

## By God's grace He calls us to greater work in the Kingdom of God / January 11

Texts: Isaiah 6:1-13, Jeremiah 1:1-10, Jonah 1:1-16, 3:1-10, Luke 5:1-11, Matthew 9:9-13

(This service is designed to be read with music after major parts. The music allows what has been read to penetrate into people's hearts and for music to reinforce what was just read.)

Begin with prayer...

**Reader 1 couple 1** – Today we will look at the call of some of God's greatest heroes of the Bible and what we can learn from their call in the Kingdom. The Lord has a great call for "Light of Christ" and everyone here as individuals. Wow isn't that amazing to think about. What will you do with the call God has given you...what soil is your heart made of? The Lord both invites and challenges us as He calls us forward in the Kingdom of God and walks with us into the great harvest field like Esther 4:14 *For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"* Like Esther we have a great opportunity to lead people to Jesus during these last days for such a time as this. When Christ calls a man, "says Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 'he bids him come and die.' There are different kinds of dying, it is true; but the essence of discipleship is contained in those words.

One of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament was Isaiah and his call is in Isaiah 6:1-13. Isaiah's ministry takes place during the stormy period of the expansion of the Assyrian empire and the decline of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Although God prevented the Assyrians from conquering the Southern Kingdom of Judah; Isaiah was called to warn Judah that her sin would bring captivity at the hands of Babylon. As you listen to the call of Isaiah notice that when in the holiness of God what is his reaction? Why does he say that he is ruined?

Be aware of Isaiah's response to God's call, "Here I am send me!" Also note that although he has a great call and is a great prophet people are not going to drop everything and embrace the words of God spoken through Isaiah...his ministry would be difficult and people's hearts would be hard.

**Reader 2 couple 1 - Isaiah 6:1-13** *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and*

*the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" 9 He said, "Go and tell this people: "'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' 10 Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." 11 Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?" And he answered: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, 12 until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. 13 And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."*

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**Reader 3 couple 2** - Now we turn to the call of another great Old Testament prophet Jeremiah often called the weeping prophet who ministered to the people of Israel right before they went into captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah had a very difficult ministry and people's hearts were not very receptive to His ministry yet God placed him in Israel to lead the people to repentance. In these verses God tells Jeremiah he has been set apart. To be holy is to be set apart and as believers in Jesus you too have been set apart.

**Jeremiah 1:1-10** - *The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. 2 The word of the LORD came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, 3 and through the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile. 4 The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." 6 "Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." 7 But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD. 9 Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I*

*have put my words in your mouth. 10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."*

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**Reader 4 couple 2** - Our last prophet of the Old Testament we want to examine is Jonah the reluctant prophet who let his own personal dislike for the Assyrians get in his way of seeing that they too needed a Saviour, they too needed to repent. When God calls us to deeper things are you and I a little like Jonah?

**Jonah 1:1-16** *The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." 3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD. 4 Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. 5 All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. 6 The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish." 7 Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" 9 He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land." 10 This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.) 11 The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?" 12 "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you." 13 Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. 14 Then they cried to the LORD, "O LORD, please do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, O LORD, have done as you pleased." 15 Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. 16 At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.*

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**Reader 1 couple 3-** After Jonah is swallowed by a large fish he cries out to the Lord in prayer.

Have you ever had a time when the Lord told you to do something and you delayed what God told you? Note as we look at chapter 3 of Jonah God gives him a second chance. Don't be surprised if God has called you...you have put it on hold but God keeps calling you. Why does he do that? He longs to have you involved in his work and he knows whatever he has told you is good for you and for those he is trying to touch through you.

*Jonah 3:1-10 - Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." 3 Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city-- a visit required three days.*

*4 On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." 5 The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. 6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.*

*7 Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." 10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.*

God is calling all of us today in such a time of this so destruction does not come upon people.

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**Reader 2 couple 3 -** Just a few weeks ago we looked at the call of Peter in the New Testament. He was a fisherman and now the Lord calls him to be fisher of men and to take them from death (spiritually dead) to life (alive in Christ.) What are you willing to give up to respond to God's call?

*Luke 5:1-11 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, 2 he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to*

come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

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**Reader 3 couple 4** - Our final call is a man by the name of Matthew know as a tax collector. Matthew 9:9-13- *As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. 10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

When Matthew was called he invited many of his friends who were just like him to meet Jesus. Take some time to focus on Matthew 9:12-13. What is God saying to you in these verses. As we close let us turn to grace God's undeserved love won for us on the cross at Calvary.

**Reader 4 couple 4 – The Conclusion** - Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. Above all it is costly because it cost God the life of his son. You were bought at a price, and what has cost God cannot be cheap to us.

Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says; *'My yoke is easy and my burden is light.'*

In the midst of our spiritual walk never forget that our Saviour loved us so much he paid for us with His blood and you are a beloved child of God. Amen.