

Moffett: install.ser

Installation: The Charge
I Sam. 7:3

This is a great privilege indeed to have a share today in the installation of the Rev. Alistair Drummond as the pastor of this important church. Alistair, may I say three things to you very briefly as you take up your new pastorate.

1. The first is very practical, very ordinary. It is simply this: be prepared. But practical and obvious though that advice may be, it is necessary. It is not easy to be prepared for the pastorate in a new church with which you are not yet very familiar, and in a city so different from your beloved Scotland. Be prepared. New York is different, sometimes frighteningly different, but don't believe everything you read about it in the papers. But be prepared. Be prepared for anything.

The best preparation is simpler than you may think, and at the same time more difficult than you may think. I find it put very simply in what God said to the people of Israel long ago through his prophet Samuel, "Prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only." "Prepare your heart". He was not speaking of academic preparation. You've done very well at that, I know, for I watched you as a student. And he was not speaking of pastoral experience. You have done very well at that too, as I know from what I hear of your work as a pastor in Scotland. The prophet Samuel is speaking here of something even more important. He is speaking of spiritual preparation, preparation of the heart. A pastor must be a man or woman spiritually prepared, with spiritual stamina. Without it, the never-remitting demands of the ministry can leave you drained and empty in less than a year. More so here in New York, I would think, than almost anywhere else in the world.

The rules of spiritual preparation are very simple, but the work is hard. You may not be able to work as hard at it as some of the great saints of the church. You may not be able to

spend as much time on the study of the Bible as Chrysostom, for example, who read through the Epistle to the Romans every day of his adult life. You may not be able to spend as much time in prayer as St. Francis who used to stay up all night to pray. But take what time it takes to be prepared. Every day take time to read the Bible with your family. Every day take the time to pray with your wife. Every day take some time away from everything else to be alone with God.

Then, as the old spiritual goes: "If you can't preach like Peter; if you can't pray like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus, And say He died for all." It is as simple as that. "There is a balm in Gilead". The balm, that healing balm, is the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. It "makes the wounded whole". It "heals the sin-sick soul". Enter into your ministry prepared here with the power of that gospel in your own life, to refresh and revive and empower this great congregation through the years ahead. Be prepared.

2. Then, serve God only. That is the prophet's second word to you. Your only power comes from God, and the only way to use it is in faithful obedience to Him and Him alone. No matter how well you prepare, remember that it is not your strength, not your preparation, not your preaching or your prayers that will win the victory, as God measures victory. The power is of God. And the message of the minister is to be the word of God: the Word Alive, Jesus Christ; and the word written, the Bible.

Paul was a missionary from Asia to Europe, but he didn't come to teach them Asian spirituality. He preached Christ. You come from Scotland to another continent, America. In your mission here, like Paul come in reliance not on your great Scottish Presbyterian heritage. It's a great tradition. Don't throw it away. Don't throw away the bagpipe; don't throw away your kilt. Buk't preach Jesus Christ. Like the kilt, this church is of many colors. The Scots have a knack of taking many colors, a riot of colors, and bringing out of a riot of colors, an organized, pleasing unifying pattern in the plaid, a tartan. Let Christ

through you, weave his own pattern for the tartan of West End Presbyterian Church, and under that banner of your unity in Christ serve God only.

[Some time ago I heard of two very successful African evangelists. Wherever they went and spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ hundreds were converted and believed. What was the secret of their success. Was it their great eloquence, their enthusiasm and zeal, their sincerity, their native African spirituality? No. The secret was not in themselves at all. This is what they said. "We did not begin to preach until we had called for the power of God. That power came. We took it and went forth to preach. And people came confessing Jesus like the fish of the sea in number." You are the pastor, the minister of this wonderful congregation, the leader. But don't put your trust in yourself. Trust God, and serve Him only.

3. Finally, Alastair, don't forget that the words of the prophets are not enough for the ministry. The New Testament calls us not so much to be prophetic as to love. Love God, and serve him only. That was the prophet's commandment. Jesus, when he repeated it as the greatest commandment, added a second. "Love your neighbor". Your closest neighbors, Alistair, will be your congregation. Love them. Love them and serve them with all that you have. Don't hold anything back. ["Who will win? Communists].

[OR] There is a dramatic story told of the early days of the Spanish Civil War. When news of the Fascist uprisings reached Barcelona, factory whistles all over the city began to blow. In the gray dawn, while the street lights were still burning, one whistle sounded, then another, then a hundred, as in the old day the belfries clamored together in times of peril. Fascist troops were marching on the center of the city. They had seized the big Colon Hotel. Two field guns protected them, and in front of the guns were Fascist soldiers with machine guns sweeping the wide avenue from end to end. As the tumult of the whistles died, two black Cadillacs driven by Loyalist defenders of the city, zig-zagged madly up the street, making 70 miles an hour, horns

sounding. Like great torpedoes they plowed through the line of soldiers, charged the gun crews, and piled into the wall beside them in black, blood-spattered heaps of wreckage. The Loyalist drivers were dead, but the fascist guns were silenced.

Those two men were fighting in a lost cause, a false cause. They were communists. But they gave it all they had. They gave their love to it, their very lives. They held nothing back. Can you, who are now giving yourself to the service of God as pastor of this His church, do any less?

Be prepared. Serve God only. And love your people, holding nothing back. Then, Alistair, the Holy Spirit will bless you and keep you now and through all the years ahead in your ministry.

- Samuel Hugh Moffett