

A Living Shepherd

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, if we could, for a short while, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in 1 Peter, continuing our study or concluding our study in 1 Peter chapter 5.

And we'll read again from the beginning. 1 Peter chapter 5 from the beginning. Where Peter writes, And so on.

Well, as we continue living in lockdown, we've seen in recent days that since the lockdown laws have been revised or renewed, it has caused chaos and confusion in our nation.

Because, as you know, in this past week, following Boris Johnson's address last Lord's Day, many people, they had hoped that that address would be an inspiring message of confidence.

But some of the critics, they've regarded it as just 14 minutes of confusion. And as the days have gone by, the chaos that's already present in our nation, it's been heightened now by the confusion and the mixed messages that are coming from Westminster and the devolved governments.

[1 : 41] And the confusion is to the point that we're all being made to see that as a nation, we are harassed and helpless. We are harassed and helpless.

And, you know, our nation is no different to the multitudes of Jesus' day. Because we're told in Matthew 9 that when Jesus saw the clouds, he was moved with compassion.

Why? Because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. And, you know, that's what we're like as a nation today. We're like sheep without a shepherd.

Because as a nation, we're trying to deal with this coronavirus crisis by ourselves. No one is calling upon the name of the shepherd. We're trying to deal with this crisis by ourselves.

But we're living in lockdown. We're hearing mixed messages that are bringing chaos and confusion. And the result is we are harassed and helpless. And it's all because as a nation, we're like sheep without a shepherd.

[2 : 48] We're like sheep without a shepherd. And what's a sheep without a shepherd? But lost. We're lost. But, you know, that's why Peter brings his letter to a close by reminding suffering and scattered saints that despite all that's going on in our lives, we're not lost.

Because we have a living shepherd. We have a living shepherd. We may be living in lockdown, hearing mixed messages that are bringing chaos and confusion with many people around us becoming harassed and helpless.

But, you know, Peter, he assures us here that as sufferings and scattered saints, we are not like sheep without a shepherd. Because we have a living shepherd.

We have a living shepherd. And that's the word of encouragement Peter wants to conclude his letter with. Because he's already told us, as we've seen in our study, he's told us that as suffering and scattered saints, we're blessed.

We're blessed because we've been born again to a living hope. We're being kept by the power of God. And we have this promised glorious inheritance of one day seeing Jesus face to face.

- [4 : 02] Therefore, in that time, between now and seeing Jesus face to face, Peter says we're to live like Jesus. And we're to love like Jesus. Because as Christians, we have a living salvation through a living saviour.
- And we're being built up into a living structure. And we're to have a living subjection, as we saw in previous chapters. And it's all so that it might, even though it might result in a living suffering, but it's all because we're to have a living service to a living shepherd.
- That's what it's all about. It's all about a living shepherd. And Peter, he's reminding us this evening that we are not like sheep without a shepherd. Because we have a living shepherd.
- We have a living shepherd. And as the church of Jesus Christ, and especially as elders in the church, Peter says we're to follow the example of our shepherd.
- In fact, Peter says this evening that elders are to be pastoring shepherds. They're to be providing shepherds and protecting shepherds.
- [5 : 11] That's what Peter says in this passage. That elders are to be pastoring shepherds, providing shepherds, and protecting shepherds. So we'll see first of all this evening that elders are to be pastoring shepherds.
- We'll read again in verse 1. He says, It says, You know, as suffering and scattered saints with services suspended, Peter was very conscious of the fact that the church could have straying sheep.
- Because with the pressure and problem of persecution, there was always the danger of drifting. There was always the worry of wondering. Where Christians could compromise their Christian character, conduct, or conversation.
- And so in this closing chapter, Peter addresses the elders. And Peter addresses the elders by reminding them about the serious and solemn responsibility it is to be pastoring shepherds.
- But what's clear is that Peter's not here to give elders a dressing down or a telling off. No, Peter wants to remind you that as an elder, he's not above you.
- [6 : 53] He's not better than you. And he's not more important than you. Because Peter, he says, he's not the Pope, as the Roman Catholic Church claim. And he's not to be, he's not domineering or a dictator.
- He's not being heavy-handed or high-handed. No, Peter, he actually wants to get alongside us as elders. To encourage us and to exhort us to ensure that we are pastoring shepherds.
- And that's what Peter does. He exhorts the elders. That's what we're told. So I exhort the elders among you. And you know, I love this word, exhort.
- Because it literally means to call alongside. Or to comfort. It's the same word that Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14.
- Because Jesus said that the Holy Spirit is the comforter. He's the one who comes alongside. And so when Peter exhorts us as elders, he's not speaking down to us.
- [7 : 54] He's actually putting his arm around us. And he's calling us alongside in order to encourage us as pastoring shepherds. And the thing is, Peter isn't asking us as elders to do something that he didn't do himself.
- He's not pulling rank and saying, I'm an apostle. You better do as you're told. No, Peter says that he's a fellow elder. He's a brother in Christ. He's a witness for Jesus Christ.
- He's a Christian who will share with us in the glory that is to be revealed. Peter, he's comforting. He's giving this comforting exhortation to us as elders.

