

Portrait Of A Pastor

1 Peter 5:1-4

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I'm going to read the text. I want you to follow with me. Verses 1-4. Peter says, "The elders which are among you..."—verse 1—"...I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall..."—future tense—"...be revealed." Here's the command. It's the dominant verb or the only verb in this passage that tells these pastors what to do. "Feed the flock of God which is among you..." That's the theme of verses 1-4; "I want you elders—I'm an elder. I'm speaking to you elders. I want you to 'feed the flock of God which is among you.'" And then he breaks it down. "...taking the oversight, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; not being lords over God's heritage..."—or "God's flock"—"...but being examples to that flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away."

I'm sure at this time of the year, many of you NFL fans are getting excited that this week the season has started. Now I'm not an NFL football fan, so I had to Google this week to find out if this season has even started or not. Pray for me. And I guess Thursday night there was a game, and I guess it was between the Broncos and the Panthers. But when you think of NFL football teams, you ever notice the names that these teams have been given? Broncos, Panthers, Lions, Jaguars. We now have L.A. Rams. But did you ever notice that none of them are called sheep? Not one NFL team is the Sheep; hallelujah.

Can you imagine a stadium full of fans, and "Now welcome the Sheep! Baa! Baa!" Now you're laughing because sheep don't speak of strength. Sheep don't speak of power. Sheep are timid. Sheep are frail. Sheep are dependent; sheep need a shepherd. Right? Who has a sheep for protection? Imagine a sign on the gate, "Beware of guard sheep." "Attack sheep." If you're walking down a dark street at night and you hear a baa, you're not going to freak out. Nobody's afraid of a sheep.

But here's the amazing thing. In the Bible God likens us, His people, His church, unto sheep. Now that's not very flattering. Sheep have no sense of direction. Sheep have no natural defense, sheep are dependent, sheep need a shepherd. But what a fitting picture. The Bible says, "All we like..."—what?—"...sheep have gone astray. We've turned every one to his own way." So we are the sheep of God's pasture, and we need a shepherd. So Jesus Christ—and we're going to see in this passage—is the chief shepherd. But Jesus has appointed men under Him to be shepherds of His flock and, verse 2, to "feed the flock of God which is among you."

So just as sheep need a shepherd, so God's people need pastors. Sheep need to be fed and lead and protected from the wolves. So the church, God's flock, needs shepherds, faithful pastors, who will care for God's flock, the church. Now, as I said, in 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter is speaking to pastors about God's flock. And he tells them in verse 2 that "I want you to 'feed this flock.'" I want you to shepherd this flock. Pastors are to feed the flock of God.

Now why at this point in Peter's letter does this passage to pastors appear? And I believe it's because of this. Peter's been talking about suffering. In some modern translations, chapter 5, verse 1, starts with a "therefore." Based on other manuscripts. "Therefore you elders...who am also an elder." So the idea is there's a connection there. The church is suffering. The church is being persecuted. The church is being opposed by the world. Whenever the church is being persecuted, it needs protection, it needs encouragement, it needs help, it needs instruction, it needs direction—it needs a shepherd. When people ask me what is the greatest need in the church today, I, without hesitation, always answer "shepherds after God's heart," men who will faithfully stand in the pulpit and feed the church and protect the church and lead the church. I think that as the pastors go, so goes the church. We have good shepherds, we have good churches. Men who will lead the church and feed the church according to God's design in his Word. So Peter wanted these suffering saints to have shepherds to protect them, to lead them and to feed them and to guard over them.

As we look at this passage, these qualities that make a strong and good pastor, I believe, are listed here. Now this is not exhaustive; we could bring in other references to the pastoral ministry, but I want to try to limit my comments to this text. If you're taking notes, I want you to write them down. There are three qualities I see from this passage that are needed in a pastor. And the first one is in verse 1. And that's a personal experience with Christ. It is a good idea for the pastor to know the Lord. Don't you think so? It's a good idea for him to have a personal experience with Christ. Now go back with me to verse 1 of chapter 5. Peter says, "The elders which are among you, I exhort." Now "I'm also an elder," Peter says, and I'm "a witness of the sufferings of Christ." Now, key word. Notice that word "witness." I'm "a witness of the sufferings of Christ." And then the second key word, "'partaker' of the glory that shall be revealed."

