



# WEEK 3

MONDAY, MARCH 2 - SATURDAY, MARCH 7

MONDAY, MARCH 2ND

## Called in Our Weakness

DANA ALLIN

***But Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." Exodus 4:10-12***

My undergraduate degree is in Microbiology. When people hear that and then hear what I do now, they usually ask, "How did you get from there to here?" During my senior year of college, I was working both on an ambulance and as the youth director at my church. One Saturday, we responded to a call for a 50 year old man who had collapsed while preparing for an event at UC Santa Barbara. When we arrived, he was unconscious and not breathing. We intubated him, shocked him, pushed medications, and transported him within minutes. Despite our efforts, and the efforts of the doctors and nurses, he did not survive.

As we were restocking our ambulance, his wife and daughter entered the waiting room. It was the daughter's prom night. Her dress was still perfect, her hair was done, and her makeup was smeared with tears. I will never forget the sound of her cries as the doctor told her that her father had died. My partner looked at me and said, "Aren't you glad you are on this side of the door?" What he meant was that we deal with patients and not with families in their grief.

At that moment, I realized the opposite was true. Something in me said, "No, I think I am called to the other side of the door." But there was a challenge. I was strong in math and science, but languages were difficult for me. It took me four years to complete two years of high school Spanish. How could I possibly make it through Greek and Hebrew? The night before I was to preach at my church, I poured that question out before the Lord. In a way that was as close to audible as anything I have experienced, I sensed Him say, "As I was with Moses so I will be with you." And He was. I ended up getting As in my languages. But more importantly, the Lord has consistently used my weaknesses rather than my strengths to make His name known. Moses also had plenty of reasons why God should not use him. He told God he was not a good speaker, yet God called him to be the spokesman for Israel and before Pharaoh. His inadequacies were not obstacles to God's call. They became the very places where God's presence and power were most clearly displayed.

My encouragement to you in this season is to prayerfully consider the Lord's call on your life, both in the immediate and in the long term. And when you run into reasons why you think you cannot do what God is asking, pause. Those very weaknesses may be the clearest signs that God will meet you there and work in you in ways you never expected.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR - DANA ALLIN



Rev. Dr. Dana Allin is ECO's Synod Executive. Dana formerly served as the President of the board of ECO, the pastor of Indian River Presbyterian Church in Fort Pierce, FL and the pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Lakewood, CA. Dana attended Fuller Seminary, where he received both an MDiv and a DMin. He also has a BS in Microbiology from University of California, Santa Barbara and is an Associate Certified Coach with the International Coach Federation. Dana's passion to encourage and inspire leaders has led him to develop both the Missional Leader Training program and the Coach Certification Process. He lives in Santa Barbara with his wife, Beth and their three children – Micah, Peyton, and Piper.

# A Call to Suffering and Glory

T H A R W A T   W A H B A

Many followers of Jesus rejoice in the reality of God's call on their lives. Some are called to serve within the local church, others in missions, youth ministry, or acts of mercy and compassion. Those who hear and respond to that call rightly feel honored, for to serve the living God is a sacred privilege. Within the body of Christ, such servants are often recognized and respected.

Yet the call of God is never merely a call to honor or comfort. It is a call to obedience that always carries a cost. Scripture reminds us that discipleship and suffering are inseparable. The Apostle Peter writes, "To this you were called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). To follow Christ, then, is to walk the path He Himself walked—a path marked by humility, obedience, and suffering that leads to glory.

In many parts of the world today—across the Middle East, the Sahel of Africa, India, Iran, China, and beyond—the Church bears the marks of this calling in visible ways. The Church experiences persecution, discrimination, and hardship for the sake of the gospel. Yet through suffering, Christians testify to Christ's presence and power. The Holy Spirit strengthens and comforts them. Christ Himself walks beside them, for He first suffered for us.

As we go through this Lenten season, a time of repentance, reflection, and renewal, we are invited to remember that the way of the cross is the way of discipleship. Lent reminds us that resurrection glory is reached only through the cross. The Church in the West, enjoying many freedoms, must not grow complacent or forgetful of this truth. Christ's call is not a call to ease but a call to obedience that may lead through hardship, yet always toward hope.

