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Ordination to Gospel Ministry (1 and 2 Timothy)

One of my favorite TV shows is MASH. It is a 1970s war comedy that revolves around the individuals in a mobile medical unit situated near the front lines during the Korean War. The show portrays the horrendous and dehumanizing conditions of warfare. Most of its characters did not choose a military career but are drafted doctors and nurses thrust into the challenging task of medically repairing bodies destined to return to the battlefield. The series revolves around how these characters strive to navigate each day amidst the horrors of warfare.

Among the characters is Father Mulcahy, a Roman Catholic chaplain with distinctive traits. Lacking immediate medical skills, he is assigned the solemn duty of prayer for the suffering, and administering last rites to the dead and dying. Father Mulcahy is expected to steer clear of weapons and combat, adhering unwaveringly to what is deemed right without succumbing to personal struggles. His character embodies many stereotypes associated with individuals in religious vocations: preparing sermons and religious services, and showing up, only when the religious stuff is needed.

This leads to the topic of expectations for a religious leader, specifically a minister of the church. What roles do people anticipate for a minister? Are they expected to be a chief executive? An authority on all subjects? A constant source of inspiration? A motivator? An enlightener? To live by a higher standard? Omnipresent? Condemning of all wrong? Perfect? Judgmental (determining who's in and who's out)? THE pastor? The overseer of every aspect of the church? A financier? A moral supporter of personal choices, and more?

Reflecting on personal experience before joining CCC, every church has its distinct set of expectations for a minister. The multitude of expectations creates an impression that only a unicorn candidate could meet all the criteria. It seems unrealistic to expect any one person to embody every aspect anticipated of a minister.

While people will always have expectations. People's expectations are not the standard for what a minister is to be. God's word provides a clearer understanding of what is expected of a minister.

Today, we are on the path to ordaining Mitch Knight as a minister of the gospel. The remainder of this message aims to illustrate the biblical precedent for. What a minister of the gospel is. Why a minister of the gospel is needed. How a minister of the gospel is called to function.

In the New Testament, we find the example of Timothy. The two letters that the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Timothy and 2 Timothy) offer insights into the leadership role that Timothy was called to, the reasons behind his calling, and how he functioned in that role.

Timothy's example reveals that a minister of the gospel helps you hear and live by Jesus' good news. **A minister of the gospel helps you hear and live by Jesus' good news.**

In American football, the Quarterback position has become the most important and skilled positions in the game. Any player who becomes a quarterback is expected to do a lot. They are expected to be an on-field commander. A precise thrower of the ball. Able to make split-second decisions to change plays. They are considered the defacto leader of the team. But this was not always the case for the quarterback position. Historically, the quarterback position was very limited. The player could not run. The player could not run the ball. They could simply stand further behind the line of scrimmage – to help hand the ball to another ball runner – giving them more time to figure out a lane to move the ball. But over the years, the quarterback position has evolved to the multi-skilled position that it is today.

In the New Testament, it is difficult to find a direct parallel to what we commonly call *the pastor* of a church. In the New Testament, the pastoral role is primarily associated with a group of older and wiser men, called elders. Acts 20:28 shows the best connection of the two terms: elder and pastor - as the same role. ***Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [elders]. Be shepherds [pastors] of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)***

In the New Testament, the primary leadership of the church are the elders that are appointed in each church (according to the standards given for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1). We have two examples of the apostle Paul instructing that elders be appointed in every church. ***Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. (Acts 14:23)***

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. (Titus 1:5)

Beyond elders overseeing each church, we also see a secondary role of leadership working in conjunction with the eldership. We see this leadership role in the lives of Timothy and Titus. The role of evangelist, ***...do the work of an evangelist.... (2 Timothy 4:5)***

The term evangelist is simply “a bringer of good news.” Or proclaimer, or preacher of good news. In this case, specifically, the good new of Jesus.

An evangelist is not an elder. But by what we encounter in Acts, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, an evangelist is either a itinerant (traveling) preacher, like Philip, the evangelist, whom we encounter preaching to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 is an example of this (proclaiming the good news of Jesus. But not as a vocational job), or a resident preacher. Timothy and Titus are examples of this. Paul writing to Timothy and Titus as resident evangelists to the local churches there. In their work, they focus on proclaiming, or preaching the good news of Jesus to that congregation and surrounding community.

What we gather, is that the example of Timothy, in the letters of 1 and 2 Timothy, is a New Testament example of a local church minister. The apostle Paul calls Timothy to, **...set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)**

“...do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:5)

Here we encounter: The context: the local church. The role: a ministry (service) of proclaiming (preaching) the good news of Jesus. The form of leadership: a preacher and example of the good news of Jesus.

What leadership role did Timothy have? Helping the local church and community to hear and live by Jesus' good news.

How did he come to lead in this way? He was ordained or set-apart for this work by the elders of the church. **Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. (1 Timothy 4:14)**

Elders of the church recognized Timothy as set-apart for the work of gospel ministry, by prophetically recognizing God's leading and calling on Timothy's life, and laying hands on him - to show support for what God was doing.

This morning, you will hear testimony on how God has called Mitch Knight into gospel ministry. And later, the elders will lay hands on Mitch – to show their support for the role to which God has called Mitch.

What role is Mitch being called in? The role of being a minister of the gospel.

About a month ago, on the day before Thanksgiving, the WNY area was alerted to an explosion somewhere near the Rainbow Bridge between Niagara Falls, U.S., and Niagara Falls, Canada. Quickly, the story was reported as an act of terrorism, prompting government officials and agencies to take precautions. Fear and anxiety about further attacks permeated the community. These reports persisted until about mid-afternoon when the narrative began to shift. By the evening, the updated information clarified that the explosion resulted from a chaotic car accident with no direct connection to terrorism. While the accident itself is a tragedy, the situation illustrates something else. Initially, the news about the situation seemed to be the worst thought imaginable (a terrorist attack). But that bad and false news was countered by good news for most people. News that the situation was not terrorism.