Now notice who he's writing to. The recipients of this charge are the elders, verse 1. Who are the elders? The word "elders" here and the word "feed" and the word "overseer" in verse 2 are all speaking about the same individual. He's speaking about what we commonly today call "pastors." Now let me break it down for you. The word "elder" is "presbyteros" in the Greek. We get our word "Presbyterian." And it doesn't mean an older person. It means a mature person. Depending upon the context will determine what the meaning is. Sometimes it means an older person, and sometimes it means a spiritually mature person. And normally the two go together; with age comes spiritual maturity. More time to grow in the Lord and in the knowledge of the Lord. I have actually been a pastor now for 43 years. And I hope that in these 43 years I've grown in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But not just grown in experience but grown spiritually and grown in maturity and grown experientially in the ministry. But he's speaking not of an older individual, but he's speaking of the pastor's maturity. Elder. And it's taken from the Old Testament where the Jews had elders. Even in the Greco-Roman world they had what they called "elders," which would oversee civil duties.

And then the second word is found in verse 2, which is the word "feed." And that conveys the idea of what we call "pastors." Some translations have "shepherd." The words "feed," "shepherd," or "pastor" all come from the same root word here, "poimen." And it means "to feed" or "to shepherd." And so the natural job, the duty of a shepherd is to feed. Can you imagine a

shepherd who didn't feed sheep? And you see a shepherd, and all the sheep are laying in the field. And they're not moving and you go, "What's wrong with your sheep?" "Aw, I don't know. They just don't seem to be moving." "Well, these sheep are malnourished." "Oh, yah?" "Oh, yah. Don't you think you should be..." "Oh, I'm not that kind of shepherd. I just kind of stand around and look the part. I've got a staff and shepherd's robe, but I'm not into feeding sheep." A shepherd must feed sheep! Right? If they don't, they're going to die, starve. They're going to be malnourished. They won't be healthy. They won't be able to have other sheep. Do I believe the primary job of a pastor, a shepherd, is to feed sheep? "Pastor" is Latin for the word "shepherd," and the word actually means "to feed." It's the primary job of a pastor.

And then the third descriptive word there is in verse 2. It's the word "oversight." Taking the word "oversight," it's the word "episkopos." We get our word "Episcopalian" from it. So it means to "oversee." And we get our word "bishop" sometimes translated from episkopos.

So there's three words in the New Testament used to describe the pastor: elder, shepherd and then the third word is overseer, sometimes rendered bishop or overseer, which speaks of his oversight and responsibility. So it's kind of like this: spiritual maturity—he's an elder; his ministry—he feeds, he's a pastor; his responsibility—he is the overseer or bishop of the local church.

And then Peter identifies himself in verse 1. He says, "who am also an elder." So Peter, the elder or pastor, writing to a pastor. Now one of the reasons I love this passage is because you have a pastor talking to a pastor. I love to talk to pastors and I love to listen to other pastors. I love my relationship with other pastors. I have a heart for other pastors and men in the ministry. I think, because I know the challenges and struggles and hardships, God has given me not only a love for His sheep but for the shepherds. And he's given me a lot of opportunity to encourage younger men in the ministry and to help equip them for the work of the ministry. So here's the senior elder, Peter.

Now I want you to notice that he doesn't call himself apostle. So he's not coming off with his apostolic authority. He was probably one of the chief apostles. Any time you find their names, it's always Peter, James and John. Peter's usually at the head of the list, even when all 12 are mentioned. And he was a leading spokesman for the group. And if anyone knows any of the apostles, you all know Peter; right? But he doesn't come off "I'm an apostle." Nor does he say, "I'm the Pope. So you have to do what I tell you to do." He says, "I'm a fellow pastor. I'm an elder," notice there, "among them." To "the elders which are among you."

