

1 Peter Chapter 5A

From very early in my childhood I have been captivated by the images portrayed in the Gospels concerning the birth of Jesus Christ. Often I imagined myself sitting among the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks in the quiet darkness of that Bethlehem night when suddenly:

Luke 2:9 **An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were** (KJV – “Sore afraid,” *I always wondered how frightened does one have to be in order to be sore afraid?*) 10 **And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**

- OF all the people in the world: all of the affluent movers and shakers, all of the influential politicians, all of the religious leaders of the day, why would God reveal the birth of the Savior to an obscure group of Lowly Shepherds?
- Why? Because the one who was found wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger was actually the Chief Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, God’s promised shepherd.
- This IS the very one of whom King David writes:

Psalm 23: **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.**

And again in Psalm 28 David cries out to God asking Him to Shepherd His people:

Psalm 28: 9 **Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.**

- This child who is born in a lowly manger is the answer to David’s prayer. He is the same Divine Shepherd of whom Jacob boasted in the book of Genesis.

Genesis 48:15b **"The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been MY shepherd all my life long to this day,"**

So you see, throughout the Bible, God has revealed himself as the Shepherd of his people. He is the one who provides gentle care, powerful protection and abundant provision for the sheep of his pasture.

- I have to say, OF all the images depicting the true and living God provided for us throughout the pages of Holy Scripture, I have always treasured the image of God as my Good Shepherd. The Prophet Isaiah looking forward to his arrival wrote:

Isaiah 40:10 **Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. 11 He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.**

I am so thankful for the lovingkindness and gentleness of the Good Shepherd as he leads us through the rough terrain of this life. And Oh how wonderful it is to know that when we stumble and fall, he picks us up and carries us close to his heart.

- What a glorious example He sets for those he calls to serve, as under-shepherds, as sheepdogs among his precious flock.

When God called Moses to lead His flock out of the Land of Egypt, He gave him a staff and all that was necessary to lead the flock of God into the Promised Land.

The Psalmist writes of Moses:

Psalm 77: 20 **You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.**

- And when Moses was about to pass off the scene he asked God who would take up the staff and lead the flock. We see that conversation in Numb. 27

Numbers 27:15 **Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, 16 "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation 17 who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd." 18 So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.**

- Throughout Redemptive history God faithfully raised up under-shepherds who led the flock of God. Of course, the most famous of all was King David.

Psalm 78: 70 **He (God) chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; 71 from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. 72 With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.**

- And while David was certainly not perfect He served as a faithful shepherd of God's people. BUT sadly, throughout the history of Israel, there were MANY foolish, many abusive false shepherds who sought to destroy the flock of God.
- The Prophet Ezekiel speaks a stunning word of condemnation to the corrupt Shepherds of his day.

Ezekiel 34: 2 **"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? 3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts.**

In Verse 15 of Ezekiel's prophecy, he foretells the coming of the Good Shepherd and He tells us that God Himself will come to shepherd His flock.

Ezekiel 34: 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

- Reading through the Gospels you can't help but see that Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, the one who came to seek and save the lost.
- He heals the injured, strengthens the weak and feeds the hungry with the bread of life.

Stepping into the New Testament we see a continuation of God's plan of redemption that is carried out by the Holy Spirit who calls and equips a new generation of under-shepherds who will lay down their lives for the flock of God.

As we return to the book of 1 Peter this morning I would like to draw your attention to these 3 points that I have pulled from the first 4 verses of Chapter 5.

1. Administration of God's Flock
2. Attributes of God's Shepherds
3. Accolades of the Chief Shepherd

1 Peter 5:1 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: 2a shepherd the flock of God that is among you,

One of the eye opening lessons in our elder training program takes perspective leaders on a journey from Genesis to Revelation showing how the Government of God, the Administration of God's flock has always been worked out through a plurality of elders. Let's look at the Book of Genesis: (hopping around a lot today)

Genesis 50:7 So Joseph went up to bury his father. With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

- So we see there were elders in ancient Egypt among the People of God.
- LATER: The Patriarch Job is described as an upright man who sat among the elders at the city gate.
- Then At the time of the Passover it was the Elders of Israel who led the people.

