

Parson to Person

3-9-2025

(Thomas Neighbors—Ordination Service)

“Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:14–17).

Ministry: The Predictable and the Unpredictable

Ministry is unpredictable on some levels yet very predictable on others.

The unpredictable surfaces when we make plans to accomplish a task or mission, but God stops us completely or redirects us to something He deems more pressing. Those in ministry see this often.

For this reason (among others), we have developed a “people before programs” mentality while filtering our schedules to put the needs of the many above the needs of a few—whenever possible. This makes pastoral ministry a real challenge—unless one is blessed to have staff called alongside to help with the day-to-day ministry needs we face here at the Church.

On the other hand, we have those things that are very predictable. There is consistent fatigue, persecution, burden for the needs of those we serve, etc. There is also the joy of seeing others come to and grow in the Lord. Altogether, those called to ministry would not do a thing to flee the call. (We love it!) We may wish to

change the circumstances or change what we are required to do. However, running from the ministry is never an option!

The Call to Ministry and the Fragrance of Christ

Paul made very clear that he (and the other apostles) were tired and hard pressed, but they were not forsaken or in despair. The ministry might have been hard on them—it was costing them their very lives. However, they realized that being used by God was worth it all. Whatever they did, wherever they went, and/or whatever they endured, Jesus was using them, and in each instance, location, or circumstance, the fragrance of Christ was manifested in and through them. Paul and his co-laborers knew that the Lord was using them—and that He was their very lives. They were sold out to Him and trusted Him with life or death, good or bad, pain or pleasure.

Not for Hire

Finally, we must attend to the expression, *“we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.”*

Some who are in ministry are not called to ministry. Some are serving their ambitions and personal agendas. For these it is easy to be “for sale” or take the “easy road” to “success”. However, serving the Lord is no easy road. We who are called cannot be purchased, manipulated, or coerced. We must listen to the Lord, follow the clear instructions of Scripture, and allow the Lord to accomplish His plans in and through us—no matter the cost.

Ordained Men

Today we will recognize the ordination of Pastor Thomas Neighbors. He has proven his call and election in the Lord. As such, we call to attention the following brief outline of what will be

required of him. Moreover, we celebrate his calling and thank the Lord for his assignment with, for, and to us!

The pastor is in service to the Lord—as His servant:

- 1) In personal relationship with God: through prayer (dependence upon the Lord), obedience to the written word of God and to the leadership of the Holy Spirit (as He leads and guides through the manifold potency of His person and gifts), and walking as an ambassador to Christ (representing Him—not ourselves).
- 2) In study: for personal preparedness as a steward of the word of God.
- 3) In service to the “Body of Christ:” through spiritual leadership—as a servant leader by example; by building up and equipping the saints in the faith, answering their questions and defending them against error; laboring in the word by teaching, exhorting, rebuking, and comforting; and shepherding in the desperately needed ministry of pastoral care—mental, social/domestic, and physical.
- 4) As a prophet, speaking for God to a world in need. Forth-telling, foretelling, warning, and encouraging all to whom He directs through the truth of the Scriptures with emphasis on the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We trust the Lord for His work for us, in us, and through us.

May the Lord use your pastors as required for His glory alone.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul