

Sermon Series Title: "Church Beginnings"

Sermon Series Summary: From now until around Easter, we will be in the book of Acts, covering chapters 1-12. After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, we see the NT church being born by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through this series, we see the church being built, the kingdom going forth, and the gospel being proclaimed.

"We are in our "Church Beginnings" sermon series, and through this series, we're going to see that we need to know where we come from to know who we are now and to know who we will become in the future."

Call: Deuteronomy 32:35-36

Text: Acts 6

Title: "The Service of Stephen"

Next Week's Call: Deuteronomy 32:39

Next Week's Text: Acts 7:1-53

Next Week's Title: "The Sermon of Stephen"

Future Calls: Deuteronomy 32:43

Future Titles: "The Stone of Stephen" (Acts 7:54-60)

Fallen Condition Focus: There are people in need and people who are against the gospel.

Christ redeeming FCF: Jesus is the ultimate Deacon to meet our need and the one persecuted on our behalf.

Proposition: "Jesus is the ultimate Deacon who served us and the ultimate Stephen who suffered on our behalf."

Summary: In Acts 6, we see the establishment of the office of Deacon to address the problem of the Hellenist widows being neglected. In the office of Deacon, we see the priority of Word, prayer, and mercy in the church. The latter half of ch. 6 shows us the ministry of one of the Deacons, Stephen. In it, we see God working through Stephen and Stephen being unjustly persecuted for Jesus.

Reflective Questions:

1. What does Acts 6 teach us about the office of Deacon?
2. How does this passage speak into our call to show mercy?
3. What are some lessons we can learn from Stephen's life and ministry?

I. Introduction

- A. Hook
- B. Transition
- C. Proposition
- D. Points

II. The Problem (vv. 1-2)

- A. The church has been growing (Pentecost- 3000, ch. 4- 5000 men, ch. 5- more than ever).
- B. Hellenists- Greek-speaking Jews from Diaspora, settled back in Jerusalem
- C. Hebrews- Aramaic-speaking Jews that grew up in Judea
- D. Widows- bottom of society, poor
- E. Hellenist widows- most likely wanted to live in Jerusalem after husbands pass.
- F. Hellenists complain that their widows are being neglected. Maybe not intentional, but it's still happening.
 1. OT- call of God's people to take care of their widows.
 2. Early church- no one in need
- G. Apostles recognize that they cannot distribute and teach/pray effectively. Their main calling is to preach/pray instead of wait tables. But waiting tables and showing mercy to the widows are still very important.

III. The Provision (vv. 3-7)

- A. Pick out from among you- election
- B. Seven men- good reputation (godly), full of the Spirit (spiritual since this is a spiritual problem) and of wisdom (to discern who needs mercy).
- C. Apostles focus on word and prayer, while the task of managing property and mercy are delegated to the Deacons.
 1. Deacon is not a step to becoming an elder, but it is a completely different call (i.e. Stephen).
- D. Stephen- full of faith and Holy Spirit
- E. Hellenist men are chosen to minister to the Hellenist Jews- though they are a minority
- F. Laying on of hands
- G. Word of God increased and numbers multiplying in Jerusalem

IV. The Persecution (vv. 8-15)

- A. Stephen- full of grace; reference to Jesus (John 1:14); performing miracles (evidence for God's presence and favor)
- B. Jewish leaders dispute with Stephen but are no match for his wisdom.
- C. They set up false witnesses, making up lies about his teaching.
- D. Stephen follows Christ in Jesus' faith, wisdom, signs and wonders, and persecution.
- E. They accuse him of doing away with the temple and the customs of Moses.
- F. In truth, the temple was destroyed and the customs of Moses have been fulfilled in Jesus.
 - 1. Jesus is the ultimate temple destroyed on the cross, and He is the one who fulfills the Law by His life, death, and resurrection.
 - 2. We can receive His grace because Jesus received the wrath of God for us.
 - 3. Jesus is the ultimate Deacon who served us when we were in need.
 - 4. And He gives gifts to us, so we can live for His glory.