

Deacons (4)— The Ordination and Success of the Deacon

2022.05.08 Morning Sermon in Acts 6:5–7

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Main idea: Deacons are ordained as an offering by the hands of the congregation, committed into the hands of almighty God to use, as designated by the hands of those who came before them in a succession that traces back to Christ Himself. Their success is discovered in the effectual, numerical, and miraculous increase of the Word of God.

⁵ And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

⁷ Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Introduction: Review of the purpose of the diaconate, the work of the diaconate, the qualifications of the diaconate. Finally, the ordination of the diaconate and the success of the diaconate. What is the process by which a congregant becomes a deacon? And what is the success that we're hoping for from a properly qualified, motivated, ordained, functioning diaconate?

1. Ordination of the diaconate: process by which congregants become deacons

- a. Training
 - i. Spiritual training for the whole congregation in public and in every house.
 - ii. Diaconate-specific instruction for the whole congregation. The instructions “pleased the whole multitude”
- b. Consideration. “They chose...” —there is a process by which a congregation identifies and agrees upon whom to set before the apostles. This process should include those qualifications about which we heard in the previous sermon, including their being tested.
- c. Designation. “whom they set before the apostles” (“from among” them, v3). The conclusion of the process, when the identity of the deacons is confirmed in a final way, is actually a very serious commitment from the congregation and should communicate to the deacon that in his office he belongs first to God and under God for the people but not to himself. He is a servant, who has been handed back and forth in a transaction.
 - i. The deacons are a gift from God to the congregation, but also a gift from the congregation to God. Everything that goes into considering and selecting is a service unto God. We must never “play politics” with such a process, and we must never put forward a man out of felt obligation to him or desire not to hurt feelings, etc.
 - ii. The congregation give up their right to the deacons; the deacons give up the right to themselves with respect to their office.
 - iii. Like other offerings unto God, their ministry is consecrated. Their authority exists for service to maintain the people, free the ministers, and support the ministry of the Word. If they use their authority in another way, it's like using a consecrated thing for something other than its sacred purpose.

- iv. From the congregation's hands.
- d. Prayer. "when they had prayed"
 - i. It's not the apostles who accept the deacons but God
 - ii. Divine enterprise looking for divine results by divine power
 - iii. Those who are accustomed to pray always will also pause for solemn prayer upon significant occasions
 - iv. If they needed to pray, then we do too
 - v. Into the Lord's hands
- e. Ordination and Installation. "they laid hands on them"
 - i. From the congregation's hands, committed to the Lord's hands, by the laying on of the apostles' hands. An offering unto God from the people by the hands of their clergy (cf. Num 8:10). Behind it is the idea of "what was in me and mine, let it be given unto you."
 - ii. Public indication/recognition of transfer/sharing of authority. Elders would continue this laying on of hands (cf. 1Tim 4:14), as well as apostles (cf. 2Tim 1:6), which put the "gift of God" in a man.
 - iii. A show of succession (cf. Num 27:18, Deut 34:9). A way of saying, "may they continue beyond us, and may the Lord use them just as He has used us and more." A chain of succession all the way back to Christ, so that we will receive and submit to them as from Christ, and look to and praise Christ for their faithfulness.
 - iv. A commissioning into specific service (cf. 9:17, 13:3). We now call this "installation"—a term that is perhaps more widely known now because of computer software.
 - v. Something that the Lord expects to be some of the "basics of the faith" but (like other basics) the knowledge of which has fallen upon hard times in our sad days.

2. **Success of the diaconate: increase of the Word of God**

- a. Effectual increase. "the Word of God increased/grew"—the word is an agricultural word more than a geography word. The effect that they were already seeing, they now see more of. What they had seen in early stages came to more maturity.
- b. Numerical increase. "the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem"—the increase in number had already been great to this point. And a further increase in number was a factor in the problem that had occasioned the diaconate. But now they multiplied greatly even beyond that.
- c. Miracle increase. The hardest cases. "a great many of the priests"—those secure in their religious place and service, upon whom neither preaching, nor signs and wonders, nor the favor that the apostles had with the people had yet prevailed.

Conclusion: Does this passage not please this congregation? Let us follow His plan, find Him faithful, and seek from Him this sort of success for our diaconate.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Acts chapter 6 verses 5 through 7. These are the words of God and the saying please the whole multitude and they chose Stephen. A man full of faith and the Holy Spirit and Philip progress. Nicknor Timon, permanence and Nicholas across the light from Antioch whom they set before the Apostles.

And when they had prayed, they laid hands on them, then the Word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied, greatly in Jerusalem, and the great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. Amen. Thus ends rate, this reading of the words of God, please be seated.

So we come now to a fourth time and perhaps by God's help final time of considering the ordination of the first diaconate, We saw it first their purpose that there was a necessity to free up the ministry of the word and prayer, which is the ministry, by which the Lord Jesus, by His Spirit, gathers to himself, those whom he for whom, he has died and risen and ascended, and is seated.

