

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## An Awakened Heart and Ear

by Dan Trygg

“The Lord Yahweh has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. <sup>5</sup> The Lord Yahweh has opened My ear; and I was not disobedient nor did I turn back.”

Isaiah 50:4,5

“The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me, because Yahweh has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the favorable year of Yahweh and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, <sup>3</sup> to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh, that He may be glorified. <sup>4</sup> Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, they will raise up the former devastations; and they will repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. <sup>5</sup> Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks, and foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers. <sup>6</sup> But you will be called the priests of Yahweh; you will be spoken of as ministers of our God. You will eat the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.”

Isaiah 61:1-6

A key component of NT preaching is the need for a change of mind or heart. Without a change of mind, a change of perception, *nothing* changes, right? **Unless you can perceive a *different way* of looking at reality, or your choices in life, you will only be able to *continue* to think and live the way you *have been* living.** You only know what you know. I was just reading in Mark 6, this morning, about Jesus' visit to His hometown, Nazareth. He was given the opportunity to preach in the synagogue. As He did, the people were amazed at the things coming from His lips. **They asked, “*Where did this man get these things?* And what is this wisdom given to Him...”, and they took offense at Him. Why? Because He was teaching them things that were different than their expectations.** He was challenging their understanding of the world, as they knew it. He was rocking the boat.

The answer to their question was given by Isaiah some seven centuries earlier. **He got His wisdom from God. Yahweh had opened His ear, and taught Him. That same possibility exists for us.** Note that the passage speaks of God “awakening” us. We have been asleep and we need to be aroused. **We have been deep in the slumber of the spiritual blindness of our religious traditions and the spirit of this evil age. We need to “wake up”.** We need to be aroused, shaken out of the lethargy, enervation and inertia of our world view and lifestyle. **What are we to be awakened to? To listen. To listen as a disciple, an active follower of the living God.** Jesus Himself had been called to listen, and He followed that call. He was not disobedient, and He did not turn back. **Jesus Himself had to learn the kind of obedience that is a response to listening** (Heb. 5:8). In other words, He learned to listen to obey. **This is developing the ear of a follower, right? That same call is given to us.** We need to have our ears and hearts aroused and awakened. And we need to learn to hear for the purpose of responding to what God tells us. **This is nothing new. This is the call of disciples through the ages. They are people who are *aroused by God, and devote themselves to hear* from Him *in order to obey* His instructions.**

The other passage, from Isaiah 61 is the very passage Jesus chose to preach at Nazareth (Lk. 4:16-19). On that occasion, He only read the first verse and a half. When you read on, however, some very interesting things that come out. **God will give joy for sadness and mourning; praise instead of listlessness.** Those who respond will become the planting of Yahweh, “oaks of righteousness”, so that He might get glory. **God is to be honored, glorified and praised for what He does in the lives of these people.** It will be evident that God is at work in them, and He is doing something *unusual* in them, *...a turning around of their lives from sadness and lifelessness to joy and vibrancy.*

What will they do? **They will rebuild the ancient ruins, the waste places, the lost and deserted ways.** The Hebrew for “ruins” means “dry places”. **They were places that once had been lush and productive, but through abandonment, mismanagement and disuse had become desolated, dry and unproductive.** They will restore the dryness and desolation of many generations. The waste, dryness and lack of productivity had gone on for many generations. **These ones who are “the planting of Yahweh” will restore, refresh and rebuild** so that places that had been only minimally productive and desolated for generations would be healthy and full of vitality, **so that God's wisdom and goodness would be clearly seen.**

When Jesus preached from this passage in the synagogue in Nazareth, He was not proclaiming a literal release of captives, or for the doors of physical prisons to be thrown open. It was not a political or military freedom He was initiating. **It was a spiritual, mental and emotional liberation that He was starting.** No doubt, the ripples of the revolution He was preaching about were later responsible for the rise and fall of many, not only in Israel, but around

the world and throughout history (Lk 2:34). **He had already chosen His first twelve trainees (Mk. 3:14), and immediately after this encounter at Nazareth, He sent them out in pairs on their first preaching mission (Mk. 6:7-13).** In Luke 10, He appointed 70 others to go out on a similar mission, giving them also this important practical experience. In Matthew 28:18-20, we see that **His plan was for them to make disciples of all nations. This would require people to spread out far and wide from Jerusalem.**