Whether we live in comfort or under persecution, the Church of Jesus Christ is united under His calling: to share in His sufferings that we also share in His glory. As we walk through Lent, may we fix our eyes on Jesus, our suffering Savior and risen Lord, and remember His promise: "If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:17).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for calling us to be your people. As we remember our brothers and sisters who are suffering around the world, we know that you are with them and that your promises of accompanying, comforting, and glorifying them are true. Help us to follow your call for our life, even if it demands suffering and cost. Help us to be obedient and faithful. In the name of the suffering and glorified Christ we pray. Amen.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR - THARWAT WAHBA



The Reverend Dr. Tharwat Wahba earned his Ph.D. in 2009 from the London School of Theology. His dissertation was on the history of Presbyterian Mission in Egypt and Sudan. Dr. Wahba is a consultant for the Middle East mission with Frontier Fellowship and an adjunct professor of mission and evangelism at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo and other seminaries. He is the chairman of "Out of Egypt" Network. He served as professor of mission in the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo for 22 years. He served as the chairman of Pastoral, Outreach, and Mission Council of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt (2012-2021). He served with Campus Crusade for Christ in Egypt as a staff and a campus director for 12 years. His interest is for evangelism, church planting, and mobilizing churches for frontier missions in and from Egypt and the Middle East.

# Serving Through Rejection

REV. DR. LAURA BAGHDASSARIAN MURRAY

## Mark 6:1–13

We are in the work of caring for others. We like offering solutions or providing the best ways forward. We enjoy being people who help others. Yet sometimes, our help is unwelcome and rejected, and sometimes this rejection feels like a rejection of ourselves. It especially hurts when it is from those who know us.

In Mark 6:1–13, the gospel writer recounts a time when the good things about Jesus were rejected by those who knew him. In his hometown, he healed people and performed miracles. The people rejected him so much that they prevented Jesus from being able to heal more people. This pain and reality also led Jesus to offer his disciples wisdom on what to do when rejected.

Jesus's instructions to his disciples surprise me, and if I'm honest, I still don't know if I want to follow them. My response to rejection is to figure out every way to protect myself so I will not be hurt again. I put on layers of performance or live in such a way that my perceived competence guards my heart.

In human terms, it makes sense that we would do anything to protect ourselves from greater pain and rejection. Yet from his own life, Jesus offers his disciples words of wisdom and ways forward. He tells his disciples to go with another disciple, take just enough of what they need, and make themselves vulnerable to others' welcome. These instructions would set the environment for determining whether they are welcome or not, and then make the decision to move on or stay.

Their vulnerability would require others to show their true selves, be a clarifier for where they were welcome and where they could serve, and keep them from being alone in their practice of vulnerability and service.

How do you respond to rejection? What are the ways you add a layer of protection? How is Jesus inviting you to be vulnerable?

**Prayer:** Jesus, we admittedly want to protect ourselves from pain. We don't want to hurt as we have in the past, are hurting in the present, or be hurt again. We have so many wounds. We long to continue to obey in service, but we'd rather not have the wounds from serving. Yet wounds are real—so real that Jesus even had them and carried the scars of them. So we ask for courage. We ask for faith. And we ask for those we can walk in vulnerability with as we continue to serve those you have called us to love. Be our strength, our healer, our wisdom, and our protection. Amen.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

REV. DR. LAURA BAGHDASSARIAN MURRAY



Laura is the Director of Spiritual Engagement and Innovation at Fuller Seminary's Center for Spiritual Formation. She is also a spiritual director, retreat leader, writer, and an ECO pastor serving in the Validated Ministry of Spiritual Direction. Laura has spent over 20 years in ministry in spiritual formation, pastoring, writing, and developing leaders. She holds a Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Seminary and a Master's in Theology. Laura lives with her family in the Dallas area. She believes dessert is only dessert if it involves chocolate.

# You Can't Stay Here

K A I T L Y N   W O O D

## Luke 9:28–43

A few years ago, my husband and I managed to sneak away for a vacation in Punta Cana. It was the first time in a long time that I felt myself truly exhale. No schedules. No planning. No small humans needing snacks or rides or making sure no one was fighting. Just stillness.

On our last full day, I couldn't stop crying. My husband said, "I know the kids are exhausting, but it's not that bad!" (I'm still not sure if he was trying to lighten the mood or truly concerned...) But my tears weren't sadness—they were a sign I had tasted something I hadn't felt in years: rest. Deep, soul-level rest. And I wanted to stay. There was a part of me that thought, Why go back? Why return to emails and errands and all the messy pieces of my life? I wanted to live there forever. Which is kind of where we find Peter in Luke 9.