Now on the throne of glory, and the ministry by which the Lord Jesus builds up into himself. Those whom he has gathered. And so the purpose was to free them up for this. And then the work then was to take care of those things that are necessary because we are still earthly and because we are still sinners.

There are a number of things just for the maintenance of human life and then earthly things that are necessary for the maintenance of the gathering and the worship of the church and the ministry of the word. And so the work of the Diaconate is to oversee the use and service of earthly.

Things by the church, The youth, you the use of and service in earthly things by the church. And then we saw the qualifications last Lord's Day The qualifications of the diaconate largely same things, in which we hope to see every believer growing man, woman boy, and girl, especially first and foremost, a delight in the word itself, and that ministry of the word that the deacons work is supposed to facilitate that ministry, which is the primary thing that the Holy Spirit has been doing thus far in the book of Acts.

And therefore, the primary thing that we reading in context here would rightly understand as being full of the Holy Spirit would be to be full of this true doctrine about the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, secondly, the formation of the character of this Christ, in those who believe this true doctrine about him.

So, that it would not be bare intellectual ideas, but an actual knowing of the Christ and not a mirror, knowing about the Christ. Whom if we know Him, we must become like Him. It is not a knowledge that can leave us as we were. And so there are fruits of the Holy Spirit.

And so having heard about the purpose of the diakonet and the work of the diaconate and the qualifications of the deacon that we come at last to these three verses, we take verse 5 again, this week to consider the ordination of the diaconate that process by which congregants become deacons, the ordination of the diaconate.

And then to consider that success of the diaconate in verse 7 which is the providential blessing of God upon his peoples obed. And therefore we serve in a way to recognize and call and install a diaconate in the way that God has said knowing that it receives its approval in Christ and that it is rightly done if it is done according to his word.

But also in hope that he who is pleased to bless the proper identifying and installing and work of the deacons in this way and at six and verse 7 would be pleased. So, to bless the proper calling and installing and work of the deactivate. Now today in his churches and for us, especially in our own congregation.

So the two big things that we'll be answering from the text this morning is what is the process by which a congregant to becomes a deacon And what is the success that we are hoping for from a properly qualified, motivated ordained and functioning? The Akinate First. Then the ordination of the diaton at the process by which congregants become deacons.

And the process is one that has already been going on before we get to our text. It's one that has been going on since the day of Pentecost, because the training of the deacon is not something that starts when the church looks around and everything's falling apart, or there are poor who are not being attended to or a complaint arises from the Hellenistic.

Widows over against the Hebraic, widows the training of the deacons if we're considering the qualifications well from last week. And if we're considering the the way it occurs in this passage, these men have largely already been trained. Haven't they The training of the deacons begins in that spiritual training for the whole congregation in public and in every house that we saw in chapter 5 and verse 42 and chapter 6, and verse 4, that is to say the whole congregation is continuously trained in the scriptures in order to have the doctrine in order to have the character in order to seek the success of the ministry of the word, and in order to seek that necessary things on earth be attended to.

Well, following Christ, The whole congregation is to have this training continually and then there is not, just the spiritual training for the whole congregation in public and treehouse. In other words, if discipleship is not taking place in a biblical way, you are not going to be able by a 13-week course.

And and a book study to produce deacons Deacons are produced by a lifetime in discipleship in the church. But then there is that diaconate specific instruction. And again it was given in this particular case to the whole congregation the apostles gathered, the multitude of the disciples verse 2, and they gave instruction about why a diakonet was necessary both to free them and what the diaconate would need to be doing as we have been hearing these last couple of weeks, and then receive instruction about the qualifications that the deacon or a candidate for this office should have.

And and so the entire the instructions, about the diagon itself are for the whole congregation and this makes a lot of sense because if you train deacons and how to oversee ministry in earthly things, and you don't train a congregation that they are to be overseen in the ministry of earthly things, then you have not, well prepared the church to be led even if you have somewhat prepared, the men who will lead.

And so there is in this case training for all. Now There is a place for more training when it comes to the next part of the process by which these congregants become deacons in this passage and that is consideration. And that consideration takes place in just two words here and one word in the Greek.

They chose, They chose the whole multitude was pleased with their instruction. They have received and understood and responded to the instruction. They have received about the necessity of and the work of and the qualifications of the Deacons. And now they move from being trained to considering whom the Lord has called to be deacon among them.

In order for them to choose their ought. There would need to be some sort of consideration. Together of what they have heard from the apostles, from those who minister the words to them and not only consideration together. But consideration of specific men, some observation and experience, and perhaps even comparing of notes, this would be something like what we heard in the midweek, sermon this week in Romans and thanking God for the good reputation of the faith of another.

