

Shepherd the Flock

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[0 : 0 0] at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today. Special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're filling seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community, and as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good that they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which means that God has something to say to us in his word. That's why we come back week after week to study God's word to us, which is contained in the Bible. We've been studying the book of 1 Peter together. We're almost finished, and as I've been telling you, 1 Peter is a letter.

It's a letter written by a man named Peter, and he writes it to churches in the first century A.D. who are struggling. These churches are in the Roman Empire in Asia Minor, what's now modern-day western Turkey, and they're struggling because they're feeling out of place in the world as Christians, and they're facing opposition from the world as Christians. Peter writes to instruct them and to encourage them. He writes to encourage them that Jesus is worth it. He's worth living and loving for, and he's worth suffering and dying for, and he also writes to instruct them. He instructs them how they should live in the world as Christians and also how to respond when they face opposition for being Christians. We've been in this long section on suffering, and we exited that a couple weeks ago just for a little bit to talk about the community, how we interact together, and then last week we went back to suffering, and this week we're back in the community, how we function together as a church.

And I mentioned a couple weeks ago that many people want thick and rich community. Few people are willing to do the work to get it. Many people want thick and rich community. Few people are willing to do what it takes. A couple weeks ago we looked at what it takes in a general level, how it is that we love one another as a church, and this week we're going to look at something more specific.

How do we handle power as a church? How do we have a thick and rich community when it comes to some people who have more influence and some people who have less? Some people that God has given to be leaders in a specific situation and others that God has given to be followers. How can we be a church that survives suffering? Well, a church that survives suffering is one that's going to know how to handle power. There's a famous illustration that's used to talk about marriage. People will say that the sexual relationship in marriage is kind of like fire. You can either keep it in the hearth, in the fireplace, and it could be something that warms the entire home, or it can be something that burns everything down when it's not kept within God's constraints. We could say the same thing about power in the church.

Leaders in the church can use their power to build it up and to make it a place of incredible warmth, power is something that can be used in either way. And of course, the same can be said. We'll see this in this passage as followers as well. They can be people who fan that fire into flame, or they can snuff it out. And so God's going to speak to both of those things in his word this morning as we look at 1 Peter. We're in chapter 5, and we're starting at verse 1. You can turn in your worship guide. You'll find it near the end. You can also turn in your Bible or turn on your phone, but regardless of your method, I invite you to read with me. As we come to this passage, remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that while the grass withers and the flower fades, his word will stand forever. That's why we read it now, starting at verse 1.

[4 : 16] Verse 3.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Lord, our Father in heaven, we praise you and we thank you for your word that brings life.

You use your word to bring the world into existence at the very beginning. You use your word to bring life to those who are dead in their sin.

And you use your word to bring life to those who belong to you, who need to know your love and also the way to go.

[5 : 48] And so we ask that you would send your spirit now and you would use your word in that way, that you would give us life as individuals and as a community because you've spoken to us by your word, through your word and by your spirit.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. I mentioned last week the repetition that occurs in this letter over and over, and we're going to see it once again at the very beginning.

Peter tells us what he's been telling us over and over. There's suffering and then there's glory. And that's what we see in verse 1. We saw it last week as well. He tells that he's exhorting the elders.

And when he says elders here, he's not exhorting everyone over a certain age, but he's exhorting those who are leaders in the church. We learn about this from other passages like 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. And he exhorts them as a fellow elder.

So he's saying, I know the struggles that you have. I'm with you in this. That means I'm a witness of the sufferings of Christ. So we have the same theme of suffering that we've seen before, as well as a partaker in the glory that's going to be revealed.

[6 : 53] He is telling them the same thing he's been telling them over and over. They're suffering, but it's going to end in glory. Jesus suffered. You suffer. Jesus' story ended in glory.

Your story will end in glory. And there's a special way in which that's true for leaders of the church. And so this theme continues in every area.

You are suffering now because you have taken a position in the church that brings you a special level of heat. And as we see in verse 1, and we'll see also later in verse 4, you're also going to receive God's glory.

