

Function: Our Leading Together – 1 Peter 5:1-11

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Introduction

What seems to be Peter's point in writing to these "elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia". He is writing to people who are suffering for righteousness sake and walking through all kinds of fiery trials. He is well aware of their situation and he has an answer for them. That "According to [God's] great mercy, he has caused [them] to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for [them], 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." You see, Peter knows they will suffer, he knows they will have strained personal interactions with one another, but he wants to remind them of something bigger than their suffering, bigger than their sin against one another, and even, bigger than their enemy, the devil. They have been born again and that changes everything about them. They can endure suffering of the highest magnitude, because one day they will go home. Suffering will end in a short while and all will be made well when his son returns to take them home.

As Peter writes to them he addresses the slaves, the women, the men, the young people and what I would like to highlight today...he addresses the elders. How do they live among the flock of God in the times of suffering between his coming and his return?

Prayer

Please open your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter five and verse one. God's word says this,

Leadership in Community

Appeal to Community

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:

Peter starts off our text this morning with an exhortation but he does something interesting immediately after saying, "So I exhort the elders among you". He stops. He stops and gives some street cred as to why they should listen. And it's odd because he has already proclaimed his apostleship in verse one on chapter one. Isn't that enough. Well, of course it is, but Peter is being rather gentle with this community of believers, he is here to strengthen and encourage them through their time of suffering. Instead of just leaving it at his apostleship he appeals to them based on three things. Their common role in the community, their common link to the sufferings on Christ and their common future. First he says, in effect, hey elders, I'm one of you. I'm part of the same community you are. I have/am living through the same things you are. He is

making an appeal based on their role in the church. Second he appeals to their common suffering in Christ. When he could have pointed to his own sufferings to build that link between them, he doesn't, he points to their common (meaning the same not ordinary) Savior and his sufferings. I am like you because we have been saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. Third, and lastly, he points to their common future. He is a "partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed". We not only serve together and suffering together, but we will live together forever when Christ returns! We are brothers, a community in role, common suffering and a common future.

With our community in mind Peter goes on to point us to the task at hand. God's word says this in verses two through four,

Shepherding in Community

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. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Right out of the gate Peter is back to remind them of the community they live in. Elders do not shepherd in some sort of vacuum, they shepherd among the flock - dare I say, "among the community they have been placed in"? And brothers he has given us three ways in which we are to shepherd the flock of God,

1. Exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you

Brothers we must never shepherd the flock of God because we "have" to. We must never shepherd the flock of God because, "what would they do without us". I'll tell you what they would do, wait on God to replace you with someone of his choosing. None of us is in-expendable. The only reason to shepherd the flock of God is a deep, deep desire to do so, born out of a love for Christ and a love for his people. Watch over them because you can't ever imagine doing anything else.

2. Not for shameful gain, but eagerly

Secondly, brothers we must never shepherd the flock of God because there is a desire to gain something from our service. If you find yourself serving for things you might get, you are serving no one, but yourself and self service is exactly the wrong reason to serve. Pick up your cross and die like Christ that you might eagerly shepherd the flock of God because you can do not other in light of his death for you!

3. not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock

Third, and last, brothers we must never shepherd the flock of God in a domineering way. The people Peter was writing to know what it's like to live under a Tyrant and they would have taken this admonition very seriously. As should we. There is no room in the community of the church for bullies. We are never to abuse the role we have, but to lead this flock as an example of Christ to the church. They should follow because God's word says so, and because our lives look like we are following him as well! We will only lead as well as we follow.

And if ever, my brothers, “you should suffer for righteousness’ sake”, if ever, you are “surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you” I, your fellow elder, stand with our brother Peter and encourage you as he did our brothers in the past, that “when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory”! Brothers there is nothing better, nothing! On that day any and all suffering and trial will pale in comparison to the reward. You will see our Savior and you will share in his glory as one of his faithful servants. I don’t know how literally to take this, but I do know that God wanted us to imagine a day when we would be rewarded like that long distance runner who has completed his race and is given a crown as the victor just past the finish line. Only our crown will never fade. It will never dull. I will never tarnish because it will be the unfading crown of glory. The glory of Jesus Christ himself! Be encouraged my brothers, The Chief Shepherd is only a short time away from hearing his Father’s call to go gather up his people. It won’t be long. It won’t be long.