The unique thing about being a pastor is you're also a sheep. A pastor is a shepherd and a sheep. I have sheep needs. I need to flock together with you. I need you. You need me. We all need one another. Did you ever notice that sheep need each other? You never find the "Lone Ranger" sheep. They can't go off on their own; they need the flock. And they need a shepherd. A sheep by itself is in trouble. So I need you. You need me. We need one another. We're all flocking together and looking to Jesus, Who is that chief shepherd. The love—these words of Peter, the shepherd, writing to other shepherds.

Now I want you to notice Peter's experience. "A witness of" two things. "The sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." Now the word "witness" there is the Greek word "martus." And we get our word "martyr" from it. We think of a martyr as someone who dies for his faith, and that's true. But the word originally meant someone who "sees and tells." It's a witness, a martus. So you have an experience with Christ, and then you tell other people about that experience. So we're all called to be martyrs in that sense or witnesses, but it's born out of a personal experience.

One of the things I've noticed as I've grown older in age and in time and experience in the ministry is that my preaching now has all those years of experience of walking with God and preaching His Word and being just a child of God. As to where when I was young, it was all theory. I learned it in books and it went right from the books to my head to the people. But now it has been able to be a part of my life and lived out in my marriage and my parenting and how I handle my finances, how I deal with other people and just walking with God. So a pastor needs a personal experience with God.

And, by the way, sheep have to be lead; they're never driven. They're lead. And they need a shepherd to follow after. And so the undershepherd pastor, following the chief shepherd, Jesus, and teaching His Word, needs to be an example, as we're going to see in this text, to the flock.

So he had this experience, and he was "a partaker of the glory that was revealed." What does he mean by that? He's talking about Mount Transfiguration. Every New Testament scholar that I consulted on this passage—and as I looked at it, I believe Peter's drawing from his experience on Mount Transfiguration. He was in Gethsemane. No doubt he saw Jesus being lead to Calvary. No doubt in the court of Caiaphas he saw Him beaten and smitten and buffeted; he saw Him suffer. And then he said that "When we went with Him up on that mountain"—and that's one of the most glorious stories in the New Testament. Peter, James and John were taken by Jesus up onto a high mountain, and guess what Jesus did? He pulled back the veil of His humanity, and He allowed His deity to shine forth. Jesus, the God-man, pulled back His humanity, let His full glory of His deity shine and there appeared on the mountain Moses and Elijah. So you talk about a mountain-top meeting; that would have been awesome! Can you imagine hanging on the mountain—Jesus, Peter, James, John, and guess who shows up? Moses and Elijah. Now how did they know they were Moses and Elijah? Did they have name tags on? Can you imagine that?

Now what did they talk about? They talked about the death of Jesus. His Crucifixion, His Crucifixion that He would do. So Peter says, "I saw His suffering. I experienced the glory that's going to come." Notice, he projects it out to the future, "which shall come." "I saw that glory. I know that the Cross now leads to the crown." And that's what Jesus was trying to convey. The Cross will lead to a crown. "I'm going to suffer. I'm going to die, but I'm going to go to heaven." You know how hard it would be for a Jew to admit the Messiah would suffer and die? They thought it was only glory. But Peter came to realize first the suffering, then the glory that would follow.

But the point I want to make before I pass on to my second point is that a pastor needs to see the glory of God. He needs to see Christ. He needs to have a personal, intimate, deep relationship with Christ. And, again, if I were to say, "Pray for me as your pastor, and for our pastors," I would ask you to pray that we would have a deep, intimate, powerful, living, vital relationship with Christ.