And he's reminding us that he's one of us. But, you know, his exhortation here, it's further emphasized by the word he uses to describe an elder.

He says, so I exhort elders among you as a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ. And the word that he uses for elder here is the Greek word *presbyteros*, which is where we get the word *presbyter* or *presbyterian* from.

[9 : 06] *Presbyteros*, which is *presbyterian*. But, you know, this word that Peter uses here, it's different to the one that Paul uses in 1 Timothy 3 when he speaks about elders.

Because in 1 Timothy 3, Paul describes elders as overseers. Or, as the authorised version puts it, he calls them bishops. And, of course, the *Episcopal* church, they use this, that text, 1 Timothy 3, they use it as a proof text to justify their form of church government.

Because when Paul speaks of elders, he doesn't use the same word as Peter. He doesn't use the word *presbyteros*. He uses the Greek word *episkopos*, which is where we get the word *episcopalian* from.

So, *presbyteros*, *presbyterian*. *Episkopos*, *episcopalian*. And in the *Episcopalian* church, their form of church government is a hierarchy.

With the monarch as the head of the church. And then there's the archbishop. And the archbishop is overseer of a diocese of bishops. And then there are priests and then there's *presbyters* and *deacons*.

[10 : 18] In the *Episcopalian* church government, there's this hierarchy. There's a hierarchy in the church. But in *Presbyterian* church government, there's no hierarchy. And there should be no hierarchy in the church.

Because when you examine the words *presbyteros* that Peter uses or the word *episkopos* that Paul uses, the Bible actually uses these words interchangeably.

In fact, Peter used the word *episkopos* back in chapter 2. And so, all these words, *bishop*, *presbyter*, *overseer*, and *elder*, they're all synonymous. They all mean the same thing.

And they're all emphasizing to us that Christ alone is the king and head of his church. And that there's no hierarchy in his church. Because there are only two offices in the church of Jesus Christ.

The office of an elder and the office of a deacon. And even these offices, they're not a hierarchy. They're not one above the other. They're not even stages of advancement. You don't progress from being a deacon to an elder.

[11 : 21] No, they're two separate offices with two distinct functions. Because the deacon is to be concerned with the temporal welfare of a congregation. And the elder is to be concerned with the spiritual welfare of the congregation.

And so, what Peter is doing here as he exhorts and encourages elders is that he's emphasizing to him, there's no hierarchy. He's not a pope. He's not a bishop.

He's an elder. Yes, he was an apostle who was called and sent by the risen Christ. And he stated that at the opening, at the outset of his letter. He stated that he was an apostle.

But he only did that so that his letter would be considered as a letter that was authorized and carried the authority of Jesus Christ. But you know, as part of the church, Peter, as he says himself, he is a fellow elder.

