

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Be Fruitful!

by Dan Trygg

“Now Yahweh said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; ² and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; ³ and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’”

Genesis 12:1-3

“God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.’ Thus He called him Israel. ¹¹ God also said to him, ‘I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you.’”

Genesis 35:10-11

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek Yahweh: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. ² Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain. When he was but one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him.”

Isaiah 51:1-2

As we look ahead to this new year, it is important for us to realize that **God's purpose for our lives is to be fruitful. This is a key, overarching theme, repeated over and over again throughout the scriptures.**

Beginning in the Garden of Eden, **God's first commission to humankind was to “be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth”** (Gen. 1:28). This directive was repeated to Noah and his descendants after the flood (Gen. 9:1,7), and the nations were born and spread abroad from them. **Then, when Yahweh called Abram to follow Him, He made a covenant with him that emphasized a similar vision.** God said He would make Abram into a “great nation”. Later, as He revealed more, He added that **He would make him to be the father of a “multitude of nations”** (Gen. 17:4-6), **and that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed.** He changed his name from Abram (‘exalted father’) to Abraham (‘father of a multitude’, or ‘father of a nation’). Though Abraham did not live to see the fulfillment of this promise, it was God's purpose and agenda all along. He lived to see his son, Isaac, and his two grandsons, Esau and Jacob, but his time on earth came to an end before he could see the multiplication that would take place in the next generations. **Yahweh expressed this same charge to Jacob, who saw his family multiply into twelve households.** In the next couple of centuries, **these twelve households became the twelve tribes of the nation, named after Israel, ...a company of over two million people!** Of course, the nation of Israel continues to this day, the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. **But there is an even greater “multitude of nations”, both physically and spiritually, that look to Abraham as their forefather. The apostle Paul said that he is “the father of all who believe”** (Rom. 4:11), ...all who trust in God and are reckoned as righteous by Him. In Romans 11:17-24, he says that we who came from other physical and ethnic backgrounds, but who have trusted in Jesus, are like branches from a wild olive tree that have been grafted into the tree of the family of faith. The root and the trunk refer to the people of faith, beginning with Abraham and the patriarchs, who trusted in Yahweh. **In Christ, we have been joined to them, spiritually. They were the faith pioneers, and we are established on the foundation of the work of God in their lives. We stand in our faith, ...but God intends for us to bear fruit, ...He intends that others be drawn to God through our lives, and that they also become engrafted into the family of faith.**

In Isaiah 51, Yahweh instructs us to look at this story, and be encouraged. Abraham was only one person, when God called him. He had his flaws and weaknesses, ...but he also had faith in God. A key part of Abraham and Sarah's story was that they had been unable to have a child, and both were old enough to be past the age of bearing children. **What was impossible, from a natural point of view, was not impossible for God!**

It is the blessing of God that produces fruitfulness and multiplication. The point of Abraham's story in Isaiah 51 is one of renewal, restoration, resurgence and rejoicing at multiplied fruitfulness. At a time when Israel was taken away captive to Assyria, and Judah was soon to be exiled to Babylonia, **God chose to remind His people of what He can do.** From one couple, old and “as good as dead” (Rom. 4:19), Yahweh birthed and multiplied the millions of Israel. **Though they would experience exile and scattering, because of their sin and waywardness, Yahweh would bring them back to this land of promise, and both bless them and make them a blessing.**

He has fulfilled these words of promise twice since that time, ...in the return of the exiles in 538 B.C., and again in the return of the Jewish people to the land in the 20th century. Now, much of the former “wilderness” of Israel is abundantly fertile, fruitful and productive, ...like the Garden of Eden. I saw this with my own eyes, on my trip to Israel. Where there used to be wasteland and desert, there are plantations of banana trees and pomegranates. There are fig trees, citrus trees. There are wheatfields, date palms, olive trees and vineyards. The produce of Israel is

abundant, and is shipped around the world. **The *literal* physical fruitfulness of the work of their hands is tasted and enjoyed by people across the globe.**

