

A word to those doing Ministry Matthew 7:1-12

So Randy here you are,

an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church,
commissioned as one of Jesus disciples who
will go out as a fisher of men.

It seems just a short while ago
that I met you for the first time at Fuller.

You had just arrived from Iowa.

You had no place to live and a few pennies in you pocket.
You had your doubts about the Christian Reformed Church.
You had your hopes set on others.

But by divine appointment we met.

You lived in our house for a number of months; and
throughout the years we prayer together,
wrestled with theological issues together,
you did your internships with us,
preached your first sermons with us,
you became our youth worker, our custodian, and
finally our youth pastor.

You are one of us.

And today

we celebrate with you your ordination into the ministry.

That official recognition by the church
that God has chosen you.

And I, probably more than any one else,
know this was not a process of your choosing,
but God choosing you.

Through this process of moving to LA,
connecting with Hope International Church,
getting you M. Div, doing internships,
studying CRC polity & history
and being examined by Classis.

It was all a process of Jesus speaking to you and
saying what we find in your favorite chapter in the
bible John 15. It was a process of Jesus saying to you,

**Randy, "Greater love has no one than this,
that you lay down your life for your friends.
You are my friend, Randy, if you do what I command.
I no longer call you my servant, because a servant does
not know his master's business.
Instead I call you, Randy, friend, for everything that I**

**learned from my Father I have made known to you.
You did not choose me, but I choose you, and now
through this ordination have appointed you to go and
bear fruit – fruit that will last.
Then the Father will give you whatever you
ask in my name.”**

That’s what I’ve heard Jesus saying to you over these last five years. And so today we praise God for what he has done in your life. And we are thankful and feel privileged to be part of it.

As you begin ordained ministry

let me share with you two of words of advice.

Actually they are not my words but words Jesus shared with his disciples just before he sent them out to minister in his name.

Being a pastor can be a hazardous job.

I thought I would say that for your sake Jennifer.

Being a minister can really take its toll on your soul.

Even change your character.

When you work in the church and for the church,
you deal with people who are human and flawed.

Some times you give your whole heart and your whole being to some people,

you go way beyond the call of duty,
and it seems no one really cares.

No one gives you even the smallest sign of appreciation.

Instead you face resistance and criticism.

It isn’t easy laying down your life.

Sometimes it’s just like last Thursday night.

Do you remember how you felt?

You planned a great lesson,

you bought the food and drinks for some great fellowship,

you planned a game, you prepared your helper,

you looked forward to a great youth night,

and then no one shows up.

It’s so easy in ministry to start paying attention to the speck of sawdust and flaws and short coming of others.

To focus on them.

Ministry is not all it is cracked up to be,

it is difficult and

it so easy to let those disappointments and those

failures and those sacrifices to become

barbs in your soul.

Hanging on to them, making you
critical and negative and judgmental.

What I take from what Jesus says in this passage is that a
big part of ministry, and that is true for all of us,
is dealing with yourself.

It's first becoming aware of the plank in your own eye,
and then somehow taking those planks out of your own eye.

It's first dealing with your own ambitions and
your own prejudices and your own priorities and
your own failings and your own hurts and
your own limitations.

Sure you will be asked to help others remove the specks
of sawdust in their eyes, but

your first job is to make sure you can see clearly.

That you can think clearly,
that your own heart and your own attitudes are
like that of Jesus.

Sometime we think ministry is giving people advice and
telling people how they should act or live or
telling people what they should believe.

And because of your education and your study and your
experiences you may have great things to share.

But Jesus says sometime when you share those things
that are most sacred or
you put out your pearls of wisdom to others,
they may resist what you have in your heart to share
with them.

What you have to share may be the greatest thing you
ever experienced, it may be the most wonderful truth
you discovered in scripture, but

the truth of ministry is some people may respond by
turning against you and tearing you to pieces.

What others do and how other people respond can really
damage your soul and change your character
if you do ministry to satisfy your own needs.

And this is the word of advice Jesus gives "do not judge."

Do not let those things in ministry that disappoint,
or the flaws and weakness and failings of others
make you judgmental and critical and prejudiced.

It's easy for that to happen so watch out.

Guard your soul.

Don't let the barbs of ministry lodge in your heart.

Let them go into the hands of the Father.

I don't think Jesus meant to say that we should not judge
like discern between right and wrong or
between good and bad.
In other parts of the bible
we are called to judge and to discern.
What Jesus means here is; do not let your heart become
critical and negative and judgmental.
Carrying a chip on your shoulder or
barbs in your heart hinders the growth of fruit in
your ministry.
Rather rejoice when you are given the opportunity
to lay down your life for others as a friend of Jesus.

So how
do we keep from becoming bitter and critical in ministry?
You know the answer Randy.
Jesus speaks about that in the next section.
By working on and
focusing first of all on our relationship with God.
You even preached about that two weeks ago.
About that amazing living praying relationship with
God through Jesus.

In this section Jesus reminds us again that everything,
yes everything you need for ministry,
affirmation, appreciation, yes even compensation,
comes from God your Father in heaven.
Not from the people you are ministering to.
And God is a father who surpasses all human fathers.
Randy, you know that Adriana and I love our children,
and so do your parents love you, Randy.
They even flew here for the weekend to be with you for
this ordination service.
We as parents,
we know how to give good gifts to our children.
If they ask us something we will do everything
possible to meet their needs and to make them happy.
And Jesus rightly reminds us that
as parents we are human and flawed and make mistakes.
But God our Father is perfect.
Listen to this verse:
If we parents, though we are evil,
know how to give good gifts to our children,
how much more will your Father in heaven give good
gifts to you Randy, if you ask him.

And so that is Jesus second word of advice as you
begin your journey as an ordained minister in the church.

What ever it is you need ask your father in heaven and
it will be given to you.

Whatever you desire in ministry
seek it from you Father in heaven and
you will find it.

Whatever opportunity you hope for in ministry,
knock for it on the door of your father in heaven and
he will open it to you.

Randy, in that living loving praying relationship with God
you will receive all the good gifts you need and ask for.

So remember, Randy,
you were chosen by Jesus,
you were appointed by the head of the church
to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.
You were ordained through the Holy Spirit
to share
the glorious riches of the mystery of Jesus and God's love
which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

And for that work, for that calling,
the Father will give whatever you ask
in the name and for the cause of Jesus.

May God bless you Randy and
give you peace always as you serve him.