And so this particular category of suffering is like every other category of suffering that happens when it's for the name of Jesus Christ, that it is suffering for Jesus and glory with Jesus.

And then he gives us his commands. There's going to be three commands, main commands in this passage. First, shepherd the flock. Second, be subject. Be subject to the elders.

[7 : 52] So there's a command for leaders. Shepherd the flock, a commander for followers. Clothe yourselves. Excuse me. Be subject to the elders. And then there's a third command for everyone. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility.

And so we're simply just going to go through and we're going to take a look at all of those commands. First, shepherd the flock. Peter summarizes his command for all leaders in that way that they should be like shepherds.

They should be like shepherds who protect their sheep. Shepherds don't just protect, but they're also leading. They're feeding. They're doing all sorts of things to make sure that the flock is cared for.

This is something that's going to take an enormous amount of work on their behalf. And it's also going to take sacrifice. There's going to be times maybe they're going to have to fight off predators. But this is the metaphor that Jesus used in his teaching.

It's also the metaphor that Peter is going to continue to use in his as well, going over this main category of what it is that leaders do. And then he breaks it into a variety of things that shepherding the flock involves.

[8 : 55] First, those who are leaders in the church, and specifically he's talking to elders, right? There's all kinds of people who exercise leadership in the church. Some are elders. Some are not. But this is to the elders who are ultimately responsible to answer to God.

And he gives them several categories. First is the exercise oversight. It should not be under compulsion, but willingly. Quite simply, if you're going to be a leader in the church, you should want to be a leader in the church.

This is a battlefield. We need people who actually want to be in the fight. Shortly following the dust-up that the United States recently had with Iran, with Soleimani, there was a Google search that skyrocketed.

And it was the search of, how does the draft work? And is there going to be a draft in this situation? Of course, many of us registered for selective service, knowing that we could be drafted at one point.

And there was all this fear, right? Maybe we're going to go to war, and we're going to have people who don't want to be at war who are fighting. Peter is telling them this. There is no draft in God's church.

[10 : 08] There is no draft for elders. No one should be forced against their will to take on the role of leadership. If you become an elder at a leader in the church, it should be because you want to.

It shouldn't be because someone else tells you they need you. It shouldn't be because someone else tells you you would be good at it, although that's important, that's necessary. I'm going to say it.

It shouldn't be because your wife wants you to be an elder. You should be an elder, not under compulsion, but willingly. It's a battlefield in the church, church leadership.

Peter wants only those who are ready and willing to head into the battle. Next, verse 4. Not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

There is a type of leadership that serves self rather than others. And there's a type of leadership that's interested in what you can gain from your position of leadership rather than what you can give.

[11 : 13] And that kind of leader shows up in the church just like everywhere else. In every human organization, there are people who are interested in leadership, and whether they realize it or not, they're interested in what they can get from being a leader rather than what they can give.

Now, Peter perhaps is talking primarily here of financial gain when he talks about shameful gain. Certainly there's people who would be interested in that, but there's all kinds of ways that someone can gain in leadership in a way that actually hurts the community.

In his autobiography, *About Face*, the famous Army Colonel David Hackworth, he became famous, by the way, because he came out publicly against the Vietnam War while he was still serving as a colonel, tells the story of his time in the Army and also tells about his growing frustrations with the Vietnam War.

And one of his frustrations occurred when he showed up at Fort Lewis, which is in Tacoma, Washington, and he saw these soldiers being trained to go to the battlefields of Vietnam. Near the end of their training, there would come a time where they'd go to this constructed patrol camp.

This patrol base would be simulated, so they'd have these field training exercises to simulate what it would be like to be in Vietnam. And they'd have this patrol base that was set up, except it was in the snow because it's in Tacoma, Washington.

[12 : 46] And so you have soldiers who are training for the tropical and temperate temperatures, the tropic and temperate climate of Vietnam, training in the snow of Tacoma, Washington. So what would happen is they'd show up for this training, and those who were running, it would realize, hey, it's actually too cold for us to do this right now.

