

Notes for the Ones Called Out to Meet

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A God-Appointed Spirit-Anointed Opportunity

by Dan Trygg

“And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. ¹⁵ He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. ¹⁶ And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ The book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach good news to the destitute/needful. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the ones having been shattered/broken-in-pieces, ¹⁹ to proclaim a favorable period of the Lord.’ ²⁰ And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’” Luke 4:14-21

“And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.’” Mark 8:34

Jesus came back from His wilderness retreat, empowered by the Holy Spirit. He had a clear mind and purpose. He knew and could clearly articulate His mission. Matthew 4:17 indicates that when Jesus initially returned from the wilderness, He began to preach, “Change-your-perception! The Kingdom of heaven has come!” Mark 1:15 records Jesus message as “The time has been fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near! Change your perception, and believe the good news!” Yet, alongside the large-group, preaching dimension of Jesus’ ministry, we also see another clear purpose in His actions. Both Matthew and Mark record the calling of Jesus’ first disciples *only two verses later*, in their writings (Matt. 4:19; Mk. 1:17). Both of *these* gospels pick up the record shortly after John the Baptist was imprisoned. From John’s gospel, however, it is clear that John and Jesus were *both* actively preaching in different locations for some time before the Baptist was arrested. Going back to John 1, however, we get a little more insight into the initial days of Jesus’ ministry. It would seem that when Jesus returned from His 40 day sojourn in the wilderness, He passed by where John the Baptist was preaching. John directed some of his disciples to Jesus, and they became some of His first followers (Jn. 1:35-42). Thus, **from the earliest days of Jesus’ ministry, His time was invested in these two important dimensions: (1.) a ministry of proclamation to the multitudes**, accompanied by authenticating miraculous signs and transformed lives; and, **(2.) an intentional gathering of serious disciples for more in-depth training** to equip and prepare them to reproduce His ministry through them.

How was Jesus able to win the interest and loyalty of these first men? First of all, they appear to already be interested in things of God. Peter’s brother, Andrew, and John, the son of Zebedee, were already followers of John the Baptist. The fact that Andrew could find Peter so readily, the next day, and invite him to come and meet the Messiah, indicates that Simon also was looking for the Kingdom of God, and its King (Jn. 1:41). Next, from their fishing village, Jesus invites another friend, Philip, to “Follow Me!” Philip wastes no time informing another friend, Nathanael, of their discovery (1:47-50). **Secondly, they took the opportunity to spend extended time together to learn, and to share their hearts with each other.** They were all returning from a feast in Jerusalem, so they journeyed and camped together on the way. Then, they attended a wedding together in Cana, where Jesus did His first miraculous sign. Then, they went down to Capernaum, where Peter lived, and spent a few days there (Jn. 2:1-12). Next, we see them travel to the Passover Feast in Jerusalem (2:13f). The disciples were there to witness Jesus’ bold cleansing of the Temple, and His confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders. They also saw Him teach and perform miracles of healing, and casting out demons. Much of this extended time spent together was possible because of the Jewish Feasts, where it was expected that devout Jews would travel to Jerusalem. Most of these early disciples were also fishermen, which gave them flexibility to spend time with Jesus. **Thirdly, they were willing to get actively involved in the actual work of ministry.** In 3:22, they went with Jesus to the countryside, where He preached to the crowds, while *the disciples were baptizing* those who responded to Him (4:2). Their ministry began to have greater impact than that of John the Baptist! **Fourth, He instructed them in practical lessons and tips for ministry.** For example, when they traveled back to Galilee, the disciples witnessed His ministry to the Samaritans (4:3-43). Note the lessons for ministry He taught them. They did not *recognize* what was happening, until He pointed out what God was doing, and modeled how *it was important to respond, or to lose the opportunity.* This lesson was repeated verbally in 5:19, as He emphasized that He was watching to see what God was doing around Him, and He would respond when He recognized God’s initiative. **Fifth, He modeled preaching and teaching in a variety of settings, ...in the synagogues, in open fields, in the Temple courts, in homes, in personal interactions, etc.** His example prepared them for many of the situations that they would later face. He also dealt with a great variety of people, from the educated, religious elite, to the common person, to the very poor and uneducated, sick and even demonized. He ministered to men and

women, young and old, Jew and even Gentile. **Sixth, He modeled a deep and exemplary life of devotion to God.** He would get up to spend time alone, before the others got up (Mk. 1:35). He regularly attended the synagogue, and observed the Feast days. He was familiar with, and clearly understood, the scriptures. And, *His life was consistent with the character of God* in His dealings with others. **Seventh, they were willing to take direction from Him.** He gave them assignments and responsibilities, which they willingly responded to and carried out. *You cannot lead someone who is not willing to follow.* We see evidence of almost all of these principles before John 5. It appears that during the period of John 4 and 5 that John the Baptist was imprisoned, and the other gospel records come into play.