Which means that he wasn't above any other elder. He was their equal. He was their equal. And you know, this is something we should remember in our own context too.

[12 : 30] That a minister is not above the elder. Because, as we said, there's no hierarchy in the church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, a minister is an elder.

I'm an elder. I'm a teaching elder. Because I've been called and trained to teach. But I'm not above the other elders. I'm not more important than any of the other elders.

And I'm not more important than anyone in the congregation. As a teaching elder, I'm to serve alongside the other elders who are ruling elders.

And they're ruling elders because their responsibility and their concern, like mine, is for the spiritual welfare of the congregation and indeed the community. And so we have to get over this idea that the minister is above the elders.

And then there's the deacons. Then there's the congregation. Because that's not true. And that's not biblical. Yes, you should respect the office that the Lord appoints.

[13 : 32] But the office is an office of service. That's why I'm referred to as a minister. Because a minister is a servant. The Lord's servant.

And a servant of the people. And that's what an elder is too. Whether a teaching elder or a ruling elder. They're ministers. They're servants. They're not above the people. And the only reason I stand in a pulpit is because the Bible is above, to be above the people.

Not me. We are all to sit under the word of God. Because the word of God is the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever.

And so, being an elder in the church, whether a teaching elder or a ruling elder, it's not about our standing. It's not about our significance. It's not about our status.

It's all about our service. It's about following the example of the king and head of the church, Jesus Christ. Because his example is that he came not to be served, but to serve.

[14 : 41] And that's what Peter emphasizes here. He says that we're to be elders of service. He says, 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.

When the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. My friend, as elders, we're to follow the example of our living shepherd by being pastoring shepherds.

We're to be pastoring shepherds. But secondly, we're also to be providing shepherds. Providing shepherds. We see that.

We'll read again in verse 4. It says, and when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.

[15 : 43] Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Now, the main emphasis of Peter's exhortation to fellow elders is to be found in verse 2, where he says, shepherd the flock of God.

Shepherd the flock of God. Peter, as we said, he puts his arm around fellow elders and brothers in Christ, and he exhorts and encourages us to possess and to practice shepherd-like qualities.

Because Peter says, we're to pastor like the true pastor. We're to minister like the master. We're to shepherd like the good shepherd. And as you know, the good shepherd, he provides sacrificial service.

Because as Jesus said in John 10, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Our good shepherd, he came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[17 : 02] Therefore, as elders, we're to possess and to practice these shepherd-like qualities of sacrificial service. We're to be pastoring shepherds and providing shepherds, because we're to provide pastoral care for the flock of God.

Peter says, shepherd the flock of God that is among you. Shepherd the flock of God that is among you. We're to shepherd the flock of God who are in our pastoral care.

We're to shepherd the flock of God that the Lord has set us to be over as a congregation and indeed as a community. Shepherd the flock of God that is among you.

But you know, Peter's emphasis here is upon the flock of God. Because as elders, they're not our sheep. They're his sheep. They're the flock of God.

They're his flock. Is that not what Jesus said about his sheep? I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

[18 : 09] My sheep hear my voice. And I know them and they follow me. And I give to them eternal life and they will never perish. Neither shall they be plucked out of my hand.

Jesus says, they're my sheep. They're my sheep because my sheep were purchased at the auction mart of Calvary. And they were purchased not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with my precious blood.

Jesus says, they're my sheep. And they're my precious sheep. Therefore, as elders, we're to possess and practice shepherd-like qualities.

We're to be pastoring shepherds and providing shepherds because we're to provide pastoral care for the precious flock that belongs to God. They're the precious flock of God that's among us.

And, of course, as the precious flock of God, they're a mixed flock. They're not all the same because there are some lambs and there are some sheep.

[19 : 12] And, you know, Jesus, he emphasized that to Peter himself when Peter was commissioned to pastor like the true pastor and minister like the master and shepherd like the good shepherd.