I actually heard a true, amazing story about this fellow who lived in the San Diego area, and he would fly up to San Francisco for work. But this guy had no sight; he was blind. And he had a guide dog. But he would get on the same flight every week and fly up to San Francisco, so the pilot knew him and the crew knew him. On one flight, they had to veer off the path and land temporarily to give attention to some things on the plane. And the announcement was made that you could get off the plane and go into the terminal for a few minutes, and then you could get back on the plane and they'd make their way to San Francisco. So this guy who is blind was sitting on the plane with his dog. And the pilot came back to check on him. He knew his name. "Hey, Mike. You can get off the plane and stretch your legs if you want." He said, "No. I'm just going to stay here and wait, but could you please do me a big favor? Could you take my dog out into the terminal and give it a walk?"

Now I want you to think about this. These people disembarked from the plane, they're sitting in the terminal and off comes the pilot with a seeing-eye dog. And—true story—you know what the pilot did? He put on his sunglasses. So this pilot comes off the plane with this guide dog, and people were like, "I think I'm going to switch flights right now. I think I'm going to take another plane." Nobody wants to fly on a plane with a blind pilot. And who wants to go to a church with a pastor who doesn't know the Lord? Doesn't know where he's going? Doesn't know the will of the Lord? Doesn't know the Word of the Lord? Doesn't have an intimate relationship with the Lord?

Now there's a second quality good shepherds need, in verses 2 and 3, and that's a pastor's heart for Christ's sheep, or a shepherd's heart for God's sheep. God gives a pastor a heart, a desire for God's people, the flock of His pasture. Notice it in verses 2 and 3. He says to these elders, "Feed the flock of God." That's the command. That's the imperative. "This is what I want you to do." "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight..."—there's the word "bishop," "overseer"—"...not by constraint, but I want you to do it willingly; not for filthy lucre..."—for money—"...but I want you to do it out of eagerness, zeal, a ready heart. I don't want you to be lords over God's heritage, but you need to be examples to the flock." So we see the pastor's duty is to feed, verse 2, the flock of God.

Now I could go for weeks talking about this command. But let me just say from my heart to yours that this is my chief and primary responsibility; as a pastor, as a shepherd, it is to feed the sheep. Now what do I feed the sheep? Not psychology. Not philosophy. Not politics. Not my opinion. Not my views. But the Word of God. Nothing more. Nothing less. When you come to church on Sunday, you should hear God's Word. That's why I read the text. That's why I go back and read it again and explain the text. Then we apply the text. Any pastor who's worth his salt does three things: he reads the text, explains the text and applies the text. And I don't

want to get technical with you here for a minute, but I think God's people should be educated. When the text is explained, it should be explained in its historical context. It should be explained grammatically, it should be explained theologically, it should be explained historically. You should go to the primary meaning of that text.

I didn't do this first service, but I'm going to throw this out. Every verse of Scripture has one meaning. Not multiple meanings. Multiple applications, but one meaning. And the pastor's job—who really feeds the flock—is to get to the meaning of the text, by looking at it in a literal, historical, grammatical, theological interpretation of the text. Not imposing on that text my ideas or my views or springboarding—read a verse and then springboard to some modern, popular topic that entertains people. You never use a text as a pretext by taking it out of context. You always interpret it in its context. Why? Because that's how you learn God's Word. That's what's feeding the Word—That's what it means when Paul says to Timothy, "Preach the Word." And do it by being "instant in season and out of season," when it's popular or unpopular. Do it with "reproving and rebuking and exhorting in all longsuffering and doctrine."

And this is why a pastor's to feed the people the Word of God, because he says, "The time will come..."—and trust me, it's come today in our world—"...when people will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own likings, their own lusts, they'll heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." In other words, they'll find preachers who will tell them what they want to hear. They will find preachers who will tickle their ears and tell them things. You know, "You're okay. I'm okay. There's no heaven. There's no hell. All paths lead to God. And God wants you rich, healthy and wealthy." "Oh, yes. Good preaching, pastor." And they applaud that. And they're just tickling their ears. Instead of saying, "Wait a minute. Is that really what the Bible says? Is that really what God says? Is that faithfully expounding the Word of God?" "No, but it's popular. No, but it builds a big church. No, but if I preach that, people will come. But if I say this, people will be offended, and they might stop coming to church." Rather than faithfulness to the Word of God, their focus is popularity or power or being liked by people as opposed to being faithful to God and to the preaching of His Word.

