



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

## **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

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### **Sacrifice of Service Part 2**

Today it is our privilege to ordain and install two new deacons unto the service of Christ's Kingdom. We must NOT take this merely as a "neat time" in the life of two men and their families rather we must take this a most glorious time in our own lives and the ministry of this church. Speaking of you and individual members of the body of Christ- Paul said,

Ephesians 4:7-8, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. [What gift is that? Quoting from Psalm 68:8 Paul wrote...] 'When He ascended on high,

He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.”

This is so wonderful! God is a giving Lord who blesses each of us with gifts and abilities unto the building up of the body of Christ (cf. 1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 12:7)! Now of all the gifts God has given to us don't miss the first gift mentioned by Paul in Ephesians 4, it is the gift of leadership!

Ephesians 4:11-12, “And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”

In this regard, we have seen that a facet of the gift of pastoral care is the ministry of physical service, which in Acts 6 God established as a separate and unique calling in the body of Christ. In fact, the Greek word for “deacon” comes from δίακονος (*diakonos*) which is the Greek word for “service.” From all of this we conclude that any time a deacon is ordained/installed in a congregation we must view that as a personal gift from God and so a nudging of love from the Lord!

That is from the perspective of the congregation! Yet for the deacon- the called servants of God- there is more. For wrapped up in this calling is the reality that their ministry (our ministry) is to sinners who won't be grateful, BUT instead will receive our labor as an expected sacrifice!

As we have looked at the setting of Christ washing the disciples feet we saw that from the perspective of God, it should have been a celebration of purity. Recall, that is what Passover/the Feast of Unleavened Bread were all about! As an eight-day feast, the focus began with a celebration of God's grace (Passover) after which it transitioned into a celebration of purity (the Feast of Unleavened Bread)!

In stark contrast from the perspective of Satan we learn that this particular Passover was a celebration of evil. At this time a man plunged to the most wicked/evil level any man could dare imagine, much less do! We are told in this text that on two separate occasions Satan entered into Judas: right before Christ washed the disciples' feet (Luke 22:3) and right after (John 13:27)! This means that the service to which Christ calls us was offered to a man who was eviler than any man ever was or will be! From this we concluded that there is NO condition or limit when it comes to the call to serve those in the Jerusalem in which we live.

Finally, we saw that the setting of Christ's washing of the disciples' feet was also a celebration of folly when looked at from the perspective of the disciples! What were they doing as Christ humbled Himself to the point of a servant? They were arguing regarding who was the greatest, for none of them wanted to serve (cf. Luke 22:24)! It was in this context we read that Christ “rose from supper and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about” (v. 4) and washed their feet!

How is it that Christ could do this? What is it that enabled Him as a man to sacrifice so much for such wicked/foolish people? This brings us to Christ's conviction. Three times in this passage we are informed as to what Jesus "knew"<sup>1</sup>, which gives us the thought process that drove our Lord in His service here. Notice the first conviction that enabled Christ to serve the disciples began with the knowledge of the sovereignty of God's timing.

John 13:1, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus KNOWING that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father..."

Christ ministered ever mindful that a good God sovereignly ruled over this earth and therefore where our Lord was and what He was doing was according to God's divine plan! And this Passover meal was no exception!

A powerful transformation occurs in our lives when we understand that:

1. "The nations are as a drop from a bucket" before God (Isaiah 40:15a)!
2. The most powerful man or individual is but "a speck of dust" (Psalm 103:14; Isaiah 40:15b)! We in our greatness are but a "vapor of smoke that appears for a little time" (James 4:14)!
3. "The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes" (Proverbs 21:1)!

Indeed, anything and everything that could ever occur in our lives is according to powerful outworking of God's Sovereign plan! It was this truth that brought great comfort to the early church. Recall the disciple's prayer after being persecuted:

Acts 4:27-29, "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus [not us], whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel [God put them in place, not man], to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. [what therefore becomes the passion?] And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence."

Adopt this mindset and serving an evil or difficult person will be no difficulty at all! For after all, our service ultimately is directed at Christ (Colossians 3:23-24)!

Notice the second conviction that led Christ is the knowledge that He possessed the riches of God's supply.

John 13:3a, "Jesus, KNOWING that the Father had given all things into His hands..."- I love this! Christ knew that He had anything and everything He needed in order to be the man God called Him to be and so to serve during the sweet and bitter providences of His life!<sup>2</sup> God the Father had given "all things into His hands."

This included:

- (a) Charge over the Angelic hosts of heaven, Matthew 26:53,
- (b) Authority over the king- and therefore Pilate and even Caesar, Romans 13:1-3,
- (c) Power over all flesh, John 17:2,
- (d) Control over the large movements of divine providence as well as the insignificant movement of a piece of dust in a sunbeam, Hebrews 1:3.

