

Shepherding the Sheep

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[0 : 00] So tonight we enter into the final chapter of the epistle of 1 Peter.

! Now this is the first lesson out of chapter 5. Here's what we're going to cover this evening, 1 Peter 5, 1-4.

So I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.

Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Well, at the very outset of this final chapter in 1 Peter, we're sort of faced with a dilemma.

[1 : 50] This portion of Scripture is directed at the elders in the church. We have several elders. I'm one. We've got Lee and James and Paul and Stan and Pastor Mike and Pastor Tyler.

If you're not an elder in the church, trust me, that does not mean you're a lesser member. Nothing of a sort. I'd have to say that every person in here is part of our leadership team at Highland.

You're all an integral part of our church. And the portion of Scripture we open with, which I read above, deals with shepherding the flock of God.

It is no accident that the Lord uses the example of sheep in the animal kingdom to describe the members of his church.

Many books have been written about sheep in the church. Probably the most famous was authored by W. Philip Keller, entitled, A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23.

[3 : 15] It was first published in 1970. It is still in print. In that book, Keller compares sheep with humans.

And he talks about their great similarities. When you think in terms of sheep, here are some fundamental truths concerning sheep, but be thinking also of humans as we go through this.

Sheep can't take care of themselves. They need someone to help them. Sheep, if lost, cannot find their way home.

Sheep are in desperate need of a shepherd to guide them and to care for them. Sheep are dirty and they can't clean themselves.

If a sheep is thirsty, he's got to be led to water before he'll take a drink. You've got to take him there and show him, here's the water. When grazing, sheep will overgraze and they will consume everything, even down to the roots.

[4 : 44] One of the reasons cattlemen back in the 1800s, they hated to see sheep coming into that area. It was open range. Sheep, when grazing, cannot distinguish between good plants and poisonous plants.

sheep are naturally passive and will not protect their young from predators.

On this last point, and there's many more could be made, I once saw a film of an experiment involving sheep and a wolf.

This sheep had recently given birth to a little lamb. They were in a pen protected by a metal fence. And the scientists, they'd be criticized now for doing that, but they placed a wolf in the pen.

Well, he made a beeline for the lamb and killed it. He consumed it. All in front of the mother sheep.

[6 : 02] She never stirred. Had no interest in protecting her offspring. She just went about grazing while the wolf ate.

That type of behavior is unheard of among humans. and even in the animal kingdom.

I've seen on television, I used to love to watch Wild Kingdom. Remember that, Pastor? That was good. I watched a mother antelope attack a lion and she was trying to protect her newborn baby.

and she went after that lion. Well, where am I headed with all this? Jesus used the example of disoriented and confused sheep to describe humans.

Lost crowds of people were a little different to Jesus than were sheep. He knew they needed a shepherd. And of course, Jesus is the chief shepherd.

[7 : 23] This is what the prophet Isaiah had to say about sheep and humans. Isaiah 53, 6. All we, like sheep, have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him and that him is Jesus the iniquity of us all.

Another point we need to make as we open chapter 5 of 1 Peter is that the imagery of sheep would have been very common to those living in the first century in Israel.

there can be no doubt that Peter would have referred to people as the flock of God and called on leaders to shepherd them and begins this final chapter of 1 Peter by discussing some of the issues in shepherding.

And let me say as an aside, when I was in the service, found myself in a cold weather climate, I didn't much like that training. I'd prefer to be in the Bahamas or somewhere.

[8 : 52] They called them hills. They looked like mountains to me. I'm from Oklahoma. And there were sheep up there and there was a shepherd and he had a staff even and he had a dog, a sheepdog.

And I'll tell you what, when we were on breaks, we were mesmerized by watching this. And that shepherd, he'd raise that staff and that dog would go on point.

And he'd go like that and that dog would go that way and start rounding up those sheep. And he'd come this way and he'd bring those sheep over here. And then he'd put the staff down and the dog would lay down, keeping his eye on the shepherd.

