

# Ordination Service Homily

by Stewart Ruch

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*Bishop Stewart Ruch's homily emphasizes the call to deaconship, the importance of cultivating a legacy of faith, and the necessity of enduring suffering for the gospel's sake.*

**Duration:** 19:11

**Topics:** "Ordination"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of focusing on the first generation after oneself and fighting for the fourth generation. He encourages the audience to give their best to the current generation so that they can pass it on to the next. The speaker also highlights the theology of suffering and the need to understand its significance in the Christian life. He urges the audience to study the Bible and gain a deeper understanding of Paul's teachings on suffering. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the call to serve and suffer for the gospel, with a focus on both the present and future generations.

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## Transcript

This is Church of the Resurrection in Wheaton, Illinois. This week's sermon is by Bishop Stuart Ruck and is from our fall 2017 ordination service. Okay, so an ordination sermon is a little different.

I will be preaching from a beautiful text in the Scriptures. That's not different, but it is a little different insofar as I am in part speaking specifically to these three who have been called to the ministry of the diaconate. At the same time, everything that I'm teaching out of 2 Timothy, if you are here and you are a dedicated follower of Jesus, everything here will be applicable to your life, to your call, to the shape of your personal mission.

It's my assumption any Sunday here at Res, and especially a Sunday when there are guests celebrating, that some of you are not followers of Jesus. I'm assuming that you're here in the room as I teach. I'm so glad you're here in the room.

This is going to give you a chance to at least hear a couple of things that are extremely important to followers of Jesus as to how we're actually to live our lives. So let me begin with a word of gratitude for your all's willingness to respond to the church's call. These three did not come through some kind of very, very developed and detailed application process like you would necessarily when you're getting a job.

There is an application process. There are months and sometimes years of discernment. I'm not saying that, but it's unlike getting a job, and it's a lot like being called into a new aspect of your life in Jesus.

The church indeed has reached out to these three and asked them, would you please consider serving the church as a deacon? So thank you for responding. Thank you. Thank you for being willing to be, yes, a servant of God, probably the best quick description of the deacon who is never greater than their master, our Lord Jesus, who served even unto the cross.

But as perhaps you've heard me say before, the call of deacon is the call to be a field leader who loves, one who's called out into the field of the world, one who embraces the field of the church, who is willing to expand their hearts to love not one but both church and, as God so loves the world, so they too are called to so love the world. They're called to be out there ministering, sacrificing, teaching, preaching, evangelizing, caring, counseling, feeding in the world, in the church, with that which we've been given from our Lord, which is the love of God the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit. Be field leaders who love as you're called into this diaconal ministry, as you follow upon millions who've gone before you in the Holy Church and those who will follow after you till our Lord returns.

Thank you as well for choosing 2 Timothy as a text. I mean, this is a great book, everyone. So make note, definitely we're spending some time in this week.

It's a beautiful, compelling read. We get one of the key leaders of the early church, whose name is Paul, who is near the end of his ministry. He realizes he's near the end of his life, so you're getting Paul in a poignant, and it's a very tender letter.

Sometimes when Paul writes, he's not as tender, if you know any of his writings, if you're familiar with him. He's very, very tender here. There's a kind of holy sweetness in what Paul has to say to someone he loves deeply, when he calls his son in the Lord, Timothy.

Hence the name of the letter. I thank God, Paul writes, whom I serve, as did my ancestors with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Paul tells the truth.

That means he prays night and day. He tells the truth. As I remember your tears, Timothy, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.

I'm reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother, Lois, and your mother, Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you as well. For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. Two things that I would like to share with you all, two things I'd like to share with the people of God today.

The first is from this letter, particularly what I just read, the call to cultivate a Lois legacy, to bring Lois, of whom we don't have much information, but enough to know that Lois developed a legacy, that we are to cultivate a Lois legacy. And secondly, very simply, to suffer for the gospel. As you cannot read this letter without engaging Paul's tender exhortation.