You remember in John 21, after Peter had denied Jesus three times, Jesus, he restored and recommissioned Peter by asking that simple question three times.

Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? And every time Peter answered Jesus' question saying, Yes, Lord, you know. You know that I love you. And then Jesus responded each time by saying, Feed my lambs.

Shepherd my sheep. Feed my sheep. And again, Jesus, notice Jesus said about the flock of God. They're my lambs. They're my sheep.

They're my precious flock, whom I have redeemed by my precious blood. My friend, Peter's exhorting us as elders to remember that the flock of God among us have been entrusted into our pastoral care.

[20 : 21] Therefore, we're not to neglect them so that they starve or they stray or they stumble. No, we're to show care, compassion and concern for them.

And as elders, as those who are to possess and practice these shepherd-like qualities, the only way we can do that is by pointing both lambs and sheep to the good shepherd, the chief shepherd, the great shepherd of his sheep, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As elders with the flock of God entrusted to us, the only thing we can do is point them to the covenant shepherd who's revealed to us in Psalm 23.

Because, you know, it's when the flock of God come and confess to this covenant shepherd, when they come to him and confess, the Lord is my shepherd, it's then that they'll be assured of the covenant promise, the promise of the shepherd's provision and the shepherd's protection.

And, you know, that's what Peter highlights here, that as elders were to encourage the flock of God to clothe themselves in humility and come to the shepherd.

[21 : 35] They're to clothe themselves in humility and come to the shepherd in order to cast all their cares upon the Lord. Upon the Lord who is their shepherd.

And why are they to do it? Because he cares for them. He cares for them. As elders were to encourage the flock of God to come to the good shepherd, the great shepherd, the chief shepherd, the covenant shepherd, and to come to him and cast all their cares upon this shepherd because he cares for them.

And, you know, what I love what Peter says here, he says that as elders were to be encouraging the flock of God among us, to be casting their cares upon the covenant shepherd.

And I love this because the word casting is so important. It literally means to throw. To throw. In the sense of throwing your burden of cares upon the Lord.

You're to throw it. But when you throw your burden of cares to the Lord, you're to let go of it. You're to let go of it.

[22 : 43] You're not to cast your burden of cares and hold on to it. No, you're to throw your burden of cares and let go of them. You're not to hold on to your cares or your concerns.

You're not to hold on to them and hide them. Because that's not giving them to the Lord. But, of course, as you know, we're very good at holding on to our cares and our concerns.

We're very good at hiding our feelings and our faults. We're good at keeping our burdens instead of casting our burdens and cares upon the Lord.

But, you know, my friend, I often wonder that, is the reason why we hold on to and hide all our burdens so often, is it because we don't realize how much the shepherd cares for us?

Is the reason we hold on to and hide all these cares, is it because we don't realize how much the shepherd cares for us? We don't realize the shepherd's care, compassion, and concern for us.

[23 : 47] We don't realize that the shepherd, the good shepherd, the chief shepherd, the great shepherd, he doesn't want us to starve or stray or stumble. No, the shepherd, he wants his flock to come to him.

He wants you to come to him, my friend, and cast all your cares upon him. And keep casting all your cares upon him. Because why? He cares for you.

He cares for you. And, you know, this is the wonder. That's the promise of the covenant shepherd in Psalm 23. Because, as you know, in Psalm 23, it's everyone's favorite psalm.

In Psalm 23, we have the promise that this covenant shepherd, he provides for his flock. And he provides for his flock his peace, his pardon, his presence, and his protection.

And it's all there available to his flock every day of their life. The promises of his provision are there all the days of their life.

[24 : 54] And so, as elders who are to possess these shepherd-like qualities, we're not to neglect the flock of God among us, so that they starve, stray, or stumble.

No, we're to show care and compassion and concern for them. And, of course, this has been made more difficult because we're living in lockdown.

