

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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God Needs A Mouthpiece

by Dan Trygg

“How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!’”

Romans 10:14-15

“Therefore, come now, and I will send you...” ¹¹ But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I...?’ ¹² And He said, “Certainly I will be with you...” ¹³ Then Moses said to God, ‘...Now they may say to me, “What is His name?” What shall I say to them?’ ¹⁴ And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to them, “I AM has sent me to you.”’ “...^{4:10} Then Moses said to Yahweh, ‘Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in the past, nor since You have spoken to me; for I am slow of speech...’ ¹¹ And Yahweh said to him, ‘Who has made man's mouth? ...Is it not I, Yahweh? ¹² Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.’ ¹³ But he said, ‘Please, Lord, now send the message by someone else...’ ¹⁴ Then the anger of Yahweh burned against Moses...”

Exodus 3:10-14; 4:10-14

These two passages happened to come up in my daily Bible reading this week, and this morning I was meeting with one of the other ministers from DTM. We kind of talked through my story, concerning how God called me and directed me into teaching and preaching the word of God. He shared how God had directed Him into the evangelism and teaching ministry. This evening, I received a text from one of the other young men involved in the ministry. He informed me that he had just taught his *first* Bible study! It is kind of mind-boggling that the three of us find ourselves doing this kind of work. It is even more mind-blowing that God brought us *together*, and that we are working as team members. Separated by generations, family backgrounds, race and even locations, somehow God scooped us up and started weaving our lives together to support, teach and encourage each other in the ministry work He has for us to do.

I can't really speak for the other guys, but I know that **I was a lot like Moses**. If someone were to tell me in high school that I would be devoting most of my life to teaching about Jesus, I would have thought they were crazy! **Like Moses, one of my first excuses was, “Who am I?”** I mean, I wasn't anybody special. **I certainly wasn't an outgoing, confident kind of guy**. I was a decent student, and a varsity swimmer on the swim team (my “claims to fame” at the ripe age of 17), but was by no means a “star”, or “popular”, in the high school scene. Like a lot of guys at that age, I felt unsure of myself, was a little socially awkward, and pretty much kept to myself. I remember when I had to give a class speech, or a presentation of some kind. My mouth would go dry. I would find it impossible to make eye contact. My heart would race, and I would feel the heat of embarrassment radiating from my face and neck. I would stumble through the reading (Yes, I pretty much *read from* my notes!), and be so *relieved* to be back at my desk. It took several minutes before I could relax again into anonymity. Yuck! **I hated public speaking!** I'm sure I was thought of as being sort of a nerd. If it hadn't been for my swimming notoriety, and the camaraderie of that bunch of guys, I probably would have been drifted more toward nerd-dom. I guess I didn't really fit *there*, either. I wasn't into computers, books or scholarly stuff to be *that* kind of a nerd. I just was nobody special. When I was away from school, I had my two best friends from the neighborhood, and I hung out with them. We were regular guys. Nobody that was going to set the world on fire. We managed to entertain ourselves, and keep our mischief off the radar of the local P.D. **I loved being outside. My goal in life was to escape the city and move to some wilderness area, where I could enjoy the solitude and serenity of the woods.** My parents were alcoholics, and I had learned to shut down my emotions, and also learned to not talk about the “family secrets”. I had been emotionally bruised and diminished by some of the craziness that goes along with all that, so *that* didn't help my self-perception, either. I had learned to guard and protect my heart, so I pretty much had cut off any concern for others, and had determined to live as far away from “civilization” as I could. **I would have chosen to be a “Moses in exile”.** The “backside of the desert” sounded pretty good to me, except I was thinking more of the mountains of British Columbia, instead of the Sinai Peninsula.

I am grateful that I was not put on the spot like Moses was. God didn't come to me that way. He *didn't* say, “I am going to send you to be a preacher and Bible teacher.” I don't know how I would have processed *that*. He *did* say, “Dan, I want you to give me your future.” He didn't spell out to me what He had in mind, but I willingly yielded to Him. **Ministry was kind of thrust upon me. I didn't go looking for it. It was kind of dropped in my lap.** It was the *last* thing I wanted. *I'm sure if I had been given a choice, I would have said, “Who am I?”* **The way God worked it out, I was the only reasonable choice. It was obvious, so I accepted the responsibility** of working with a bunch of ninth graders who wanted to learn about God. **I was about four years older. That age gap made up for the feelings of inferiority I otherwise would have had.** It also helped me to get past the dread of public speaking. *I would have used that excuse of Moses', too. I would have said, “I have never been eloquent...”.* **God**

