

Thesis: **We glorify God when we fulfill our ministry!**

What will you say when Jesus asks you, **“Did you fulfill your ministry?”** Notice I did not say “if;” I said “when.” Perhaps He will ask it like this: “Did you finish the work I gave you to do?” He might say it this way: “Were you faithful to the finish in serving Me?” What will you say?

I know what Jesus would say, because He did say it in John 17:4: *I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.* NKJV Jesus fulfilled his ministry!

You may already be thinking, “Yes, Pastor, that’s what He said, but I am sure not Jesus!” You are right, of course, but the question will still be asked: **“Did you fulfill your ministry?”** And the words of Jesus remind us of this simple truth: **We glorify God when we fulfill our ministry!** So let me remind you now of the question Jesus will ask you then: **“Did you fulfill your ministry?”**

Surely you know you have a ministry, a service you are to provide for Jesus while you are on this earth? Every member of the Body of Christ is gifted; every member is a steward of those gifts. God has given us time, and we are stewards of that time; He has given us talents, and we are stewards; He has given us treasure, and we are stewards; He has given us His a testimony of His grace, and we are stewards of our testimony. What will you say when Jesus asks you: **“Did you fulfill your ministry?”** By the way, in 56 days we will be offering you a very specific invitation to find and fulfill your ministry. Get ready!

Let’s listen to one of my good friends today as he addresses this question. His name is Paul; and, other than Jesus, he may be the greatest leader this world has ever produced. His influence is as strong or stronger today as it was 2000 years ago! Take your bible and turn with me to his farewell address to his younger protégé in ministry, a man named Timothy. In 2 Timothy, Chapter 4, beginning with verse 1, we listen as Paul challenges Timothy and as he answers the question I believe Jesus will ask me and you:

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Timothy 4:1-8 NKJV)

Let's imagine Jesus and Paul meeting after Paul's death. Jesus welcomes Paul into heaven with a huge smile and a bear hug, and they rejoice together. Then comes the gentle, probing question: "**Paul, did you fulfill your ministry? Did you finish your work?** What would Paul say? We know! *I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith* (v. 7)! Add to that Paul's words in Acts 20:24: *But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.* (NKJV) **Paul accomplished his holy ambition of glorifying God by fulfilling his ministry!**

In this letter, Paul is doing everything he can to encourage Timothy to fulfill his ministry. In verse 5 he says it specifically and succinctly: *fulfill your ministry!* Let's look at how he sought to encourage Timothy and let's allow him to challenge our hearts as well.

How do we know that it so important for us to minister, to serve, and to do it faithfully until the life God has given us is over on this earth? How did Paul seek to motivate Timothy?

Look back with me at verse 1, where Paul used strong language to make sure Timothy understood **the gravity of the charge** he was receiving. Paul said, *I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.* The Bible Knowledge Commentary identifies five realities Paul invoked to emphasize

the seriousness of his charge: *In the name of God, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in light of the coming judgment, in light of the Second Coming, in the light of the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom* (Bible Knowledge Commentary). Eugene Peterson paraphrases it this way: “*God is looking over your shoulder.*”

When I stand before a couple and officiate at their marriage ceremony, I always want to emphasize the seriousness of the vows they are saying. I remind them they are saying these vows to each other, they are saying them before witnesses, and most of all they are entering into a covenant before and with Almighty God! God is looking over their shoulder! It is of utmost seriousness!

Paul’s words to Timothy were deliberately weighty, because Paul knew the seriousness of being faithful in ministry. **We glorify God when we fulfill our ministry!** Paul sought to motivate Timothy (and us) by **the gravity of the charge!**

So let that be our first answer: **The gravity of the charge makes it of utmost importance that we fulfill our ministry!** It is no small thing; it is huge! **We must fulfill our ministry!**

Now look at verse 2: *Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.* This verse and the following highlight a second reality. We not only see the importance of fulfilling our ministry by **the gravity of the charge**, but we also see it in the **urgency of the charge!** Had Paul been speaking to Timothy face-to-face, he would have been sitting on the edge of his seat, his eyes would have been filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, and his voice would have been rising. *Preach the Word, Timothy! Be ready in season and out of season! It may be convenient; it may be inconvenient. It may seem like a good time; it may seem like a bad time. Those things are not your business, Timothy. Your business is to fulfill your ministry. Preach the Word!*

Before you heave a sigh of relief, because you are not a preacher, let me tell you this text is for you and it is for me! You may or may not herald the good news of Jesus from a pulpit or before an audience of several or many, but we are all His witnesses! It would not be inappropriate to read verse 2 like this: *Plant the Word!* I have challenged you to be seed-planters, and now it is

time to ask you a question: “Have you fulfilled your ministry this week?” How many of you have planted a seed of God’s truth into someone’s life this week? Raise your hands! It was a proper assignment, and it is proper to give and account for your ministry. I planted seed face-to-face and on Facebook. I believe I can plant more seed, but by the grace of God I planted some seed! Not only has seed been planted this week, but the harvest has already begun! At least one more person is in the family of God because the seed was planted and God has given the increase! Hallelujah!

Friends, this is urgent! **We glorify God when we fulfill our ministry!** We see the incredible importance of this by **the gravity of the charge**, and by **the urgency of the charge!**

Why are we not all **fulfilling our ministry**? Why would some of us be ashamed if today was our time to see Jesus and to give and account of our stewardship? Let me suggest that our text pictures the possibility of us being “dodging disciples” – Jesus has put the ball in our court and we are playing dodge ball! How about you? Are you dodging God’s call? Are you a “dodging disciple?”

How do we try to dodge this call? We say:

- The time is not right (Be ready in season and out)
- The task is too hard (Convince, rebuke, exhort; cf. v. 3-4)
- We have tried and failed: Been there, done that, got the T-shirt (longsuffering)
- The truth is not what people want to hear (vv. 3-4) (“but you” v. 5)
- That’s not my gift (do the work of an evangelist) (Don’t punt!)

A lot of us play “dodge ball” when it comes to seed-planting or to any other ministry God has given us. When I look at verse 5, I see these encouragements:

1. Be ready to seize the day (*be watchful in all things*)
2. Be ready to suffer affliction (*endure afflictions*)
3. Be ready to speak the Word (*do the work of an evangelist*)
4. Be ready to serve to the finish (*fulfill your ministry*)

Remember, friend: **We glorify God when we fulfill our ministry!**