But, you know, it shouldn't stop us from contacting the flock of God among us, to remind them and reassure them that their covenant shepherd, their covenant shepherd, he promises to provide his peace, pardon, and presence, and protection.

He promises that when they come to him, they're to cast all their cares upon them because he cares for them. But, you know, we're even to remind those who still don't know the Lord as their shepherd.

And there are many of them in our congregation and in our community. They've heard about the shepherd. They know the shepherd, Sam. They know it off by heart. But they don't know the shepherd.

[26 : 00] And you need to know the shepherd. There are still those in our congregation and in our community who don't know the shepherd. And as elders, we're to remind them that they need the shepherd.

And that they need to go to this shepherd. Because they can't go through life and they can't go through death without this shepherd. They need this shepherd. You know, my friend, if you don't know the shepherd tonight, then get to know him.

Get to know him. Get to know him whilst you're on mercy's ground. Get to know him whilst you have breath in your lungs. Oh, get to know him before death will leave you and judgment will find you and eternity will hold you.

Get to know this wonderful shepherd and come to him. Call upon him. Cast your cares to him. Because the wonderful truth of the gospel is he cares for you.

And he promises to you. Oh, he promises to you that when you come to him and when you confess him as your Lord and as your shepherd, he promises that his goodness and his mercy, they will follow you all the days of your life.

[27 : 12] Do you know, my friend, what better hope in life and in death to have than to know the Lord as your shepherd? What better comfort to have?

And so as elders, Peter is exhorting and encouraging us to follow the example of our living shepherd. Not only by being pastoring shepherds and providing shepherds, but also lastly we see that we're to be protecting shepherds.

Protecting shepherds. Look at verse 8. Peter says, Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Resist him. Firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 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.

To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. So Peter, he has already exhorted us as elders not to neglect the flock of God so that they don't starve, stray or stumble.

[28 : 31] Rather, we're to show care, compassion and concern for the flock of God. But Peter also says here that an elder must show care, compassion, concern and caution.

An elder must show caution to the flock of God. Because an elder must not only remind the flock of the shepherd's provision of peace, pardon, presence and protection.

An elder must remind the flock that as suffering and scattered saints who have services suspended, if we become straying sheep and are in danger of drifting or worried about our wandering and even concerned about compromising our Christian character, conduct or conversation.

You know, an elder must, Peter says, an elder must remind the flock of God that the shepherd will punish, push, prod and poke. He will deal with his sheep.

Therefore, as elders, we're to be protecting shepherds. We're to point out the pitfalls. We're to highlight the hazards. We're to signal the snares. Because as an elder, that's what Peter does here.

[29 : 45] He highlights the hazards. He points out the pitfalls. He gives this word of caution. He says in verse 8, Be sober-minded.

Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. You know, at the Bible study last Wednesday, I mentioned maybe more than once about the animated movie that's been recently released called The Pilgrim's Progress.

And it's a wonderful resource for kids and adults. In fact, it's such a good film, and I encourage you to watch it. It's such a good film that I've started reading The Pilgrim's Progress again.

And you know, in John Bunyan's classic, The Pilgrim's Progress, I don't know if you've read it, but I'd encourage you to read it. When John Bunyan, when Christian, when he climbs to the top of the hill called Difficulty, he comes across two lions.

Two lions that are at the entrance gate of this house that's on the hill. And the house on the hill, we're told, has been built by the Lord of the hill. And the house on the hill is for the relief and the security of pilgrims.

[31 : 05] But in order to get to the house on the hill, Peter, Christian, has to pass the roaring lions on either side of him. Because he has to pass through them in order to get to the house on the hill.

But he's afraid to pass because he's worried that these roaring lions will devour him. But what Christian doesn't realise, and it's brilliant how John Bunyan puts it together, what he doesn't realise is that the lions are chained.

And so the porter of the house, he comes out. He comes out of the house on the hill and he appears. And this porter he's called watchful. And he says to Christian, And watchful says to Christian, And you know, my friend, it's a great reminder to us that the enemy of the flock of God is chained.

