

My Worthless Shepherd

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 July 2021

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] But if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of the prophet Zechariah and chapter 11.

Zechariah chapter 11, I want us to look at the whole chapter, but if we just read again at the last verse. Zechariah chapter 11 and verse 17. Where the Lord says through his prophet, Woe to my worthless shepherd who deserts the flock.

May the sword strike his arm and his right eye. Let his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded.

Woe to my worthless shepherd who deserts the flock. You know, as those living in a crofting community and surrounded by sheep, our context and our culture, it certainly helps us to relate to the shepherd theme.

Of scripture. Because the shepherd theme of scripture, it seeks to remind us again and again that the Lord is our shepherd. We see it there in the book of Genesis, right at the end of the life of Jacob.

[1 : 13] Jacob confesses that the Lord has been my shepherd all the days of my life. And from there we see, we see that Moses and Joshua and the judges and then also David, they're all under shepherds of the Lord who is the true shepherd.

And that's why David confesses in Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. And then you continue through the Old Testament, we see that the prophets, they also refer to the Lord as their shepherd.

Isaiah said that the Lord will feed his sheep like a shepherd. Ezekiel said the Lord will rescue and redeem and restore his sheep. And Zechariah, he mentions the shepherd time and time again.

But in chapter 13, we'll come to it in a few weeks' time, we see that there will come a shepherd who will be smitten for his people, for his sheep. And of course, the identity of the shepherd in the Old Testament, he's revealed to us in the New Testament as the person of Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus, he declared that he is the good shepherd. Peter called him the chief shepherd. And Paul stated that Jesus is the great shepherd of the sheep.

[2 : 28] But as you know, this shepherd theme of Scripture, it concludes with the book of Revelation, where John tells us at the end of our Bible that the lamb in the midst of the throne who was slain, he was slain for his sheep.

And that lamb, we're told, was the shepherd. He was the shepherd of the sheep. And he's the shepherd who will guide his people. He was the shepherd who had been washed, who will wash his people and make them white in the blood of the lamb.

He's the shepherd who will guide his sheep to springs of living water, and wipe away every tear from their eyes. You know, my friend, the shepherd theme of Scripture is a wonderful reminder to us that our Jesus, our Jesus is the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep.

And this is something that's important to remember this evening as we come to this passage in the book of Zechariah. Because as the late John L. Mackay stated in his commentary, he said this poignant section of Zechariah's prophecy should not be read apart from John 10, where Jesus claimed in John 10, I am the good shepherd.

Now the reason for this is because in this chapter we see the good shepherd as the resented shepherd and the rejected shepherd, which leaves the sheep in the care of the reckless shepherd.

[4 : 09] And there are headings this evening. So the resented shepherd, the rejected shepherd, and the reckless shepherd.

So first of all, the resented shepherd. The resented shepherd. Look at verse 1 of the chapter. Open your eyes, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars.

Wail, O Cyprus, for the cedar has fallen, for the glorious trees are ruined. Wail, oaks of Bashan, for the thick forest has been felled. The sound of the wail of the shepherds, for their glory is ruined.

The sound of the roar of the lions, for the thicket of the Jordan is ruined. Thus said the Lord my God, become shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter. Those who buy them slaughter them and go unpunished.

And those who sell them say, blessed be the Lord. I have become rich and their own shepherds have no pity on them. Now as you know in our study of the book of Zechariah, we've learned that Zechariah, he was called, commissioned and commanded to comfort and challenge God's people with God's word as they were living and looking beyond lockdown.

[5 : 27] The Israelites, as you know, they had spent 70 years living in lockdown in Babylon due to their rebellion and rejection of the Lord who was their shepherd.

But by God's grace, the shepherd allowed this return remnant to come back to the promised land of Israel and they were to rebuild and renew and rededicate their lives and also the temple to the Lord.

And then in chapters 1 to 6, we saw that the Lord spoke to this return remnant through Zechariah's eight night visions where the Lord reassured the return remnant that he was still with them.