And this went on all day. We were just fascinated by that, watching him do that. Well, I want to first talk to you about issues in shepherding.

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed, shepherd.

[10 : 10] Be a shepherd. shepherd. In the ESV, verse 1 begins with the word so. In the New American Standard Version, the verse begins with the word therefore.

And either one, they have similar meanings. It refers back to Peter's discussion concerning suffering that was in chapter 4 and elsewhere in this epistle.

Remember, I've said many times when you see the word therefore, you've got to figure out what it's there for. It always refers back or almost always to a previous truth revealed.

Christians were being attacked for their faith by the surrounding Roman culture. You may recall last week that we looked at the fact that Nero, the Roman emperor, burned Rome.

The people were, I hate the pun, I didn't mean to do that, but they were inflamed. They were very angry with him. So, he needed a scapegoat, so he blamed the fires on Christians.

[11 : 26] And so cruel was this maniac that he rounded up Christians, had them placed on poles in his garden and burned them alive to provide light to his dinner guests.

That's how cruel that guy was. In this portion of chapter 5, the Holy Spirit affirms that Christian leaders, referring to the use of the word elders here, are exhorted to be shepherds.

The flock of believers needed shepherds in the form of elders. This was very first mentioned in the New Testament by Dr.

Luke in the book of Acts. Acts chapter 11 verse 29 and 30, so the disciples determined everyone according to his ability to send relief to the brothers living in Judea and they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

That is an amazing verse of Scripture. We've talked about that before. I don't know if everyone was here or if you remember, but a tremendous famine had hit the region and the church of Judea was suffering greatly.

[12 : 59] Additionally, they were under intense persecution and it was increasing. They were in a bad way.

Now, the church in Jerusalem though, they considered themselves to be superior. They thought, well, we're the mother church.

We're in Jerusalem. all those other churches are just little satellites, even in some Gentile areas, like Antioch. Well, the Gentiles in the other regions heard about the plight of, and they didn't say,

well, the Jews in Judea, they said, our brothers and sisters in Christ in Judea are suffering greatly. they're being persecuted. They can't work because they're Christians. They can't find a job. They've got no food.

They've got no means to support themselves. So they called in Barnabas and they gave him sacks of money, basically gold, that the churches had collected in that whole region outside of Israel.

[14 : 25] And he went down there and presented it to the suffering church in Jerusalem. And that's when the light bulb came on for the Jewish believers.

And like the scriptures say elsewhere, there's no longer Jews and Gentiles. There's Christians. There's believers. And the light bulb came on.

And today we don't speak of well, is that a church of Gentiles or Jews? We don't talk that way.

There are churches, Christian churches that are made up of people that were born into the Muslim faith and broke with it and were ostracized by their family, but they were Muslims.

We refer only to brothers and sisters in Christ. So why did the Lord raise up elders in the church?

So that they could protect the members of the church and lead them and when necessary or if necessary, physically feed them.

[15 : 45] Go to the other churches, even Gentile churches, and say, we need help. We need help. A bigger point, perhaps, they needed to be protected from sin and from error.

Biblical error, Bible error. Elders were also called to be examples of godliness to the flock. work. Interestingly, the word elder in the New Testament, if it's been properly translated, always shows up in the plural.

Churches are to operate with a plurality of elders. It's not one. It's a number of them.

They talk about it in terms of a plurality of elders. elders. Now, there are a number of reasons why you want to have a plurality of elders, but primarily it is a check and balance to guard against error. Even when I was, for many years I served as deacon. Mike remembers those times and others of you. You know, we had 15 then. We would never take an issue to the church that was voted on 9-6.

[17 : 16] We wouldn't do it. We wouldn't do it if it was voted on 14-1 without thoroughly examining what that one was concerned about.

We wanted to be unified. You know, when we could come to a unity of the body of deacons, would we take things forward? So why do we have elders?

