

Ordination Service
John 13:1-17
Hebrews 9:3-4
“When its NOT About You”

Introduction

Over the past several weeks we have been studying the book of **2 Timothy**, where we saw the Apostle Paul chained to a wall, awaiting his execution. However, his final thoughts were not for himself, as one might expect, but rather he was solely focused upon the continuance of The Kingdom of God. At a time when a man's death was eminent, most of us would expect to find him consumed with fear and dread and not with purpose and determination. This kind of mindset just does not come naturally, but rather supernaturally. And where did the Apostle Paul find such passion for Kingdom work in his final hours? From Christ, that's who!

Today we will be ordaining a man to be an elder of the Greeneville Campus of Freedom Fellowship. The office of elder is the highest office that a man can attain in the church today, unless of course you subscribe to the doctrine of Roman Catholicism. An Elder according to scripture must be “above reproach” (**1 Timothy 3:2**); which means, he must follow closely the teachings of the Christian faith. In short, His life must reflect his belief, or in a more common way of speaking, his walk must match his talk. In the ways of this world, the higher a person climbs, the more people are compelled to serve him. This may be the way that the world does it, but it is the polar opposite of Christianity. Jesus teaches us that in the Kingdom of Heaven, the **“greatest must become a servant” (Matthew 20:26)**. Again, this is a mindset that does not come naturally, but rather, supernaturally.

The night before he went to the cross, Jesus was more concerned for His disciples than He was for Himself. Much like we saw in the attitude of the Apostle Paul, Jesus, as He awaited his own execution, was far more concerned with the final instructions for His disciples than He was about His imminent suffering and death. Christ has set for us the ultimate example of selfless sacrifice and service. He, Who is God of the universe, was willing to endure the most horrific torture imaginable, because of His great love for His own. THAT is Christian leadership, to be willing to empty one's very self for the betterment of others. This is what it truly means to be “great” in The Kingdom of Heaven.

In **John 13**, we see Christ in the upper room preparing to share the Seder (Passover) with His disciples. As they all are about to recline around the table, Jesus, The LORD of Glory, does something that must have completely shocked the disciples. He strips off His outer robe and wraps a towel around himself and begins to wash the feet of his followers! In their culture, this would have been a task assigned to the lowest of slaves, to was the feet of the guests coming for supper. But Christ, joyfully takes up the cloth and wash basin to cleanse the filthy feet of His own. What a sermon without a word! Is it any wonder that Peter was so very shocked by this act that he initially refused to allow The Savior to touch his dirty feet. But Jesus admonished him saying, **“Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me.”** To which Peter, broken by those words, offered to let Jesus give him a complete sponge bath! Peter had misunderstood the spiritual implication of the “foot washing”, but Christ told him that one day he would understand.

If a person has truly been “washed clean” by the precious blood of Christ, then he shall never be dirty again, for we have already had our spiritual “bath” in Christ, and our sins are forever forgiven. But our feet... well that's another story. You see, as we walk through this wicked world, our spiritual “feet” come in contact with much uncleanness. We still sin from time to time, due to the filth that is so very prevalent around us. When we sin, we lose our close communion with Christ. This is why we must confess our sins and be cleansed from all unrighteousness (**1 John 1:9**). In other words, we must go to Jesus very often to get our “feet washed”. We don't need to be “bathed again”, we just need a spiritual “freshening up”, as it were. That is why Jesus told Peter he didn't need a bath, but he certainly needed a good foot-washing!

Jesus told His disciple that if they would watch and learn from the example He set for them by washing their feet, then they would be truly blessed (**vs. 17**). The word there for “blessed” basically means “happy”. You see, the most miserable people in this world are the ones that The Apostle Paul

called “lovers of themselves” (**2 Timothy 3:2**), but the person who lives to serve the needs of others will find true happiness. It is the way that we were designed to function at the highest level. How do I know this? Because Jesus SAID SO!

Today, as I stated earlier, we are ordaining an elder here at the church. To be an elder is to be a servant of all. It is to be willing to be a foot-washer, a person who will be ever-willing to put his own needs and desires secondary to the needs of others. It is a calling, and not a choice, for no one can serve in this way unless they have first been filled and commissioned by The Holy Spirit. Today, as I preach the elders charge, I would like to use the contents of The Ark of The Covenant, as a spiritual example of what will be required to serve in the capacity that Jesus would have us, as leaders of His Body, to serve. To be a selfless servant of The Kingdom, one must have: 1) The Calling of God; 2) The Provision of God; and 3) The Word of God. Please allow me to explain.

