

WEEK 5

MONDAY, MARCH 16 - SATURDAY, MARCH 21

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Called Beyond the Shoreline

AMY DELGADO

John 21:15–19

After the resurrection, Peter found himself back where it all began—by the Sea of Galilee, with empty nets and lingering questions. He had walked with Jesus, seen miracles, even proclaimed his love for the Lord—and yet, after failure and loss, he returned to what was familiar. Then Jesus appeared on the shore once more, calling Peter to cast the net again and to follow Him anew: *“Feed my sheep.”* This moment has always spoken deeply to me. In mission work—whether across the world or across the street—obedience isn’t just about the first call to follow Jesus. It’s about hearing His voice again and again, in new seasons and unexpected ways.

When we serve in God’s mission, it’s easy to imagine that “calling” is a one-time moment—a clear directive, a new opportunity, a step of faith, a “what’s my purpose”, as if there is only one. But I’ve learned that calling is often a continual invitation to listen and respond. There are seasons when the work feels fruitful and clear, and others when we, like Peter, return to the shoreline unsure of what comes next. But even there, Jesus meets us with grace and purpose.

He doesn’t stop calling once we’ve said yes. His invitation is always fresh, sometimes unsettling, but always rooted in love. Peter’s restoration reminds us that our failures, transitions, and uncertainties can become places of renewed obedience when we listen for Christ’s voice.

Lent invites us to that same shoreline—to lay down self-reliance and rediscover our dependence on Jesus. Wherever we are in our life’s walk with Jesus, our calling is not a static assignment but a living relationship with the One who still says, *“Follow Me.”*

Where might Jesus be asking you to follow Him again—not to return to the past, but to step into a renewed season of trust and service?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for calling us again and again, even when our natural drift is back to the familiar. Teach us to listen for Your voice in every season of life. For those serving in mission and witness, grant fresh courage, humility, and faith. Fill us with Your Spirit so that we may follow You wherever You lead next. **Amen.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - AMY DELGADO



Amy Delgado serves as the Director of Outreach Ministries at Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church in Houston, Texas. After a career in global technology, Amy transitioned into full-time ministry twelve years ago, blending experience in international business with her passion for sharing the gospel. Amy serves on the ECO Global Engagement and ECO Persian Community teams. Amy and her husband, Manuel, have two grown daughters and one son-in-law who live in Dallas, so getting family time together is her favorite pastime.

Speak, Lord, for Your Servants Are Listening

JAN & TIM DEVINE

When I (Tim) was young, my father would call us kids to dinner using the call of south-central pig farmers, "Sooie, piggy, piggy! Sooie!" He hollered it to be funny, but we all knew that dad was calling us home to the table, where our family came together to share a meal and fellowship, prayer and a devotion, and often a competitive game of Rook or Pinochle.

The kids in my (Jan's) neighborhood loved to play hide and seek at dusk. Although we didn't know at the time what the words actually meant, we all knew that "olly, olly, oxen free" was the signal that we could leave our hiding spot and come safely home - "All ye, all ye, outs in free."

Scripture is full of examples of our Triune God calling people:

God has continually called people "home" - back to right relationship with him. God also called people to follow him, to worship him, to repent, to serve, to reflect his character to the world, to lay down their lives for him.

God called Moses in a loud, thundering voice from Mt. Sinai, and on that same mountain, he called to Elijah in a still, small voice. Some, like Mary, answered God's call immediately; for others like Samuel, God had to extend the call repeatedly before it was understood and obeyed.

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10 and Reflect:

- What does this young boy, Samuel, teach you about what is necessary to hear and recognize God's voice, and then answer his call?
- Do you create "quiet moments" in your day for silence and prayer, so you can hear God's voice?
- Is your default response to God, "Here I am," or do you often struggle to say "yes"?
- Do you have a wise and mature person to help you understand and respond to God's call on your life?

Pray: Sovereign Lord, you called Samuel by name and he answered, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.' Teach me to hear and recognize Your voice in the midst of my daily life. Give me an attentive heart that is humble and ready to obey. Help me respond to your call and walk the path you set before me with faith and trust. In the strong name of Jesus, I pray this. Amen."

Act: Set aside 2-5 minutes each day during Lent to sit in silence. Do not ask for anything; simply say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS - JAN & TIM DEVINE



Jan and Tim Devine have been husband and wife, as well as co-pastors, for 43+ years. Before retirement in 2023, they received calls to serve three very different churches in PA and NY. They currently live 6 months in San Antonio and 6 months in upstate NY, to be able to invest in the lives of their children and grandchildren in each place. Jan and Tim also work part-time for Cornerstone Presbytery. Their charge is to build relationships with pastors and congregations, and to support them in becoming flourishing churches that make disciples of Jesus Christ. Jan and Tim are personally in a season of actively discerning how God might be calling them to serve the fostering community when in Texas.