And as we thank God together for the gracious work that he has done in particular men among us, We have some sort of process by which the congregation identifies and agrees upon whom to set before the apostles. It must, of course include those qualifications about which, we have heard in the previous sermon and ongoing, because this is not the only passage in which we have the process by which deacons are identified.

You'll remember last week, when we studied the qualifications, we noted from Titus chapter 3 that a deacon is already identified in his character, and in his ability, his wisdom, his skill in carrying out such oversight, First and foremost in his own household, but then also with testing in the congregation, let a man be tested first.

And if he is found blameless, then he enters into the work fully. And so there is there must be some process by which congregation identifies and agrees upon whom to set before. In this case, the elders. And we'll know when we get to the laying on of hands. And what Paul says, to Timothy about his installation to his office, that this is now something that is done by the elders of the church because we don't have apostles on earth anymore, that that there must be some sort of process.

This is why if you're a Presbyterian and and you have some sort of process and in each of the congregations, there's a slight amount of variance from one to another, but you might have nominations a request their arising, a need for more deacons. The session may request nominations having given instruction about the character so that they might be identified or perhaps if in the discussion among the congregation of the character of one man or another, they may even come to the session and propose.

We have recognized these qualifications about, which we have been instructed from the Word of God, in such and such a man. And then you may have something that because of the way it happens in the world feels

untoward and mundane and slimy. And it is our, it is our duty before God to do it in a way that does not imitate the world.

But reflects that he wants us to recognize whom he is calling and to agree upon upon those men together and to set them before Him. And before his ministers together, you might have a vote. Now this requires some restraint of our sin doesn't because in many congregations, the way it goes, is those with whom you are really friendly and whom you think might do a good job, looking out for your own interests and with whom, you may have even fallen into the sin of gossip in complaining, about things with them.

And they have done the Absalom outside of David's palace. And said, oh yeah, where are you from? Oh, he would ask them where they're from. He wouldn't let them bout any lift, you know, raise them up. He'd ask them what their case was about. And, you know, not his head real sympathetically and say, oh, if there were only someone in Israel who could do something about that for such a good and right case as you have, You know, You're not hopefully going to have such a insidious and underhanded type of interaction but we can still fall into seeking for positions of authority and administration.

Those whom we feel not most resemble, the qualifications that God has set forward and doctrine and character and wisdom and skill. But the ones who we think identify with and agree with the same complaints that we have and the ones that we have been friends with and then politics enters into the church and voting becomes, not a congregation agreeing together to celebrate the gracious work of God and the men whom he has prepared for the office.

But then voting becomes the the politics of trying to get the man you want instead of the man you don't want. And then we have abandoned God altogether and used his good office. And his way of giving us, the men whom he has called, to make ourselves the heads of the church and can each become a little King James?

I don't mean that just because I have in my own remaining sinfulness and referring to what I hope as a much worse James than I. The one who authorized a translation to get rid of the Geneva Bible so that he could be head of the church over, which he was losing his grip because of those pesky reformed study notes.

And we all want in some respect and our remaining sin to be a little King, James to be the one who decides, what's going to happen in the church. And we can even see the vote as a way to advance our own opinions and what to do about particular questions and about particular situations.

So, the process by which congregant congregants become deacons includes training spiritual and deaconate specific instruction for the entire congregation. And then consideration of some kind in which a consensus is achieved in recognizing, those whom the Lord is calling to the office. The consideration including the testing that is commanded in Titus chapter 3.

Sorry, Titus chapter 1. Did I say chapter 3 before? That is 3 is wonderful. But Titus one is the where we find the instruction on the diakonet, First Timothy 3, is a corresponding passage that has some qualifications. And then there is the designation once they have been recognized and identified and whatever mechanism by which the church does that.

And there's nothing wrong with having a vote for the purpose of identifying. In that way, there needs to be some mechanism. You know, surely there was some mechanism by which the multitude chose seven men. They did not miraculously all at once. Shout the same seven names together. That's the kind of myth that the Jews would come up with for how the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament came about. They said oh well, 70 scholars isolated themselves.

And each of them wrote a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament and they came out and compared notes. And they were all the same and they said, ah, we have the Septuagint, which is from the word for 70. No, there had to be some mechanism. It's okay to have a mechanism.

You follow God. According to his word as much as possible. But we we need to use the means that he has given us in his word and in his world. So there's training consideration. And then designation they set these men before the Apostles and they are setting before the Apostles, seven men, verse 3.

If we go back to verse 3 from among themselves, The apostles had said seek out from among you. And so this is in as it were in the form of an offering in numbers. Chapter 8, the those who were going to be ordained to particular office were set before the priests and the priests laid hands on them.

Numbers eight verse 10. They were presented to God as a wave offering. Now I'm assuming that this, you know, they're being remaining on the ground was good enough that they, the priests didn't have to actually pick up the men and waive them in front of God, like they would with a grain wave offering.