Christ had:

- (a) Charge over the Spirit of God, John 3:34,
- (b) The authority to give life to whomever He willed, John 5:26, as well as
- (c) Complete and total charge over the disciples, John 6:37–39; 10:29; 17:6, 9, 12, 24; 18:9.

In fact, we are told that He was in absolute control when it came to the cup He was ordained to drink (John 18:11)! All of this had been given to Christ the Son! No wonder it was with strength that Jesus laid aside His garments, took up the basin and towel, and served!

Such is the strength we also have when it comes to Kingdom ministry! While we do NOT have the authority NOR the power of Christ, we are assured in Scripture that we HAVE been given all that we need to fulfill that which God gives us each and every moment of our lives!

Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.”

If you have Christ, you have the riches of God’s supply and so everything you need in order to fulfill your calling today! Peter told his persecuted brethren:

2 Peter 1:3, “...[God’s] divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”

At our disposal this moment is all that we need to live the life God has called us to live as well as to grow in His grace. Talk about the riches of God’s supply! And yet, how does this translate to ministry? To answer this, consider the exhortation Christ gave the disciples and so us through them:

Luke 12:11-12, “And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not become anxious about how or what you should speak in your defense, or what you should say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

Hebrews 4:16, God gives us, “...grace to help in time of need.”

The event that occurred just prior to Christ’s walking on the water was the feeding of the five

thousand. It had been a long day of ministry and the disciples were exhausted. It was getting late and the disciples each knew that in short order, the crowds would be gone, and they finally would be able to enjoy some down time with Jesus. Accordingly, the disciples encouraged the Lord, "The place is desolate, and the time is already past; so send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves" (Matthew 14:15b).

Christ's response no doubt was the last thing the disciples wanted to hear, "They do not need to go away; you give them *something* to eat!" (Matthew 14:16)

*"But Christ, we're tired! We've been ministering all day! We're hungry as well!"* How well we understand the question they no doubt were thinking, *"What about us and our needs?!"*<sup>3</sup>

In this regard, consider the lesson Christ gave the disciples in Matthew 14! After serving the over 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish, what was left over for them? We read this:

Matthew 14:20, "And they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets"

A basket full of bread for each disciple! Personally speaking, I've seen this so many times in my life. God is able to multiply your strength, patience, wisdom, and gifts in the context of ministry — if only you avail yourself to the Lord and so minister in the Spirit and NOT the flesh! When we do this, God does the rest!

This brings us to the third and final conviction which impelled Christ in His service, the certainty of one's security.

John 13:3b, "Jesus, KNOWING that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God."

Never did Christ question what awaited Him following His time of service on this earth! We read this:

Hebrews 12:2b, "...who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame..."

His ultimate destiny was never in question in Christ's mind! In fact, on the cross just before God's wrath was fully vented upon our Lord, Jesus looked at one of the thieves hanging next to Him and said this:

Luke 23:43, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

No doubt Christ could remember the fellowship He enjoyed with the Father from eternity. Accordingly, as He approached His death there was not one doubt as to the fellowship He once

again would enjoy with the Father and His blood bought children. Remember the conviction of THE Servant of God:

Isaiah 49:4, "But I said, "I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely the justice *due* to Me is with the Lord, and My reward with My God."

It was knowledge of this glorious future that impelled Christ in His ministry- it was "...the joy set before Him..." that enabled Him to "...endure the cross, despising the shame..." (Hebrews 12:2). And Christian, in the ministry given to you by the Lord this day, that too is what you have!

Remember the truth Peter gave his persecuted brethren as to their future? He said that the day was coming in which Christ would publicly commend them for their service (cf. 1 Peter 1:7) — at which time they would receive those glorious words, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21, 23)!

As that is our certain future, set your focus this day on the prize of the upward call of God. Gaze richly upon this throughout your ministry. And at the end of the day, when the question of whether or not the sacrifice was worth it, you will be able to say with David Livingstone these words:

People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blest reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink, but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in, and for, us.  
(Livingstone, December 4, 1857)

Such was the conviction that led Christ in His service. Yet what is it that empowered Him to stoop so low? We know how the acts of sacrifice arose... so what was the strength behind it?

## References

Livingstone, D. (December 4, 1857). Cambridge University. *Cambridge University Speeches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## End Note(s)

<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris wrote, "Again John stresses Jesus' command of the situation. He knew what was taking place (see on 2:24; 4:18)." (*The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, p. 546)

<sup>2</sup> In fact, He knew this from the beginning, cf. John 3:35!

<sup>3</sup> Ministry can bring us to this point! Think of Christ in John 13... while His disciples were arguing about who the greatest amongst them was, Jesus was thinking of the cross for as we just saw, "His time had come!" So indeed! What about Christ's needs?!!