

John 10:1-16 (Ordination) PM

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Preacher: Rev. Mike Stewart

[0 : 00] Good evening everyone. What a joy it is to be with you here this evening. A joy for our ordinands and their families. A joy for the churches in which they will serve and a joy to our beloved diocese, the Anglican Network in Canada.

As the prayer book makes clear, since apostolic times there have been this three-fold order in the Church of God. A three-fold order of ministries. Bishops, priests and deacons.

And tonight, Craig and Jacob, Jeff, Dan and Will will be ordained into those sacred orders.

And my dear friends here tonight, let me remind us that all Christian ministry, in whatever form, begins and ends with a vision of God.

This is how it was for the Apostle Paul, the greatest missionary that the Christian Church has ever seen. And this is how it was for the prophet Isaiah.

[1 : 24] You see, it was around the year 740 BC that marked a turning point in the life of this great prophet. It marked a turning point in his ministry.

From that year onward, Isaiah tended to use a distinctive title for God Almighty, whom he referred to as the Holy One of Israel.

Because it was in that year that Isaiah had a vision of God's holiness. Isaiah is lifted up into the courts of the Lord.

If you have a Bible handy, you might want to turn to the book of Isaiah, chapter 6, and take a look at the opening verses. He writes, This is a holiness that can kill.

This is a holiness that can forgive. I saw the Lord sitting on a throne.

[3 : 31] High and lifted up. And the train of his robe filled the temple. Yes. God sits.

Ruling over the affairs of men. Infinite calm. Absolute power. This is the supreme headquarters of the cosmos.

A minister was once asked in an interview, what could be done to make the church more relevant to the culture of the day.

To which the minister responded, The issue is not how the church can become more relevant. The issue is how the church can become more holy.

You see, this is far more important than being cultured, eloquent, or up-to-date. Yet, we confess one holy, Catholic, and apostolic church.

[4 : 43] Isaiah's vision of God's holiness initially causes him to draw back. Woe is me.

Literally, I am doomed. For I am a man of unclean lips. And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Yes. God's holiness shuts Isaiah's mouth.

Regular repentance. My brothers and sisters. Such a vital ingredient in Christian ministry. My dear brothers being ordained tonight.

Let God keep you on a very short leash. Keep the King in your sights.

[5 : 50] Verses 6 and 7 of Isaiah chapter 6. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.

And he touched my mouth and said, Behold, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away.

And your sin is atoned for. Utterly sufficient. Utterly sufficient.

Instantly effective. Instantly effective. Is the holy love of God dealing with Isaiah's problem. Which was his sin. Which is also my problem.

God's holiness reopens Isaiah's mouth. God's holiness. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[6 : 54] as we with the church at large at the beginning of the day and toward the close of the day, simply pray, O Lord, open our lips and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

You see, it is God who must open our lips. And these words in the morning and the evening daily office, of course, come after the confession and absolution.

There is an order to this. My dear ordinance, beware of the perilous sin of affirming sin.

As ministers of the gospel, like St. Paul, we proclaim that the crucified Christ is Lord and is seated at the right hand of God.

Through his own sacrifice, he has made atonement for our sin. Through the cross, sinners are reconciled to a holy God as we receive the forgiveness of our sins.

[8 : 15] Pray to have your mouth opened every day to proclaim and embody that gospel to a world that desperately needs it.

When the apostle Paul, in the New Testament, talks about his ministry, it's clear, as he proclaims, he does not tamper, he does not water down, he does not change the word of God, the message of reconciliation reconciliation that has been entrusted to him.

Having such a ministry, my friends, is a privilege. It is a gift at the end of the day. You have this ministry by the mercy of God for no other reason than that.

You have this ministry by the mercy of God. The apostle Paul was able to hold fast faithfully to the message that he had received.

He was able to not lose heart despite those who reject the gospel. He is not motivated by money, salary.

[9 : 45] He's not motivated by human approval. He's able to endure his own sufferings. He's able to endure his own weaknesses.

All for the sake of the gospel. How does he do this? He keeps the king in his sights. The one who appeared to him on the road.

And so, my friends, how do we keep the king in our sights? Well, we regularly submit ourselves to the crucified one through whom we have received the forgiveness of sins and been reconciled to God.

The good news of the gospel, if men will receive it, is this, your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for.

Hallelujah. Yes, Jesus Christ is Lord. The Lord of the church in whom all the fullness of God so pleased to dwell.

[11 : 06] The good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. For the scriptures are clear, beloved, as we know, all we like sheep have gone astray, every one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Or as we Anglicans like to confess, we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep.

Clergy, it's good to remember that we are sheep.

More often than not, silly, stubborn, sinful creatures, getting all tangled up in the most ridiculous dilemmas and troubles, often of our own making.

If I may speak for myself for a moment. The church is not immune from all this. And yet, wonder of wonders, this is God's choice of venue.

And those of us who are called to be shepherds in the church are reminded by the bishops in the ordinal that the church and congregations that they serve are the sheep of Christ for whom he shed his blood.

[12 : 46] These are the people that you are called to serve. Those of you being ordained tonight. The sheep of Christ for whom he shed his blood.

And shepherds, remember too, that you are part of the same flock. Under shepherds of the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep.

The image of a shepherd is the preferred biblical image of leadership and is the very image that Jesus chooses in John chapter 10 that we heard tonight to explain his own claim to be the true king of Israel.

the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. And so, my dear friends in Christ, having had a little trip through these two majestic texts that we have before us this evening, I close where I began.

I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

[14 : 23] Jacob and Craig, Jeff, Will, and Dan, it is to this God that you have said, here I am, send me.

And we're so thankful for that. And we rejoice with you tonight. The church has tested that call. And tonight, Bishop Dan will lay hands upon you and ordain you and commission you to be about the work that God has called you to.

And it is this same God whom you have said, here am I, send me too, who will pour out his spirit upon you once again to anoint you and empower you to carry out this ministry and to do this work. Brothers, pray to be aware of the charisms that will be poured out upon you by God himself tonight. And to all of us here this evening, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we witness these ordinations, let us also keep the King in our sights.

Let us look aright and recall that amidst all the chaos of this world there is one who sits on a throne and let us confidently, joyfully proclaim our God reigns.

[16 : 05] Blessed is he and blessed is his kingdom now and forever. Amen. Amen. Amen.