Ex 12:21 Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb.

- The Old Testament is literally packed with examples of divine authority being worked out among the people of God through a plurality of elders.
BUT what about the New Testament?

In the Book of Acts we see Paul and Barnabas traveling throughout the Mediterranean region proclaiming the Gospel, making disciples, establishing churches and appointing Elders.

Acts 14: 21 **When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,** 22 **strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.** 23 **And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.**

In His letter to Titus Paul writes 1:5 **This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you**

Well here in 1 Peter the Apostle exhorts the elders who are among the “Elect Exiles” in the region of Asia Minor in a very personal way, Peter describes himself as their “Fellow Elder.”

- His exhortation may have carried more weight, it may have possessed more authority if he would have said, Peter, the Pontifus Maximus! The first Pope.
- He could have described himself as, the one who walked on the water.
- He could have said, I was the first to confess Jesus as Lord. He could have said I was ONE of the three who was there on the Mount of Transfiguration.
- But instead, with humility he emphasizes his solidarity, his shared calling as one of many elders, a simple sheepdog serving the Chief Shepherd.

If you are with us this morning and you aspire to the office of elder I would ask that you listen carefully today and consider both the historicity and the gravity of God’s call.

- But even if you don’t aspire to an office in the church you should still pay attention, because you will be called upon to evaluate the men who are brought before you as prospective elders in the future.

In the context of Peter’s writing, Vs. 1 of Ch. 5 begins in the ESV with the word “**SO.**” I believe a better translation might be the word “**Therefore.**”

- Therefore, in light of the fiery trials that were coming upon the churches, in light of the hardship and persecution that was described for us in Ch. 4, Peter addresses the elders, those men whom God had called to help navigate the church through the troubled waters of distress.

It is in this season of suffering that Peter describes himself 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:**

- Immediately Peter points these troubled saints to the suffering and exultation of Jesus Christ.

Peter was an eyewitness to Christ's suffering. He stood by the cross when Jesus cried out, "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.*"

- There is no greater suffering, there is no deeper pain than that which Peter witnessed at the cross where Jesus bore the wrath of God on our behalf.
- But we need to remember that Peter was also an eyewitness to the glory of God, revealed in the person of Christ there on the Mount of Transfiguration.
- Friends, the Sheep of God's Fold follow the path that has been laid out for them by the Good Shepherd. He walks beside them in the valley of the shadow of death and carries them all into His own glorious house where they dwell together forever.

Whenever we endure fiery trials in this mortal life it is always best to walk beside someone who has traveled the path before us, someone who has learned to overcome, someone who has endured the heat of those trials and has come out on the other side rejoicing. The Elders of the church are here to walk beside you.

Before we move on let's take a minute and consider this simple biblical principle, it goes beyond the office of elder. Here in the church, the older men are to teach the younger men and the older women are to teach the younger women.

- In this shared life that we have in Christ there are some who have walked with the Lord for 30 – 40 – 50 years. God has lavished His grace on them in every season of life, (colicky babies, rebellious teenagers, college payments, and the grace of God has sustained them through 30 -40 years of marriage.
- To the older saints I encourage you to be diligent in your study of God's Word and ask the Lord to develop the character of Christ in you so you can be an example: Kindness, gentleness, patience and goodness and love.
- Younger saints, Don't squander the resources that may be sitting right next to you. Build multi-generational friendships.
- We have seen the office of elder let's move on to see - attributes of a shepherd

2 The Attributes of God's Shepherd – Here Peter describes a few of the attributes of a faithful elder.

1 Peter 5:2 *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; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.*

The word "Feed" (POIMAINO) is a word that describes the whole scope of a shepherd's work and that would include things like: nourishing, nurturing, leading, guiding and of course protecting the flock of God.

You may remember after his resurrection the Lord Jesus served his disciples breakfast on the shores of the Galilee. It was there when he took Peter aside and asked him three times, “Peter do you love me?” and after Peter responded Jesus said, “Feed my Sheep.”