On the mountaintop, Peter sees Jesus transfigured—glorious and unmistakably divine. And in that brilliance, he blurts out the same desire: Let's stay here. Let's camp right in the middle of this beautiful moment. Let's never go back down. Maybe Peter thought he had reached the pinnacle of his calling. Maybe he believed this—this—was what discipleship was all about: soaking in the presence of God without interruption or responsibility. But before the words even finish tumbling out of his mouth, a cloud overshadows them, and the voice of the Father redirects Peter's imagination: "This is my Son... listen to Him." And then, they have to go back down the mountain. In every story (biblical or otherwise) the hero eventually returns home. The mountaintop moment is never the final destination; it's part of the preparation. When my husband and I returned from vacation, we walked straight into the noisy, beautiful chaos of real life. And yet something in me had shifted. In moments of overwhelm, my husband would jokingly remind me: What would Punta Cana Kaitlyn do? In other words, how might I carry the peace I experienced there into the pace and pressure of everyday life?

Peter didn't stay on the mountain, either. The very next day he is thrown back into the exhausting swirl of ministry—crowds pressing in, desperate parents begging for healing, people arguing. Yet he carried in his bones the truth of what he had seen. He follows Jesus not because every moment feels transcendent, but because God met him on the mountain and called him back into the world that needs to know Him.

Transformation is never for our sake alone. God gives us moments of clarity, rest, or revelation not so we can camp there forever. He calls us back down the mountain, into the ordinary and the overwhelming, to live differently because of what we have seen. **You can't stay here. But you can let the encounter change you for whatever God is calling you to.**

**Prayer:** Oh God, help us to carry the peace of the mountaintop into the messy, aching places where Your love is needed most. Give us courage to follow You back down the mountain. Give us eyes to see the people You place in our path — the ones who need compassion, the ones who need healing, the ones who need a glimpse of the hope we've tasted in You. Transform our hearts in ways that go with us into the real world. And when we are tempted to run back to comfort, remind us that we are called not to stay, but to follow. Lord, lead us faithfully and help us be obedient wherever You call.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR - KAITLYN WOOD



Rev. Kaitlyn Wood was born and raised in upstate New York. She earned a BS in Communication Theory at Eastern University and an MA studying Religion, Media, & Culture at RPI (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute). In 2015 she discerned the call to vocational ministry and entered Northeastern Seminary in Rochester, NY. As a pastor, she worked with her congregation to bring about transformation, a renewed vision, and a heart for the region. Kaitlyn is passionate about equipping pastors and churches for holistic revitalization, which is the focus of her current DMin project at Northeastern. When she isn't working with churches, you can usually find Kaitlyn at the baseball fields with her husband Matthew and three boys – Levi, Jonah, and Aaron.



# The Man Among the Graves

REV. CHARLES TEIXEIRA

Luke 8:26–39

This is maybe my favorite episode of Jesus' entire ministry. After all these years, I just can't get it out of my head. It's not because it's a charming story—quite the opposite, actually. For me, at least, the Holy Spirit continues to use this passage to reorient and shake loose my understanding of who Jesus is and who I am in Him.

It's hard not to focus on this man among graves. I imagine when he was born his parents were eager to show off their baby boy to their neighbors in Gerash. These same neighbors, decades later, wanted nothing to do with him—and it's possible his parents felt the same way, if they were still alive. And really, who could blame them for keeping their distance? He was difficult, embarrassing, burdensome, strange—not to mention he was a grown man who had a propensity for being naked in public.

I'm struck by the question that the man asks Jesus: "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" I can only imagine that the man expected Jesus to simply say, as everyone else had, "Nothing. I want nothing to do with you." After all, every power of hell was working for this man to be exiled and forgotten, thrown out like garbage in the overgrowth. What pain must have echoed behind that man's question.

The truth is, many of our neighbors are deathly afraid that if God were to walk up to them and take a deep, hard look at the mess in their lives, He'd want nothing to do with them. They've come to expect that no one is "coming ashore" for them—that God and all those who claim His name aren't interested in the difficult, embarrassing, burdensome, strange.