In those early days of the Christian movement, there were no buildings, so there was no confusion. **These converted believers in Christ continued to follow the principles of OT giving. The first tithe went to support the ministry workers (Num. 18:21).** Under Judaism, this was given to the Levites, to support their work as temple servants, scribes and experts in the Law. **God is very practical. If His people were faithful in giving and properly utilizing the tithe, then for every ten families someone could be freed up to devote themselves to study and teach the word of God.**

**Under the New Covenant, most of the believers began to give to support the work of apostles, evangelists, and other teachers of the word of God, so they could be freed up from other employment to devote themselves to their work. This example was modeled by the Lord Himself.** He had left His carpenter shop, and gave Himself to the work of preaching, praying, teaching and ministry among the people. *He insisted that every one of His apostles also leave their jobs to follow Him.* **They were supported by contributions generously and freely offered by people who valued and believed in what they did.** Jesus taught even His novice trainees to expect to be hosted and fed on their journeys, “For the laborer is worth his wages.” This was not a *demand* that they put upon *people*, ...it was an *expectation* that *God* would incline the heart of some person or persons to supply their needs. **As early as AD 50, Paul wrote a strong defense for a contribution-supported ministry.** He uses seven word pictures in I Corinthians 9:1-14 to strongly advocate that God’s people support those who preach the gospel. He said that **it was the Lord Jesus who had directed to the ones preaching the gospel to live out from the gospel.** In other words, He was again calling them to separate themselves from other work to devote themselves to preaching and teaching the word. At the end of his life, Paul was still advocating the same thing: “No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier,” he wrote Timothy (II Tim. 2:4). God calls some of His people to leave their jobs in order to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. *Early Christians clearly understood this, and generously gave to free up workers who showed promise and effectiveness in service.* **During the first three centuries, the Christian movement quickly grew, expanded and spread. Why? Because people in ministry were valued and were encouraged in their work by the support of others.**

**In the fourth century, when Emperor Constantine became a Christian, he made numerous “improvements” to the way ministry was done.** Not only did he build lecture halls to replace the small, intimate home church meetings, **he began to support Christian workers with state tax money.** While at first blush this might seem like a wonderful thing, **it had very unhealthy consequences.** To receive this tax money, preachers had to be *registered* and *recognized* by both the church and the state. They also *were enrolled in a local town or city.* Parishes as geographical areas began to replace the traveling preacher. *There was also a rush by some unscrupulous people to become religious workers* for the purpose of receiving a secure, steady government income, and a respected position of employment. As corruption crept in, people were buying and selling ministerial positions for a price, or some favors. *The natural check of a freewill offering was lost, and the gravy train brought out the cockroaches and other vermin.*

**Meanwhile, the other “improvement” Constantine had introduced was also expanding and spinning out of control. Communities and congregations were taking pride in expanding and beautifying their buildings.** *Church officials began to come up with campaigns and schemes to get people to give more, or to raise funds.* Sound familiar? State churches remained the norm in Europe and England until 1700-1800’s. **Even when the Protestant Reformation started to shift away from some of the unhealthy teachings of Roman Catholicism, they still supported their church workers and buildings from the same paradigm.** When some of the “Free Churches” began to be founded, they had similar *expectations, but not the governmental support.* **So they introduced things like “the pew rental”, “membership dues” and “taking up an offering” as means of supporting their buildings and ministers.** *They talked about collecting “tithes and offerings”, but they did not utilize tithes as God had instructed tithes to be used.* They emphasized that a tithe should be 10%, but they lumped it into a common fund from which to pay all operating expenses, instead of using the tithes to free up preachers, teachers, evangelists and missionaries.

**You might say, “Dan, what brought all this up?” Because I see that God is raising up workers to step into new fields of service, but we are trapped in the confines of our inherited, misguided thinking.** If God would waken us up, arouse us from the slumber of centuries of traditions, *we* could be ones to restore life to dry places. **We could train, support and send the strangers to shepherd God’s people in new places.** There they could be ones to plant, tend and harvest so that together we could rejoice in the Lord’s work. **We need to get the workers to the work!**