offered his observations.

He said that in the West we are often stuck in a yesteryear. That for many Christians their hopes for their congregations are – to be again like they were 30 or 50 years ago. That we are fixed on our glorious past, and not on God given present.

That we often lament about how good it was, at the same time not considering much what abundant opportunities the Lord may have placed before us, as individuals and as congregations. He had noticed that we often prefer the comfort and safety of what we know, instead of considering what it means for us, for each one of us, to respond to the Lord's call. I wonder, how much does this apply to us as well?

But the Gospel blows up our comfort to pieces! When the Gospel really sinks in, to the heart of our hearts, and we finally understand – I am a selfish sinner, through and through, I do deserve God's anger and rejection, but Jesus Christ, the innocent Son of God, has taken my place.

He stepped in and received God's wrath and rejection that I deserve. Now He graciously forgives me for all the suffering I have caused Him, and He offers me a place in the Father's heart and in His Kingdom. This God desires to have me, unworthy and ungrateful, with Him in His New Earth and New Heaven. Forever. Yes, He does! When this sinks in, it changes us.

When we meet fellow Christians, we don't want to talk about weather or politics, we want to talk about this God, about His Great News. We want to tell others about this unbelievable Jesus. When the Gospel sinks in, the Holy Spirit takes us over and divine joy abounds...

I wish I could preach in a way that you all could experience this joy. Because when we do, nothing else matters. Jesus calls you: "Follow me!" and we jump to respond: "Here I am Lord!" I pray that our gracious Lord will fill us all with this joy.

Now, it is good to reflect, how many friends do we have who are not Christians? It is great to spend time in joyful Christian fellowship. We all need more of that. But if that was all that we are to do, God Yahweh would have said to Abraham: "Just stick around your fellow believers and enjoy yourself!" He didn't say that.

March 1st, 2026

Jesus would have said to His disciples: "Guys, stay close and appreciate one another's company!" He didn't say that. Instead: "Go and make disciples of all nations!" The same applies to us as well.

But... we do often worry about how this may turn out. What if I get rejected? Probably we will be. What if I mess up? I don't feel like I am equipped to do this. Sure, we are not. No one is. And some of us are not exactly people persons.

What if someone asks me something and I don't know how to respond? It happens. So, we worry. And that is good and that is how it should be - so that we do not rely on our own cleverness and abilities. God's power manifests in our weakness.

The comforting news for us is that God's favour doesn't depend on how many times we have proclaimed Jesus or even how many people we have brought to His Church. Zero or hundred. Your place in New Heavens and New Earth is secure because of what Jesus has done for us, for you. That won't change.

But if we do not respond as Abraham did, we may miss out on something special. God said: "I will bless you." Remember? "I will bless you with my presence. You will experience me closer than ever. As you go where I send you, I will go with you."

If we do not respond, we may miss out on one of the greatest joys. On the joy which we experience when we try to bring the Gospel to others. When we pray and consider how to tell them about what this God has done and prepared for them.

When we try to bring them into divine fellowship with the Father and the Son and all the saints. "Come and see and taste that this God is good, He wants to be your God, He is waiting for you to bless you too, come, let me introduce Him to you!"

Many of you would have experienced this joy. When you pray for someone, your loved ones, when you study Scripture and consider how to tell them about Jesus, when you discuss with your brothers and sisters how to do it winsomely.

When you finally have an opportunity to speak to those you care for the words of eternal life, when the Holy Spirit uses you... how would you describe your feelings? Joy, divine joy, the presence of the Holy Spirit... We can experience it already now. This is what it means - "I will bless you and you will be a blessing."

One sermon probably won't change much. But I invite you to prayerfully consider these matters. The future of the Church is glorious. For this is not ours, it is Christ's Church. And there will be lots of joy as countless multitudes come to Jesus.

For us the question is, do we want to be blessed by this God? Do we want to experience the joy of His presence? Do we want to be a blessing for others? For your Heavenly Father certainly wants to bless you. He most certainly does.

I pray that we all could respond as Abraham did: "Here I am, Lord! Show me, how do you want to bless me! Show me how you want to bless others through me! Here I am. Bless me richly and make me a blessing to many and many!"

Amen.