But this setting them before the apostles, it does come in the same sort of form, doesn't it as what they had been setting at the apostle's feet before This was the very thing that had become the occasion for the need of a in it. There were so many needy and the Holy Spirit was moving, so many to offer so much by setting it at the Apostle's feet.

Well, the deacons are now are going to be the ones who receive and oversee and administer the distribution. And yet, the congregation the last thing they come and they set before the apostles is not now money. But men This conclusion of the process with the identity of the deacons.

Now being confirmed in a final way by the congregation setting the men before them is a very serious commitment from the congregation just as when the you set the money before the Apostles feature saying to the Apostles. Now, this money that was mine, so long as I had it to remember what Peter said to to Ananias in the Fira, it was your the property was yours.

You didn't have to sell it and when you sold it, the the money was yours. You didn't have to give all of it or, or any of it, but when you, when they set it before, the Apostles are saying, you know, we no longer lay claim over this money to have done with it.

What we want. And so there's a recognition, When the men are put forward, and this goes over against the common way, in which many people vote for officers, doesn't it? You set the men before the ministers of God's Word and in a sense then therefore God himself who ministers his word through them.

And you say we no longer lay claim over these men for ourselves. They are now handed over to God for the purposes for which God wants. And so, it's a serious commitment from the congregation because they're agreeing to submit to the oversight of these men. That's what a, that's what a deacon is going to do.

He's going to oversee, the use of and service in earthly things by the congregation. This is why when the ARP a couple of years ago, started to reform the Office of Deacon to roll back the departure from biblical doctrine that had taken place in 1968 when women were admitted into the office of deacon.

And at that time, when the practice from our northern sister denomination, that had gone back even into the 1800s. It's always been a socially progressive sister denomination. When the practice was adopted, we tried to adopt some of their doctrine and we suddenly said, the Office of Deacon is not one of authority.

It's one of service. The word means servant except for there being set over this business here in Acts chapter 6. But when we went to Reform, it a couple of years ago in the ARP, the way that it ended up coming to, the Synod was there was a Presbytery that asked the Synod if it's an office of service, Why do the vows that the congregation takes, when a deacon is installed include vows to submit and debate submit to and obey them especially since in some of these congregations, women were being installed to the Office of Deacon.

And everyone was saying it's an office of service, it's an office of service And then you get to the ordination and installation you put them in the front and the minister starts reading the questions and one of the questions is to the congregation Do you and whatever the other language is and submit to and obey or get render all proper submission and obedience, I think is the actual language.

Why is the vowel like that? Well, the vow is like that because when the congregation comes and sets them before God, they say they're not ours anymore. Just like with the money, they are gods for the purpose for which God has appointed and the purpose for which God has appointed is to set them over these necessities.

This business, the earthly things that are necessary for the work of the gospel to continue in the congregation. And when the congregation does that they say, these are the ones that we've recognized that you have chosen God. And so these are the ones that we are agreeing to submit ourselves to and to obey and matters of earthly the use of earthly things and service in earthly things.

Same thing by the way, in spiritual matters and the ministry of the work and sacraments and prayer and public. And from house to house, when a congregation does similarly, with its elders. And so it's a very serious commitment from the congregation. And it also communicates something to the deacon, doesn't it?

Because the authority that he has, and that they are to obey isn't actually his own. They, the people have not laid themselves at the Deacon's feet. The people have not set themselves before the deacon, the deacon has been set before God and he's been set before God by setting him before, the minister of God's Word.

Why? Because it's God's Word that rules. What the Office of Deacon is for what the work of the deacon is what man, what kind of, man, he is supposed to be like, and what he is aiming at with his labor. And so, the deacon is a scripture ruled man, in a scripture bounded office, He cannot come into everyone's house and tell them what to do with all their earthly things.

He can give biblical counsel on the way of working and the way of spending money, He can, well, not, he by himself, but the diakonet together, there's a plurality here. The, the diakonet can say He who will not work. Let him not eat. He who cannot work. Let others be generous.

Let those who had been thieves in many different ways, one of which is laziness another, which is, another of which is wastefulness, there are lots of ways to be a thief, but he who is a thief, let him no longer steal, but let him work with his hands. Why not?

Just so that he can attend to his own needs. But so that he may have something to give to others in their time of need. And so there are scripture principles that must be followed, but they must be careful of laying down particular rules that the scripture itself cannot sustain and commanding, especially personal, and household applications.

They are bounded by the Word of God has office in his office, the deacon belongs first to God and then under God for the people. But the last the last person place and this means not at all that he should serve the last party that he should serve is himself.