God's Calling

I have always been fascinated with The Old Testament scriptures. One thing that I have learned over the course of my ministry is that it is nearly impossible to fully grasp the teachings of The New Testament, without a firm grasp upon The Old Testament. A very familiar symbol in the Old Testament was The Ark of The Testimony (Ark of The Covenant). It was a small wooden box overlaid with gold. It had two angels with their wings outstretched upon the cover which was called “the mercy seat”. The Ark was always carried by the priest, in front of the assembly of the Israelites, as they moved through the wilderness in their forty year journey that eventually led them to the promised land. It represented the very presence of God (His Throne) going before His people wherever they went.

The *Book of Hebrews* (**Hebrews 9:3-4**) tells us that there were three items that God had commanded the priest to keep inside The Ark at all times. Of all the things The LORD could have chosen to be placed within The Ark of the Testimony, He chose only these three: Aaron's staff, a Jar of Manna, and The Ten Commandments inscribed upon the tablets of stone. I believe that EACH of these three items have incredible significance for any man who would lead God's people. They represent God's Calling, God's Provision, and God's Word. Let us now look to these items one by one, as I attempt to explain their significance to the man of God.

The first item, Aaron's staff, was placed into the Ark as a representation of God's CALLING. You see, when God chose Moses to lead Israel and Aaron to be the first ever High Priest over the nation, some of the people complained against Moses and Aaron. These rebels, led by a man named Korah, felt that they were much more qualified than Moses and Aaron to lead the people, and what started out as quiet murmuring and complaining, eventually escalated into a full scale rebellion. God put a stop to the uprising by causing the earth to open up and swallow Korah and his fellow conspirators in the sight of all the people (**Numbers 16**). Needless to say, this pretty much silenced the critics, who were complaining against God's anointed leadership! But God took it one step further. He wanted the people to know without question that He, and He alone, had chosen Aaron as His High Priest. The LORD instructed Moses to have the princes of all twelve tribes to inscribe their names upon their staffs and lay them in front of The Ark of The Testimony. Aaron's staff was to represent him as prince of the tribe of Levi. When it was done, God caused Aaron's staff to bud, blossom, and produce almonds, as if it were a living tree. This would signify in the sight of all the people that God had indeed “called” Aaron to be the High priest of Israel. The branch that was dead came to life again (That is a picture of Christ, in case you missed it.), and after that, no one could argue with regard to just whom God had chosen to lead His people.

The spiritual significance of this is evident for all to see. No one can “call themselves” into the ministry! Without the calling of God, any attempt to shepherd God's people will end in dismal failure. I have seen it time and again; people who have somehow convinced themselves that the ministry is a good place to gain prominence, or advance their own agendas. Just like Korah and the others who rebelled against Moses and Aaron, God will not allow these people to succeed. Only God can call a man to the ministry, and only God can cause a man to “bear fruit” in the work of The Kingdom (**John 15**). To be successful as a leader of God's people, one must have the CALLING of God upon his life. This calling will also be evident to the people whom he has been called to lead. For just as God made His calling of Aaron evident to all the people, He will also make it evident to The Church, when He calls His servants to

positions of leadership. For this reason, when we ordain a man into church ministry, other ordained men will “lay their hands” upon him to signify that we can clearly see the call of God upon his life. Without God’s obvious, and public calling, no one can succeed in ministry. We MUST have God’s Calling, for apart from Him we can do nothing!

God’s Provision

When the children of Israel were traveling through the wilderness, God miraculously provided manna (the word means “what is it”) for them to eat. Each morning the manna would lie upon the ground like a morning frost. The Israelites would gather the manna and use it to make food. This Bible tells us that it had a sweet taste like wafers with honey. The people would pound it into a flour that they used to make cakes. They had to gather it each day, for it would spoil if they kept it overnight. The only day that they could keep it overnight was Friday so that they would not have to gather it on The Sabbath day of rest. God miraculously allowed the manna to be kept only for that one night. The manna also had to be gathered promptly in the morning, for it would melt away from the heat of the sun. God instructed Moses to place a jar of manna in the Ark of The Testimony, to be kept as a reminder of God’s daily provision for His people.