But, of course, that is only a small part of the blessing that has originated there. Our Savior, Yeshua, was born there. He walked those roads at a time that was much less fruitful or productive. Under the heavy domination of the Roman occupation, **He went about preaching the kingdom of God, healing the sick, casting out demons, and even raising the dead. He called people to repent, and to believe the good news that God's kingdom was at work among them.** He was a glimmer of hope, a flash of excitement, in a dark and oppressive time. **And, then HE was cut off, ...betrayed by the chief priests, and handed over to the Romans to be crucified. BUT, death could not hold Him! He arose from the dead, and soon His disciples were sharing the good news of His victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil.** They demonstrated the kingdom of God by miraculous acts, and fearlessly stood up to those who had killed their Master. **When the chief priests tried to quash this new movement, it only grew and spread.** Within 40 years, Jerusalem itself was gone, destroyed by the Romans, ...BUT, by that time, Rome itself was being penetrated by the leaven of the spiritual kingdom of this risen Jewish Messiah. **At the close of that first century, there were nearly a million followers of Jesus Christ, ...approximately one believer for every 60 people within the Roman empire!**

The stories of the land of Israel, like that of Abraham, or the victory of Jesus, or the advance of the gospel, are meant to be lessons and examples of what God can do with us! Nothing is too difficult for the Lord!

He has not changed His mind about His purpose. He still wants us to be fruitful, to multiply and to fill the earth, but He has added an entirely different dimension to *our* commission. Our focus is not only about our physical descendants, but on our spiritual family. **We are to be birthing, training and raising up disciples of Jesus Christ, ...and sending out people who are trained to establish new faith communities in other places.** We are to "discipline the nations"!

He says to us, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, then look around at the earth beneath your feet! The sky will vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment, and its inhabitants will die like a swarm of gnats, but My salvation will last forever, and My righteousness will not wane." **Kingdoms and governments will fall, crumble into ruin, and be forgotten. What will endure are those we can save from the deception of this fading world.** Great civilizations have gone before us, and they have turned to dust. The topics of their day, the political debates, the news, the gossip, the parties, the money earned or spent, ...none of that matters. It is all gone. **And, trust me, the topics of our day, the political debates, the elections and administrations will mean nothing when the judgments of God come.**

The only thing that will matter will be what God has done with His people. Because, as we have seen throughout history, **God is relentless and unstoppable in accomplishing His purpose. His purpose is to cause those who are His to be fruitful, to multiply, and to be a blessing and a light to all nations.** We are only still here because that work has not yet been accomplished. The gospel must be proclaimed as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come.

Why? Because Jesus was willing to be the Lamb led to slaughter, the grain of wheat to be buried in the ground, so that by His death and resurrection He might bear much fruit. He is worthy, because He emptied Himself to come among us, and gave Himself on our behalf. **With His blood He redeemed people for God from every tribe, tongue, people and nation, so that we might be a kingdom and priests to Him, and we might reign with Him on a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. It is God's great purpose to glorify His Son. This is done most fittingly by bringing in the full number of those who are willing to live to follow and honor Him, ...the true disciples of the Lamb.** "He shall see the fruit of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11).

The "fruit" of the travail of Jesus' soul is inextricably tied together with the "fruit" of our own lives and walks. **God is the Source, but He chooses to use people to accomplish His purposes in this world. We are the ones He has recruited to be His co-workers.** God can do great things with even a few yielded and responsive people. **Availability is the greatest ability we can offer God. To be fruitful, we must avail ourselves to Him, ...to present ourselves to Him for His use.** Jesus Himself said that **we must abide in Him, ...set ourselves aside from other distractions and self-interests to tune into Him.** We are to *watch* to see what He is initiating in our lives, and *join with* what we can sense He is prompting. **In partnership with Him, we will find the ability and desire to serve and help others. He will inspire a different quality of life in and through us than what we would have chosen on our own.** We will find ourselves making time to listen to people we would not have listened to before. We will be concerned for others, and make ourselves available to help them. **The Holy Spirit will direct us to do things that we would not have done on our own.**

Make this your prayer for this year, **"God, make me to be a blessing. I present myself to You to be available, ready and willing to do Your will, ...whatever that may be.** I choose *not* to focus on the temporal cares and concerns of the world around me. Help me to perceive them through the lens of history, ...today's concerns get ever smaller when seen through the rearview mirror, ...and even tomorrow's concerns will soon be yesterday's news. **Help me to trust Your eternal, relentless purpose: to bless me and make me a blessing. Use my life to draw others to follow Jesus.**

"Only one life; 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last" (C.T. Studd).