When Jesus came to the synagogue at Nazareth, He already had established a track record. Many had heard of the signs and wonders He had done at Capernaum, or in Judea. He was well-known in that little town, where He had grown up, and spent most of His life as a builder. It was His custom to attend the synagogue, and on this day He stood to read. The scroll of Isaiah was given to Him, and He read from the 61st chapter, the first verse and a half, and then sat down. Everyone was attentive to what He would say. He said, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” **What did He mean? God’s Spirit had been placed upon Him to proclaim good news to those who knew they had nothing, to proclaim freedom to those who knew they were in bondage, and recovery of sight to those who knew they could not see, to set free those who acknowledged that their lives had been shattered, bruised or broken-in-pieces.** He came to proclaim a time of God’s favor. *He came to give hope to the hopeless, release to those who were stuck, vision to those who could not find their way, mending and liberation to those whose lives had been torn in pieces. This was an opportunity, a limited period of time, when God’s favor or grace was available!*

What of those who thought they were full, or free, or who felt they could see clearly, or who felt their lives were all together? His ministry was not to them. In fact, He had nothing to offer them! He came for the hurting, the needy, the lost, the broken, and those who knew they needed change. **Those who thought they needed no change, were not going to receive what God was offering.** He said, “You may say, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Do here the miracles You have done elsewhere.’” He spoke of how there were many widows in Israel at the time of Elijah, but God sent him to a widow from Sidon. There were many lepers in Israel, at the time of Elishah, but only Naaman the Syrian was healed. **These words were unquestionably true, but instead of bringing the listeners to reflection and a change-of-perception, the people took offense.** In self-righteous pride, nationalism and anger, they mobbed Jesus, and brought Him to the brow of a prominent cliff, to throw Him off, but He walked through their midst. **That day, He moved from Nazareth, and relocated to Capernaum. Most of the people of Nazareth rejected the opportunity for God’s favor that day, ...and it was gone!** Instead of asking *why it was* that only the widow from Sidon, or the Syrian general, saw the favor of God, ...and “God’s chosen people” received *no* signs of His grace..., **they shut off their ears, minds and hearts to the One who came to make known God’s grace and truth** (Jn. 1:14). **As a result, they missed both!**

Interestingly, when Jesus read from Isaiah 61:2, He only finished halfway through the verse. It reads, “...to proclaim the favorable year of Yahweh, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn...” **Jesus’ mission, at that time, was to proclaim the year (or, “season” or “opportunity”) of God’s grace, acceptance and hope for all who will come to Him for forgiveness, healing, a new relationship with Him and a new orientation for their lives.** *Jesus came to make that possible, by His ministry and death on the cross on our behalf.* Nevertheless, He will come again, at the end of the age as the Judge and Avenger of God against evil. Jesus omitted that part of the reading, because that was not why the Spirit was upon Him at that time. That day will come, however. **If we are among those who mourn over sin, who grieve over unrighteousness, and long for God’s ways to be established in our lives and upon the earth, then we will be among those who will welcome and be comforted by God’s grace in Christ.**

Finally, it is important for us to see that there have been many who have rejected the opportunity for God’s presence and working in their lives, because they turn away from His invitation to “follow Me”. Of the twelve disciples Jesus picked to be apostles, *all* initially responded, but *one*, Judas Iscariot, later betrayed Him. **We may be able to come up with all kinds of reasonable-sounding excuses to put the Lord off, but we do not realize that sometimes we are at a fork in the road.** We do not always realize that **rejecting the invitation to follow today may direct us away from the clarity we currently have, and we may wander farther and farther away.** Jesus called one person to follow Him, and the man asked if he could wait until his elderly father passed away (Matt. 8:21,22). Jesus cut him no slack, “Let the dead bury their dead!” Another wanted to say goodbye to everyone at home (Lk. 9:61,62). Jesus basically said, “If you are going to plow the field for planting, you can’t be looking back and do a good job!” He called the rich young ruler to follow, but he went away sad, because he was unwilling to give up his possessions (Lk. 18:21,22). **If we are going to be a disciple of Jesus, we must be willing to lay everything else down in abandonment, take up our cross daily, and follow Him wherever He leads.**