The deacon must have that qualification that we saw in the first ordination of officers in Exodus 18, some weeks ago in the evening. Sermon that he hates covetousness. Not just that, he isn't covetous, but that he recognizes the propensity that tendency towards the sin of desiring for himself and seeking his own in himself, and he hates that and he wars against that.

And that's why he is not covetous because he's not just a man who isn't covetous, but who hates covetousness. Here's a servant. He's been handed back and forth in a transaction. God says, I'm giving you deacons. Here's how you recognize them. And the congregation says I'm giving you deacons from among you.

Here's how you recognize his eyes. I'm in the congregation says, we have recognized them. According to your word and here they are from among us. They are gifts from God to the church, their gifts from the church to God. It is a gift to be in that office. Not a yeah special talent for from God.

Unless by talent. You mean that weight of money? That was to be stewarded But the use of the word gift there. When we come and we see in first Timothy, the gift that is in Timothy by the laying on of the hands of the elders and second Timothy. The gift that is in Timothy by the laying on of my that is Paul's hands.

It recognizes that he is not for himself. He has forgot. And for the people of God has office does not belong to him. It is authority for the purpose of service is talking to young man, this week in the presence of an older, man. And they were Christian, but not very well.

Instructed. Christian and Praise God. The young man was just eating up all sorts of truth. And I used the word tyranny and the old man said, the older man said, well, what's tyranny? And I said, tyranny is a failure to recognize that all authority comes from God. And may only be used for the purposes and within the boundaries, which God has applied to it.

Tyranny is authority for something other than service. A deacon must not be a tyrant, He literally exists, so that the obstacles of earthly things. Both in the way we are hindered in our neediness or offended in sinful, use of earthly things would be removed. The deacon who moves beyond his office of service in these things.

Becomes the very thing for which that office was designed to eliminate the very thing which that office is designed to eliminate Everything then that goes into considering and selecting the Deacon as a service unto God, If he is to view this as from God, and for God, then we in the process of considering and designating and vowing and then serving under the deacons must consider it all as from God and for God.

And so we don't on the front end, put forward, a man out of a felt obligation to that person or a desire, not to hurt his feelings feeling like well, he's been in the church a long time and he hasn't gotten any recognition yet and I, you know, I'd like him to feel important or involved.

No, the deacon is from God. And for God, according to God's qualifications for the work which God has set them apart to. And then on the back side when God has given us deacons we should render all of that respect and submission and obedience when it comes very difficult to do the backside.

Well doesn't it? If the front side has not been done well, if they have not been recognized in the way that God has said and selected in the way that God has said, and and installed in the way that God has said, how can a congregation be expected to submit to and obey and respect such men.

If they have not the qualifications that God has described like other offerings unto God, their ministry is consecrated.

They are men who have come from then the congregations hands. Well, in the next part we've had training consideration, designation, and then prayer and prayer is among other things. A committing of things into the hands of God, This is signified. Often very physically, isn't it? The lifting up of hands When we considered in the purpose of the diakonet, the necessity of the ministry of the word and prayer in public, and in every house, and the leading of prayer, being one of the roles of the minister of the Word and of the man in his own house and how in every place in the institutions that God has established, whether the church or the home, he has established that men should lead in prayer.

We looked at first Timothy 2. And one of the what is one of the things that First Timothy 2 said, was the purpose of a man, reigning in his wrath and reigning in his unbelief so that he might, what lift holy hands in prayer, two things, that that prevent right praying Praying in wrath.

We had a great question after singing and imprecatory soul in the in the evening singing and sermon time, a few weeks ago, how are we to think and feel as we sing and pray such things. And one of the things was to embrace, the fact that God has wrath so that I don't pray and sing these things as a venting of my own and yet, how often we have prayed in a situation, he says no wrath when you pray no unbelief when you pray without wrath or doubting lift up holy hands.

And so we have in the in the designation a setting forth of the of the men by the congregations hands. But then Then they pray and that is which another way of which would be said, another way that could be said is to commit them into God's hands. They set them before the Apostles verse 6, and when they had prayed,

We'll see this again in the installation as it were in Antioch of Paul and Barnabas they choose and pray and lay on of hands. Here Everything has been done according to the Word of the Lord, as spoken by his apostles. And yet still they pray the commit. All of this into the hands of God, those who walk with the Lord and have their ordinary stated times of prayer.

As our Lord Jesus himself often came away and had a state, a time of prayer and who are praying continually as we'll see. When we get into chapter 5 of Thessalonians, the believer is always to do to carry on a continual conversation with God. That will also recognize those significant moments and activities in which it is good to formally commit all to God in prayer.

And so even though all of this has been done by the Word of God and the men who have been chosen are full of the Holy Spirit and the apostles are are speaking and preaching as those who are emissaries of Christ and have that, apostolic portion of the Holy Spirit in their ministry.