**Friends, prove them wrong. For the sake of Jesus, prove them wrong every time.**

Go to someone who least expects to be found among whatever graveyard they've made for themselves. Befriend them. Listen to them. Ask for the Holy Spirit to drive out the damp darkness of their doubts or despair. At some point they may wrestle with what on earth you want with them. Tell them about Jesus, who chose a life cast out all the way to the grave so that those who once lived among graves could be brought back home. We're living proof. I hope, by the end of my lifetime—maybe even sooner—that this moment in Gerash isn't shocking to me. May it become the norm in my city and in each of yours as well.

**Prayer:** Oh Jesus, thank You for going out of Your way to find us, renaming us, spending time with us, clothing us, and restoring us in so many ways. Tell us again, remind us again: what did You want with us? As men and women who lived among our graves, thank You for finding a new place for us in glory. Equip us, send us, and empower us to be like You among those who least expect Your love. Amen.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR - CHARLES TEIXEIRA



Lead Pastor of Community West Church in Henrico, VA, Charles grew up in southern Massachusetts and came to faith in Christ through the persistent witness of a high school friend, later sensing a clear call to evangelism and discipleship through Cru at the University of Connecticut. That call led him to Gordon College and an M.Div. from Bethel Seminary, after which he was ordained in ECO in 2018 and served in pastoral ministry in Texas and Minnesota, where he witnessed significant spiritual renewal. He is passionate about seeing those far from God brought near through faith in Christ. Charles and his wife Elizabeth have three sons and enjoy opening their home, exploring the outdoors, and sharing life together as a family.

# Held in the High Priestly Prayer

REV. NATE DREESMANN

Recently, my youngest daughter, Elise, a dedicated softball player, underwent a partial Tommy John surgery. The surgical anticipation, however, was overshadowed by a traumatic forty-five minutes of preoperative procedures. Due to her tiny, deep veins, three nurses and an anesthesiologist repeatedly attempted to place an IV. We watched my tough, almost fifteen-year-old daughter move from tears to unstoppable sobbing—an experience more traumatic than the surgery itself.

The team finally decided to take Elise to the OR, induce sleep, and then place the IV. After we prayed with her and said our goodbyes as she was wheeled away, my wife, Cari, and I were deeply shaken. That's when dear Stacy, a nurse who had not been involved in the ordeal, came over. As she took us to the waiting room, she asked, "Hey you two, may I pray for Elise and y'all before we go?"

We readily agreed. Stacy stood beside us and poured out a powerful prayer. Our tears flowed freely—for the trauma Elise endured, for the daunting road of recovery, and for the possibility of lost dreams. Yet there was Stacy, living out God's call on her life, ministering to us like family, with every intentional word rooted in sound doctrine, compassion, and a clear, palpable presence of the Holy Spirit, holding us through Stacy's hands as our tears fell.

As Cari and I waited for the surgery to conclude, my mind turned to Jesus' High Priestly Prayer in John 17. This is the prayer where Christ asks to be glorified and, crucially, prays for His disciples and for all future believers—that we would all be one: one body, one family, worshiping the one Sovereign Lord over all.

In that quiet waiting room, I saw the truth of this chapter manifested. I pictured Christ seeing His adopted daughter, Stacy, glorifying God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as she lived into the fullness of her call. She ministered to her adopted brother, Nate, and adopted sister, Cari—one body, bound by the covenant of grace, worshiping our Lord.

The experience was a vivid reminder: the unity Christ prayed for is not merely an aspiration; it is an established, realized reality under the gospel in which all of us, living into God's call on our lives, co-labor with the Triune God as His hands and feet.

As we finally left the hospital and began Elise's long recovery, I went home to read John 17 again. The central truth struck me anew: Christ died for me, made a way for me, and Christ prayed for me—and for all of us. In this hard moment, God called upon Stacy to minister to us, and Stacy answered that call. No matter the earthly trauma or uncertainty, we are safe, known, and eternally loved because of the secured, intercessory work of our Savior.

**Are you resting today in the knowledge that Christ prays for you?**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR - NATE DREESMANN

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Rev. Nate Dreesmann has been serving the church for more than thirty years. He has served on the staffs of small, medium, and large churches, from Berkeley, to Washington, to Idaho. Nate has also served on the sessions of small and large churches. Nate attended Fuller Seminary, where he received both a MDIV and MACCS. Nate is passionate about Jesus, living out the Great Commission, helping believers to be at peace with one another, and helping ECO churches revitalize and plant new churches. Nate is married to Cari and they have four children – Gabrielle, Jackson, Charis, and Elise.