Deacons are servant leaders in the church. Roles, duties and expectations for deacons are not spelled out in the New Testament. Studying the words translated “deacon,” “servant” and “minister,” along with the verbal forms, will give us a pretty good picture of what ‘deaconing’ looked like in the NT.

Our two texts this morning sort of cover the whole period of the NT. The complete NT didn’t fall down out of heaven in a golden clam-shell box with a Holman Bible Publishing stamp on it. The books of the NT were written over a period of time and then were preserved because they spoke to the church. They were later collected and recognized as having unique ‘authority.’ The church recognized the inspiration of certain books and these were included in the ‘canon.’ The canon is the list of recognized, authoritative books of the Bible.

Acts chronicles events in the early church from the ascension of Jesus to the death of the Apostle Paul. First Timothy was written near the end of Paul’s life. So, in Acts we see the seed of deacon ministry being planted, and in Timothy we see a more developed understanding of ministries in the church. In between the beginning in Acts and the latest recorded truth of scripture in the pastoral epistles we can see what is recorded. We can look at what the Bible says about who did what and come to an understanding of what ‘deaconing’ looked like in the early church. It should probably look pretty similar today.

Let’s read 1 Tim 3.8-13 again . . .

Mike Huckabee has been the governor of Arkansas, made two runs at the White House, and is well-known as a broadcaster. Now he serves as ambassador to Israel. But when he lived in Florida and attended Destiny Worship Center evangelical church near his home, *Huckabee was simply known as the 'golf cart guy' on Sunday mornings*. No matter what he did earlier in the week, on Sunday mornings, he drove through the church parking lot shuttling people to the door. Everyone serves in some capacity at his former church so he embraced the role of making certain people get a warm welcome while he gave them a ride to worship. Regardless of who we are or what we do, ***serving* others will always be essential**.  ( *Houston Chronicle, 10/1/17, p.F8* )

Let’s look at another passage; turn to 2 Cor 6.3-11. In vss 3 and 4, we see the word “ministry” and “ministers.” Just LOOK at everything that Paul went through for the sake of ‘deaconing.’ For Paul, this was the proof that it was the Lord’s ministry, that it was really ‘deaconing.’

The point is that the dedication, the spirit of serving, the commitment, the dedication, the humility required required to keep on keeping on in doing the Lord’s work proves the reality of the ‘deaconing.’

While serving as a youth minister in Seattle, Eric and his wife were casually invited to the sixteenth birthday party of a girl in their group. The invitation was made as she left an event and almost seemed like an afterthought. When the day arrived, Debbie sensed it was important to attend Christy's party so they loaded their car with three teenagers and headed to the ice rink. Christy's mother mocked her daughter for attending church and it was only because her dad dropped her off that she went. Eric and Debbie stepped into this uncomfortable environment and were surprised to find that they, and the kids they brought, were the only people at Christy's party. There was cake, decorations, and place settings for ***thirty people***, but nobody else showed up. They had a great time and got to spend time with Christy's parents. Several weeks later, Christy's mom sought out Eric because she had decided to become a Christian. The same woman who berated her daughter for going to church, was now embracing God's grace with tears streaming down her face. Eric curiously asked about this dramatic change and Julie replied, "**I changed my mind about God and Christians because you came to my daughter's party**." Ministry is more about compassion and presence than we often realize. ( *Not Like Me, Eric Bryant, 2010, p.76* ) Like we said last week, you have to show up.

Now, I want us to look at some people called “deacons” or “servants” or “ministers” in the NT, as well as some who are said ‘to deacon.’ Get your Bible out and follow along, please . . .

1. Acts 6 lists ‘the seven.” Among these are two famous dudes, **Stephen** and **Philip**. I think these were the first deacons, even though it wasn’t called that at the time. We will look at them next week.

2. Eph 6.21 — Tychicus

3. Col 1.7 — Epaphras

4. 1 Tim 4.6 — Timothy

5. Rom 16.1 — Phoebe

6. 2 Tim 1.16f — Onesiphorus

7. Luk 8.3 — Joann & Susanna

8. Luk 10.40 — Martha “deaconing alone” (X Files—’The Lone Gunmen’ - Elijah

9. Rom 13.4 — Government

10.  1 Cor 12.1f — Different ministries

11.  1 Pet 4.10 — Use gifts as good stewards

12.  Rev 2.19 — the church at Thyatira

Billionaire Ross Perot died 2019. Larry King, who was still alive at the time, reflected on Perot’s life. King recalled an interview where he asked about the secret of his success and Perot explained that he “sells umbrellas when it’s raining.” **Much of ministry is just that - providing people with what they need most at the time**. ( *Time, 7/22/19, p.15* )

I think we can see the heart of what ‘deaconing’ is supposed to be. It ***started*** in Acts 6 as an answer to an ‘opportunity.’ It ***continued*** with the seven and others doing whatever they could to make sure needs were met, providing people with what they needed most at the time. ’Deaconing’ continued as dedicated believers showed up at the party — ***continuously***.

The place of deacons is the place of **service**. Deacons are people who ***show up***, ***love on folks*** and ***do*** what is needed. Deacons are servant-leaders in the church. Sometimes they drive golf carts. Sometimes they hold babies. Sometimes deacons line up and meet service and repair people at the church-house to get something fixed. Sometimes they may plan and promote and participate in special events. Sometimes they share the gospel with people who need to follow Jesus. Sometimes they pass out bulletins. Sometimes they fill the baptistry and assist those being dunked. Sometimes they fix the plumbing. Sometimes deacons call and/or visit sick folks. Sometimes they welcome guests and help new folks feel at home. Sometimes they teach Sunday School. Sometimes they encourage the pastor. Sometimes deacons meet with the pastor and leaders to plan for the future of the church.

 I think that too often, we put deacons in box that is far too small. ‘Deaconing’ is doing ***whatever it takes*** to honor God and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Deacons are servant-leaders in the church. They are the folks who ***keep on showing up*** in order to “**Git ‘er DONE**.” They fit into a VERY important place in God’s scheme of things! **Servant-*leaders*** in the church, **that** is the place of ***deacons***.