Suffer. Share with me in my sufferings, Paul says. Share with Jesus in his sufferings.

Is the cross not prominent in all that we do? If nothing else, and it is for many reasons to remind us that a servant is never greater than his or her master. Cultivate a Lois legacy with affection. I didn't think much about affection when I began full-time ministry work 25 years ago.

I just didn't think about it much. I was too caught up in how should I craft a vision and how do I write this sermon, which I found anxiety-producing and nerve-wracking as an experience. How do I lead a small group meeting? How do I build an agenda? That's all the stuff I thought about a lot when I started 25 years ago.

I thought very little about affection. And yet the more and more I study the Bible, and particularly I study Paul's interactions with those that he loved, again and again his words are marked with emotion, with affection, with an unabashed kind of holy emotion. You can hear it in the verses that I read.

I got choked up reading them. So as you cultivate a Lois legacy, as you look at the reality of Lois, who passed on the faith to Eunice, who passed on the faith to Timothy, and by the way, we have Paul in the mix too, who gets alongside Eunice and is a spiritual dad, as Eunice is a spiritual and biological mom to Timothy. We have three generations already mentioned there, but we can't forget that this is also going to the church that Timothy is serving, the church in which he is a spiritual father.

So there's a fourth generation. So we have a Lois legacy of four generations of affection, four generations of bonding, four generations of holy and proper and beautiful and deep emotion, longing. I long for you.

We need to be longed for. We need those spiritual mothers and fathers that long for us, that carry our names in their imaginations and their hearts and their heads. Scott, Matt, Margie, long for daughters and sons.

Spend night and day praying for them. Let the Lord break your heart with an affection for them. Let their wanderings break your heart.

Let their victories send you in exultation. Let their shortcomings inspire new intercession. Let their growth spur you on to more love and good deeds.

You're going to have to figure out how you invest your week. It just kind of comes down to that. It just comes down to how you're going to invest your week.

How do you invest your life week after week? What does your weekly schedule look like? What are those things that you do on a weekly basis or a daily basis or a monthly basis, right? So it comes down to how you spend that week. What have you decided is a daily thing that you do? What have you decided is a weekly thing that you do? Everyone of us makes high risk investment as we look at our weeks and how we spend the capital of time. There is no greater currency in full time ministry and for many of us in our lives overall, there's no greater currency, nothing more expensive or more valuable than our time and the investment of our time.

Be absolutely clear. You are making an investment. So get crystal clear about your investment.

With rigor, look at your week. Are you invested in a Lois legacy? Are you moving your week around? Look at Timothy and how he's so benefited from Lois and Eunice and Paul and how that fourth generation is benefiting from him. So cultivate that.

Be intentional about that. There will be so many things to invest in. You will have to fight to invest in this legacy.

I submit to you, Lois, focus on the first generation right after you but fight for the fourth generation that will come after you. Focus on the first generation right after you, those that you are especially by God's providence, you're just a little bit farther ahead, just a little bit older probably. Focus on them.

Give them most so they can give the next generation their most but then fight for the fourth. Understand that you're teaching and you're preaching. Understand that the stands you take for the gospel, understand the suffering that will come is because you're fighting not just for the one that you love now, the next generation, you're fighting for the fourth generation.

You're fighting for those that you pray will receive the gospel in its fullness and power. Amen? Do you see how you focus on the first, the generation right after you, but you are always fighting for the fourth? Oh, learn your Bible and the theology of the scriptures. Understand the trajectories of what you teach now and where it will lead later.

Focus on the first. Fight for the fourth. Oh, for four generations of faithfulness, suffer for the gospel.

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God who saved us and called us to a holy calling. That's just intense. I don't know how else to make it anything else.

And it's right in the heart of the text that Paul is giving to Timothy. How can I not give it to you? What is a suffering? It's such a profound theology of suffering you all. I don't dare try to even begin to work it all out.

