

## Installation Sermon By Rev. F. J. Lankenau

If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever! Amen. – I Pet. 4:11

My Dear Friends:

To you this day will stand out from all the other days of your life. It is the day to which you have long looked forward with prayerful anxiety and upon which you will look back with solemn interest to all eternity. I am exceedingly anxious to do all in my power to make the day a blessing to all the other days of your existence.

You are about to become active workers in the service of the Lord's kingdom. Two of you are to go to far-off India, there to do important mission-work, which only trained women like you can do. As zenana workers yours shall be the blessed privilege of bringing the Bread of Life into the secluded apartments of east India homes. One of you, probably, will go to the western coast as a missionary deaconess to assist pastors and deaconesses in caring for the needs of members in distress and bringing in those that are without. Finally, two of you, as I understand, are to serve as hospital deaconesses in supplying the physical and spiritual needs of your fellow-men.

It is a blessed work that you are to enter upon; it is also a most arduous and responsible work to which you are commissioned in this service. It is a work that will require self-denying sacrifice, extraordinary patience, and often great courage. And if you would have your labors crowned with success, you will have to perform them in the spirit demanded in our text. According to our text

THE SERVICE OF A CHRISTIAN DEACONESS must be rendered

*1. Humbly, 2. Generously, 3. To the glory of God.*

1.

Ever remember that your services in the hospital and in the field of Home or Foreign Missions is a channel only and not the fountain. Whatever service you are able to render is because of the ability and opportunity which God gives you. If you would be the ideal deaconesses, you must be poor in spirit. Only as you are poor, can you make others rich; only as you realize that you are the channel of God's grace and mercy, can you be true deaconesses. Only as you realize that your sufficiency is of God; only as you are convinced that your only hope is Jesus' blood and righteousness; only as you are willing to admit that you have been but unprofitable servants and at best have only done your duty; only as you despair in your own power and strength, is it that you can be a blessing to others in your work, - I say, only as you thus humbly learn that all your willing and doing must come from God, can you expect to attain to God-pleasing efficiency as deaconesses.

The love, zeal, energy, and self-denial which God-pleasing ministry of a deaconess demands must come from God. We are weak, but His strength is made perfect in weakness; we are selfish, but His Spirit can kindle the fire of holy love in the hearts that once were cold and dead. We must supply the ability which we need for the work which He has given us to do. He has appointed to each man his work, and He will enable every man to do the work appointed him if he seeks for that ability in faith and prayer. Every true servant of God is enabled by his Master to say as did St. Paul: "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

Work, then, in the strength of the Lord and ascribe any measure of success which may be granted to you wholly to that strength which God gives. Like faithful servants ascribe all success to the Lord's gifts.

In your ministrations you will be thrown in contact with the poor and lowly, with those whose earthly advantages have been few. It will be only natural that your flesh will be filled with a feeling of superiority when it compares itself with the unfortunates to whose wants you are ministering. At such times forget not that you have no advantages over them except those which God has given you. To the free benevolence of God you owe your attainments. May a recollection of the actual state of the case prevent conceit and vainglory from becoming enthroned in your hearts!

## 2.

Your services should be given "as of the ability which God giveth." They should be given whole-heartedly. You should give the full measure of your ability. Zeal and energy should characterize your ministrations. Realizing that you are the dispensers of God's gifts which were freely given you, you should give your services without stinting and grudging. Then, too, the fervor of Christian love should impel you to benevolent activity. This generous, zealous, fervent, loving ministry is well exemplified by Peter in the healing of the impotent man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. Peter and John were one day going up to the Temple to pray. At the gate of the Temple, called Beautiful lay a poor, wretched man. He had been lame from birth and daily carried there by loving friends, so that he might beg alms of those who came to the Temple to worship. When Peter and John were about to enter the Temple, he asked also them for alms. But Peter and John looked at him and told him, "Look on us." The man did as he was told, thinking he would receive a coin from them. But Peter said to him: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk!" And immediately the man was able to stand on his feet and walk.

Peter had something precious in his possession. He knew he could help the sufferer, if not by giving him alms, since he had no silver and gold, then by giving him what was far better, the use of his limbs. And this gift Peter was willing to give, as he knew that God had given it to him that he might freely use it in behalf of his fellow-men.

