

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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Bragging on God

by Dan Trygg

“I will bless Yahweh at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. ² My soul shall make its boast in Yahweh; the humble shall hear it and rejoice. ³ O magnify Yahweh with me, and let us exalt His name together.” Psalm 34:1-3

”Even though the fig tree should *not* blossom, and there be *no* fruit on the vines; though the yield of the olive should *fail*, and the fields produce *no* food; though the flock should be cut *off* from the fold, and there be *no* cattle in the stalls; ¹⁸ *yet* I will exult in Yahweh, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹ The Lord Yahweh is my strength; and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places.” Habakkuk 3:17-19

Wow! The psalmist wrote, “Oh give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good, for His steadfast love is everlasting. Let the redeemed of Yahweh say so...” (Psa. 107:1,2). Again, “It is good to give thanks to Yahweh, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High.” (Psa. 92:1). And in another place, “Come and hear, you who revere God, and I will tell you what He has done for my soul” (Psa. 66:16). I feel that I must share a bit of what God has done for me. I realize that I don't speak much concerning this kind of thing, but, in this case, I feel compelled to allow you to enter into the world I experience, so that I can brag a little on God. It is good for me to speak of it. I hope it will be a blessing to you to read and see the kinds of things God does, so that *you* may be encouraged as to what He may wish to do *for you*. And, most importantly, it brings honor and blessing to God.

Remember when Jesus sent the disciples out by two's, and told them to just bring the clothing on their backs (Matt. 10:5-15; Mk. 6:7-13; Luk. 9:1-6; 10:1-11), nothing extra? ...no purses, no extra food or clothing, ...no American Express card? Can you imagine *that*? What must *that* have been like? At least, this was a *short-term* project. They were just to go to cities as kind of “advance men”, preparing the way for Jesus' coming. They were to do what Jesus did, ...preach, cast out demons, heal the sick, even raise the dead..., as God directed them. It *had to* be intimidating. Can you imagine what it would have been like? *This was taking things to a whole new level!* They would have to step out *on their own*. They wouldn't just be background workers, assisting the ministry of Jesus. This was a training experience to see if God would provide for *them*, even when they were apart from Jesus. These guys were not exactly raw recruits. They had been following Jesus for well over a year, maybe nearly two, by the time He dropped this bomb on them. They had already been involved doing ministry work, under Jesus' supervision. Now, however, He was sending them out on their own, without a safety net. They must have been excited, but a bit tentative at the same time.

It was the fall of 1979. I had been a serious disciple of Jesus Christ for just over eight years. God had almost immediately put me in a setting where I was teaching other, younger Christians. Over the years, this small midweek group of ninth graders stretched out to reach kids from several churches, and many of us met together five times a week! People grew up and moved on to college. By 1979, I had graduated from college, and had tried my hand as a youth pastor. One of the most important realizations I made at seminary was that I was not interested in being a typical pastor of a traditional church. I was really into discipleship, one-on-one meetings and small groups promoting serious Bible study and spiritual growth. I seemed to be most effective with people who were more serious about developing their relationship with Christ. Some of these people had begun to encourage me to consider doing this kind of ministry work on a full-time basis. At the time, I was working about 26 hours a week as a security guard, which allowed me time to read and pray between fire-watch rounds. Joan was in her last year at the University of MN. We had purchased a mobile home, and our expenses were fairly minimal. I kept running into people who benefited from what I was doing. They would help us out with food, or cash, or an odd job here and there. They kept saying, “There is a real need for what you are doing. You ought to consider doing this on a full-time basis.”

I began to see more clearly what the scriptures had to say on this matter. Jesus had left His carpentry business to devote Himself to ministry. He called his twelve disciples to leave their jobs (Matt 4:18-22; Lk. 5:1-11), in order to also devote themselves to preach and teach the good news. As I mentioned, He challenged them to see how God was able to provide *for them*. He said, “the laborer is worthy of his wages” to indicate that traveling preachers *should* be supported (Lk. 10:7). He Himself was supported by a number of people who valued His ministry. They contributed out of their private means so that He and His men could travel, preach and minister to people (Lk. 8:1-3). The original apostles all followed His example (I Cor. 9:3-5). The apostle Paul strongly argued that this was Jesus' counsel to those who would preach the gospel. (Note the strong word pictures used to support this teaching – vss. 4-14.) Jesus had “directed those who preach the gospel to get their living from the gospel” (I Cor. 9:14). (Paul himself, because he had persecuted the church, did not always utilize this privilege, choosing instead to support himself by working with his hands most of the time [I Cor. 9:15-18]. At times, however, he *did* “devote himself *fully* to preach the word”, and he would accept the gifts of churches who wanted to support him [Acts

18:5; Phil. 4:10-20].) He later quoted Jesus' words, "the laborer is worth his hire" to encourage the support of elders who are good examples and who labor hard in teaching and preaching (I Tim. 5:17,18).

About the same time, I came across the biographies of a number of missionaries and significant Christian leaders of recent times. I was especially impressed by the examples of George Muller, Amy Carmichael, Hudson Taylor, and others from the 1800's who had been led to trust God to provide for their financial needs. These men and women left the security of the lives they knew in order to fulfill what they perceived to be the calling of God on their lives to preach the gospel. I was moved by the descriptions of how they became aware of God's prompting, and how they struggled with it, until they finally gave themselves to obedience. I could identify with the human struggle, the squeamishness of the flesh to take risk, or to break with tradition, ...to be *different*. As I read their accounts of discovering God's will for their lives, I also was exposed to their thinking process, and the passages of scripture that God was using to teach them. I was stirred as I read of their willingness to press after God, and how the Lord met them, stretched them and trained them. As they stepped out in obedience to God, He met them at every turn. Even where they were immature, or incomplete in their understanding, ...even when they made mistakes..., He was very gracious and gentle. Their stories challenged me, as they stepped out in faith that God would supply their needs *in answer to prayer*, even as they left the comforts of home to bring the gospel half way around the world.

It took about six months of almost daily prompting and prodding, but eventually I quit my job in April of 1980. I have tried to do part-time work, at times, but God has made it very clear that this is *not* His will for me. Shortly after making this decision, we found out that Joan was pregnant with our first child. He was the only one we had medical insurance for, yet we have five healthy children. God always made a way for us to pay for the medical expenses, usually *before* the baby came. We moved from our trailer to our home in 1982, and we have been there ever since. I have made my share of mistakes, but God has always provided for our true needs. We never went without.

In thirty-three years of living this way, I never cease to be amazed at what God does! Some people have *faithfully* and *consistently* contributed, month after month, ...for *years!* It is very humbling. Many times, **the Lord seems to especially enjoy providing in unusual, unpredictable ways, so that I will more clearly recognize that He is the provider**, not the people He is using. *My needs are being met because I have a Father in heaven*, not because I am a skillful marketer or administrator, ...or even because I am incredibly talented or effective at what I do. **He is my Source, my Security and my Stability.** I have found money in the street, ...had strangers come up to me and tell me that God told them to give me some money, or to buy my meal. At times, *other* individuals have popped up out of my past, *at just the right time*, and given a check to meet a need they knew nothing about. People have called and asked if they could drive by with a donation, *at a time of real need* that they had no knowledge of. I have had people on welfare, ...who I do not even regularly see..., *call me up* to stop by their home, so they could give me \$ 50 or \$ 100, *which is a real sacrifice to them*, because they *value* what they know God works through me. On the other hand, I have met with others who are wealthy who *say* they appreciate the ministry of God through my life, but never sow a *dime* into the ministry! **It is a reminder to not despise the weak and powerless, nor to show favoritism to the moneyed and powerful.** Sometimes, I have looked for provision to come in the mail, but when the mail came, nothing was there. A few hours later, my neighbor called to say that an envelope had been delivered to his house by mistake. I felt like God was saying, "Gotcha!" One time, I met a man and his wife at a seminar in Denver. We shared a meal, and discovered we were both living by faith. For years afterwards, they generously sent gifts of support on many occasions that met a specific need *just at the right time!* It has been 33 years of this, yet it is as amazing, humbling, overwhelming as ever!

In the past year, I have noticed a pattern that God seems to be using to show me His personal touch. There are two passages in Psalms that speak of young lions being in need, and how God supplies the needs of His people (34:10; 104:21-33). It seems that whenever I am reading either of these passages, I am going through a faith test, and God makes provision that same day, or the following one. I have noticed this often enough that I have commented on it to others. I happened to read Psalm 34 on Thursday morning. I was praying for God to bring in the mortgage money I needed for the April payment. I had had most of it earlier, but had a couple of weeks where not much provision had come in, so it was almost all gone. Tax day is Monday, and I was also praying for money to come in to make an estimated tax payment. I mentioned to a friend that I had read this passage, and was expecting God's provision to come shortly. He, too, was praying for support for his ministry at the same time as he received my text. He read the entire Psalm, and we decided to work on memorizing the entire passage. About 37 hours later, I texted him back, "God has brought in \$ 1,656.00! Only \$ 450 of that was 'regular giving'. The rest was extra offerings, or from completely unanticipated sources. One fellow called me after 5 years of no contact. We met to catch up, and he donated \$ 250! Praise God! He provided once again!" There is enough for the estimated tax payment, ... and I was just able to make the mortgage payment, with \$ 18.62 to spare! **"I will bless Yahweh at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in Yahweh; the humble shall hear it and rejoice. ³ O magnify Yahweh with me, and let us exalt His name together."**