

“Answering Our Lord’s Call To Serve” by E Terry delivered 10 19 19

Joshua 1: 1 – 9; Ephesians 4: 1 – 16; John 21: 15 - 17; **1st Timothy 3: 1 – 15** (Sermon)

This morning we have the privilege of ordaining and installing Elders and Deacons. So we need to look at what The Bible says about the qualifications and responsibilities of Elders and Deacons. We also need to look at your responsibility as a member of this congregation to your leaders?

The New Testament uses three Greek words for elders. These three Greek words for Elders help us understand the role and responsibility of an Elder. The first Greek word is translated as “**bishop**” which means overseer. Elders are spiritual overseers of the Christians in their respective church. The second Greek word is translated as “*pastor*” or “*shepherd*”. Shepherds know their sheep by name and shepherds are always with their flock. Shepherds lead their flocks. Shepherds provide for and protect their flock from predators. Elders provide for the spiritual nurture the flock. Elders are the caretakers of the members of the church. The third Greek word is translated as elder. Elders are individuals old enough to have experienced the Christian walk and have proven to be spiritually mature Christians with leadership abilities. Elders share their wisdom by teaching The Word, leading the Christians by example, and Elders discipline members when needed.

In our lesson from 1st Timothy we read the qualification for Elders and Deacons. This is quite a list and if we are honest with ourselves, no person can measure up to these standards. But God can, and God does use flawed individuals like me and you. Remember Moses was a murderer. David was an adulterer. And Peter denied Jesus three times. The one thing that all of these flawed individuals had in common was that they loved The Lord and they wanted to serve The Lord. All of these Biblical qualifications tell us that Elders and Deacons are people who have proven to be trustworthy, truthful, and totally devoted to The Lord. Their character must be above reproach. Elders and Deacons exercise their authority by their Godly example and sound teaching. Elder and Deacons are individuals who the congregation willing follows.

If you were to study our Book of Order you would see that it is the duty of every Elder, both individually and jointly, to diligently watch over the flock that our Lord Jesus Christ has committed to their charge. Elders are to provide for multiple opportunities for the people to worship and to celebrate The Sacraments. Elders are to insure that The Word of God is preached and taught and ensure no false doctrine or false morals enter the church. Elders are to regularly pray with and for the people. Elders are to visit the people in their homes; especially the sick, the grieving, the homebound, and the lonely. Elders are to provide opportunities for spiritual growth, service, fellowship, stewardship, and for evangelizing those people who do not know Jesus Christ as their savior. Elders are to teach God’s Word and to preach when call upon. Elders are to cherish, instruct, nourish, and guard the children of the church. Elders are to lead by example evidenced by their enthusiasm and total commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. Elders are to exercise government and discipline and to take oversight not only of the spiritual interests of the particular local congregation but also the larger church bodies. Elders are to discharge all of their duties with the love, the mercy, the compassion and the commitment of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Peter summed up the Elders’ role in 1st Peter 5:1-4. ***“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”***

The term “*deacon*” comes from the Greek word “*diakonos*” which is translated as servant most of the time in The Bible. In John 12:26 Jesus said; “***Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.***” So, every one of us are deacons in a general sense. None of us were saved to sit; rather all of us were saved to serve! Being a Christian is not a spectator sport but rather Christianity is about serving The Lord. We are all called to be “*general servants*” Then in Romans 12:5 - 8 we read that serving is one of the spiritual gifts. So there is another group of servants or deacons. This group of individuals are individuals who have the spiritual gift of serving other people. They are model servants and serve as role models for all of us. And then the Greek word “*diakonos* is translated as “*deacon*” in our lesson from 1st Timothy 3. These are the individuals who are elected by their peers to the Office of Deacon.

If you were to study our Book of Order you would see that it is the duty of every ordained Deacon to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any person who may be in distress. Deacons are to develop the grace of giving in the members of the congregation and to challenge the people of God with the privilege of responsible Christian stewardship of money, time, and talents. Deacons are to develop effective methods of encouraging and collecting the gifts of the people. Deacons are to lead by example evidenced by their enthusiasm and total commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. Deacons are responsible for developing an annual budget and ensuring that the gifts of the people are used to glorify God and to further His Kingdom on earth. Deacons are responsible for the care, the maintenance, and the proper use of the church building and property belonging to the congregation. Deacons are to discharge all of their duties under the supervision of the Session and with the love, the compassion, and the commitment of Jesus Christ.