Well, they're to provide spiritual leadership toward maturing the flock and for the flock to achieve Christlikeness.

The primary objective is that of feeding the flock, and I'm not talking here about food, I'm talking through preaching and teaching divine revelation.

Elders are to be preachers, and we have two on our elder board, or teachers, and we have a number of those, a bunch of us.

[18 : 24] Who do the elders shepherd? Elders are to shepherd the flock of God among you. They shepherd the flock. Now the Holy Spirit, the author of all scripture, it's all God breathed, provides us with an easy but outstanding revelation.

Elders are not to shepherd their own flock, they're to shepherd the flock of God. They don't own it. God does.

It's God's flock at Highland Park. and other churches. It's God's.

And this is all done in harmony with the Lord Jesus, with the Spirit of God. Consider the fact that Jesus came to redeem His church, and this was accomplished on the cross.

does the flock of God have value? God the Father sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice through His death on the cross.

[19 : 45] The Lord purchased us with His own blood that was poured out. obviously He has great value, more than we can imagine. When this was accomplished, the Lord then ascended back to heaven to take His rightful place next to the Father.

But of course, we all know He did not leave us as orphans. He said He wouldn't. Instead, He sent His Spirit to the flock from which the church receives its power to minister.

And may I say we're doing that in an increasingly dark world. Guys, this world's getting dark. And you know, it's not just dark out there, it's dark in a lot of churches.

I mean a lot of them. I'm not going to name names, that would be embarrassing, but you got guys like Andy Stanley. Maybe I didn't name you, I'm sorry. Son of Charles Stanley.

The late Charles Stanley. Andy's become a heretic. And you got other guys out there. It's amazing. This fact is excellently commented on by a Bible commentator, R.C.H.

[21 : 15] Linsky. I've got a couple of his books, or at least one. This is what Dr. Linsky said. Flock brings to mind all the shepherd imagery found in the scriptures.

The sheep gentle, defenseless, liable to stray, in need of a shepherd. sheep are happy, peaceful under his care, but equally sheep are pitiful when they're lost, when they're scattered, and so on. This is God's flock that was bought at a great price, and it is exceedingly precious in his sight, trust. A great trust placed into the hands of human shepherds who are to pattern their service after Yahweh, the great shepherd.

What shepherd could have the care of any part of God's flock and treat it carelessly? Peter's words are sparing, but overflow with tender and serious meaning.

shepherding, how must the shepherding be accomplished? It's to be accomplished by exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

[22 : 58] Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. Peter, writing by inspiration of the Spirit of God, provides an obvious excellent answer in the above passage.

Some of his examples are positive and others are negative. First, he says elders are to exercise oversight. That is one word, by the way, in the Greek language.

It means to look close upon or to look upon or have scope over. The noun form of that Greek word translates bishop or overseer.

So, elders, as shepherds, watch the flock to make sure they're in good condition and they also lead, guard, and feed the sheep.

according to this passage, the elders are also to be positive examples to the flock. Shepherds accomplish that by leading exemplary lives for the flock to observe.

[24 : 15] I guess that's saying we should be an open book. Peter also provides some very helpful negative comments, and we can all learn from these.

It says we're not to shepherd under compulsion. Elders are never to force their views on the body of Christ. They are to be ministers who serve willingly, and you could even say they're voluntarily. Perhaps the following list is helpful concerning elder service. Be diligent rather than lazy. be motivated to serve rather than forceful to be faithful.

Be passionate rather than indifferent. The Apostle Paul offers some great insight here. Romans chapter 1 verses 14 to 16 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

So I am eager to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome. for I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[25 : 55] Some passages say to the Gentiles. Why to the Jew first? Well that's Jesus came to the nation of Israel who rejected him. You know every priest in Israel should have known the Messiah is here.

All you got to do is read the Old Testament. Read Daniel. It tells you not only when the Messiah is going to come to Jerusalem it tells you he's going to be killed. They missed it all.