worked it out so it wasn't much of an issue, at all! I didn't have to speak to my *contemporaries*. I was teaching *ninth graders*. I was a cool, college-age kid, with my own car. The age difference naturally helped me rise up to the challenge. **Then, these kids were not typical ninth graders. They were interested.** They really *wanted* to know about the God they could see working in my life. **The second excuse of Moses didn't even come up! I didn't have to convince these kids that God had come to me. They could see that something different was at work in me.** From the first, they were interested and hungry. It wasn't at all like the stiff-necked people Moses had to face. After a couple of years of teaching Bible studies, the kids wanted to start a Christian coffee house, and I would give a message there every Friday night. **My first sermons were inspirational talks to this younger crowd, most of whom were already friends who respected me.** When I actually gave my first sermon to adults at another church, about a year or two later, I was pretty well seasoned at speaking and teaching. I had my notes all prepared, and then, when I stopped to pray before starting the sermon, *my notes fell off the podium!* I thought, "Great! How embarrassing! I will have to be picking up papers strewn all over the platform!" But, when I opened my eyes after praying, I looked around, and the papers were *nowhere to be seen!* I thought, "Well, God, it's just You and me! Help me to know what to say." He wonderfully gave me the words. **I learned by experience what God told Moses He would do for him, "I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say."** Since then *He always has come through* for me in that way.

In the late 1970's some of those same young people were students in college, or recent graduates. We rented a house together, for the purpose of helping one another go deeper in Christ. **I worked with each individual one-to-one, and we had group studies and prayer times during the week. It was those young adults who said, "Dan, you need to be doing this full time. There is a real need for people to teach the Bible, and work with people like you do."** They encouraged me to cut back on work hours, so I would be freed up to teach and disciple more people. They said that they would begin to financially support me. **They understood the principles of Romans 10. They had benefited from a preacher/teacher who had brought the word of God to them. They knew that others needed the same kind of attention and help I had given them. So, they began to contribute toward my support, and they also covered more than their share of the bills, so that I could be freed up to teach and disciple some other people.** The impact and outreach continued to expand and grow until, in 1980, God very clearly began calling me to leave my part-time job *entirely*. That was a big step! **Like Moses, or Paul, God was sending me to preach to others, and disciple them. God assembled a team of people who, unofficially and informally, began to support this work. Because they had the vision, and they invested in the mission, I was able to reach a wider circle of people.**

Both of these passages clearly communicate the truth that God needs a mouthpiece. People cannot trust in God, if they don't know who He is, what He has done, or what He has promised. While it is conceivable that someone could stumble upon some reference to God, become curious, and expend the effort to find out these things, it is highly unlikely. **People generally have to be confronted with the gospel story and claims of Christ through the lips of a living witness.** In the same way, a person could conceivably take the initiative on their own to study and obey God, but **most people need the stimulation, instruction, example and accountability of actual teachers and disciplers in their personal lives in order to grow effectively and consistently. They need a mouthpiece of God to keep them making progress in their growth.**

Some of us are chosen by Him to be a spokesperson for His purposes. We are called to proclaim His word to people, to lead them to Christ, to mature them or direct them into God's will for their lives. **Others of us are called to be team members who support those who are sent out with the message.** This was also God's strategy in the OT. One tribe was set apart full time for serving God. The tithe, the first 10% of people's increase, was earmarked by God for their support (Num. 18:21-24). **The role of the senders is just as significant and important as the function of the ones who are sent.** Paul clearly understood this, "How can they preach unless they are sent?" "HOW CAN THEY...?" **The work comes to a virtual standstill, if people are not willing to sacrifice and sow into the ministries of those who are sent** to proclaim or teach the word. Oh, there will always be people who are "tentmakers", people who support themselves with a secular job and also do ministry work. In fact, *most* of us are in that situation! **Most believers are called by God to hold down everyday jobs in order to (1.) provide for their own expenses, (2.) have extra to help those in need, and (3.) send out the "mouthpieces of God" to their respective fields of labor** (II Thess. 3:12; Eph. 4:26; Rom. 15:23-27). Just because *most* people are called to that kind of lifestyle does not mean that God has *not* called *others* to go out to preach, nor does it mean that these "tentmakers" are somehow excused from being *senders*. **Just from a pragmatic point of view, if you are tied down to an 8-5 job, you will be limited in time and distance in your outreach to others. It is God's plan to send some. It is God's plan that those who preach the gospel should get their living from the gospel (I Cor. 9:14). It is God's plan that they be freed up from everyday business so they could devote their efforts more fully to God and the mission He has called them to fulfill (II Tim. 2:3,4). It is God's plan that we send them out in a manner worthy of Him (III Jn. 1:3-8).**