The devil is chained. Satan is chained. The devil, he can only go so far. But you know, we still have to be on our guard, don't we?

We have to be on our guard. But as elders, we need to be like watchful. Because it was watchful who came out of the house on the hill.

[32 : 37] Watchful was, in many ways, like an elder, where we need to tell Christian, Stay in the middle of the path so that the roaring lion won't harm you.

Elders need to be like watchful, telling Christian to stay in the middle of the path so that the lion won't harm you. As elders, we have been entrusted to care for the flock of God and we're to emphasise caution.

We're to emphasise caution so that straying sheep are not in danger of drifting or there's no worry of wandering. As elders, we're to point out the pitfalls and highlight the hazards and signal the snares so that the flock of God will not compromise their Christian character, conduct or conversation.

My friend, you know, Peter is reminding us this evening that we have a living shepherd. And as the Church of Jesus Christ, and especially as elders of the Church of Jesus Christ, we're to follow the example of our living shepherd.

As elders, we're to be pastoring shepherds. We're to be providing shepherds. We're to be protecting shepherds. We're to show care, compassion, concern and caution for the flock of God that is among us.

[33 : 58] And we're to show care, compassion, concern and caution so that the flock of God will be assured of the shepherd's promise that goodness and mercy shall surely follow them all the days of their life and that in God's house forevermore their dwelling place shall be.

shepherd the flock of God. You know, I was recently reminded of a quote by the great preacher and evangelist of the 18th century, John Wesley.

And with this I'll close because as an elder who served in the Church of Jesus Christ, John Wesley, he lived by this great philosophy and as elders and as Christians, you know, we'll do well to adopt this philosophy and apply it in our lives because as an elder in the Church and as a Christian, John Wesley said, do all the good you can by all the means you can in all the ways you can in all the places you can at all the times you can to all the people you can as long as ever you can.

I'll say that one more time. It's a wonderful quote. Do all the good you can by all the means you can in all the ways you can in all the places you can at all the times you can to all the people you can as long as ever you can.

My friend, let us shepherd the flock of God because we have a living shepherd. may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray.

[35 : 47] O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for our good shepherd that he deals with us so graciously and so compassionately. We give thanks that he is a faithful shepherd, that he loves his sheep, that he loves them and gave himself for them.

And Lord, we pray that even as under shepherds, as elders in a congregation, that we, O Lord, would continue to shepherd the flock of God.

Help us, Lord, in our weaknesses and Lord, forgive us for the times we lack. Help us, Lord, to do everything to thy glory, to the furtherance of thy kingdom and to lift up the name of Jesus that many more would call upon the name of the good shepherd and that many would know his precious promises.

Lord, do us good and we pray, go before us and keep us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening by singing in the words of that well-known psalm, Psalm 23, the shepherd's psalm.

And as we said, it's one thing singing these words, it's one thing singing about the shepherd, it's another thing completely knowing the shepherd. And we have to know the shepherd.

[37 : 07] You have to know the shepherd. You have to be able to say with David, the Lord's my shepherd. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

He makes me down to lie. In pastures green he leadeth me, the quiet waters by. I'm going to sing on to the end of the psalm. Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me and in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be.

The whole psalm to God's praise. The Lord's my shepherd, the Lord's my shepherd, I am not one.

He makes me down to lie. In pastures green he leadeth me The quiet waters by.

my solid ■■■■ drain's dour fire part of the earth's earth's earth's not one menses there in a another ■■■■■■ love Righteousness In glory Is only Sing Though I walk In death's dark will Yet will I be

[39 : 20] The male For thou art with me And thy hope And shall we come Or still Thy table Blood Has burnished In presence Of my foes I have Thou close With all the night And might

The border Close The border Close Goodness And mercy Of my life Shall Shall surely Follow me And may For me And may For us For ever For ever For ever For ever My Which May To be For ever For ever For ever And may For ever For ever

For ever And may For ever