JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY

The Levites, the Local Church and Your Place on the Team

> Every believer is a minister. Like the clans of Levi, we each carry a part of the house of God: hospitality, kids and youth, worship and media, and the ministry of provision. The city will be reached at the rate of vision, manpower and generosity.

MAIN TEXT
Numbers 3:5-6

SERIES
We're Relentlessly Driven by the Mission, Week 4 of 4

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BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. Every believer is a minister: the marketplace and ministry distinction is true, but 1 Peter 2:9 makes the whole church a royal priesthood.
2. Numbers 3 and 4 lay out three clans of Levi whose assignments map onto where people serve in a local church today.
3. The Gershonites handled the curtains, coverings and screens, setting the atmosphere and the boundaries of the tabernacle, which is the hospitality team: greeters, parking, coffee, first impressions.
4. Hospitality is not small, because you never know who is walking through the door.
5. The Merarites carried the structural elements, the beams, bases, pegs and pillars, which is kids and youth ministry building the framework for spiritual formation.
6. Children's and youth ministry is urgent, not optional: most people come to faith before 18, and about 60 percent of church kids walk away at 18 with only 20 percent returning.
7. Teenagers stay rooted when they serve in ministry, are mentored by an adult outside the family, see active faith in their parents, worship with the whole church, and are taught to read the Bible.
8. The Kohathites carried the most sacred items, which is what happens in the room: worship and the media team who carry the gospel farther than the preacher does.
9. The Levites were less than five percent of Israel, so the other ninety-five percent had the ministry of provision, giving so those who serve are not left without what they need.
10. Reaching the city will move at the rate of three things: vision, manpower and generosity.



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READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/fulfill-your-ministry

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This message closes a four-week series on the mission of the church. Week three ended with kings and priests: believers in the marketplace and believers in the ministry. This week answers with a "yes, and": that is true, and every believer is also a minister.

The text is Numbers 3 and 4, but do not read it. It is long, and read aloud it would be the whole sermon. Read Numbers 3:5-6 to anchor the message, then teach the three clans of Levi and their assignments. Tell the congregation up front: less reading today, more teaching.

The research figures in this message (guest return rates, when people come to faith, teen dropout) need current sources before you use them. Check them, cite them, and keep them brief. The media and Facebook numbers in point three belong to one church in one month; use your own church's numbers.

The message ends on giving, but it is not an offering appeal. Say so plainly.

Introduction

We have been in a series called We're Relentlessly Driven by the Mission:

- Week one: the Great Commission.
- Week two: strategies that we know will be fruitful for reaching the lost.
- Week three: stay in your lane. The right lane, our lane and my lane. We can't be every other church in the city. We can only be who we are.

Last week ended with kings and priests: kings are believers in the marketplace, and priests are believers in the ministry. That is true. But a lot of truth in the kingdom is "yes, and."

> **1 PETER 2:9** ESV
>
> [9] But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Yes, there are believers in the marketplace and believers in the ministry. And every believer is also a minister.

Illustration: "Everyone a Minister." When I got saved, our worship leader, Ben Stone, wrote a little song we sang called "Everyone a Minister." First Peter says it: we are a royal priesthood, called out of darkness into His marvelous light. You are a testimony of His marvelous light.

THE TITLE

The title comes from a passage we will not read today. Near the end of 2 Timothy, one of the last letters Paul wrote before his execution, he charges young Timothy to "fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5).

Have the congregation say it to a neighbor: **"Fulfill your ministry."**

The Tribe of Levi

Our text is Numbers 3 and 4, both chapters. They tell us about the tribe of Levi, the ministers of the old covenant, and they show us where we have opportunities to fulfill our ministry in the church.

> NUMBERS 3:5-6 ESV
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> [5] And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [6] "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him.

For the Levites, ministry happened in the tabernacle. For us, it happens in the church.

Israel's structure. The nation was divided into 12 tribes. Tribes were divided into clans, clans into families, and families into individuals. That is what the genealogies are doing when they introduce a Boaz, a David or Jesus: they show where a person fits.