And so Hackworth would see that they would set up these bonfires, and they'd just smoke cigarettes around the fire instead of preparing for the battle that was ahead of them. Of course, the military had bases in other places that were more like the climate in Vietnam.

They had bases in the Philippines, in Hawaii, but those weren't the ones that were used. And so he began to dig in. He was enraged, by the way, that this is what the military was doing.

This is part of his growing frustration with the war in Vietnam. He had to ask the question, why is it that we're training people in a way that's going to get them killed? We are sending people who are unprepared to the battlefield.

What he found out was this. It was big business to run an army base in Tacoma, Washington. And the politicians there were unwilling to take the hit that would happen to the economy if the base shut down while it was snowing.

[14 : 00] And so, in exchange for money that needed to go to the military, these politicians would lay out as one of their stipulations that this base had to remain open. And they put American lives at danger in the process because these politicians were concerned, not with serving eagerly, but verse four, they were concerned with shameful gain.

They were exchanging the preparedness of American soldiers and their lives for what they could get with power and money. God's leaders also put his people in incredible danger when they serve themselves rather than others.

When they are interested in shameful gain rather than building up God's people. This happens in a variety of ways. It can happen for pastors. Pastors perhaps are afraid that they might lose congregants, and congregants means losing money, and maybe that will affect their salary.

And so, it's easy to not teach on certain portions of the Bible. It's easy to avoid the kind of things that might upset certain people in the church.

Of course, they look great, right? We're preaching the gospel. We're preaching through this book. It happens to be this hard passage. We're going to bury it in a larger section so we don't have to discuss it. Perhaps it was tempting for these elders as well.

[15 : 31] It can happen in other ways. Not just fear around what we teach, but fear around certain people. Maybe we're going to avoid having a hard conversation because doing that's going to affect us personally.

And we'd rather live with comfort than do what's right. It can happen in other ways. Now, perhaps, you know, there are some people who receive compensation from the church, right?

And there's a temptation for them to do things for shameful gain. There's also people who don't receive compensation from the church. And there's also a temptation for shameful gain. There are people who desire church leadership so that they can finally have their way.

There are people who long for church leadership so that they can finally get rid of that song that they don't like. They can stop that ministry that they don't think is effective. They can finally enact their vision for the church in the world.

They can finally do what is best for their group within the church. Right? We need so-and-so to be an elder. Finally, that will get changed. And our voice, right?

[16 : 38] Our voice, our tribe within the church will finally be heard. Philippians chapter 2. We're questioned people, not answered people.

Jesus looked not to his interests, but to the interests of others. Those are the leaders that we need in the church. Not leaders who are trying to make a church that's perfect for them, a church that conforms to all of their preferences, but leaders who are seeking what's good for everyone else, seeking what's good for the body.

It is always tempting for leaders to look for ways to make things better for themselves and worse for others.

It's tempting for leaders to look at ways that will make things meet their preferences rather than what will serve the body. And so it's a temptation.

It's a temptation in leadership in the world, and it's a temptation in leadership in the church. Peter is telling them, this is not how it should be among you.

[17 : 45] I've told some of you before, if you were here, when we went through Philippians, I told you about an amazing church. At this church, everything is done right.

The church has a name, by the way. It's called Matthew Presbyterian Church. It conforms to all my preferences. We only sing songs that I like. We only do the kind of things that I want to do.

We set the service time based on kind of my morning schedule and routine. It's also a very terrible and frightening church. It's a terrible and frightening church because no one ever challenges me.

No one else gets to have any input. No one gets to raise important questions. No one gets to have any input questions. When leaders come to the church, they are not there to make their perfect dream church.

This is not, Cheyenne Mountain is not the dream perfect church for any of us. All of us have a list of things that we would change about this church, right?

[18 : 49] I have things I would change. You have things you would change. But we're not here for personal preference church. We are not here for shameful gain.

And more than anyone else, leaders need to be aware of that because more than anyone else, leaders have the ability and the power to use their influence in that way.