So when it says we are to "feed the flock," we're to preach the Word of God. That's what Paul told the elders in Acts 20, and that's what he said in Ephesians 4, that God has given pastor-teachers. One word in the Greek. Not pastors and teachers but pastor-teachers, that they might "feed the flock of God, which is among you."

Now this came out of Peter's own experience, John 21. Remember when Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love Me?" Remember that story? And Peter said, "Yes, yes, yes." I won't go into all the Greek words that they exchanged on love, phileo and agape, but basically Jesus told Peter—what did He tell Peter? "If you love Me, feed My sheep." Isn't that great? Now Peter is telling pastors to do the same thing. "Feed My sheep."

When I first believed and sensed that God was calling me to be a pastor, I just kind of found myself teaching the Bible and God using the teaching of His Word and God giving me a love for His people. And all of a sudden when I began to sense, I believe, that God was calling me to

pastoral ministry, God gave me a love for His people. And that love has never gone away. Now I've seen everything you can see in a church. I've seen the bickering and the fighting, the carnality, and division and the strife, and the messed-up people and all that stuff, but I still love God's people. I still love God's people.

Can you imagine a shepherd that didn't like sheep? "Yah, I'm only here because they pay me, and these things stink and I don't like them. And I just kick them everywhere." What would you think of a shepherd that didn't like sheep? One of the evidences that God has called a man to the pastoral ministry is a love for God's people. And I know that God has put a love in my heart for this congregation. I had to leave a congregation that I was the founding pastor of. And I was there for 39 years, and it was really difficult to say goodbye. But how God has knit my heart together with this congregation. And what a blessing it is to be the pastor here, the senior pastor to teach the Word every week to God's people. And that's what a pastor's job and main duty is. To "feed the flock of God among you."

Now notice what should motivate the pastor, and then we'll move on. In verses 2 and 3, he gives them three warnings. He says that you should not be lazy, not by constraint, or compulsion. You don't have to be constrained to do it. "Oh, do I have to go to church?" Like the story about the fellow who was awakened by his wife on Sunday. "It's time to go to church." He complained, "Do I have to go to church? Give me some reasons why I have to go to church." "Because it's Sunday, because Christians ought to go to church and, thirdly, because you're the pastor." "Okay, but I hate those stupid people." Now there's times that I get tired in the ministry, but I never get tired of the ministry. And a pastor has to have a love for God's people. And do it willingly and not be lazy. I've heard of guys who say, "Well, I can't find a job so I wonder if you could hire me at the church to be a pastor." "No." "Well, I heard you guys really make a lot of money, and you only work one hour a week, so I thought that would be a great job." No; that's not how it works. If you can do anything else but be a pastor, do it. If you cannot do anything else but be a pastor, only then do you do it. It has to be a compulsion, a desire. It's a gifting and a calling that God places on a man's life. Willingly, not out of necessity or constraint. A love for God's people, doing the will of God from the heart.

And then, secondly, notice you shouldn't be covetous. You shouldn't love money. One thing you don't want in a pastor is a money lover. Notice what it says right in verse 2. "Not for..."—what?—"...filthy lucre." I love the old King Jimmy there. You can't get better than "filthy lucre." Hard to say that without a British accent. You don't go in the ministry to get rich. You don't go in the ministry because it pays well. You don't go in the ministry for a job to make money. That's okay. Having said that, 1 Timothy 5:18 says it's okay for a pastor to be paid. "Don't muzzle the ox that treads the corn. A workman is worthy of his hire." "And those who labor in the Word are worthy of double honor," which means double pay. I just thought I'd throw that in there. It's in the Bible. You can study it yourself. But that's not what motivates or motors a pastor's heart. He doesn't do it for "filthy lucre." This warning also includes the temptation for gain, personal popularity or social influence. No man should ever go into the ministry to be liked or popular. "Not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind," which means eagerly or zealously.