Awake with Him in the Dark

L A U R A C R O S B Y

Confession: Lent is my absolute least favorite season. In fact, as an Enneagram 7 who is eternally optimistic and always looking for the next fun thing, I dread it. Who wants to think about death, embrace sacrifice, and fast from chocolate for Pete's sake!? Celebrating Jesus' birth and His resurrection? Heck yeah! But the road to the cross? Hard pass.

One passage of Scripture I relate to is Matthew 26:36-46 "Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

Then he said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.'

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. Two more times Jesus asked the disciples to be present with Him in prayer in His anguish and two more times He found them asleep. "

How often do we choose sleep over the hard places Jesus asks us to accompany Him or others? Comfort asks for escape. Courage requires presence through the pain. What distractions do you choose over being present to Jesus? What contributes to your "sleepyness"? Denial? Busyness? Distractions like social media? In John 11 when Lazarus dies, Jesus fully enters into the pain and grief with His friends. Jesus keeps watch with us in the dark. He walks towards our pain, not away from it. He knows the areas of our life that feel dead. Jesus walks toward the tomb, toward the grief, toward the impossible situation in our lives and embodies hope.

Prayer: Lord, thank you that You are not a High Priest who is unable to empathize with our pain. Awaken me to Your sacrifice, and help me not to jump to resurrection before I acknowledge the agonizing road You walked for me. Like You, may I not turn away from the dark times others are experiencing, but stand with them, holding hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - LAURA CROSBY



Laura Crosby is an enthusiastic follower of Jesus, who loves to help people connect to God and each other by creating a welcoming space around her dinner table, walking alongside young leaders, traveling to encourage Christians around the world, and telling stories of God's faithfulness through speaking and writing. She got her Masters of Theology while her kids were in high school and has partnered with her husband in pastoral ministry for 43 years.

Called to Grow Up, Together

M I C H A E L S M I T H , C L P

Opening Prayer: O Lord God, you have called us out from the lives we know and into new life in unity with your Son, Jesus Christ, and have brought us into that new life by the power of your Holy Spirit. You have also united us to others whom you have called and have brought us together as your church so that we may grow each other up into the fullness of Christ's image. In this Lenten season of preparation, we ask that you, Holy Spirit, would continue to transform our hearts, minds, and wills to be more like that of Jesus Christ. Help us to be faithful to this calling and obedient to the Word of God. Help us every day to look more like Jesus as individuals and help his church to more faithfully represent him as his ambassadors in this world so that we are prepared for the day that he returns in glory. We pray all these things in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Ephesians 4:1-16 NRSVUE o I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high, he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) He himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Lent, much like Advent, is a season of preparation. All over the world, Christians of all different traditions prepare themselves over this forty-day period for the solemnity of Holy Week, the triumph of Easter morning, and the imminent return of Jesus Christ by focusing more intently on practicing various spiritual disciplines; traditionally fasting has been the spiritual discipline emphasized during Lent.

Paul's words in Ephesians 4:13-14 clue us into the specifics of what the end goal of not only this specific Lenten preparation, but truly the full preparatory nature of the Christian life actually is – coming to the unity of the faith, the knowledge of the Son of God, and maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. This, indeed, is God's calling for his people, to bear the image of his Son by progressively becoming more like him every day through the various ministerial works of the saints. In the Reformed tradition, this process of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ is called Sanctification and is one of the primary works of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18 NRSVUE).

Yet even so, our own responsibility in partnering with the Holy Spirit in his sanctifying work through the new freedom we enjoy in Jesus Christ is highlighted by Paul when he says in Ephesians 4:1-3, "I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace..."

The italicized portion of Paul's words to the Ephesians shows us that, as Christians, this new relationship with and before God into which he has called us does indeed require obedience on our part towards him.

Likewise, Paul's words in his letter to the Ephesians are equally applicable to us as individual Christians as they are to the entire corporate body of the church. He is writing to a church after all! Let us therefore remember that the Holy Spirit is not only sanctifying me but is also sanctifying us. Thus, we all have the responsibility of obedience to God as individuals whom he has called, as well as the body into which we are incorporated by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, in knowing what the end goal of our calling by God is – growing to maturity in Jesus Christ as individual Christians and corporately as his church – we fulfill our end of this new covenant-partnership we enjoy with God by being obedient to him through humility, gentleness, patience, and love towards him, towards each other, and towards the entire creation.