The, the whole is committed to God and prayer. Why? Because it's not the apostles who must accept the deacons. But God, God is the one who must receive them, and it's not the apostles who must use the deacons. But God, God is the one who must use them. Not just so that the disagreement or the difficulty, or the conflict between the Hellenistic widows.

And the Hebraic widows can be sorted out But so that the ultimate purpose of this diaconate so that the ministry of the word can be freed up and become more effectual. Well, who can make it effectual? You can hear all day long. And from Colossians 1 and 2, and, and three, three in particular, which we've been hearing in the Sabbath schools.

The, the last two weeks you can hear all day long, that, that Christ is the image of the invisible, God and the firstborn overall the creation. And that in him, the fullness of the Godhead, dwells bodily, so that we know that he's not a divine person and a human person, but one divine person with two natures.

Because it's the fullness of the Godhead that dwells in the God man, who in whom, you can hear that all day long and then you can come to chapter 3 and you can hear that you have been united to Christ and that you

are united to him still. And as Ephesians also says, you are seated within in the heavenly places And that your life is hidden with Christ in God, that there is nothing on earth that can touch or take away that resurrection life and that guarantee that those whom he has justified, He will also have glorified.

You can hear it. But unless God, the Spirit convinces you other it, You'll raise all kinds of objections. Against the divinity of God, the Son and your heart will raise all kinds of objections against the reality of you being seated with him and your life being untouchable, so that nothing can take it away from you.

And that even while you live on earth, the power of the god man is being worked out in your life. This is why it is by God, the Spirit that His word works in us. Even for such a small thing. It's not a small thing as heavenly-mindedness as remembering who you are to whom you belong, what you will be when He has done with you.

What you have already and will have forever and bringing the memory of all those things into what you eat and drink and whatever you do. And so they pray because it's not the apostles who accept the deacons but God and it's not the apostles who must employ or use the deacons.

But God The installation and work and submission to a work of and submission to a diaconate is a divine enterprise. That looks for diviner results by divine power. And if that congregation needed to pray and not just to check off a box in the ordination procedure prayer was done.

Check put it in the minutes. Get the minutes checked. Yes, it was all done in decency and in order. Right. Yay. We're Presbyterian. What if they needed to commit it to God in truth through the action of serious prayer? Do we not need to? And why would we not want to?

So it's from the congregation's hands into the Lord's. And by the laying on of the Apostles' hands. Finally, we have the ordination and installation They laid hands on them Now. Praise God. That this is an ordaining laying on of hands. The same exact language could be used for mugging them or something else.

This is physical and visible. Why? Because God knows that you're and my faith is small and weak. We need the help of things that affect our senses and so because our faith that Christ gives himself to us and his life to be in us as small and weak. He gives us bread that has broken out unto us and that which we ought to know, anyway without the meal, he communicates to us, even through our senses, to bolster our lack of understanding and lack of appreciation.

So that our faith will be helped by touching and smelling and tasting bread. And since our faith that we are bound to God by the blood of Christ, He has bound himself to us and He will fulfill His part and He is bound us to Him. And we must fulfill our part.

But when we come through faith in Christ, it's a seal unto us. If you come without faith in Christ, it condemns, you doesn't it to use the seal without faith, but when we come by faith in Christ, it's a seal unto us. Should we have confidence in Jesus and joy in Jesus without toasting the glass the cup of Jesus and the new covenant in his His blood.

Yes, of course, we should have that confidence and that joy. But you don't. And so he stoops down to us and he gives us a physical visible smellable. Olfactory audible. Tastable evidence to bolster our faith. Well there's something very similar here, isn't there? God has given us instruction about these men and what their ministry is for and what kind of men they're supposed to be and and how there to come into this ministry and we know that it is from him and that it is for him and for us and we know, all these things and yet God has His ministers of His Word, lay physical hands that we can see and that they can feel and it communicates in a way that helps our faith, that drives home to our unbelief and helps us overcome the resistance.

In our remaining fleshliness that this is genuinely something that God is doing from heaven. There is here a public indication recognition of the transfer and sharing of authority. This continues. It was already being done by elders even while apostles still lived. And first Timothy 4 verse 14, the gift of prophecy that was in Timothy.

And for Timothy who was received, you know, he had known from his babyhood, which by the way for for discussion and in current events, the word that is used there. When when the apostle tells Timothy that he's known the scriptures from his babyhood, it's also used for infants in the womb.

There's no linguistic difference in how God talks about them, but he says that from, from his babyhood, Timothy knew the Word and that he had also received from Paul the Word of God. And so those were the things that he was to hold fast to and, and to preach.

So when it says the gift of prophecy that is in you by the laying on of the hands of the elders in First Timothy 4, and verse 14, it does not necessarily mean new words from God. That means elders, laid hands on you to recognize that God has called you to the ministry of a preacher.