Peter warns against that. That's not the kind of leadership that's going to get us through suffering. That's not going to be the community that's going to survive when the storm comes.

By the way, you might be wondering, okay, there are six, seven elders at Cheyenne Mountain, depending on how you do the math. What does this have to do with me? First, this is what you should expect and look for in leaders.

This is the kind of person you should nominate when we have officer nominations. When you move, when you PCS, what kind of church are you going to look for?

[20 : 00] Look for a church in which you believe they have these types of elders. This is what you should look for in leaders in general, right? If you're the leader of a family, if you're a father, you could take this first and you could apply it to your little flock.

If you're a single woman and you're looking for a man, if you want a little flock at some point, this is the kind of man you should be looking for. You want a first Peter five kind of shepherd.

Peter goes on. It's not just a shameful gain. By the way, I jumped ahead of myself here. Hackworth saw this situation at Fort Lewis and decided he was going to do everything in his power to fix it.

He couldn't fix the fort it was held at. There were a lot of things he couldn't fix, but everything that he could, he did. He started to hold leaders who were under his command accountable. He began showing up to classes incognito, so he would dress as if he was a private, so no one would know he was there auditing.

At one point, he blew his cover and took over the class so that he could teach what needed to be taught. He sacrificed himself for the sake of these people, knowing that what mattered was their safety and their lives, much, much more than his comfort and his convenience.

[21 : 24] Verse three, not just from, are we avoiding shameful gain, but we're avoiding domineering those in your charge, being examples to the flock. Elders lead by example. They don't lead by explosions of anger or threats or power moves.

That's not how God's shepherds operate. Instead, they're operating as examples to the flock that people can look at them and see this is what a godly and humble leader looks like.

First Timothy three, when it lays out the qualifications for elders, says this should be someone who's gentle. Also says it should be someone who's not contentious. If you are looking for someone to be a leader in the church, you are not looking for the person who demonstrates to everyone that they're able to win every debate.

You're looking for someone who is willing to serve. They don't impose their will on others, right, through personality or power.

Church leaders can sometimes become isolated and become heavy-handed without even realizing it. It's important instead for God's leaders not to be domineering, but being examples to the flock.

[22 : 44] And what do you get? It's tempting for leaders, right, to seek shameful gain because they want to get something for their leadership.

If that's your view of church leadership, I have some bad news for you. Church leadership is a lot less getting your way, expressing your opinion all the time, being able to do whatever you want to do, and it's a lot more of taking out the church's trash, telling people things they don't want to hear, confronting people in their sin, dealing with conflict in the church, having things said about you that are not true and not being able to defend yourself, being a punching bag for Jesus.

What do you get? You get suffering. If you're a leader in the church, what you gain is tremendous suffering. Verse one, I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ.

What else do you get? You get Jesus. Verse four, elders, your service in the church is not so you can gain things now and here, but it's that you can gain the honor and glory that Jesus Christ will bring to you when he returns.

And so you suffer knowing that he is coming back, doing what you need to do in the church, not for your own gain, but to build it up so that we would grow together as one body, giving tremendous honor and glory to Jesus Christ as we serve one another.

[24 : 51] And we're serving, verse four, the chief shepherd. In other words, Jesus is the one who is the shepherd of this church. We said that multiple times during the transition when we didn't have a lead pastor, we would say, Jesus is the one who leads his church.

That is still true now. And everyone who leads in his church will answer to him. And so there's both an encouragement and a warning, right?

The encouragement is you serve not to get things now here, but to get Jesus. Jesus, there's also a warning. The chief shepherd is coming back.

If you remember in our worship guide, we read at the very beginning our preparation for worship, Hebrews chapter 13, verse 17, obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls.

By the way, this word keeping watch is talking about someone who's keeping watch at night. Another way to translate it would be those who are losing sleep over your souls.

[25 : 56] They're not gaining, they're losing as those who will have to give an account. In other words, I don't know exactly what it's going to look like, but it's going to look something like this.