By preparing ourselves in this way during this Lenten season and all the days with which God blesses us with the gift of life, we "...grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love." God be with you during this Lenten season as you and your churches prepare for the glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - MICHAEL SMITH



Michael Smith is the Commissioned Lay Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Yorktown, Texas. He is presently a student at the Flourish Institute of Theology, is about halfway finished with his Master of Divinity degree, and has also recently initiated the ordination process. His primary goal in ministry is simply to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with as many people as possible, confident that the same sort of transformation God has, is, and will work out within him through the gospel can also be worked out in other people. Michael resides in Yorktown with his wife Amy (who is also a FIT student), daughter Lillian, and their two dogs, Lady and Tramp. As an avid outdoorsman, Michael enjoys hunting and fishing, especially when it's with the covenant-partners of First Presbyterian Church, because there's nothing quite like discipleship in a deer blind or Bible study on a bass boat!

Hear My Cry, O Lord*

R E V . D A N N Y A W A D

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psalm 34:18)
(Hear my cry, O Lord)

Often, we find ourselves in the midst of life's storms, surrounded by worries and pressures, feeling helpless and afraid, overshadowed by a sense of loneliness. In these moments, it becomes difficult to see the path ahead, and we may almost ask ourselves: Does anyone hear me? This is when the heart's cry arises: "Hear my cry, O Lord."

Crying out to God is not merely words spoken from the mouth, but the language of the spirit when words fail to express the depth of pain. The faithful human, no matter how strong or steadfast in faith, still experiences moments of weakness. In these moments, crying out to God is a sincere acknowledgment that we need Him, and that we cannot face trials alone. God does not reject our cries; rather, He waits for us to come to Him with honesty, for He knows our hearts even before we speak.

When we lift our voices to Him, we remember the story of David in the Psalms, who said: "Hear my cry, O Lord; consider my weeping." David was not always strong; yet he found refuge and comfort in God. Likewise, when we cry out and pour our sorrows before Him, we open the door for His mercy and peace to flow into our hearts. Crying out is the beginning of a true encounter with God, as it demonstrates our complete dependence on Him.

But crying out does not stop at merely expressing pain; it transforms into a lesson in trust and patience. When we listen to God's silence at times and recall His promises, we understand that our cries are not meaningless, but a path to strengthen our faith. God hears us, even if the answer is delayed, for He always works for our good and knows what is best for us at the right time.

So let us lift our cries without shame, without fear, without restraint. Let us believe that our Lord is near, that He hears us and sees us. Every tear, every pain, every cry reaches Him, and He is able to turn it into peace and joy. Nothing is lost before His eyes, and no one is forgotten by Him. Crying out to God is the beginning of healing, the starting point for new hope.

Today, hear the cry of your heart, lift your hands to heaven with confidence, and say: "Hear my cry, O Lord, I need You." Let God fill your heart with serenity and guide your steps toward a new light, where cries are transformed into songs of thanks and glory, and pains into triumph and victory.

Prayer: O Lord, hear our cries and grant the Church strength and hope. Bless our children and youth, guide us in all our steps, and fill our hearts with peace amidst the difficulties of life. May Your love for us be a light that illuminates the path, and may Your joy keep us steadfast in our faith. Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - DANNY AWAD



Pastor Danny Awad
The Presbyterian Church in the Holy Land

On Earth as It Is in Heaven

V E L I N D A H O P P E R

Matt 6:10 "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

"On earth as it is in heaven" has been heavy on my heart over this last year. It has been my prayer, my hope, and my challenge. Most Christians know the phrase so well we often overlook the magnitude of what it would truly mean for the kingdom of God to be central on earth just as it is in heaven.

There is a magnitude to it that is sometimes too great to even begin to understand, let alone try to accomplish. Jesus teaching his disciples to pray what can only be described as an extraordinary prayer, is a call just as impactful and world changing as the Great Commission. It's a call to change the world. A call to pray for the extraordinary as we expect the extraordinary.

It is too easy for us to forget that we are called to so much more than we know because we have been shaped and equipped by a God that is able to do more than we can imagine. Every individual call is moved by the undercurrent of God being glorified and His will being done on earth as in heaven.

We have the immense honor of being called to a small piece of that.

You are called into the grace of our Lord Jesus.

You are called to experience the love of God the Father.

You are called to rejoice in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

You are called to live the extraordinary on earth as it is in heaven.

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father...that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Eph 3:14-21)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - VELINDA HOPPER



Velinda Hopper and her husband Kurt pastor Ripley First Presbyterian in Southern Ohio. Velinda is an artist & tattoo artist, and busy mother to 5 amazing kids, 2 dogs, and 1 turtle. Her and Kurt live to experience the adventure that comes with simply being available to God.