And we still do that today and it's extraordinarily moving when congregation and elders who are laying on hands and new preachers upon whom hands are laid. Understand what is being physically? Communicated. That it is the gift of God. God in heaven, who has saved that, man, and groan that.

Man and called that man. So there's a public indication and recognition of this transfer and sharing of authority and ministry. In this particular case ministry that the Apostles weren't even going to do anymore. Only the deacons we're going to do, there's a show of succession a couple of the most significant or prominent laying on of hands or references to laying zone of hands.

Numbers 27:18 and Deuteronomy 34:9, Moses laying his hands on Joshua when Moses was about to die and you can see they're pretty clearly what's going on there. That God would now use Joshua in the way that he had used. Moses that the authority and responsibility and respect for the office and the people's submission to him and following under his leadership.

Well, that all of this now was being communicated to Joshua in the same way that Moses has had it. And so, one of the things that laying on of hands does, is it shows succession Is there such a thing as apostolic succession? Well yes, but not one man to one man.

To one man to one man, to three men to one man to one man. Don't let the papists take advantage of your ignorance of history. You know, one time there are three popes and in three papal palaces each excommunicating, the other two is not this. Nice neat thing that they claim has taken place.

Apostolic succession isn't like that. Apostolic succession is one to hundreds to thousands to God, helping us have mercy millions. It is the laying on of hands by men who have been qualified for and served well, in sustained by God in their office. As the recognition that God is still calling men, new men to new office and multiplying His work and growing his kingdom.

And that these men belong to him under his word for his purposes.

And yet, this chain of succession is very encouraging, isn't it?

Because when men have their hands laid on them up here, God willing in a little while. We'll see something that goes back to Christ Himself and his ministry to those upon whom after his resurrection. He breathed and instead receive the Holy Spirit. And he appointed them and then Paul whom he selected as one out of time.

Perhaps, you know, Matthias was a stop gap in between but it's very moving. Isn't it to remember that? Jesus was on earth, He started this whole thing. He picked the first officers and he poured out his spirit. And by that spirit, they laid hands on the next officers, and they laid hands, and they laid hands, It can be a very moving thing to go to Palestine.

And to visit places that, you know, your Lord was physically there, my wife and I got to do that as students before she was my wife. It was deeply moving, but it's a very moving thing to break bread and eat the bread and drink the cup. Something that the Lord started on the night that he was betrayed or a reminder that he was physically here.

He accomplished in time. All that was necessary for redemption. It should be a very moving thing. When men have hands laid on them up here, a reminder that it is our Lord Himself who began this on earth and the selection of the 12. There's also a commissioning into specific service.

This is, this is what we call installation to the office, a commissioning into specific service, You'll see that in chapter 9 and verse 17 when the hands are laid on Paul and Barnabas and then you'll see it again in chapter 13 and verse 3, where they sorry Paul and Barnabas as chapter 13, chapter 9 is Ananias when Paul is being converted and he lays hands on him and the skills fall from his eyes and so forth.

As God has told Ananias that he had, he has shown Paul, he must suffer many things for him. Setting apart to specific service. And this laying on of hands shouldn't be new to you. Perhaps there are some of you here who already knew all of these things about the laying on of hands and what is taking place in it and how we should respond to it?

It's been my experience in the churches that very little is understood about the laying on of hands and ordination and installation. But in Hebrews chapter 6 and the first two verses, it's included with things like repentance from dead works and faith, faith in God and baptism something that's really been messed up by a lot of the churches as well and laying on the hands.

This doctrine of the ordination of the officers of the church was supposed to be one of the basics that in Hebrews 6 actually rebuking that congregation to whom it was originally written, that that they haven't moved on from such basics, you know, such ABCs of Christianity. And here, we have been called to live in a day where the churches in such a low state.

Now that we don't even know the basics. We don't receive the officers as from God. And for God, We don't know how Jesus runs his church according to the Bible, many even take pride and not having officers what foolishness?

It's gonna say in the last place we will say in the last place or in the second great place. That was the ordination of the diaconate, the success of the diaconate and this can be done briefly, The main thing here is not the content of the data. But the impression that it ought to make upon us The Word of God spread, It's not a geography word.

That sounds like a geography word to us. It's a, it's a mathematical word or even more an agricultural word, it's a word that means increase or grow. The effect that had already been seen from the Word of God. They now see more of that, which they had seen in small stages knee-high by the fourth of July, is probably more than that here in the south.

That's what they say in Iowa that which had been seen in small stages. Now was seen coming to maturity not just the public ministry but the house to house ministry. One of the results of the ministry of the deacons was that there were there would now be many many more men who would be qualified to be deacons because that ministry of the word that produces such men, It increased, it grew.