Like Peter you have no silver and gold to give to wretched, suffering mankind. The Church and her servants seldom have that to give. The world has it for its enterprises, to

extend its railroads, build its factories, and rear its commercial palaces. But Christian enterprises can seldom say else than did Peter, "Silver and gold have I none." But let that fact not make you envious. Our God could easily make His Church and all its enterprises rich if He wanted to do so, for all gold and silver is His. He could supply you and all His other servants with means to relieve all physical want wherever it may show itself. But He does not do so, partly in order to exercise our faith and keep us humble, largely, however, to help us realize, as He did Peter, that the gift He has given us is far greater than all silver and gold.

As servants of the Church this precious Gospel is given you that you may freely give it to others. Let it ever be in your eyes your most precious treasure. With it you can direct the spiritually blind to safety and happiness, strengthen the weak, and lift the fallen. You will find this Gospel ever the Bread and Water of Life, able to nourish the famishing soul and quicken the faint heart. You will find it ever to be the true balm of Gilead, which can heal all the wounds of sin; ever the reliable companion when man is about to pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death.

As God gives you this gift of His, use it freely, unstintingly, faithfully, to the saving of many souls. All God's gifts are given to us that we may give them to others. All God's strength is given us that we should use it. If He makes an arm strong, it is for work. If He makes a voice strong, it is that it may plead with others for Him. If he makes a heart strong, it is that it may be a blessing that is intended to rest with us. All blessings that flow to us are to flow through us, gain force from us, and flow on in refreshing streams beyond us. If you are compelled to recognize that fact that you *could*, – you *could* give, you *could* nurse, you *could* cheer – then a solemn responsibility rests upon you. What you can do for Christ and for His brethren you are, by all holy persuasions and considerations, bound to do. Such as you have, by gracious trust from God, that you must be ever ready to *give* and to *spend* and to *use* for the service and blessings of *others*.

### 3.

The end and purpose of all Christian service and thus also of your deaconess service shall be the glory of God. "That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever!" It is God's strength that we employ in service; and so it is to Him that we must ascribe the enabling power. It is only through Christ's agency that we act; and so when we glorify God, it is through Him. The glory and the power we ascribe to God forever and ever.

The Savior said that He had glorified His Father on earth. We, His disciples, should imitate Him, learning of Him to seek the glory of God in and above all things. The love, the zeal, and the energy which true Christians exhibit to the use of the gifts given them by God show forth the glory of God; for that love and zeal can come only from His grace; weak, selfish creatures such as we are could not live holy, self-denying lives save by the help of God's gracious presence. Every act of Christian self-denial, every labor of love, is an additional proof of the reality of God's grace and power. Thus God is glorified in His saints by their deeds of love, and that "through Jesus Christ for it is the Lord Jesus

Christ who by His atonement has brought us near to God; He has enabled His true disciples to know and glorify their Father which is in heaven. All glory and dominion are His own, endowed with power from on high, enabling them to glorify God by a holy and unselfish life and by a blessed death.

Dear friends, you in your chosen calling will have a wonderful opportunity to glorify God, since your faithful labors will be so obviously, so palpably, a manifestation of love and good will, which even the unbelieving world recognizes as divine. Where the unbelieving world sees unselfish, forbearing, helpful love, it feels the power and presence of God, and its scoffings and sneers generally cease. The atmosphere of heaven is love, and when but a breath of that heavenly love is exhaled by his servants, God will be honored and His name glorified. The natural man is an egotist and remains such until love from above transforms him. Yours is the blessed task of showing forth the blessed transformation of the heart by acts of love. By your ministrations you will compel modern heathens to say as did the ancient heathen of the Christians, "Behold how they love one another and all others!" For to show that the Church, born of love and living in love, is the appropriate organ for the practice of love. Show the world that the love of God working in us embraces all men and thus help to win it for Christ and His Church. Let your love work as a missionary. Let it exclude none, as the grace which has kindled it excludes none, not even enemies or persecutors.

And now we separate. You know your duty, you know your work. You know the expectations entertained respecting you. May God be with you!

We shall meet again. But when we next meet, the day will be ended and the result of our labors will be revealed. To a large extent life is before you. With many of us most of life is gone, and all that we can do is to penitently kneel and cry for pardon. With you it is not so; and I charge you in particular to seize the moments as they pass and use them in the service and to the glory of the Master.

Go forth in God's strength to do the work to which He has called you, counting no work too difficult, no sacrifice too great, so that you win souls and build up Christ's Church, and thus be faithful.

May God be the Strength of your hearts and your Portion forever!

Oh, that each of you in the day of His coming may say:  
I have fought my way through;  
I have finished the work Thou didst give me to do!

Oh, that each from His Lord may receive the glad word:  
Well and faithfully done!  
Enter into My joy and sit down on my throne!  
Amen.

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