If you're intrigued by that, do your study in 2 Timothy and then do 2 Corinthians, which will help you to understand Paul's understanding of suffering. But let me just say just a bit this morning to all of us and to these three. There is the suffering that comes from a holy calling.

That's Paul's phrase there, verse 9, the power of God who saved us and called us to a holy calling. This calling is not simply about ordination at that point. This is calling to live in the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the calling he's speaking of. That when you're called to live the good news, the gospel of Christ, the reality is you enter into a war with three battle fronts. The suffering comes because you enter into a massive war with three different fronts.

There's the front of the sinful nature, that as you resist sin, as you resist sin in your own heart, you will suffer for that. As you resist the reality of the world, which we're called to love, yet which is deeply corrupted and comes against the good news, you will suffer for that in the world. And you will suffer as the world comes into the church.

And you will suffer because there is a devil, Satan, who is an enemy of your soul, of your family, and of the church of Jesus Christ. At the very least, that is one reality as to why we suffer. What does that suffering look like? Often a kind of profound, intangible, and yet deeply felt spiritual pressure that just feels like pressure, often unrelenting pressure.

It's not the pressure of your own sin that you're fighting. It's the pressure of the world coming against you, without and within the church. If it isn't one of those two pressures, and you're having a really good day, then Satan sees his opportunity, and he lays it on.

Three fronts, you all. So Paul says there's a suffering. The call to live the gospel is the call to live in a significant season of tension.

It's a season of tension that we'll live until we see the Lord. Until we see Him face-to-face, we'll live that tension. All of us, for you, call to this particular diaconal ministry.

That's one of the main reasons you serve. That's one of the main ways that you serve. You'll serve at the table, and you'll serve in lots of hidden ways, the people of God and those far from God.

But be clear, one of the key ways you serve, as our Lord served, is to share in His sufferings, and to share in the sufferings I've just articulated. It's a deep service. I was at a cross-country meet of one of my sons this week, and I had my six-year-old Beckett with me.

We were seeing another one of the boys. And right before the race started, and I ran cross-country for many, many years, so I began to have a very Pavlovian experience. I'm very nervous.

My palms are very sweaty. I feel very thirsty. My legs all of a sudden feel weak, even though I'm not running.

I'm not involved in this at all, except I am a dad, and I do actually run all over the cross-country course. But Beckett, the six-year-old, says to me, why is this so hard? Why is cross-country? He's a soccer player. Why is cross-country so hard? This looks so easy.

And I didn't miss the moment. I got down on my knees. I looked at him, and I said, hey, Beckett, cross-country is a lot harder than it looks.

Okay, buddy? Christian life can be a lot harder than it looks. The call to the diaconal ministry can be a lot harder, because you suffer, often secretly, often quietly. But suffering, it's not the last word.

Suffering can't be the last word. I can't leave you with that. Paul doesn't leave Timothy with that.

As a matter of fact, before he even speaks of suffering, excuse me, actually, it's prefaced in between two different calls to suffering. There in the last part of verse 8, it's not the last word, because the gospel is the last word. And in the gospel, you're given the power of God.

Later, in a text that we didn't read from chapter 2 of 2 Timothy, you're told that the word of God is not bound. So we're bound by our sin and the world and the devil at times, but the word of God is not bound. The word of God, the Scriptures, and the fullness of Jesus Christ Himself has won the battle.

He has suffered. He's overcome by His suffering and the power of the resurrection, which means that yes, you will suffer, but you will suffer with the power of God. You will suffer with the word of God.

The word of God will not be bound. You'll be field leaders who are given to this place and sent out from this place to love. And be assured of this, in the words of Augustine, the more you love, the easier the work.

The more you love, the easier the work. The more you cultivate a Lois legacy, the more you share in the sufferings of our Lord and your fellow believers in the faith, the more that you know that love, the easier the work. Why? Because of the power of God.

Because the word of God is not bound. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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