

1 Timothy 4:15-16

Ordination/Installation of Samuel Schulz

July 23, 2023

You have been preparing for this day for many years. Since Call Day you have focused on beginning your pastorate at St. John's. Now here we are. It is fitting to turn to a veteran pastor for words of advice—no, not me and not these guys in robes sitting in that pew, although they will have some worthwhile things to say in a bit. We look to the experienced, skilled, inspired author of the pastoral epistles of the New Testament. The dedicated missionary Paul encourages you

GET SET FOR A MARVELOUS MINISTRY

- I. With a marvelous message
- II. Bringing marvelous benefits
- III. Having marvelous effects

The marvelous message you will share in your ministry is revealed in the Word. The content was termed “these matters,” which takes us back to the preceding verse. “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.” Here Paul mentioned “doctrine.” The key doctrine of the Bible, as we Lutherans know, is justification, or how we are saved. It is so vital because each of us and the whole world is lost in sin. We know it from the mirror of God's law which calls for perfection in thought and word and action and from reflection on our daily behavior. Sin is part of us constantly in the selfishness we show, in the pettiness that mars relationships in our homes and outside encounters and a whole host of more ways.

Our wise and loving Lord had the solution to our predicament. He got personally involved as he sent his own Son to enter our existence to live for us, not once violating a command, then to die on the cross, put to death by man's unjust act but as payment for the sins of the world. Both his life and his death were in our place; we receive the benefit. God left no doubt about the effectiveness of Jesus' work when he raised him from the dead on Easter morning. As a result, we are free from the curse and power of sin. We are at peace with God, confident of his blessing and care now and of heaven forever. What greater news could there be?

That message is not something new as you enter the ministry. You have known it throughout your life. It was brought to you in your home, assisted by the church, confessed at your confirmation in your growing years and continued in your high school training. It was underscored by your studies as you prepared for the

ministry on your journey through college and seminary. Now it will be your privilege to proclaim the marvelous message you know well.

II.

As you do so it is bringing marvelous benefits and those benefits come to you. Your work is not just academic, but it is personal and it is continual. St. Paul urged his young co-worker Timothy, “Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.” Keep studying, making the truths of God’s Word a part of your entire being and your approach to your life and ministry. The instruction to be diligent is related to thinking and meditating. The Apostle was not calling for the mindfulness that is promoted these days for a healthy life, in which you can meditate on anything—it’s more the process than the content—but he is calling for spending time with the Word. He has in mind specific content and a definite purpose: to grow in faith and love for Jesus.

You can’t effectively teach what you do not personally believe. The ordination vows you will soon speak identify the Bible as God’s infallible Word and the source of your teaching, with the three ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions as faithful witnesses to that truth, so you will conform your teaching to them. Again, that is not just professional and public activity but your own conviction.

The lasting effect was clearly stated in the text: “You will save yourself.” You have eternal life awaiting in heaven with all its glories. There you will enjoy freedom from sin and its consequences. You will be surrounded with beauty beyond compare. You will enjoy life in the presence of your Savior and in the company of all believers in Jesus. That future has not been earned by you but by Jesus and is his gift.

As you live with that assurance in the biggest matter that exists, it fills you with peace now and joy even in the difficult and challenging days that come in the lives of all of us on this earth, including Christian pastors. The Spirit keeps working as you take in that marvelous message, building your faith so that “everyone may see your progress.” It is bringing marvelous benefits to your heart and life and eternity.

III.

Of course, you want more. You are entering the ministry, which means service, and that involves others. There’s a congregation here that has been waiting for a fulltime, local pastor and as you serve them, the marvelous message that you share will be having marvelous effects. As Paul noted, “You will save...your hearers.” Not you personally, but that is the effect of the Word you will share with them.

You are not seeking a personal cult of followers or a name for yourself. Your focus is on Jesus.

God the Holy Spirit will use the marvelous message you share and live to touch the hearts and lives of others, building up those already gathered and reaching more souls who will believe and be saved. One of the joys of the ministry is seeing the gospel at work uplifting troubled, grieving sinners with God's forgiveness, strengthening doubters with their fearful hearts and breaking open hard, rejecting individuals and moving them to repentance. It is our prayer that you will see many such blessings in the years ahead.

We are also realistic as we approach the tasks of ministry. Not everybody is going to respond in the ways just described. Today's Gospel reading brought the parable of the weeds growing up as the devil is working also. The Second Lesson described the darkness that permeates a rejecting society. Those are among the conditions you will encounter. We might think that since we have the only solution to the plight that plagues every person, the complete Savior with his free gift of forgiveness and eternal life, that everyone would rush in to hear and instantly believe with gratitude. Sadly, that's not the case. You will need to take a stand against sin and error.

You don't need to be obnoxious in doing so. Orthodoxy is not proved by how many people you can drive away.

There will be blessings as you faithfully proclaim God's law and gospel. Paul spoke of persevering in the truth. You have that solution that all need to hear, the good news of Jesus, the marvelous message we noted at the outset. When you file your taxes even the Internal Revenue Service recognizes you as a Minister of the *Gospel*. That saving news is what uplifts souls, brings them joy and saves eternally. That is the message that must predominate as you conduct worship within these walls and as you reach out on campus and in the community. The Word gets results. After all, it is God's Word, inspired by the Spirit and his tool in planting and building faith. A blessed fellowship will be enjoyed as pastor and flock work together in the Lord's service. A blessed eternity will one day be enjoyed in heaven, lasting forever. Those are the marvelous effects that your ministry will have. We pray that for you and for St. John's members, present and future.

Not long after I retired, a pastor whom I had never met sent out a survey seeking insight from several of us old timers as we looked back. I responded with a

summary and then expounded with a few paragraphs carefully crafted after reflection. He replied with thanks and said that what I had first written was what he would take away from our correspondence. What were those words? “Love Jesus and love his people.” I guess I could have saved a lot of time and ink. That’s what it is really all about. So maybe that’s where I should stop today.

With the marvelous message of Jesus and his love, you and your fellow sinners/saints will grow in faith and be saved. Members of St. John’s and soon-to-be Pastor Schulz, get set for a marvelous ministry!