When Jesus returns, he is going to sit with the elders of Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and he's going to take out our church directory. And he's going to go name by name through the directory and he's going to say, what about so-and-so?

As those who will have to give an account. And so we serve as leaders knowing that we answer to Jesus. We answer to Jesus in our failure and our success.

But most of all, we look to him in our suffering knowing that that is our goal as leaders. Not shameful gain, but the unfading crown of glory. If you are going to lead, do it because you want to shepherd the flock.

That is Peter's fundamental command here and do it because you want to serve the chief shepherd. Jesus is the great shepherd shepherd of the sheep.

[27 : 19] By the way, that's the example that Jesus has left us. In the gospel, I should say first in the world, we use our power to lift ourselves up. Jesus took his power and he used it to lift other people up and push himself down.

And he did that fundamentally by dying for us and our sins on the cross. And so as Christian leaders, we also use our power to push ourselves down and lift other people up.

Jesus, the chief shepherd, is the example for his under-shepherds. The gospel is the narrative that informs how leaders in the church operate. They operate for the sake of others just like Jesus did.

In the gospel of Luke in chapter 22, there's a dispute between Jesus' and his disciples and it tells us this. A dispute arose among them as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

And he said to them, the kings of the Gentiles exercised lordship over them and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you.

[28 : 29] Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leaders as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table?

But I, Jesus, am among you as one who serves. And so also the shepherds of the church.

Our next command comes in verse 5. So we've had shepherd the flock. Verse 5, likewise you are younger, be subject to the elders. Now we could take this as a command only to young people, old people, older folks don't really need to worry about what the elders have to say.

However, in this context, elders, follow the logic with me here, elders is referring to leaders of the church, not all older people. And so the younger here in context are the opposite of that, the non-leaders of the church.

So this is not primarily a distinction of age, although that may happen in certain situations, it's likely that elders are going to end up in general being older and some are sometimes going to be younger.

[29 : 39] But the distinction here primarily in this passage is between the elders, those who lead, and the younger, i.e. those who are not elders. You who are younger, you who are not elders, be subject to the elders.

I mentioned at the beginning that power, those who have power, elders, can be like a fire. They can warm and nurture the house or they can burn it down. Followers can fan that fire into flame or they can snuff it out.

There's a type of following that causes incredible headaches for the leadership of the church. And those are followers who refuse to be subject.

This could look in a variety of ways. It could be someone who's causing trouble in the church. And it gets to a point where the elders have to talk to this individual about the trouble that they're stirring up and this person says, well, I really don't care what you have to do.

I answer to Jesus. Jesus is this chief shepherd. He has under shepherds. It could be someone.

[30 : 46] They're not an elder, but they still have an agenda for the church. They have a perfect church in mind and they're going to push for it no matter what. And they don't realize, Philippians chapter 1, that we have to discern what's best and approve what's excellent.

And we can't do everything as a church. There are a million good things we could do in this city. We could probably actually only do one or two of them.

And sometimes, we have to make hard decisions about what those things are. And so being subject to the elder sometimes is realizing and recognizing this is a good thing and we as a church aren't able to do it right now.

And I'm going to move forward with this church building up the body rather than subverting it. Rather than going around the church and stirring up division. Rather than gossiping.

There is a type of followership in the church that wastes incredible amounts of time and energy. There is division that's stirred up in the church that wastes countless institutional hours between the elders combined.

[31 : 57] Another way to put it would be this. Imagine if the elders of the church did not have to spend any time addressing conflict. Imagine what we could accomplish as a body.

Imagine what we could get done if people were willing to come together following the leaders that God has given them even as they do so imperfectly.

By the way, our preparation for worship spoke to this as well. Talks about leaders. They'll have to give an account. But it ends with this. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning for that would be of no advantage to you.

You hurt yourself when you rebel against leaders in the church. You hurt yourself because they're actually trying to point you towards righteousness and holiness, something that is for your good.

You hurt yourself because you're stirring up division in the church and then you wonder why the church isn't doing better than it is. because the leaders are spending time with you rather than the ministry that God has called them to.