Brothers and sisters this is what it looks like among your elders. We are a community, a plurality, if you will, serving God by his grace in the best way we know how. Always listening and watching for way to encourage and exhort one another and yes, even ways to confront one another when we see warning signs of fatigue and sin. We are a community in the larger community of Clearcreek Chapel, seeking to lead by example as we await the return of our Chief Shepherd.

This community talk hasn’t ended. Peter is about to pull others into the discussion. God’s word says this at the beginning of verse five.

Humility in Community

5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.

Young people, listen closely. Peter has an exhortation for you as well. “...be subject to the elders”. This is an especially difficult task for you at your stage of life. I remember when I was younger. I knew it all. I was pretty certain my parents didn’t understand the finer intricacies of my life and that I was a far better judge of what was a good idea and what wasn’t. Now, I know this is very general statement and some of you will fall outside of this characterization. However, before you dismiss what I’m saying because that’s not you at all...perhaps that’s exactly the kind of thinking Peter is addressing here.

There are three things to think about in being “subject to the elders”.

1. God put them there. The Bible tells us that God is sovereign over all rulers and authorities and Peter has pounded this point home with his listeners. You are not under these men because other men randomly chose this guy to be your elder. No, God put him in that position. This should create humility in you and him.
2. God will give you the grace you need. Ephesians 4:7 says this, “...grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift”. God has given you grace to deal with your elders in a way that honors him. You don’t have to sin. You may not agree,

but you can honor God in how you respond to them. Remember also, he has given him the grace to deal with you. Not some high profile preacher you might love to listen to, not one of the other elders that you like better, but the guy who shows up at your flock meeting every week. God has uniquely supplied him with the grace to lead you.

3. Experience counts. Job 12:12 says this, “Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days”. When you are young you just don’t have the time under your belt to have experienced much of what life has to throw at you. This doesn’t mean your not smart, or clever, or experienced at some things that others aren’t. It just means that you should listen those around you with more time. You may find some of them haven’t used their extra time to gain wisdom, but you can learn much from the vast majority if you listen to their insights.

But God isn’t finished with the elders and the youngers. God’s word says this at the end of verse five,

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

See it! The elders live in community with not only each other, but Peter is going to do what he has been doing all along throughout the book. He goes back to the fact that we are to live in community together...slaves, wives, husband, elders, youngers. We’re all there and Peter has given us a command. This is no “wisdom issue”, as we like to say around here. We are to be dressed in humility. When people see us from far away they should see humility. When they come up close for that personal conversation later on they should see humility. It should be our style as believers in Christ.

Why do that? Why clothe yourself in humility? Because God not only doesn’t give grace to the proud, but he opposes them. He is actively against you in your pride. That is a sobering thing. How much of your life is spent building your little “monuments to me” because you are so much smarter, prettier, wiser, stronger...whatever the case may be...than someone else? It’s a lot isn’t it? The more you think about it the worse it gets. Pride is at the essence of the fall and it has kept on reaping consequences ever since. But there is another side to this coin. God gives, he actively seeks out and gives grace to the humble. Look back at your salvation. You cannot come to Christ in your pride. You cannot stand condemned before a Holy God and say please forgive me for offending you. I give up on my self-righteousness and throw myself down at the foot of the cross and beg for the mercy of Christ. Only grace can do that. So the good news is, if you are a believer you already have the grace to conquer your pride. Now trust God with all that you thought you should have because you deserve it, and give up everything, to serve him humbly in this community.

Well that is the elders and a bit of the youngers and Peter is going to Go on and show us how were are to function, one and all, in humility filled community. God’s word says this in verse six and seven,

Day by Day in Community

Trust in Community

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Since you are commanded to be clothed in humility and since God opposes pride and gives grace to the humble when dealing with one another...what shall we be before God!? I love the imagery here. “Humble yourselves...under the mighty hand of God”. When he says it that way, what other option do you have. But Peter is not using this as a scare tactic. He gives us two commands and gives us the results of obedience to them as an encouragement to obey. We are to humble ourselves, “that at the proper time he may exalt [us]”. You should never exult yourself loved ones, but it is exactly right to wait for God to exalt you. One day you will be lifted on high to enjoy fellowship with God in Heaven forever and how much better is that than whatever little pitiful kingdom you would have built here on earth. Again, let go of your wants and desires and let them be his. His are far better.