Why did Timothy help his local church and community to hear and live by Jesus? Because there was false news (false information) being proclaimed to the people in Timothy's church and community: **The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid**

people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:1-3)

Deceptive, demonic, hypocritical, and truth-less teachings.

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. (1 Timothy 4:7)

Godless, made-up teachings.

For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Flawed, defective doctrine (i.e., sound doctrine). Opposing teachings (chaos, i.e, suits their own desires). Ignoring truth about reality (only wanting to hear what sounds good in the moment, i.e., itching ears want to hear). Made-up teachings (i.e., myths)

This takes us back to 1 Timothy 4:5, where Timothy is reminded of his calling: *to do the work of an evangelist*. Timothy is to be a bearer of the good news of Jesus. Timothy is to counter the false truth that is being taught and heard by the people, with the good news and truth of Jesus. ***If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. (1 Timothy 4:6)***

The primary role of a minister of the gospel: To make the good news of Jesus known (awareness). To help people live into the good news of Jesus (to follow it, to believe it).

A family friend of ours owns and operates a Chic-fil-a in South Bend, IN (stop by there, if you ever cross the 90 that way). While our friend primarily owns and manages the restaurant, the restaurant is dependent on her training of the employees to do all the various jobs needed. That also means that she has to be able to do all of the jobs – to train others how to do them. This illustrates the dynamic between a minister of the gospel and the members of a local church.

Timothy is called to lead the local church to hear and live by Jesus' good news. Timothy is called to do this in a variety of ways: ***...set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. (1 Timothy 4:12-13)***

Throughout 1 and 2 Timothy, the apostle Paul also instructs Timothy to do this work by: 1 Tim 4:6 - pointing out false teachings; 1 Tim 4:7 - staying away from godless myths; 1 Tim 4:7 - training himself to be Godly; 1 Tim 4:11 - commanding and teaching the way of Jesus; 1 Tim

4:14 - use your spiritual gift [from God]; 1 Tim 4:15 - be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them; 1 Tim 4:16 - watch your life and doctrine closely (stick to what was passed down to you); 1 Tim 4:16 - Persevere in life and doctrine (don't give up); 2 Tim 1:8 - join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God (it won't always be accepted as good news); 2 Tim 1:13 - What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching; 2 Tim 4:2 - Preach (proclaim, make-known) the word; be prepared in season and out of season; 2 Tim 4:2 - correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 2 Tim 4:5 - keep your head in all situations, endure hardship.

Timothy is to let his life and work flow from the good and truthful word and life of Jesus – that has been passed down to him. But notice that Timothy is to set an example. Timothy is not the only person who is to be about this work. The entire church, every believer is to be about helping others to hear and live by Jesus' good news.

Timothy's unique role is to lead the way in this. And as the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4:11-12, ***Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his 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)***

Timothy is to lead the way and equip the church. **A minister of the gospel helps you hear and live by Jesus' good news.** To hear and live by God's word. Lead the way and equip the church to help others hear and live by Jesus' good news.

Throughout 1 and 2 Timothy, we encounter: what a minister of the gospel is; why a minister of the gospel is needed; and how a minister of the gospel did their work. June 2018 is the first interaction that I had with Mitch Knight. He emailed the church about having been a believer in Jesus for half a year. He was recently graduated from Fredonia, and looking for a new church to call home. I responded to Mitch and soon arranged to meet him at Clarence Center Coffee. I could tell from that meeting, that Mitch was a studious and deep thinker. We discussed a number of things and hit it off. Mitch quickly became a regular worshiper at CCC. Maturing more and more in his relationship with Christ, eventually being baptized. In the coming year, Mitch and I began to meet weekly in the cafe area of Wegmans on Sheridan. We'd discuss any and all topics about life and following Jesus. Those meetings lasted until the responses to COVID prohibited us from meeting at Wegmans. However, from that point on, Mitch began serving in a variety of areas of the church: singing, communion meditations, and youth group leader. Looking back on Mitch's journey, one quality that stands out is his availability, paralleling the situation of the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6:8, ***Then I [Isaiah] heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8)***

Mitch was available for the Lord. And when asked whom could be another minister of the gospel, Mitch could reply: "Here I am. Send me." Because he was willing to be available to

serve however was needed. And Mitch has done that ever since. As many of you have experienced, Mitch has also served in preaching on Sunday morning. God has given Mitch a tremendous ability to retain Scripture and re-share it with ease. God has indeed blessed and equipped Mitch with a heart, mind, and desire to help people hear and live by Jesus' good news. And today we support and recognize God's calling of him to this vocational work.

A minister of the gospel helps you hear and live by Jesus' good news.

Today, I invite you to respond in praise and thanksgiving for what God has done. Praise and thank God that he came to speak and live-out good news for us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Without Jesus, there is no good news. Without Jesus, there is no need for workers to be called to share the gospel. Without Jesus, we would not have the help that we need to hear and live by Jesus' good news - week-in and week-out.

You can respond in praise and thanksgiving as we take the communion elements during this next song – **Remember the death and resurrection of Jesus – that made Jesus such good news to our hopeless lives.**

You can respond in praise and thanksgiving by your **Prayer and support for Mitch as he enters this role in God's Kingdom.**

You can respond in praise and thanksgiving by how you live – **Helping others to hear and live by Jesus' good news.**

Thank the Lord that he has given us ministers of the gospel. Those who help you to hear and live by Jesus' good news.

A minister of the gospel helps you hear and live by Jesus' good news.