The tribe of Levi had three clans that carried the work of the tabernacle: **the Gershonites, the Merarites and the Kohathites.**

A note before we start: we tend to think of all the Levites as priests, but only a small portion of the tribe, Aaron and his sons, were priests. The entire tribe served in the house of the Lord.

1. The Gershonites: Hospitality

Their job: They handled the fabric of the tabernacle: the curtains, the coverings and the screens that divided its areas (Numbers 3:25-26; 4:24-28). They set the atmosphere and the boundaries of God's dwelling place.

The modern connection: the hospitality team. Greeters, parking team, coffee crew and first impressions volunteers set the tone of the house. Like the Gershonites, they create the environment that welcomes people into the presence of the Lord. **You make people feel like they belong before they ever hear a single word in the house.**

Illustration: a welcome that changed my life. You never know who is walking through the door. I was raised by two alcoholics. I never knew what I would come home to. I watched someone get hurt again and again, and I regularly called my grandparents to say, "We have to go find this parent again." When I walked into the house of the Lord week after week, someone had set an atmosphere that felt welcoming. It changed my life. Those people are part of the reason I am in ministry today. Hospitality is not a small thing. It is a huge thing.

What guests look for. Studies from Lifeway Research and Church Answers suggest that first-time guests often decide whether to return based on how they were greeted, treated and seated. In Lifeway's surveys, guests named these preferences:

- Clear signage
- Empathetic greeters
- Visible hospitality
- Not feeling put on the spot

Some guests do not even want hospitality right away; they just want to know where to find it, and who they can trust with their kids. That is also why we do not ask first-time guests to stand up and be recognized.

The Gershonites set boundaries too. Sometimes a hospitality volunteer has to say, kindly, "We don't go in that room." They keep everyone moving where they need to go.

2. The Merarites: Kids and Youth

Their job: They carried and maintained the structure of the tabernacle: the frames, bars, pillars, bases and pegs that held everything together (Numbers 3:36-37; 4:29-33). The Gershonites brought the curtains. The Merarites brought the structure.

The modern connection: kids and youth teams. They build the framework for spiritual formation. Children's and youth ministry give us the greatest head start in seeing someone live for Jesus for the rest of their life. **They don't just serve during service. They shape future generations, because nothing stands without structure.**

Why it matters. Pastor Jason's notes cite these figures (sources to confirm before preaching):

- 62% of parents say children's ministry was a decisive factor in choosing a church.
- About two-thirds of Christians came to faith before age 18, and 43% before age 12.

Children's and youth ministry is not optional. It is urgent.

Honor the people already doing this work by name. Families are watching to see what a church does for their kids.

TEENAGERS: THE DROPOUT REALITY

According to Lifeway Research, among young adults who attended church regularly as teenagers, about two-thirds stopped attending for a time between ages 18 and 22, and only about a third of those came back regularly in their twenties. (From the pulpit, this was summarized as 60% walking away and 20% coming back.)

The main reasons they gave:

- Life transitions: college, work, moving
- Feeling disconnected from the church
- Intellectual doubts and unanswered questions
- Seeing the church as irrelevant or judgmental

The most critical window to shape a lasting faith is before they graduate from high school.

WHAT KEEPS THEM ROOTED

Research from Lifeway and the Fuller Youth Institute's Sticky Faith project points to five shared experiences of teens who stay in church into adulthood:

- **Serving regularly in ministry.**
- **Being mentored by an adult outside their family.** That is why youth leaders matter.
- **Parents with an active, visible faith.**
- **Worshiping with the whole church.**
- **Being taught how to read the Bible.**

Illustration: four strings. I am the product of people who were kind to me and prayed for me. I am also the product of a bass guitar. I got my hands on a bass, found a place where I was useful, and God changed my life with no more than four strings. My youth pastor was hard on me. But what kept me was that bass. Serving kept me.

Application: If you have a teenager, get them serving: in kids ministry, on the hospitality team, or on the worship and media teams. Get involved in ministry, and it will change your life.

3. The Kohathites: Worship and Media

Their job: They carried the most sacred things: the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars and the vessels of the sanctuary (Numbers 3:31). But they could only carry what the priests had first covered, and they had to do it with reverence: "they must not touch the holy things, lest they die" (Numbers 4:15). The priests themselves came from this clan, through Aaron.

