

January 25, 2026

HOW TO RUN AWAY

By Pr. Beate Chun

When Running Away Sounds Tempting

Grace to you and peace from
the one who is,
and the one who was,
and the one who is to come.

Have you ever thought about running away?
If so, what happened?
What were the circumstances?
Why did you think about running away?
And then, what did you actually do?

I know a little boy who is five years old.
On his very first day of kindergarten,
he tried to run away.
He was sure that his mother
had made a terrible mistake
by dropping him off in a place like this.
He needed to leave right now
and get back to his toy truck at home.

And so it goes.
Throughout life, many of us find ourselves in situations
we did not choose,
or situations that turned out
very differently from what we imagined.

Sometimes, as teenagers, we struggle to get along with our parents.
We are growing up,
we have ideas of our own,
and then we hear those familiar words:
As long as you live in my house,
as long as your feet are under my table,
you do as I say.
And quietly, many teenagers think,
Well then, I just have to run away.

And it can happen again in college.
Everything feels overwhelming.
Classes are hard, pressure is constant,
and suddenly students begin to dream
of a faraway country
where life is simpler
and there are no term papers due.

And it can happen to new parents.
The baby has been crying all night—
again—
and they are exhausted.
If only they could get away from
all the crying—even for a little while.

Or perhaps a person is stuck in a job she hates.
The boss is difficult, even cruel.
Every morning she dreads going to work,
but there are bills to pay
and there are responsibilities
that cannot be ignored.
But still, there is this fantasy:
What if I just quit?
Just drop everything and quit.

Another person may have made it past midlife.
Not young anymore, but not old either.
Life feels stuck in a loop:
the same routine, the same worries,

the same grind day after day.
And he wonders:
What if I could start over?
What if I could run away?

And some people actually do.
Some leave their families.
Some quit their jobs.
Some sell their homes and buy campers,
and travel the world.
Some go to an ashram in India.

For many, running away is a lifelong fantasy.
For a few, it becomes an experiment.
What if I could just leave everything behind and begin again?

Life by the Lake in Galilee

Today's gospel introduces us to four fishermen:
Simon Peter and his brother Andrew,
and James and John.
They were fishermen in Galilee
during the time of the Roman Empire—and life was not easy.

The Romans squeezed their occupied territories relentlessly.
New taxes, new fees, new rents, new tributes, new tithes—
every last coin extracted to support the empire,
the urban Roman elite,
and distant aristocrats.
Enforcers ensured compliance.
If people could not pay, they were often forced into slavery.

Within a single generation,
Galileans lost two-thirds of their income.
Farmers had to hand over larger
and larger portions of their harvest
to cover the many taxes,
and fishermen had to hand over

larger and larger amounts of their catch
as well.

And so here they were:
Simon and Andrew,
and James and John.
Often they spent long nights
out on the lake,
and then they came home in the morning
cold and tired and hungry.
They looked at their small catch
and they knew that not much of it
would be left after the Romans
had taken their cut.

And perhaps there were moments
when these fishermen dreamed of
better days,
when life was not so harsh.
Perhaps there were moments
when they thought:
What if we left everything
and went away, to another place,
another country even,
where life is easier?

Something Better Than Running Away

There is a German fairy tale that speaks
to this sort of feeling.

It is called

“Die Bremer Stadtmusikanten”

“The Town Musicians of Bremen,”

and it goes like this:

Once there was a donkey
who had worked hard all his life.
All his life he had carried heavy sacks to the mill.
And the years passed,

and he became weak and old,
and his master began to think:
Why do I need this old donkey?
He is no longer worth keeping.
I should get rid of him.

The donkey became very afraid
and decided to run away.
He decided to go to the town of Bremen
and start a new life
as a musician.

On the way, he met a dog
who was lying by the roadside.
The dog was old and no longer useful for hunting,
and his master meant to put him down.
“Come with me,” said the donkey.
“We’ll go to Bremen and become town musicians.
You have a great voice.
When we sing together, we will be fabulous!
Surely, somewhere we can find
something better than death.”

In German it is:

*Etwas Besseres als den Tod
findet man überall.*

So together they continued on their road,
and after a while they met a cat.
And with the cat it was the same story.
She was old and thin,
and no one wanted her anymore.
So they invited the cat along.

Then they met a rooster,
crying in fear
because he was going to be slaughtered.
And of course, they took the rooster along as well.

And so there they were:
four old creatures with nothing to lose
but their lives,
going off to Bremen.
And there they had wonderful adventures—
that is a story for another time.
You can read it for yourselves.

“Follow Me”

But back to Galilee.
Back to Simon and Andrew,
and James and John.

One day, someone appeared by the shore.
They had never met him before,
and yet his presence was compelling,
almost magnetic.
And he said to them,
“Follow me.”

Suddenly, there it was:
the chance to leave everything behind
and to step into something new.

It did not take long for them to make up their minds.
“Immediately,” the Bible says—
immediately they left their nets
and followed him.

And with that, a new life began.
A life that unfolded in very unexpected ways.
Jesus called others too:
tax collectors,
sinners,
people from every walk of life.

A donkey, a dog,
a cat, a rooster...

no—wait.

That was another story.

From Jesus they learned another way
of being in the world:
living in community,
sharing what they had,
trusting God for their needs,
helping those who had even less,
spending time in prayer,
singing songs together,
living with great joy—
joy even under pressure,
finding peace within.

Jesus had a name for this way of life.
He called it the kingdom of God.
This kingdom was not a place
with walls and castles and armies.
It was a way of life—
a way of living that can happen right here, right now.

And then Jesus said,
“Now that you have discovered this way of life,
share it.
I will make you fishers of people.”

Running Into Life

Fishers of people!
What does that mean?
Does it mean going door to door,
trying to convince others to convert?

That is not how I understand it.
To be a fisher of people is to live in such a way
that others can glimpse another possibility—
another way of being human.
It means embodying a life shaped by grace,

generosity, compassion, and trust.
It means showing, by how we live,
that God's kingdom is already near.

The kingdom of God is not something
we enter only after death.
It is already available to us now—
imperfect, fragile, and unfinished, but real.
And one day it will be fulfilled.

So the good news today is this:
God does not invite us to run away from our lives.
God invites us to run into life,
into the fullness of life.

Our troubles and burdens do not
magically disappear.
But in the midst of them,
a life of hope and joy and community
is possible.

Jesus shows us the way.
And Jesus gives us all we need:
brothers and sisters in Christ,
a foundation to live by,
and the Spirit who gives us strength
and joy each day.

So let us hold one another by the hand
and look together for this way of life.

Amen.

**Sermon for January 25, 2026
Epiphany 3 Year A**

The Text: [Matthew 4:12-23 NRSVue - Jesus Begins His Ministry in Galilee - Bible Gateway](#)

Tags: Epiphany 3 Year A | January 25, 2026 | Discipleship | Following |