He was still with them as their shepherd. And then in chapters 7 and 8, the return remnant, they received a lesson about covenant commitment because the Lord who was their shepherd, he wanted to remind this return remnant that as their shepherd, he was committed towards them.

He was committed towards his covenant and his covenant people. And then as we moved into chapter 9, it marked the second half of the book of Zechariah, which was written about 15 to 20 years after the temple has been completed.

[6 : 45] So we're working around the year 500 BC. And by this point in their history, the return remnant, they have been back in the promised land of Israel for about 35 years.

But even though the temple has been rebuilt and rededicated to the Lord, as we said before, things weren't back to normal yet. Things weren't back to the way they were before lockdown because the glory of the Lord, it hadn't returned to the temple.

The walls of the city were still in ruins and the people were getting restless. Which is why in chapter 9, Zechariah, he exhorted and encouraged the return remnant to look to the sovereign king.

Then in chapter 10, as we consider last Lord's Day, in Zechariah, he encouraged and exhorted the return remnant to look to the shepherd king. They were to hear Israel shepherd like a flock.

Hear Israel shepherd like a flock. They were to listen and love and look and lean upon the shepherd king, who was the good shepherd, Jesus Christ. And they were to do that because, as we read in chapter 10, they were a shepherdless people.

[7 : 58] They were like sheep without a shepherd. They were willingly wandering away from the good shepherd. But you know, it's not that this return remnant didn't have a shepherd.

They did have a shepherd. They always had a shepherd because the Lord was their shepherd. The Lord was the shepherd of his people. He was always their shepherd king. But the thing was, they weren't living as though the Lord was their shepherd.

They weren't listening to the Lord. They weren't loving the Lord. They weren't looking to the Lord or leaning upon the Lord as their shepherd. In fact, this chapter reveals that the shepherd king was the resented shepherd.

The shepherd king was the resented shepherd. And because of this, because the shepherd king was the resented shepherd, the Lord promised judgment upon this return remnant.

And he promised judgment in the form of ruin and rule. Ruin and rule. At the beginning of the chapter, of chapter 11, the people are told that the land will be ruined.

[9 : 06] And then by the end of the chapter, they're told that the land or they will be ruled by the reckless shepherd. So judgment will come in the form of ruin and rule.

And chapter 11, it begins with very strong words of judgment, words of ruin, where famous trees in Israel are going to be ruined. We're told in verse 1 about the cedars of Lebanon.

And they are mentioned because the cedars of Lebanon were a symbol of strength. And they were a symbol of strength not only because they were tall and strong and fruitful, but also because the cedars of Lebanon were used as the main material to build Solomon's temple.

So they were a symbol of strength. Then the cypress tree is mentioned, or the juniper tree, as it's known elsewhere. And that was also a symbol of healing and eternal life.

And it's a tree that Elijah found rest and refreshment under when the angel of the Lord met him. And then we're told about the oak tree that's going to be ruined, which was a symbol of righteousness.

[10 : 16] Because it was at the oak of Moray that the Lord appeared to Abraham, who was made righteous by faith. But, you know, what we're reading here is that in the Lord's promised judgment, these trees are going to come to ruin.

They're going to catch fire or fall. And they're going to land in ruin. And, you know, when you read these verses, you know, all I hear is what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes, where the tree falls, there it shall lie.

It's the Lord's promised judgment that these symbols of strength, of life, and of righteousness, they're going to be robbed and ruined and removed from this returned remnant.

And it's all because of their resentment of the shepherd. But, you know, their resentment of the good shepherd was because they were responding to the under-shepherds, these under-shepherds who were leading the people astray.

And we touched on this last week when we saw that the Lord was angry with the under-shepherds. He was fuming with them because they'd lost sight of their pastoral principles and priorities.

[11 : 35] The under-shepherds, the leaders in Israel, they weren't warning the congregation about being wayward or wondering. They weren't directing the congregation through discipleship and discipline.

They weren't exhorting and encouraging and enabling the congregation to follow the shepherd king, the Lord. And instead, the elders, the leaders, they were neglecting their pastoral principles and priorities.