Second he commands us to cast our anxieties on him. Isn't worry just a form of pride? You worry and fret about things you can't change because in your pride you think you would do a better job than God at whatever you are worried about. If not, why don't you just wait patiently in your circumstance for his “might hand” to move? You can trust him. How do I know that? Because Peter just told us, he cares for us. Why would he send his son to save you and then allow you to go unchecked into the future all alone? Why would you trust him for your spiritual life and then not trust him with your next meal, your children, your bills, your life, your death, why!? Isn't he infinitely trust worthy? Hasn't he supplied all you need? Isn't he wise enough to know the difference between what you want and what you need? Sometimes, we need to suffer. I know we don't want it, but sometimes we need it. It knocks off a bit of that chip of pride we carry around on our shoulder doesn't it. Trust him. Good times and bad, he is good, sovereign and wise.

Peter continues on with encouragements to the suffering who are in the community of God's family. God's word says this in verses eight and nine.

Suffering in Community

8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

The elders have been told “exercise oversight” and now the entire flock is given the warning to “Be sober-minded; be watchful”. The elders are not the only ones responsible to watch over the flock of God. The flock is to watch over itself. We are to be serious and sober in our watchfulness. Look at the imagery here. It's as if you are on a hunt, only it's been all turned around and now you are the hunted. The devil prowls slow and low like the lion waiting for you to give him the opportunity to pounce and devour you. How sober and serious would you be if

you were out in the jungle with a lion tracking your every move. Would you, as we are prone to do, get as close as possible to enjoy the excitement, but far enough away to have not sinned yet? What's the reach of that lion? How far can he leap? How fast can you move? Sin and the devil are nothing to play with. Be watchful. Keep your distance from sin and the enemy. He has nothing of value to you. Right?

It's not enough to stay far away from the devil. You must use the means God has given you to "resist" him and his plans. You resist him by being "firm in your faith". When suffering seems to be a foot deeper pool than you are tall, stand firm, by remembering that you are not the only one going through these things. One of the defenses we are to use against the schemes of the devil is to remember our community. Remember "your brotherhood throughout the world". This remember that they are suffering to will cause you to be strong in the fight against losing hope! We are in this together, elders, youngers, and the brotherhood throughout the world. Praise God we are not left alone to stand firm, but lifted up by Christ through our remembering our brothers who are going through the same suffering.

And just as he encouraged the elders with their future in Christ, so to will he encourage the flock with the same. Look down at your Bibles, God's word says this in verses ten and eleven.

Certainty in Community

10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

You cannot lose! Will we suffer together? Yes. Has God forgotten you in your suffering? No. The God who contains all of the grace there is in the universe and has called you to glory, (in other words, the one who saved you by grace and will bring you home to glory. Your past and future are his and they are fixed) will get you through this. He will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. Does that sound like he is letting you go. NO! Does that sound like he has forgotten you in your suffering. NO! If you were a boxer after a big fight it would sound like this, "God will heal you up, remind you that you are able, train you to be better and give you rock solid plan of attack for the next fight".

And in the same way he spoke before he reminds you, his beloved flock, that no matter the suffering or the enemy you come up against, HE is the ruler of it all forever and ever. When he promised you that he would take you home there is nothing that can stand in the way of his bringing his promise to fruition!

Closing

Brothers and sisters be assured that your elders are working together in community, as God intended, to shepherd the flock of God here at Clearcreek Chapel. We are ever seeking to encourage one another in the faith and holding on another accountable for how we go about exercising oversight of the flock. Let us all be clothed in humility as we await the sure return of Christ. May we be found bound together in love for one another, a community, unshaken by the

world and the schemes of the devil, only ceasing when our ears are filled with the sound of a far off trumpets call growing ever louder in our ears.