[33 : 09] And so it is of no advantage to you to stir up division in the church to rebel. Instead, we have leaders who are sacrificing and followers who are following.

By the way, in verse 2, this phrase, among you, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, the word here is the idea of an apportion or an allotment.

In other words, God has given us to each other. The elders that you have, God gave them to you. The congregants, you all, God has given you to us.

With all our quirks, with all our flaws, both in leaders and in followers, we are the people that God has for each other. And so imperfectly, we are walking together, following Jesus together as one community.

And if we want that to be a thick and rich community, we need leaders who sacrifice. And followers who follow, who are subject to the elders.

[34 : 29] Finally, we have our last command, clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility towards one another. For God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. How do we do it? How can you be a sacrificial leader and a humble follower?

A follower who doesn't stir up division but is willing to receive correction and hear a no instead of always hearing yes. The answer that Peter gives us is humility. Remember I mentioned two weeks ago that there's a rich humility that comes with the gospel.

You are so flawed and sinful that Jesus had to die for you. Maybe I, not maybe, but I am so sinful and flawed that Jesus had to die for me.

Maybe that means I don't get everything right all the time. Maybe it means you don't get everything right all the time. But we're the people who've been allotted to each other.

And so we walk in humility recognizing our own foibles and flaws and working together the best that we can. We've had some positive motivations here.

[35 : 43] The chief shepherd's going to appear. There's a positive and negative one here. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. people. If you are a leader and you are looking to use your power and your influence to impose your will on the church, God is opposed to you.

If you are a follower, even if you know your theology really well, but you are stirring up division in the church, God is opposed to you.

We cannot mince words where the scripture does not mince them. And so this is not just a feel-good kumbaya passage for God's people, but it is a serious command and a serious warning.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. On the other hand, if you are a leader making mistakes with flaws as all leaders are, but you have humility, you're willing to recognize your mistakes and correct, you're willing to work alongside and with other people, God's grace is for you.

And if you're a follower, imperfect and flawed and sinful, making many mistakes, but you're humble and you're seeking to build up your leaders in the body, God's grace is with you.

[37 : 18] And our hope is not in our behavior ultimately, but our hope and our praise is that God has not always followed the pattern of opposing the proud and giving grace to the humble.

Because when Jesus died, he did the exact opposite. when Jesus died on the cross, God opposed the humble.

He took Jesus who was humble and he allowed him to die. And then he gave grace to the proud. He gave grace to you and me who are flawed and sinful.

He gave grace to leaders who make mistakes and followers who don't always get it right. He opposed the humble to give grace to the proud.

And so that's our hope, right? That's what we're uniting around as one community. We're uniting around the fact that Jesus is there doing that for us, that we are sinned and flawed so much so that we deserve God's wrath and his judgment, but Jesus died on our behalf taking the penalty for our sin for everyone who's willing to repent and have faith and hope in Jesus Christ.

[38 : 32] Jesus models this for us in John chapter 13. He's near the end of his ministry. They're preparing for the Passover and he washes everyone's feet.

And who doesn't want to be subject to the elders? It's Peter. Peter tells Jesus, no, you can't wash my feet.

He said, you shall never wash my feet and Jesus answered him, if I do not wash you, you have no share with me. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

And then he says, do you not understand what I have done to you? You call me teacher and Lord and you are right for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

[39 : 50] How do we handle power in the church? And how do we have thick and rich community? We do it by having leaders who want to sacrifice rather than gain.

We do it by having followers who are willing to follow Jesus together as they follow his shepherds. We're only able to do it as we clothe ourselves with humility.

And we do it because we know that Jesus' grace is for us. He set us his example by washing feet and being among us as one who serves. And he's enabled and empowered it by being the one who allowed God to oppose the humble so that he could give grace to us who are proud.

And so that's our hope and our confidence. Please pray with me. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your word and we ask that you would drive it deep into our hearts, that we would be filled more and more with the humility that comes with the gospel and it would cause us to serve you and one another.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.