And then notice the third warning in verse 3. “Don’t lord over God’s heritage.” So the warnings and dangers of ministry are that you be lazy, that you be covetous or that you be domineering or controlling or that you become a dictator. “Neither lording over God’s people,” verse 3. So he says there that leaders are not to be lords. They are to be shepherds who lead. Jesus taught us that by example. He said, “If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you are to also wash one another’s feet.” The New Testament uses the word for pastors as “servant,” which is “doulos,” which means “slaves.” They’re not over the people so they can be served. They’re under the people to serve the people. Myself and the pastors here at Revival Christian Fellowship are your servants. And we’d better have a love for God’s people and a servant’s heart, or we’re not fit for ministry. We need to be examples to the flock.

So the negative in verse 3 is “Don’t lord over the flock.” Sheep have to be lead, not driven. And I love what he says, “God’s heritage.” That’s God’s people, God’s inheritance. “But...”—verse 3 —“...you’re to be examples to the flock.” So a pastor has to be an example. You know, you can be a good doctor, maybe have a bad marriage. You can be a really good banker and maybe have a drinking problem. You can be a good truck driver and maybe have some moral issues or failures. But you can’t be a good pastor and have moral failure. The standards for pastors are very high. And one of the problems in Christendom today is that we haven’t maintained those high standards for pastors in the ministry. Husband of one wife. Not given to wine. Not greedy for “filthy lucre.” Not newly planted that he would be lifted up with pride. All of the qualifications —1 Timothy 3—required of a pastor should be mandatory for any man in the ministry.

And I use the term “man in the ministry”—and I don’t need to go there, but I did first service and I’ll throw this out real quick, because I don’t know what it is. I just like to get myself in trouble when I preach. I’m saying “men in ministry.” Do I believe that pastoral work is only for men? Yes, I do. Do I believe that women can have a pastor’s heart? Yes, they can. But there’s no office in the New Testament described for a woman. You go, “You’re mean.” No, I’m not. I’m married to a woman. I love my wife. I had three daughters. I have two granddaughters. I have four sisters. I’ve been surrounded by women my whole life. But the Bible says if a man desire the office of an elder, bishop, pastor, he—masculine—desires a good work. Does that mean women can’t teach the Bible? No. They can teach the Bible. Does that mean women can’t counsel? No. They can counsel. But they can’t have the office or position of a pastor.

Some churches say “pastors.” Pastor John and Pastor Kristi. My wife is not Pastor Kristi; okay? And she would not want to be called Pastor Kristi. She’s my wife. And that’s her first and primary role. And she does an amazing job in that position. But the older women are to teach the younger women: to love their husbands, to be chaste, keepers at home, to raise their children. There’s ministry, lots of it, for women, but there’s only two offices in the church. That’s the offices of a pastor and a deacon. Those are the only two described offices in the church. And they’re both in the masculine. And they’re both to have men fill that role. And I think when men step up and fulfill their God-given calling and responsibility, that other men are trained, equipped and challenged to rise up and serve the Lord in the church.

Now there’s a third and last point I want to make, and that’s in verse 4. The pastor is to have a

passion to please Christ alone. And I would say of all these verses, this fourth verse is my favorite. I want you to go with me and look at it. Now he tells them everything: they're supposed to feed the flock, take the oversight, supposed to do it willingly, supposed to do it with a ready, eager heart, supposed to be examples to the flock. Why? Verse 4. Because "when the chief shepherd shall appear..."—Jesus Christ is the chief shepherd, and He's coming back—"...you..."—that is, you elders, you pastors, you shepherds—"...shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away." Guess what I'm looking for? "A crown of glory that fades not away."