Which, as we said last week, it wasn't a new problem. Because the problem was there long before they were living in lockdown in Babylon.

This was an age-old problem. Ezekiel draws attention to it in chapter 34, where the under-shepherds in Israel, they were meant to feed the flock, but instead, they were only feeding themselves.

And the Lord said to the leaders, He said, 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, and the lost you have not sought.

[12 : 45] And so instead of hearing Israel's shepherd king, the flock, the people of Israel, they were hearing Israel's under-shepherds. But these under-shepherds, they were actually neglecting the flock, and they were leading them astray.

They were leading them astray because they only had their own interests at heart. And because of the Lord's promised judgment, we're told in this chapter that the flock, the Lord's people, they were doomed to slaughter.

They were doomed to slaughter. That's why we read in verse 4 that the Lord, he calls, commissions, and commands Zechariah to represent the resented shepherd.

Zechariah is to represent the resented shepherd. Thus said the Lord my God, Become shepherd. So represent the shepherd of the flock who are doomed to slaughter.

So the Lord, he calls, commissions, and commands Zechariah to represent himself as the good shepherd. In fact, the Lord appoints Zechariah to intervene and intercede on behalf of the people.

[13 : 57] And so Zechariah's ministry at this point is to be one of pastoral protection. He was to have this care and commitment just like the good shepherd.

He was to have a care and commitment towards the flock just like the Lord, the good shepherd. And he was to have this care and commitment because the undershepherds in Israel, they were fleecing the flock of God for financial gain.

They were fleecing the flock of God for financial gain. You know, instead of tending to the flock like sheep, they were treating the flock like slaves.

Instead of tending to the flock like sheep, they were treating them, they were treating the flock like slaves. They were buying and selling the flock and making a profit.

That's why we read in verse five, those who buy them, slaughter them and go unpunished. And those who sell them say, blessed be the Lord, I have become rich. And their own shepherds have no pity on them.

[15 : 09] So through his representative, Zechariah, the Lord, or the resented good shepherd, he was confronting and challenging the leadership in Israel.

He was confronting and challenging the leadership in Israel. Now, in order to apply this to our 21st century context, we need to understand that the under shepherds in Israel, they were not just ministers or preachers.

They were the eldership as a whole. They were the teaching elder and the ruling elder. They were the kirksession. They were the presbytery.

They were the general assembly. They were the office bearers in the church. They were the leadership of God's people. And so as we go through this, we need to keep that in mind because instead of feeding the flock, the leadership were failing the flock.

And they were failing the flock because the people began to resent the shepherd and reject the true shepherd.

[16 : 19] The good shepherd, they were treating the good shepherd as the resented shepherd and the rejected shepherd, which is what I want us to see secondly.

I want us to see secondly, the rejected shepherd. So the resented shepherd and then the rejected shepherd. The rejected shepherd. Look at verse seven.

It says, So I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep traders. And I took two staves, one named Fever and the other named Union. And I tended to the sheep.

In one month, I destroyed the three shepherds. But I became impatient with them and they also detested me. So I said, I will not be your shepherd. What is to die?

Let it die. What is to be destroyed? Let it be destroyed. And let those who are left devour the flesh of one another. You know, following the end of the Second World War, in a speech to the House of Commons in 1948, the Prime Minister at the time, Winston Churchill, he said, Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

[17 : 32] Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. And this was certainly true of the people of Israel because their resentment and rejection of Israel's shepherd king, it was nothing new.

It was just like before they were living in lockdown in Babylon. They had repeatedly resented and rejected the Lord as their shepherd and they turned to idols.

They turned to the Baals. But the Lord, we're told, he sent prophet after prophet after prophet to call the people to return to the Lord in repentance.

But they refused to return. They refused to repent of their sin. They refused to hear Israel's shepherd like a flock. They refused to listen and love and look and lean upon the Lord.

And they ended up in lockdown in Babylon. But now as this return remnant, as they learned to live and look beyond lockdown, it's now becoming more and more evident that they failed to learn from the Lord in the past and to live for the Lord in the present and to look to the Lord in the future.