I threw that in for free. That's not in your notes. So the first danger is trying to shepherd under compulsion.

Forcing yourself. Second elders are never to serve for sordid gain. The ESV uses the words not for shameful gain.

We sometimes have a joke in the elderly that we're going to double our salary this year. You know two times zero is still zero. Okay? We don't get paid and if we did none of us would serve.

[26 : 59] It's that simple. Shepherds are never motivated by money or any material benefits.

Again, Paul is quite helpful here. Now, this is Paul, Acts 20. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me.

In all things, I've shown you that by working hard in this way, we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said it is more blessed to give than to receive.

An elder is never to be motivated by money. This does not mean that shepherds should not be properly compensated. I'm thinking specifically in our church, Pastor Mike, Pastor Tyler.

We have two elders who receive compensation from the church as the ministers of our church, pastor and associate pastor.

[28 : 15] Scripture calls for this, who serves as a soldier at his own expense, who plants a vineyard without eating any of the fruit, or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk.

Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.

Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does He not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope, and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

We have sown spiritual things among you. Is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do we not even more?

Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple?

[29 : 29] And those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

Now, obviously, he's talking about full-time ministers there. And it's interesting here, he says that he used his hands to support his.

You remember, Paul was a tent maker. How would you like to buy one of his tents? I'd love to come across one of his tents. And he plowed that money back into not only him, but the guys that were traveling with him.

But shepherds are never to lord it over the flock of God. The ESV uses the words, do not be domineering, but serve as examples to the flock.

Well, we're kind of hurried through this, but this leaves us really with a final point tonight. Why should shepherds serve?

[30 : 44] And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 1 Peter 5 4. The Lord has many titles in Scripture.

Hundreds. The title chief shepherd is very beautiful. It appears in a Greek word meaning to reveal, manifest, Christ, or make clear.

That's a reference to the second coming of Christ. At that time, the shepherds will receive the unfading crown of glory. Any crown we might receive in this life from the world will fade away.

But the crown that the king bestows will never fade away. I remember getting a letter of commendation directly from the director of the FBI one time when I was an FBI agent.

I idolized that thing. I got no clue where that thing's at now. I don't even know if it's still around, burned up. I had a flood one time and lost a bunch of stuff.

[32 : 03] And I don't care. I'd much rather have a letter from the king. And he gave us one in the word of God. Shepherding the flock is serious business.

One reason is it has eternal consequences. What we do around here, men, is touch eternity. We touch eternity.

elders are accountable to God for their ministry. James talked about this with inspired words. Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

That doesn't bring me a lot of comfort. But it's the truth. That is, or should be a very sobering thought.

Well, I always delight in talking about shepherds and sheep. And perhaps there's no better way to end our lesson this evening than to quote the 23rd Psalm.

[33 : 24] Let me do that. And I'm going to add a couple words. That's always dangerous. The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His namesake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. You anoint my head with oil.

My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

[34 : 28] great Psalm 23. Messianic Psalm. I added in there, I shall not be in want. I did that on purpose. When I first heard that, I was a little shaver, probably in vacation Bible school, and for the next 20 years, I couldn't figure out why we wouldn't want the shepherd.

I knew He was Jesus. It said, the Lord is shepherd, I shall not want. And I struggled for 20 years. And finally, I saw some clarification on that.

No, no. It's not saying you don't want the shepherd. You're not going to be hurting for anything.

You'll provide all your needs. That's why I added that.

Let's close with a word of prayer, brothers. I thank you, Father, for these men. I thank you, Lord, that we have a flock.

we have shepherds. And that we are under the chief shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, the soon returning King.

[35 : 41] Lord, may we be found faithful in all that we say and in all that we do. Be with my brothers here tonight. Get them home safely.

Bring them back safely. as we celebrate Easter this weekend and we have a full week until we get there. I ask all this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.