Now I appreciate, "Good sermon, pastor. We love you, pastor. We're praying for you, pastor," and the words of encouragement and the cards I get. I'm amazed of the support I get in this congregation. I appreciate that. But what I'm really waiting to hear is from the Lord when He says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And you should be looking for the same. Whatever your gifts, whatever your calling, whatever your ministry, there's one thing you're looking for, one thing you're waiting for. And that's for Jesus Christ to say to you, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord." That's the pastor's passion; to see Jesus and to have His commendation.

Over the years I've had people say to me, "There's a lot of people in that church. How do you keep them all happy?" [Laughter.] That's what I do; I laugh. "Well, pastor, how do you keep all those people happy?" "Huh. I don't." There's only one person I have to make happy. And you know who that is? Jesus Christ. If I make Him happy—I love you, but I don't care if you like me or not. I don't care if you think I'm wonderful or not. I just want Jesus to think I'm wonderful. I just want Him to approve of me.

Now look at what Peter says in verse 4. It's really pretty cool. He calls Jesus the "chief shepherd," which means that we, as pastors, are undershepherds. Jesus told Peter in John 21, "Feed My sheep." Sometimes when there's problems in the church, I remind the Lord, "They're Yours. You aren't going to get me to worry about this. You're not going to get me to try to fix this. Lord, You're got a problem. You'd better straighten it out. They're Yours." They belong to the Lord. He's the chief shepherd. Pastors are only undershepherds. I'm always reminding myself, this is God's church. This is God's ministry. These are God's people. These are not my people. Sometimes people will say, "Oh, it's John's church." No; it's not my church. Jesus is the true pastor, and anyone working in the church is just an undershepherd.

And then, secondly, Jesus is coming again. "Shall appear." That's His Second Coming. He's the good shepherd Who gave His life for the sheep. He's the chief shepherd Who will come to reward the shepherds with a crown of glory.

Notice what it says, thirdly, in verse 4. That Jesus is coming to reward faithful shepherds. "You shall receive a crown of glory." The word "crown" there is "stefanos." There's another word translated "crown" in the New Testament, and it's the word "diadem." That's a king's crown. Stefanos is the victor's crown. And he's drawing from the Greek athletics, the Greek Olympics. The Greek Olympics started in Greece, and they used to run the race and do all the athletic events, and guess what they got? They didn't get a gold medal. They didn't get a silver medal.

They didn't get a bronze medal. They didn't get their picture on a Cheerios box or a Wheaties box. They got a little pile of leaves on their heads. They threw a salad on their heads. They would train and practice and run and discipline their bodies for one event. And the moment came and this was it, and they put a pile of leaves on their heads. Yeah! And it would just start to wither, and they would just throw it away.

What a contrast. We, as the Lord's servants—and I say “we,” because not only the pastor, but every one of us has been given a ministry. We are going to “receive a crown of glory that fades not away” and is kept, or reserved, for us in heaven.

Oh, I'll say this and then close. But I say this from the bottom of my heart with all my heart. I am so blessed and so privileged to be your pastor. But you belong to God. You're not my people. And I'm only an undershepherd. And I am committed, with God's help, to feed the sheep, to lead the sheep, protect the sheep and to love the sheep. I want you as a church to be the best loved and best fed congregation anywhere around here. And I want to have a heart like God for His people. And there's one thing, and only one thing, that I'm really looking for, and that's to hear the Lord say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord.” “Only one life will soon be passed, and only what's done for Christ will last.” It's true of you and it's true of me.

Look at your life and say, “What kind of impact am I having on eternity? What have I done with my time? What have I done with my treasure? What do I do with my talents? What am I doing to serve the Lord? Do I give? Do I pray? Do I sacrifice? Do I serve? Do I love other people? Am I using what God has given me for His glory, so that one day, I too, will hear those words of “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”? It applies to your marriage. It applies to your parenting. It applies to your ministries. All that God has entrusted to you, you'll have to answer to Him for it some day. Do a little evaluation of your life. Who are you living for? Who is it you want to please most? God or man?

Let's pray.