- One of those three times, Jesus actually used this same word. (POIMAINO)
- Now Peter uses that same word to describe the character of God’s chosen Shepherd in His Epistle.

Elders are to serve freely, willingly watching over the sheep to assess their condition. Feeding them good food in the green pastures of God’s Word, leading them beside still waters in seasons of spiritual refreshment.

- Good Shepherds faithfully warn the sheep when predators seek to attack the flock of God.
- The Apostle Paul passionately exhorted the Ephesian Elders concerning their oversight of God’s Sheep.

Acts 20: 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Years ago a very Charismatic young Man who was supposedly saved in prison came to Pottstown and began pastoring a local church. He actually wrote a book entitled, “From Prison to the Pulpit.”

- His personality combined with His message of faith and prosperity immediately drew a crowd. And after about two years, at the height of his popularity....
- He began building a huge home on the outskirts of town. (movie theater) Sadly his home was never completed because he was arrested.
- He took every penny that came into the church through the offering and when that wasn’t enough He began trafficking drugs and stolen cars across state lines. Peter warned the flock of God about those greedy false shepherds.

1 Peter 5: (Elders are to Shepherd the flock of God) not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

- The term “Shameful Gain” actually goes beyond an inordinate desire for wealth, it points to the shameful manner in which that wealth is acquired.

The Apostle Paul writing the qualification of an elder to Timothy and Titus said that he is “NOT to be a lover of money.”

- When Peter describes those false shepherds in his second epistle he writes:

2 Peter 2: 3 in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

- As the sheep of God's Fold it is important that you know these things so that you are NOT deceived or taken advantage of by a false shepherds.
- The servant of the Lord must not be motivated by money. He must not be power hungry, He must not lord over the flock of God; (only 1 Lord!)
- So what is the Elder's motivation?
- Peter describes it for us in Vs 4. And that brings us to our final point:

3 Accolades of the Chief Shepherd

1 Peter 5: 4 **And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.**

- The driving motivation for all of the servants of God, the stimulus behind every sacrificial act of service the incentive that drives every mission of mercy is the imminent appearing of the Chief Shepherd.
- When Christ returns, all of his faithful servants will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Think about that for a moment. God is the one who chose us before the foundation of the world. For His own glory He called us to Himself, He drew us with cords of kindness and bands of love (Hos. 11:4)

He redeemed us with His own blood and sealed us with the Holy Spirit. He gave every one of us spiritual gifts with which to serve him and in the end, He will reward us richly for the work that He has done in us and through us.

- This Amazing Grace often overwhelms me! And I must with Paul cry out:
- Romans 11:33 **Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!**
- That He who redeemed our lives from the pit and seated us in heavenly places in Christ Jesus would also reward us! Friends this is extraordinary grace!!

Like Peter, Paul also described this great reward as a crown that will be placed on the head of God's beloved sheep.

1 Corinthians 9: 24 **Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.**

- Other places in the N.T. our reward is pictured as a crown.
- James wrote of the crown of life (James 1:12)
- Paul wrote of the **crown or righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.** (2 Timothy 4:8)
- In 1 Thessalonians Paul told the believers that **THEY** themselves were His Crown. Their presence in Glory would be a sufficient reward.

Certainly the faithful under-shepherds, the sheepdogs serving in the fold of God possess both a daunting task and a glorious reward.

- BUT they are not alone. Every blood bought believer, every single sheep in the fold of God will one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ,
- IF you belong to Christ:
- You need to know that YOU will be rewarded for everything they have done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

As we bring this teaching to a close; Whether the Lord has given you 1 or 5 or 10 talents, there is a day coming when you will be called upon to give an account of your faithfulness, your stewardship of the manifold grace of God.

- How will you fare?

When your life comes under the search-light of God's final judgment will you hear those wonderful words: "**Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.**" (Matt. 25:23)

PRAY: Thank you for the Gospel, we believe it is the power of God for salvation. We thank you for opening our blind eyes to see this great salvation that you have provided through Jesus Christ.

We thank you that He is the Good Shepherd, who will lead us through all of the valleys of this life to that great mountain top when we will be seated at the table with him in Glory.