The modern connection: everything that happens in this room. The worship team carries, in a great degree, our incense before the Lord. The media team carries the gospel beyond the room. They are not just pressing buttons or singing songs. They help carry the Word and presence of God in a way people can receive it.

Paint the vision: one day a stage full of people of every age and background.

Illustration: the best preacher in the house. After a service at a previous church, someone told me the message was great. I grabbed the camera operator by the ankle and said, "This guy reaches more people than I do."

Illustration: the pen video. I once posted a video about the pens I use to write in my Bible. A medical student at Oxford, looking for pens to study her textbooks, found it on YouTube, kept watching more videos, and gave her life to Jesus Christ.

Illustration: our reach. Share your church's own numbers here. At the time of this message:

- A Wednesday night teaching with thirty or forty people in the room had been watched by more than 500 people online within days.
- A sermon clip from a month earlier had been viewed more than 25,000 times.
- Facebook content was viewed 10,019 times in April, the month of Easter, and 19,968 times in September with the month not yet over.

This ministry has incredible potential to reach the city, the nation and the world.

Response: If you serve in kids, hospitality, worship or media, or signed up in the last few weeks, stand. Let the church thank you. If you want to join the team, sign up today.

4. The Ministry of Provision

Some of you are thinking, "That all sounds good, but I don't see myself doing any of that." That is okay.

Be honest about why the push to serve has been strong. People are dying without Christ, and somebody has to step in between. The church has been through a hard season, and it needs help. One will chase a thousand, and two will put ten thousand to flight (Deuteronomy 32:30). There is only so much one pastor can do. If you have a gift, the Lord has need of you.

But if you cannot join a team, there is still a ministry for you.

The tribe of Levi was a small fraction of Israel, roughly five percent or less. The rest of the tribes did not serve in the tabernacle, but they still had a ministry: **the ministry of provision.**

> **DEUTERONOMY 12:19** ESV
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> [19] Take care that you do not neglect the Levite as long as you live in your land.

There are people doing the work of the ministry. Do not forget them and leave them without provision. God forbid someone serves in kids ministry and we tell them to buy the diapers out of their own pocket.

A word of gratitude. Many of you are incredibly generous. Some of you give in ways that are astonishing. There are decisions made in this church that can only be made because of you. Thank you.

Tithing and generosity. Every believer is called to tithe, returning ten percent of their income to the Lord (Malachi 3:10). The pastor is not exempt. But beyond the tithe is generosity. "One gives freely, yet grows all the richer" (Proverbs 11:24). When we are generous to the Lord, ministry happens and our world gets bigger.

Be clear: this is not an offering appeal, and nobody is being asked to empty their pockets.

Conclusion

Reaching the city will move at the rate of three things. So will reaching your family, your kids and your grandkids:

- **Vision.** We have to have a word and a direction from the Lord.
- **Manpower.** The team: the Gershonites, the Merarites and the Kohathites coming together to do the work of the house of the Lord.
- **Generosity.** We will reach this city at the speed of your generosity.

God is about to call some of you to a greater level of giving than you have ever known, and He is about to make your world bigger. As the psalmist said, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread" (Psalm 37:25).

Joash's chest. Last week we saw King Joash and Jehoiada the priest lead an apostate nation back to the Lord. Here is how it happened. "Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD" (2 Chronicles 24:4). A chest was made to receive the people's gifts. Second Kings says Jehoiada "took a chest and bored a hole in the lid of it and set it beside the altar" (2 Kings 12:9); Chronicles says they "set it outside the gate of the house of the LORD" (2 Chronicles 24:8). The people gave gladly, and as the chest filled, the money went to repair the house of God.

> **2 CHRONICLES 24:13** ESV
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> 13 So those who were engaged in the work labored, and the repairing went forward in their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it.

It was a construction project, and God turned it into a revival for a whole nation. You can't always see the connection in the natural, but God honors faith: the showing up, the serving, the giving. A strong church can wreck a city in all the right ways.

Fulfill your ministry.



ABOUT

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