Well, the success of the diaconate is the increase of the word of God. First, the effectual increase and the second place numerical increase, You can skip over very quickly can't you and the number of the disciples multiplied, greatly in Jerusalem, except for they've already been multiplying and multiplying. And the one of the things that actually got us into the mess out of which came the diaconate was multiplying, and then God, grants the installation of the first diaconate and come even in addition to, or perhaps, even in comparison to all that had come before.

Now the number multiplies greatly And so you have the effectiveness of the ministry of the word increasing You have the number of those being gathered to Christ and built up in Christ. You have the number of them increasing and not just effectual. Increase in numerical increase, but miracle, increase and a great.

Many of the priests. We're obedient to the faith Now. We're all a hundred percent unsalvable, but in God's providence, there are those who by comparison have greater obstacles to their coming to faith. Jesus says this of the rich man, how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God?

Well, up until this point in the book of Acts, as you read and hear the effect that God in his providence had given, you would say how hard it is for a priest to enter the kingdom of God In God's providence. They had heard all of this this preaching, and they had seen that the apostles had the favor of the multitude and they had seen even miracles that God gave the apostles to do as signs to the truth of their preaching.

But how had they responded to the miracles? Children had the high priest and those who are with him which was the sect of the Sadducees, all the priests and they responded to the miracles by saying It's true. Jesus is the Christ. We were guilty of murdering the Christ, or as first Corinthians says crucifying, the Lord of glory.

It's true. Thank God that he sent his apostles after he rose again from the dead first to preach forgiveness to Israel. So that we may be forgiven that they responded that way to the miracles. No, They responded to the miracles by arresting them.

God decides to wait to save them until the diaconate. Now, you're comparing infinities here. There's, you know, it's calculus. It's probably over our heads, but the way that Jesus talks about it in the way it's done in God's providence, Everyone is entirely unsalvable, except for the power of God, but the function of the great, many of the priests becoming obedient to the faith, is that it's not just effectual.

Increase the word of God increased. It's not just numerical increase. The number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, but it's also miracle. Increase unexpected, increase. The hardest cases, increase, and it's probably the hardest case is still today.

The hardest cases today are probably those in the church, maybe in office in the church who are unmoved by the preaching and the evidence. The all that the apostle apostolic message has said about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done, you know, someone who thinks they're saved, is the hardest person to be converted.

If you can speak that way again, infinities and yet those who felt secure in the religious place and serve as before and upon whom neither the preaching, nor the signs and wonders, nor the favor that they apostles had with the people upon whom. None of those things had yet prevailed.

Now because the purpose of the diaganant was fulfilled to free up the ministers of the Word for the ministry of the Word, God now came and attended that preaching with the conversion of those who for all practical purposes as far as the church could see would never be saved.

And suddenly, he brought in a horde of them, Now, if you look out on an Evangelical landscape in America and you see churches, full of people who know, not the Lord and rest, not in him, don't rejoice over him and who have been inoculated against the gospel and with whom nothing seems to prevail.

You're not desire to see this success. That not only with the word increase among us and we would come to maturity, not only with the word increased numerically and many would be gathered into many churches and congregations would multiply but that even those who up until this point in the providence of God right now seem like the hardest cases The ones from whom there are no conversions that God would suddenly bring in a great many of those and show us that we don't know a thing about what it means to be a hard case because as Jesus proceeded to say, when the disciples said who then can be saved, he said oh it's impossible with men but nothing is impossible with God.

And are we not looking to Him by following His word and what he has given us to do? Are we not looking to him to do that? Which is easy for him. But to us. Astounding in the significance of great. Many of the priests obedient to the faith. Well, when the multitude received the instruction, When the multitude and street received the instruction, it pleased, the whole multitude verse 5 does, this passage not please, you Does the design of the Lord for this part of the ministry of his church and how to get there.

Does it not please? You. So we not like they diligently joyously, Follow his plan and find him. Faithful and seek from Him, cry out to him. And look to him for this. Kind of success that we see upon the ministry as a blessing upon the ministry. I've already God grant that it would be.

So, Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven. We're grateful to you for giving us so much. Instruction about how your church is to operate. Forgive us for the ignorance. As you say, respect to death and resurrection return of Christ and the next week's passage. And first Thessalonians that You do not want us to be ignorant to a Lord.

We confess this is a part of your word in which many in the churches and us to a great wheat. To a great extent, have been ignorant. And so, forgive us and help us Congrat to us a wise, and wise way of following these things. In a way that honors.

What you have said here and come by your spirit and help us. Not only to do it faithfully. But then by that, by that Almighty power of your Holy Spirit, give the fruit that only he can give that are diaconate success would not be measured in property. Well, taken care of and poverty.

Well neutralized but that by means of those things and the ministry that they free up the success of our deacon, it would be seen in the effectual and numerical and miracle increase of your word. We longer God to be able to look back at these days as fledgling days in which you helped us to obey and then came by your power and did that for which none of us could have dared to hope.

Do what we ask the price. Amen