Just as God provided manna as provision for His children in the wilderness, Christ also promises to provision those whom he has chosen to lead in ministry. Apart from God’s provision, a leader in the church is destined to fail. You cannot “do ministry” in the flesh. Many have tried to rely on their own intellect, talents, and other worldly resources, as a substitute for The Holy Spirit of God when attempting to do ministry. This will lead to disastrous results within The Body of Christ. Do you ever wonder why Jesus calls so many ordinary people to follow Him? Because they realize that they must rely upon his provision in order to succeed! Do you ever feel ordinary and plain, with no real superlative qualities that make you stand out in a crowd? Then congratulations! You are JUST the type of person that God can use! When we have nothing to bring to the table but our own flawed selves, then Christ alone gets the glory for all that we accomplish. I love what the New Testament says about Peter and John’s teaching in **Acts Chapter four: “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).** Isn’t that a GREAT verse!! You see, all the power that Peter and John needed was given to them daily by Jesus Himself! They knew that they couldn’t handle their ministry duties in their own flesh, they had to be provisioned DAILY by Christ. Just like He provided manna of the children of Israel, He also gives His anointed leaders the daily provision that they need to succeed in ministry. This is why He promises us in **John 15**, that if we will **“abide in Him”** (by having our daily time of prayer and Bible study), then He will provision us and make us fruitful (successful). No need to worry about the results! Just rely on Jesus for your daily provision.

By the way, The Manna is also a picture of Christ in the Old Testament:

It was small - A picture of Christ’s humility.

It was round - It had no beginning or end.

It was white - A picture of His sinlessness.

It was sweet - Oh taste and see that The LORD is good (**Psalms 34:8**).

It was nourishing for food - Jesus is the Bread of Life.

It came down from heaven - Jesus is The Bread of Life that came down from Heaven.

It was unlike anything they had ever seen -

Jesus is the One and Only Begotten Son of God.

It came to them even though they had sinned against God -

Jesus came to save that which was lost.

It was only available for a limited time -

If you do not accept Jesus while there is still time, then you will be forever lost in your sin.

The lesson that we must learn here is that Christ IS our daily provision. **If we abide in Him, then we will bear fruit: fruit that will last (John 15:16)**. Let no one try to do ministry apart from Him, God's daily provision. Stay connected to Christ and make a lasting difference!

God's Holy Word

The actual Hebrew word for the "Ark of the Covenant", literally means "Ark of The Testimony". Why? Because it was constructed primarily to contain the original stone tablets of the ten commandments. These commandments were the "testimony" of God. They were given to Moses so the people could live according to God's Law. Today, we not only have the Ten Commandments, but the complete Word of God contained in *The Old and New Testaments*. The Word of God reveals to us His Nature, His Purposes, and His Ways. The Word of God is the most important thing that a believer can know in order to live a life that is pleasing to God. Very close to the center of your Bible you will find **Psalms 119**. It is centered in *The Bible*, it is the longest chapter in *The Bible*, and it is all ABOUT *The Bible*! One of my favorite verses in all of scripture is **Psalms 119:165** which says; **"Great peace have they, that love Thy Law and NOTHING shall offend them."** What an awesome verse! It basically assures us that if we know the Word of God and live by it, then there is nothing out there that can catch us unawares and trip us up! I don't know about you, but I, for one, could certainly benefit from that kind of wisdom!

Is it any wonder then, that one of the primary qualities that an elder must possess is that an elder **"MUST be able to teach" (found in 1 Timothy Chapter 3:2)**. Teach what? The Word of God, that's what! Anyone who would be a leader in the church will only be qualified to lead, if they can teach others the Word of God. The Great Commission of The Church (**Matthew 28:16-20**) tells us that we are to make disciples by **"teaching them all the things that Jesus has commanded us"**. That means that we are required to teach others The Word of God. Jesus, according to **John Chapter 1**, is the very embodiment of The Word of God. **"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:14)**. The only effective way to know Christ is to know His Word. The Word reveals Him to us better than any thing else ever could. I meet people all the time who claim to "know" Jesus, but they spend very little time in His Word. To know Christ IS to know His Word. The only way to have a deeper and meaningful relationship with Christ is to have a daily time of prayer and Bible study. Wanna be closer to God? Get in the Word of God, my friends. Study it, meditate on it, pray over it, and walk in it. This is how we can walk with Jesus and come to know Him intimately. He tells us that if we love Him, then we will obey His commands (**John 14:15**). That implies that we have to KNOW what they are before we can obey them. Anyone, who would be a leader in God's Church, MUST study, then walk according to The Word of God.

So there you have it. The three part recipe for being an effective leader of God's holy people. You must have God's CALLING, God's PROVISION, and God's HOLY WORD. These are the common traits of the Man of God that will leave a lasting legacy of faith. These are the things that The LORD requires that each of us to possess. Then, we are to use them to serve others, putting their needs ahead of our own. If we strive to live like that, then we will be more and more like the Savior, who gave His life and set us apart for his Holy purpose. I want to be that kind of Christian. How about you?

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!!