[18 : 43] They'd failed to learn from the Lord in the past, live for the Lord in the present and look to the Lord in the future. And you know, when we consider the character, the conduct and even the conversation of the Lord's people in the 5th century BC as they continued living and looking beyond lockdown, you know, my friend, it should make us question our character, our conduct and our conversation as the Lord's people in the 21st century as we continue living and looking beyond lockdown.

Because you know, the question that comes to my mind is, asking myself first and foremost, has the last 18 months had an impact and an influence upon my life at all?

Has all that we've encountered and experienced, has it caused us to think about our commitment to Christ and our communion with Christ? Have all the restrictions or even the removal of all these privileges that we once enjoyed, such as fellowship, communion, singing, visiting, gathering together on the Lord's day?

Have these things made us think about how much we took for granted? Have these things made us realise the roles and responsibilities we actually were relinquishing before lockdown?

Or are we just like this return remnant? Are we just like them where we have failed to learn from the Lord in the past and live for the Lord in the present and look to the Lord in the future?

[20 : 26] Do you know what I mean? Again, in the words of Solomon, like a dog returning to its own vomit, are we going to be the fool who returns to their folly?

Like a dog returning to its own vomit, are we going to be the fool that returns to its own folly? Are we going to continue as we were before lockdown? Are things just going to go back to the way we were where we were just drifting and dreaming, going along casually, carelessly, and even with this consumerist Christianity where it's all about me?

Or, my friend, are we going to seek and strive to be committed to Christ by our Christian character, conduct, and conversation? Is this lockdown, is this experience in our lives, is it going to change us for the better, for our commitment to Jesus Christ?

Are we going to learn from the past so that we live in the present and look to the Lord for the future? Do you know, my friend, the word of warning from the Good Shepherd is that we must learn from the past.

We must live in the present and we must look to the Lord in the future because that's something the Israelites repeatedly failed to do. They repeatedly resented and rejected the shepherd.

[21 : 52] And you know, Jesus even spoke about this when he told the parable of the wicked tenants. The parable of the wicked tenants, it actually describes Israel's history.

You remember when Jesus said, he said, a man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants. And the owner, he went into another country for a long while.

And when the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and they sent him away empty-handed.

And so the owner, he sent a second servant and a third servant. But the tenants also beat them and sent them away empty-handed. Then the owner of the vineyard were told, he said, I will send my beloved son.

Perhaps they will respect him. But when the tenants saw him, they said, this is the heir, let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours. But, asked Jesus, what will the owner of this vineyard do to the tenants?

[22 : 58] And Jesus says, he will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others. And when you read the passage in Luke chapter 20, when the Pharisees heard this, they said, surely not.

Surely not. The parable of the wicked tenants describes Israel's history because the owner of the vineyard is God. The vineyard is salvation, which was given first of all to the Jews.

The tenants are the leaders in Israel. The rejected servants are all the prophets. The beloved son they killed was Jesus. And the promised judgment of God upon the leaders for rejecting the message of salvation was the destruction of the temple, which took place in 70 AD.

You know, my friend, the parable of the wicked tenants, it was a reminder to the leaders in Israel that their resentment and their rejection of the Lord, it will always end in destruction, disaster, and death.

But before then we see that Zechariah, he represented this resented and rejected shepherd. Because we read in verse 7, he says, so I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep traders.

[24 : 24] And I took two staves, one named Favor and the other named Union. Zechariah sought to replace the godless shepherds and also represent the good shepherd by pastoring the flock, this flock who were suffering and straying and headed for slaughter.

And Zechariah did that by taking, what we're told, two shepherd staffs. He took two shepherd staffs, one named Favor and the other named Union.

Now, possessing two shepherd staffs was common. It was common for shepherds to have two shepherd staffs in the east. One was often a rod or a club and the shepherd staff would be used for warding off attacking predators or even robbers to ward them off from the flock.

The other shepherd staff was one that had a crook on the end that we're more familiar with that was used to help suffering and straying sheep.

And so the two staffs in the hands of the shepherd, they provided security and safety. They provided security and safety. And you know, that's why David confessed in Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd.

[25 : 46] And he said about the Lord his shepherd that in him he finds comfort because he says your rod and your staff they comfort me.

They comfort me because they assure me of the shepherd's security and the shepherd's safety. But Zechariah, he had these two shepherd staffs and they were given specific names.

They were called favour and union. And favour expressed the care and compassion of the good shepherd whereas union drew attention to the unity of the flock.

The unity of the flock. You know, that's something Jesus spoke of in John chapter 10 when Jesus said I have other sheep that are not of this fold. Those outside Israel.

I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice so that there will be one flock and one shepherd. shepherd. But what we go on to read is that despite showing favour and union, despite showing care and compassion, security and safety, we read that within a month the response of the flock to Zechariah who was the representative of the good shepherd, their response was that they renounced, they resented and they rejected the shepherd king.

[27 : 10] Their response was that they were unresponsive. They were uncaring, unconcerned and uncommitted. Again, this is something that Jesus highlighted in his day about the leaders in Israel.

Do you remember when Jesus spoke to the scribes and the Pharisees who were the leaders in Israel? Now you remember how he spoke to them? He spoke to them so directly. He said, you hypocrites, you serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

You are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. You murdered Zechariah, this Zechariah, and you murdered him between the sanctuary and the altar. And Jesus says to them, he says, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you would not.

They resented him. They rejected him. And so as the representative of the shepherd king, Zechariah, he makes this solemn statement in verse 9.

So I said, I will not be your shepherd. I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die.

[28 : 41] What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. And let those who are left devour the flesh of one another. And with that, we're told that Zechariah, he broke his first staff called Fever, cancelling the covenant he made with his people.

And then he broke the other staff called Union, breaking the bond of brotherhood among the people. But this is what happens when the flock forgets and forsakes the shepherd.

The promises or the covenant and the bonds are broken. The shepherd, he chastens and he challenges his sheep.

And he lets them stray into sin. He gives them over to their own desire. He lets them have what they want. You know, it's a solemn position to be in, to reject and resent the shepherd and yet for the shepherd to let you stray into sin.

But you know, we're also shown how much the flock resented and rejected the shepherd king. We're shown that in verse 12. We read in verse 12, Then I said to them, If it seems good to you, give me my wages, but if not, keep them.

[30 : 02] And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. You know, as the representative of the good shepherd who had done a month's work among the people, Zechariah, he asks for his wages.

But what the people give to him wasn't just money. They also gave him a message. Because when they gave Zechariah thirty pieces of silver, they were giving him the monetary value of a slave.

And that money was a message. And the message was, you're not our shepherd, you're our slave. You're not our shepherd, you're our slave.

You know, some people think that that's what a minister is, or what elders are, that they're not shepherds in a congregation, they're just slaves of a congregation. And yet the Lord says to his prophet in verse 13, then the Lord said to me, throw it to the potter, the lordly price at which I was priced by them.

So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord to the potter. You know, the significance of the Lord's statement here is that it was fulfilled when the good shepherd was, or the resented and rejected shepherd, he was resented and rejected by Judas Iscariot.

[31 : 27] You remember that after Judas had betrayed Jesus, he betrayed him for the price of a slave, thirty pieces of silver. But even though Judas changed his mind and brought, he brought back the thirty pieces of silver and he said, he said to the leaders in Israel, he said to them, I have sinned by betraying innocent blood, but the leaders in Israel, they didn't care because they just wanted the Christ dead.

But it was then that Judas, he took the thirty pieces of silver and just as Zechariah describes there, he threw the money down in the temple. He threw it down in the house of the Lord.

And while Judas went out and hanged himself, the chief priests, they refused to put the thirty pieces of silver into the treasury at the temple since it was now known as blood money.

And so instead, they went out and bought a field. They went out and bought the potter's field. And that's what we're told here.

Throw it to the potter, the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them down into the house of the Lord to the potter.

[32 : 43] You know, don't you find the prophetic detail so remarkable? But there's more because in this chapter we see the good shepherd as the resented shepherd and the rejected shepherd which leaves them in the care of the reckless shepherd.

That's what I want us to consider lastly and briefly. The reckless shepherd. So there's the resented shepherd, the rejected shepherd, shepherd and the reckless shepherd.

The reckless shepherd. Look at verse 15. Then the Lord said to me, take once more the equipment of a foolish shepherd. For behold, I am raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for those being destroyed or seek the young or heal the maimed or nourish the healthy but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs.

Woe to my worthless shepherd. who deserts the flock. May the sword strike his arm and his right eye. Let his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded.

You know, by resenting and rejecting the good shepherd, the Lord, he lets their sheep, he lets the sheep stray in sin.

[34 : 03] In chastisement, he gives them over to their heart's desire. He lets them willingly wonder like sheep without a shepherd. And the shepherd he provides, the shepherd that the Lord provides for his people, is a reckless shepherd.

A shepherd who doesn't care for the sheep. He's just like the shepherd that Jesus described in John 10. He's a hireling. For as Jesus said, he that is a hireling is not the shepherd.

He does not own the sheep. And when he sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and flees. And the wolf catches the sheep and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing about the sheep.

He's a reckless shepherd. He's a worthless shepherd. He's a foolish shepherd. And he's a foolish shepherd. That's literally what Zechariah says. He's a foolish shepherd, not because he lacks intelligence, but because he doesn't fear the Lord.

He doesn't fear the Lord. He lacks wisdom because he doesn't fear the Lord. Because as the Bible says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Therefore, without wisdom, the shepherd despises discipline.

[35 : 20] Without wisdom, he opens his mouth without thinking. Without wisdom, he just speaks his mind. Without wisdom, he's always right. It doesn't matter what anybody else says. He's always right and unwilling to take advice.

Without wisdom, he's proud. He's arrogant. He's self-righteous. He's everything a spiritual shepherd shouldn't be. He's everything a spiritual shepherd shouldn't be.

He's a reckless shepherd who cares nothing for the sheep. In fact, we're given six characteristics of this reckless shepherd and his reckless leadership.

We're told that the reckless shepherd, we're told that he doesn't care for the lost sheep. He doesn't seek the young lambs. He doesn't heal the injured sheep and he doesn't nourish the hungry sheep.

Instead, he's selfish. He's self-absorbed. He loves to be seen, but he doesn't like to serve. He loves position. He loves prestige.

[36 : 22] He loves power. He's a reckless shepherd, a worthless shepherd, a foolish shepherd. shepherd. And you know, my friend, this is a solemn and serious indictment.

And it's all from the good shepherd. It's all from the good shepherd. It's a word of warning to the leadership in Israel.

But you know, the thing is, we have to take it to ourselves, don't we? We have to apply it to our 21st century context. Because we have to understand that the under-shepherds in Israel, they were not just the preachers and the ministers.

They were the eldership as a whole. They were the teaching elders and the ruling elders. They were the kirksession, the whole kirksession, the whole presbytery, the whole general assembly.

They were the office bearers in the church. They were the leadership of God's people. And instead of feeding the flock, they were failing the flock. And you know, as elders, myself included, do I preach this passage to myself first?

[37 : 32] You know, as elders, we have to ask ourselves the same questions. Are we the reckless shepherd? Are we the reckless shepherd?

Do we care about the lost sheep in our congregation and our community? Do we seek out the young lambs who need to be taught and disciplined?

Do we visit and check up on the sick and the suffering and the sorrowing sheep in our flock? Do we nourish and feed the hungry sheep by our friendship and our fellowship?

As elders, do we shepherd the flock of God? That's what Peter told the New Testament to do. Shepherd the flock of God. Do we shepherd the flock of God?

Or are we, as the good shepherd describes, are we the reckless shepherd? I once heard a pastor compare some of his elders to garden gnomes.

[38 : 36] Because as you know, all garden gnomes do is that they sit and look pretty and they do nothing. Are we the reckless shepherd?

shepherd? You know, the office of an elder is a serious and solemn position in the church. And it's one that's not to be taken lightly.

Not at all. If you're an elder in this congregation or in another congregation, you've been given the charge and the care of the souls in your congregation.

And as elders, we will be held accountable on the day of judgment for those under our pastoral care. This is where the rubber hits the road.

This is where it becomes serious. And it's serious. The message is serious from the good shepherd because the good shepherd cares about his flock.

[39 : 32] The good shepherd cares about his flock. And he has entrusted us as under shepherds, as elders. He has entrusted us with the care and the concern for the souls in our congregation.

That's why it's such a serious and solemn warning from the shepherd. That's why there's this warning right at the end of the chapter. And it's at the end of the chapter so that it will stick in our mind as we conclude this sermon.

Now, Jesus says, the word of woe is, woe to my worthless shepherd who deserts the flock. Woe to my worthless shepherd who deserts the flock.

And you know, friends, although it's hard hitting, you know, it should be hard hitting. God's word should always be hard hitting. And although it's hard hitting, let us take heed to the warning of woe from our good shepherd.

Woe to my worthless shepherd who deserts the flock. And as a congregation, we need to pray for our leadership. That was mentioned on Wednesday night at the Bible study.

[40 : 45] The need to pray for the leadership. That there will be unity. That there will be peace. That there will be one heart and one desire and one aim for us to pastor and care and show compassion for those under our, those in our congregation.

That we would imitate and emulate the good shepherd, Jesus Christ, because he was the resented shepherd. He was the rejected shepherd. And he was resented and rejected so that he could be the redeeming shepherd.

And he says about his people tonight, they're my sheep. They're my sheep. And you know, as under shepherds, as elders, that's what we always need to remember.

They're his sheep. They're not ours. They're his. He redeemed them. We didn't. And Jesus says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep.

They're my sheep. And so the warning, the word of warning, the word of woe that the Lord leaves us with this evening is woe to my worthless shepherd who deserts the flock.

[42 : 05] May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O heavenly Father, forgive us if we have failed thee.

We confess, O Lord, that we are not what we ought to be. And when the good shepherd speaks to us, yes, he speaks to us words of comfort so often. But Lord, we also need words that challenge and confront us with what we ought to be.

And we pray that we would hear this word of woe, that we would take it seriously, that we would realize how solemn it is to have a responsibility, to have a care and a concern for the souls of the sheep in our congregation.

And Lord, that we would, all that we would seek to work together for the furtherance of thy kingdom, the glory of thy name, that there would be one flock and one shepherd, and that we would all be pointing to that good shepherd who is Jesus Christ.

He is the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. Lord, bless us, we pray. Bless us, Lord, as we go into another week, a week that is unknown to any of us.

[43 : 24] But our prayer is that we would all look to the shepherd and keep our eyes firmly fixed upon him, to know that his goodness and his mercy, they will follow us all the days of our life, if we are trusting in him for time and for eternity.

Do us good, we pray. Take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 23.

That shepherd's psalm. Psalm 23, we're singing in the Sing Sam's version, and we're singing the whole psalm. Psalm 23, from the beginning.

The Lord is my shepherd, no one shall I know. He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow. He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow.

We'll sing the whole psalm of Psalm 23. To God's praise. The Lord is my shepherd, no one shall I know.

[44 : 31] He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow. He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow.

My wandering steps he brings back to his way. In safe house of righteousness making me stay.

And this he has done, this make me to display. And this he has done, this make me to display.

Though I walk in Death's Valley, where darkness is near. Because you are with me, no evil I'll fear.

Your rod and your staff bring me comfort and cheer. Your rod and your staff bring me comfort and cheer.

[46 : 07] So surely your covenant mercy and grace Will follow me closely in all of my ways.

I will dwell in the house of the Lord all my days. I will dwell in the house of the Lord all my days.