**Wise Service**

*Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.****2****And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.****3****Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.****4****But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”****5****And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.****6****These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.*

***7****And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:1-7, ESV)*

 Wise ministry is done with the Holy Spirit and spiritual discernment. Greetings in the Lord, dear brothers and sisters as we talk today about the best way to serve. The Bible does not only teach us with its content, but also through its mode of communicating that content. The Church of Christ not only learns from the teaching ministry, but also from the example of the Apostle’s ministry. Today, then, we’re going to speak with this last reality as our background. The Apostles show their ministry style through the way that they served. Again, wise ministry is done with the Holy Spirit and spiritual discernment. Let’s spend a few minutes going deeper into the topic…

 The best ministry is the one that is done in the Holy Spirit and with wisdom. It was apparent that the Apostles’ ministry was bringing fruit – they did face a problem, however. The Hellenist widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food and other needs. That ministry was limping along (at best). If the Apostles had approached this issue in a worldly way, perhaps they would have dropped everything and fulfilled that job themselves. However, driven by their spiritual awareness, they decided not to take on that ministry, but to appoint people to take care of those widows.

 Specifically, the Apostles requested that the servants have a good reputation, be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Yes, the ministry in question was serving tables, probably making visitations, and handing out foodstuffs and other needed items, but even that simple ministry needed the Presence of the Holy Spirit and great wisdom. Not just anybody could do that service. It had to be someone who had a good reputation. In other words, the best way to serve, according to the Apostles, was to make sure that the right spiritual person was found for the position(s). The right person should be full of the Holy Spirit, wise, and have a good reputation.

 When we compare this to secular work situations, and sometimes they are similar and sometimes different. If someone pushes paper in a construction company, that person may need to be able to complete certain tasks, but it may not be necessary that they have a degree in construction! Or, if someone is going to wash dishes in a restaurant, they may need to know how to do that specifically, but not how to cook the food. In the Church, however, if a ministry is going to happen, it is imperative that the person taking charge of that ministry be led by the Holy Spirit, wise, and well-attested.

 If the church leadership body needs to focus on its mission as the Apostles did, then the needed work needs to be delegated to the correct people, so the ministry itself does not “limp along. For example, let the musician have a music ministry, but let it be full of the Holy Spirit and let him or her have a good reputation. In the case of teaching, it is the same; it is the same with an Elder; it is also the same with any servant or specifically a deacon.

 Whoever is going to serve, let them serve rightly, and may they be someone full of the Holy Spirit, full of wisdom, with a good reputation.

 This means that if you want to serve, it is necessary that you be full of the Holy Spirit, full of wisdom, and you must have a good reputation in the church. A good name by itself is not enough. Being full of the Holy Spirit is not enough. Being wise is not enough by itself. You must have all three of these together, and your ministry ought to be according to the decision of the church leadership.

 May God give us wisdom, so that our ministries live up to these standards – being full of the Holy Spirit, full of wisdom, with a good reputation.

 May the Lord bless you all. Amen.