

Deacons Ordination 24th February 2018

Feast of Matthias

A short exhortation

Lectionary Readings:

Acts 1:14-17, 20-26

Psalm 113

Philippians 3:13-21

John 15:9-17

Pray

We are here today – on this splendid occasion - because Jesus was true to his word.

He explained to his friends in John 15 that his love for them was informed by God's love for him...and such love finds its apogee (its deepest expression, its highest point) in a willingness to lay down one's life for another.

And that is why we are here today.

Jesus was true to his word.

Jesus went to the cross and to death to remove all that stands between us knowing and enjoying his Heavenly Father.

He lays down his life for his friends. He deals with our sin. He gives his all.

Such is the beneficence and generosity of this one who lays down his life for his friends that he also lays upon them (Philippians 3:9 – the context for our

epistle reading) – *and us*, his righteousness – his right standing before his Heavenly Father is conferred upon or imputed to all who believe.

And did you note, Deacons-in-waiting, from the text of John 15 that Jesus' actions are not predicated on *our goodness* but on *his grace*; it is his initiative?: 'I chose you, I appointed you, I have called you friends'.

Hallelujah!

Any wonder that Jesus says that such a relationship is marked by an **overflowing joy** (John 15:11)!

And Jesus' expectation of his friends – those who know their 'master's business' (John 15:15) is that they'll align their lives to that business, such that they pray in accord with their Father's will and live fruitful and productive lives.

What might *that* look like?

Well, St Paul is a case in point (and I reference the Epistle reading – Philippians 3).

He knows his master's business.

He knows that following Jesus may well entail persecution and death and it will certainly mean a reordering of priorities – *as he leaves behind all that once drove him* – pressing on towards the resurrection and the eternity that Jesus' own sin-bearing death and life-giving resurrection has secured for him. That's his goal; that's his signal focus; that's his reward.

So Deacons-in-waiting here's the thing:

Though the process is different, like Matthias (in Acts 1), you have been chosen *as a result of sisters and brothers earnestly seeking the Lord in prayer*, to continue with an 'apostolic ministry'. That is:

- You are to joyfully testify (from the rising of the sun to its going down [to borrow from Psalm 113) to the power of Jesus' death and resurrection which deals with our sin and put us right with God. Preach that gospel – in season and out of season.

- You are to live holy, attractive, fruitful, Christ-honouring lives – as you get about your Master's business.

There will be adversity, beloved.

There will be opposition; guaranteed.

But as Jesus was true to his word, you can be sure that an eternal reward awaits those who are faithful.

Kenneth, Gavin, Steve and Kay – are we on the same page?

Then let us move to the Presentation, Examination and expectations.

In the Name of Christ.

Amen.