

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Agenda of the Spirit

by Dan Trygg

“The Spirit of the Lord God is on Me, because Yahweh has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to the prisoners; ² to proclaim the year of Yahweh's favor, and the day of our God's vengeance; to comfort all who mourn, ³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion; to give them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, festive oil instead of mourning, and splendid clothes instead of despair. And they will be called righteous trees, planted by Yahweh, to glorify Him. ⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins; they will restore the former devastations; they will renew the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.”

Isaiah 61:1-4

“Jesus of Nazareth, as God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, He went throughout doing good, and healing all who were dominated by the devil; for God was with Him.”

Acts 10:38

“[The Spirit] will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and declare it to you.”

John 16:14

This passage from Isaiah 61 was in Jesus' mind, as He began His public ministry. He was well aware of the desire and leading of the Spirit, which was what energized and directed His activities. He went about doing good, preaching good news, healing the sick, and driving out the evil spirits, ... setting free those who were oppressed physically, emotionally and spiritually (Acts 10:38). **When He visited His hometown synagogue, this passage was the text selected to be read on that day. Jesus read the first verse, and half of the second, rolled up the scroll, and declared, “This scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk. 4:16-22).** As He continued on with His message, **people were amazed at the words of grace which were coming from His mouth.** He had grown up there. Everyone knew both Him and His family. Apparently, He was not known for such preaching and teaching. It was so *uncharacteristic* that they murmured to each other, **“Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles happening through His hands?”** (Mk. 6:2)

Of course, if they had been listening to the passage that He read, the answer to their questioning was very plainly stated right there. ***It was the Spirit of the Lord.*** Jesus said as much. **The Spirit of Yahweh was upon Him, and it was directing Him into these activities, and giving Him the words to speak.** As He would later say, on the last evening before His crucifixion, “The Father abiding in Me does His works” (Jn. 14:10). **As you look at the ministry of Jesus, the apostles, and the early church, we see these same kinds of activities as signs of the Spirit at work through His people.** The Spirit was glorifying Jesus by prompting and empowering the church to be about these same things.

In a world that was brutal and oppressive, *the followers of Jesus stood out as a light in the darkness.*

In a religious environment that was often ritualistic, legalistic and self-righteous, *the compassion, love and freedom of the disciples of Jesus breathed new hope, life and encouragement into people weighed down by life.*

Instead of recoiling and avoiding those who were “sinners” or “outcasts” or “of no account”, as some other “religious people” did, *the Jesus'-followers sought them out, proclaimed good news to them of how much God loved them.* They welcomed and included those who responded to their message. They invited them into their homes to share in their common-meals. They prayed with and for them. They served and helped them. They shared their resources with them, to help them out of their distress. They went well beyond just looking to their own interests, ... they rallied to help one another.

This was radical! This was nothing like the religion or the culture that they had grown up in. This was God's grace in action! This was love expressed, ... demonstrated in practical, personal ways!

These people did not just *preach* Good News, ...they were Good News! They put shoe leather and elbow grease together to make love *tangible*. Outsiders were amazed, and commented, “See how they love one another!”

They did not *require* sacrifice or offerings as a “religious obligation”, ...they themselves *freely chose* to sacrifice of their own things, and offer them to others in need. Giving and serving was *spontaneous* and *joy-filled!*

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *FREEDOM*, ...freedom that comes from God, and spills into the lives of others. It is inevitable, because it is the heart of God, the example of Jesus, and the agenda of the Spirit.

As outsiders witnessed the joy, the graciousness, the acceptance offered to others, the love and support in action toward one another, and their zeal to share their faith with others, they asked the same question that the people in Nazareth asked, **“Where do they get these things? What is this wisdom that comes from their testimony? What are these clear signs of God at work in their lives?”** The answer, of course, is **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon them.”**

What is the agenda of the Spirit? What are the signs of His activity at work through His people? What kinds of things will the Spirit prompt us to be doing? Let's take a closer look at the passage that Jesus quoted to describe what the Spirit had sent Him to do, ...Isaiah 61:1-3:

“The Spirit of Yahweh is upon me, because Yahweh has anointed me to...” The “anointing” is significant. Priests, kings and prophets were all anointed with oil as a sign of their consecration and spiritual empowerment for their ministry roles (Exo. 40:15; Lev. 6:20-22; 1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13; 1 Kg. 19:16). **Jesus was not anointed and consecrated to His ministry by men. God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. That’s what mattered.** The anointing with oil was meant to signify this greater, spiritual anointing. The Spirit came upon Him, filled and empowered Him to *preach* the good news of the impending kingdom of God, and *demonstrate* that kingdom through the good works and healing ministry that God performed through Him (Acts 2:22;10:38).

It is important to see that **we, too, have been anointed by the Holy Spirit** (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 Jn. 2:20,27). Whether or not people recognize it, **the presence of the Spirit in our lives is what makes us qualified and capable as servant-ministers of the new covenant** (2 Cor. 3:2-6). **His empowerment and leading is what matters.** Not human credentials!

What is the agenda of the Spirit? What does He want to be doing through our lives? “He has anointed me to...”

“...to bring good news to the poor...” This is often understood as “preaching”, but the Hebrew does not specify that. Not all of us are “preachers”, but we can still be used by God to “bring the good news” in other ways. Also, **the “poor” here are not just the economically needy. It refers to people who are “meek, humble”, ...folks who know they are in need and looking for answers.** The Greek Septuagint translation uses the same word as Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount, “...blessed are the poor (beggarly, those who are needy and calling for help) in Spirit” (Matt. 5:3).

“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted...” These are people whose hearts and lives have been shattered. Our job is to come alongside them and “bandage them up”, ...like pulling a wound together so that it can heal. We are to offer support and care for their wounded, hurting souls. This requires a deeper level of care than simply sharing the good news. **These people have had their lives splintered and broken. They need help pulling themselves together again. God sends His anointed, Spirit-led people to care for those shattered by life.**

“...to proclaim release to captives...” We get to be the ones to liberate those who have been held captive. Note that **this is a word of proclamation, but those imprisoned must choose to leave the prison, and walk away from their former captors.** In Jesus’ ministry we see the application to those who have been dominated by the devil. He rebuked the unclean spirits, and drove them out. The Spirit of Yahweh is upon us for that same emancipation. We can declare what Jesus has now accomplished for them on the cross. He redeemed them from bondage by His shed blood, and He is willing to lead them to freedom through the resurrection life of the Spirit. **He has equipped us to expose the lies and deception of the enemy, and bring every thought captive to obedience to Christ** (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

“...to proclaim the year of Yahweh’s favor...” Again, this is a word of declaration. **We are to let people know that God has a time of favor and grace for those who will humbly come to Him,** and are willing to acknowledge Him as Lord. This is *not* an open-ended, limitless opportunity. This is “an acceptable time”, ...or “an opportunity to be accepted”. It is available “today”. Those who put it off, or reject, may not have another opportunity. Our job is to proclaim that God has opened the way for them. We cannot compel them to respond. That is their choice.

“...and [to proclaim] the day of vengeance of our God...” There will come a time when the offer of grace or favor will be withdrawn. **The “year of God’s favor” will give way to “the day of vengeance”. We are responsible to let people know that aspect of reality, as well.** God has made a way, ...and He has extended an offer..., but those who put off responding to Him, or reject His offer outright, may find themselves facing judgment without the grace and advocacy of Christ. “The one who believes and trusts in the Son of God will receive eternal life; but the one who does not obey (or, stubbornly-resists) the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” (Jn. 3:36).

“...to comfort all who mourn...” The word for “mourn”, in both the Hebrew and Greek versions, refers to heavy emotion, expressed outwardly in tears, sighs, groans, and in actions expressing one’s pain, such as fasting, tearing out one’s hair, putting dust or ashes on one’s head, and tearing one’s garments. There would be weeping, sometimes wailing, and loud crying to God. **Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Those who hide their pain will receive no comfort.** Those who are willing to abandon their pride in appearance and self-restraint, and allow themselves to be honest, vulnerable and raw, give themselves to pour out their pain and their petitions to God. **God has called His “anointed ones” to come alongside to comfort those who mourn.** To do that, **we must be willing to grieve with them, weep with them, and graciously hear them out.** As we are present with them in their pain, and offer consolation, we are commissioned and empowered to give them “glory instead of ashes”. Some translations render this as “beauty” or even a “turban” or “crown”, but the Greek translation uses the word “glory”. **The point is, transformation from deep despair and emptiness to joy and fullness.** We are to give “the oil of gladness instead of mourning” and a “covering of praise instead of a spirit of dullness, dimness or apathy”. We are called to lift their minds, hearts and spirits to the Lord, so that they can be filled with joy and delight in Him.

“...so they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh, so that He may be glorified.” Transformation! **Our ministry is to lift up the hurt and wounded, bind them up, set them free, fill them with joy in the Lord. They, then, will go on to do great things, ...they will rebuild, repair, and restore others, ...to the glory of Yahweh!**