The question always comes up: If the Elders and Deacons do all of these things, what does the pastor do? In the Presbyterian Church the pastor’s official title is Teaching Elder. My primary duty as a pastor is to preach, to teach, and to pray for all the members of the church family. In Ephesians 4:11-12 we read that the primary duty of every church leader is to nurture and equip the members of the church for service. “***So Christ himself gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ***” (Ephesians 4:11-12) Pastors, Elders, and Deacons all work together in order to equip the congregation for works of service and to nurture the congregation so that we will all become mature Christians.

A good Elder and a good Deacon will be good role models; they will be a living example of the kind of life a Christian is called to lead. They will be enthusiastic, energetic, loving individuals who will challenge the congregation to join them in serving The Lord. The Apostle Paul gave this advice to Titus who was a church leader. “***In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.***” (Titus 2: 7 & 8)

This leads us to the congregation’s responsibility to your Elders and Deacons. The congregation’s responsibility begins with having a proper perspective of the office of Elder and Deacon. When the congregation understands the responsibility God has placed on the Elders and the Deacons, the congregation should willingly and quickly follow their leadership. Hebrews 13:17 is a command. “***Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.***” And 1st Thessalonians 5:12-13 tells us, “***Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in The Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.***” If you want better

Elders and Deacons you need to pray for all of us every day. You see when the Elders and Deacons are doing their job the congregation will grow spiritually and numerically. When the Elders and Deacons are doing their job, a congregation will whole-heartedly follow their leadership and will show them the respect they deserve. God is glorified when the Pastor, the Elders, the Deacons, and the congregation are all doing their job

This morning we are all confirming our commitment to serve The Lord. Today we are also demonstrating the seriousness of the office of Elder and Deacon by setting Akwa, Franklin, Tanwani, and Cassandra apart for service. Akwa, Franklin, Tanwani, and Cassandra have committed themselves to be faithful Elders and / or Deacons in the Church of Jesus Christ and they are accountable to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today Alison, Charles, Danielle, Lyliane, and Olivia are rotating off. These five individuals were devoted to The Lord and they served you well. God blessed Mt Paran for their service. Every one of us needs to thank these five individuals for their service in their role as active Elders and Deacons. Akwa, Franklin, Tanwani, and Cassandra being chosen by The Lord to represent Him is truly a blessing and it carries a lot of privileges. However being chosen by The Lord also carries a lot of responsibility. You are faced with a very difficult task. However, you will be successful if you follow God's advice to Joshua. In verses 1- 4 of our lesson from Joshua, we read that we will be successful if we face our duties knowing we have been called by God. In verses 5 and 6 we read that we will be successful if we face our duties with The Lord's encouragement. ***"I will be with you; I will never leave you or forsake you"*** (Joshua 1:5). In verses 7-9 we read we will be successful if we face our duties with strength and courage. Three times God said, ***"Be strong and courageous"*** (verses 6, 7, and 9). In verse 7 we are told we will be successful if we face our duties in obedience to all of God's commands. ***"Be careful to obey all of the laws..."*** And in verse 8 we are to face our duties saturated with God's Word. ***"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*** (Joshua 1:8).

In John 21 we read where Jesus asked Peter; ***"Do you love me"*** three times. Each time when Peter answered yes Jesus told Peter to ***"Feed my sheep"*** and to ***"tend my sheep."*** You see love always involves responsibility and love always involves sacrifice. We show our love for The Lord by our obedience, our willingness to sacrifice, our service to others, and by our commitment to serve our Lord Jesus Christ in all that we do and all that we say.

I am a blessed pastor. I say that because of you, the congregation. You are the most loving caring congregation I have ever been in. And I thank God and I thank you for your love and your support! And you as a congregation are blessed with seven Elders and seven Deacons who love The Lord and have committed themselves to serving The Lord Jesus and to serving you the members of the Mt Paran family. I am honored to serve as your pastor and to serve with the Elders and Deacons you have chosen. Today I challenge each of you to continue to pray for your Elders, your Deacons, and your Pastors. Encourage them, respect them, and support all of their decisions.

God's word to us today challenges each and every one of us to remember that Jesus chose us to represent Him, to represent His people and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the unsaved people around us. We all need to ask ourselves: ***"How am I responding to The Lord's call for me to be an active part of His ministry to save the world from sin, spiritual death, and spending eternity in hell?"*** Romans 14:12 is a sober reminder of our responsibility as Christians. We will all stand before God's judgment seat and ***"each of us will give an account of himself to God."*** When Jesus calls you home will Jesus say ***"well done you good and faithful servant"*** or will Jesus say; ***"depart from me you wicked lazy servant"?*** (Matthew 25: 26 -31) AMEN