

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Acts 1:12–26**

**Sermon: “The Office”**

Someone was needed to replace Judas as the twelfth disciple after Judas betrayed Jesus and took his own life. The apostles were gathered together during those ten days between Jesus’ ascension, which we celebrated on Thursday, and Pentecost, which we know is coming up next Sunday.

The apostles did not know when that outpouring of the Holy Spirit was going to come, but they did understand that to carry out the Great Commission Jesus had given them before he ascended, they would need to be at full strength—twelve strong. So, the other Christians considered two men for the job—Justus and Matthias. Both men were qualified. Both had experience. Both had served faithfully. Both were deserving of the honor. Both were loved by God. They were both good men, but only one could be chosen for this position. After casting lots, equivalent to our drawing straws, Matthias was chosen.

Matthias was called to an office job. By that I mean not that he had a job based in an office to carry out clerical or administrative work for an organization. Rather, his office job was a position of public authority and service.

The Oval Office. The Resolute Desk. They were around long before Joe Biden or Donald Trump occupied them, and they're likely to be around long after. The Office of President of the United States is bigger than anyone who holds it.

Still bigger, Matthias's office was one of authority and service to proclaim the name and Word of our crucified and risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It was the office of apostle. Apostles were "sent ones," called and sent by Jesus Christ to say what he said, nothing more and nothing less. The qualifications for being in the office of apostle included being an eyewitness of Jesus' death and resurrection.

In our text, Matthias was chosen to take Judas's place in the Office of Ministry and apostleship of Jesus Christ.

Today, pastors are called into apostolic ministry. Pastors are obviously not eyewitnesses to Jesus' death and resurrection, but they, like the apostles themselves, are called and ordained to say what Jesus said, nothing more and nothing less, for the Lord's words, not ours, are the words of eternal life. That's why we say I as your pastor has an office job.

In this office job pastors work in the stead and by the command of Jesus Christ. Pastors are not in charge of the work being done, nor is it our words or actions that get it done. Rather, it is God's Word at work in and through us. Both pastors and laypeople say and do things that fall short of the glory of God. We often speak and act according to our fallen human nature because it comes easily to us. That gets us into trouble.

Judas had to be replaced because he removed himself from office by following his own greed and sinful agenda (vs 15–19). Our fallen human nature misses the mark when it comes to God and his Word.

A child was taught by his dad to play golf. Unfortunately, his dad's swing was such that every time he hit the ball, it sliced. Like father, like son. The child's swing, passed on to him from his father, was such that every time he hit the ball, he sliced it just like his dad. Later in life, he took golf lessons and learned the proper swing. It didn't seem right and felt awkward and wrong, but when he swung the club as he was taught by the pro, the ball went straight down the fairway. Throughout his life, the golfer sought to swing as he was taught by the pro, but he often regressed to his old natural swing, only to watch the ball slice out of bounds. He had to keep going back to that unnatural swing to get it right and had to practice it throughout his life. It made him a better golfer.

Likewise, we, including those in the Office of the Ministry (Acts 1:15–17), have a natural way of speaking and acting that's corrupted by original sin passed on from our parents. It's our "go to" way and results in the slice of actual sin. "Swinging" the Lord's way is not only unnatural for us—it's impossible. That's why God gives us his Word and pastors to preach it.

Through it, God in Christ credits to us the perfect “swing.” It comes from outside of us, so it’s something we practice by believing, that is, receiving, throughout our lives.

Like Matthias, I was put into this office, the office of Christ, to carry out Christ’s mission for you. I am under orders to preach only God’s Word. The stole I wear reminds me and you of the vow I made at ordination to teach and preach the Word of God faithfully and administer the Sacraments in accordance with the Lord’s Word.

As members of the Body of Christ, you have a responsibility to hold your pastor to the Word of God. You need the Lord’s words, not the pastor’s opinion. Pastor Eugene Peterson relates how you, a layperson, might communicate this to your pastor. Stress the importance of the pastor’s office, not the pastor himself, and say to him: ***We need help in keeping our beliefs sharp and accurate and intact. We don’t trust ourselves; our emotions seduce us into infidelities.***

***We know we are launched on a difficult and dangerous act of faith, and there are strong influences intent on diluting or destroying it. We want you to give us help. Be our pastor.***

(Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor* [Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1989], 138–39)

Even Peter could only say what God’s Word said. ***“For it is written in the Book of Psalms, “May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it”; and “Let another take his office.”***

Since pastors carry out the office of Christ, my ministry as your pastor is of eternal blessing to you! Jesus says to those who speak his words, ***“The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me”***

(Luke 10:16). Jesus said in his prayer to our Father in heaven, ***“This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”*** (John 17:3). Eternal life is knowing this Jesus, who won it for you by dying and rising.

When you hear pastors proclaim Jesus’ words, words that forgive sins, words that are spirit and life, you know that you are forgiven, given eternal life.

So, if you don't like what I have preached to you today, see the Lord about it. I only work here. This is an office job that's good for you and me, even if we don't always like what we hear, because it makes believers out of us. Jesus said as he prayed to our Father in heaven, ***“I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me”*** (John 17:8). This office exists to proclaim the Word of God written for us so that, as John writes, ***“you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”*** (John 20:31).

Amen