



*To Know Christ . . .
and to Make Him Known*

Wilmington, North Carolina
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The Lord's Day, August 26, 2018

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Gifted for Service Romans 12:1-8

Every Lord's Day is special, but some are even more special than others.

This is one of those especially special Lord's Days, because today we're setting apart one of the members of our congregation, ordaining him for deacon ministry.

The text we just read from Romans 12 is a very rich one, one that we could spend a long time mining its treasures. But I don't have a lot of time this morning. So let me begin to sharpen our focus a little more clearly on how this text applies to what we're doing in our worship today with this deacon ordination.

Paul's appeal

As Paul begins this section of Romans, he appeals to the believers in Rome on the basis of the mercies of God he has expounded in chapters 2 – 11 of this tremendous epistle. He appeals to them (and to us!) to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship** (12:1).¹ The way they were to do that was to be **transformed by the renewing of [their] minds** rather than being conformed to this present age and its way of being and doing. This kind of transformation would enable them to test and discern what is God's will—**what is good and acceptable and perfect** (12:2).

Paul then directs them to think properly about their relationship with Christ and with His body. This would involve a right assessment, a sober judgment that recognizes that all believers are members of the body of Christ, each with his or her own function that God has assigned, just as He has assigned each a measure of faith.

Did you notice how Paul moves from talking about presenting *our bodies* as living sacrifices to being members of *Christ's body*?

He draws the analogy of a human body having many members with different functions to show the Roman church how though there are many different believers, we're all **one body in Christ**, and we're all vitally related to one another. We don't just *happen* to belong to the same religious *club*, but rather **individually we are members one of another** (12:5). What Paul is describing here is an interdependence and an interrelationship that's hard to put into words. Whatever else he means, he surely means that no member of the body is unimportant, that every member has a role to play and a function to fulfill for the proper functioning of the body.

¹ Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible.

You might say that *Paul was saying that we present our bodies as living sacrifices by fulfilling our God-given role in the body of Christ.*

Gifts for service

So what does that have to do with ordaining deacons?

Well, in 12:6-8, Paul goes on to describe how the members of the body are to use the differing gifts that God has given them. These are not things that believers accomplish, not something we come up with on our own. They are *gifts*, spiritual gifts, *Spirit-given gifts*—gifts God gives to be used in the work of His kingdom, for the good of His church, to accomplish His redemptive purpose in the world.

Paul mentions a number of gifts here, just as he does in 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Ephesians 4. These lists do overlap some, but none of them are identical. What that indicates to me is that these lists are not exhaustive, that they *don't* tell us *all* the gifts that God gives His people to fulfill His work, but they *do* tell us about some very important ones. Here in Romans 12, Paul lists prophecy, ministry or service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and compassion or mercy. And he tells how these gifts are to be used.

One of these gifts he mentions in Romans is particularly pertinent to what we're doing here today—the gift of *ministry* or *service*. The Greek word is *diakonía*. If that sounds familiar, it should. It's from the same root as the word *diákonos*, which comes over into English as—you guessed it—*deacon*.

That *is* what “deaconing” is about, you know—*ministry* or *service*. While all disciples of Jesus are to be servants, some are especially gifted for service. These are the kind of folk we should always select to be deacons: followers of Jesus who are particularly *gifted for service*. And *those who are gifted for service must use that gift in serving!*

That was what Jesus taught. He said that those who wanted to be *leaders* among His people had to be *servants*. He told them this over and over. And as we read earlier in our service, He even demonstrated the night before He died how important this is in His kingdom by laying aside His outer garment, tying a towel around His waist, taking a basin of water, getting down on His knees, and washing the feet of *His disciples*.

And so, deacons, that's your model—the Son of God with a basin of water and a towel in his hand.

God has not called you to be lords, but to love His people.

He has not called you to rule, but to wait on others.

He has not called you to manage an empire, but to minister to needs.

He has called you to take a towel in your hand and His people in your heart, and to show His love to them by your loving *service* to them.

He has gifted you for service.

And so now, *serve in his name!*

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Deacon Ordination Service

Responsive Reading

Pastor: Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.

Deacons: **Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.**

Pastor: In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well.

Deacons: **Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!**

People: *Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.*

Deacons: **Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.**

We come now to set apart our brother Scott Limback for the ministry of deacon in our church. In doing so, we testify as a congregation that we have seen in his life spiritual gifts that suit him for such a ministry, and the character and faith that qualify him for this task. We have prayerfully sought God's will in this matter, and we now affirm that within his call to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, God has now called him through the voice of our congregation to serve as a deacon among us.

Baptist history teaches us that our early Baptist forebears in the 17th and 18th centuries saw the role of deacons in the name itself, *diákonos*, which literally means *one who serves* (originally, *one who serves tables*). Thus deacons were to serve tables—first, the Table of the Lord in Communion; then the table of the pastor and his family, to be sure their needs were cared for; and the table of the poor and needy, in ministering to them. This description captures the very essence of being a deacon—*service*. Some of these responsibilities have shifted through the centuries, but deacons are still to be servants of the Lord and His church, ministering to needs and helping the pastors lead the church in her mission and ministry.

We come now to set Scott apart for this ministry.

This ordination confers no special status or power. Rather, it is a confirmation and a blessing—our church's public affirmation that God has gifted and called him for this service at this time in his life and in the life of this church. In this ordination we bestow on him our blessing in the Lord as he enters this sacred work. So now, let us make sacred covenant promises to God and to one another.

The Ordination Charge

Scott, please rise. In accordance with God's leading our church has chosen you for this service, and you have indicated your willingness to serve in this office. I charge you therefore to employ the gifts that the Holy Spirit has entrusted to you for this ministry for the common good of this church. You are to minister to those in need and seek to lead this church in her purpose and mission as we seek to know Christ and to make Him known by embodying His presence to

Wilmington and the world through our worship, our witness, and our way of life. You are to be blameless in your walk, generous in your heart, and faithful in your service, holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. If you do these things, you will indeed serve well as a deacon. Do you pledge in covenant with God and this body of believers that by God's grace, you will be faithful in doing these things?

Reply: "With the Lord as my helper, I do."

The Charge to the Diaconate

Will all ordained deacons please rise? Our brother Scott Limback is about to enter this ministry of service as a deacon. As he begins his ministry of helping, I charge you all to help him by your prayers, counsel, guidance, and encouragement. You are to be examples for him, friends to him, and fellow-servants with him. You are to love and accept him as your brother, respect him as your colleague in this ministry, and share with him your mutual sorrows and joys. Do you each now pledge in covenant with God and with this new deacon that by God's grace, you will be faithful in doing these things?

Reply: "With the Lord as my helper, I do."

The Charge to the Church

Will all members of Temple Baptist Church please rise as you are able?

We are the local expression of the body of Christ known as the Temple Baptist Church of Wilmington. As we now set apart our brother Scott for service as a deacon among us, I lay on us this charge. As individual members and as a congregation, we are to support him and his family with our prayers and encouragement. We are to strengthen him for ministry through our fellowship together and our partnership in the gospel. And we are to grant him the freedom to fulfill his ministry as a deacon by using our spiritual gifts faithfully for the common good of this church and the advancement of Christ's kingdom in our city, our county, and around the world. Do you each now join me in pledging in covenant with God, with this new deacon, and with one another that by God's grace, we will be faithful in doing these things?

Reply: "With the Lord as my helper, I do."

Ordination Prayer and Laying on of Hands

Welcome to Diaconate & Presentation of Certificate