**FEED THE FLOCK**

***Shepherding God’s Church***

Among the most terrifying verses in the Scriptures to me personally is Ezekiel 34:1-10. Forgive me for quoting such a lengthy passage but I need you to see the full context to appreciate why it scares me to death. I read it and weep. How does it affect you?

​1 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. 6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.”
7 ‘Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 8 “As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock”— 9 therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD! 10 Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.”

Israel’s chosen leaders had become apathetic toward their duty to put the flock ahead of themselves. Can you imagine being Ezekiel and hearing God tell you to go preach such a sermon to religious leaders? Picture it. They are exiles in Babylon and the Levites and priests had gone AWOL (Absent Without Leave – for you readers who don’t speak in military acronyms). It had become everyman for himself. Look out for number one. Me first. I’m not my brother’s keeper.

At the very moment in history they needed leadership the most they had selfishly used their position of authority to fleece the flock, then allow them to wander defenseless into the dangers of Babylon to be eaten alive. God was furious! “***I am against the shepherds***!” That’s terrifying!

The shepherd has one job – feed the flock! The beautiful 23rd Psalm is known and loved by all spiritually minded people. It’s the most read scripture at Christian funerals. “*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*…” Every line is centered around the role of making sure the flock is secure and at peace. A flock well fed and anointed is a flock that lies down in green pastures, beside still waters. Jesus reminds us, *“The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep… The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep”* (Jn. 10:11-13). Those are the only two kinds of shepherds. You either care, or you don’t.

That, of course, leads to our main text. Peter, himself a *shepherd* – i.e. “*fellow elder*” vs.1, *pastor* (Eph. 4:11), *bishop* (Phil. 1:1), *overseer* (Acts 20:17,28), *ruler* (Heb. 13:7,17) – wrote these words to all “*fellow elders*” in the church in I Peter 5:1-4,

​*The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*

When Peter said “*shepherd the flock of God among you*” he was commanding those of us who are “*serving as overseers*” and “*examples to the flock*” to be proactive in feeding the sheep. Every member of the church makes up God’s flock and our job is make sure every one of you are nourished and cherished. Every soul is to be spiritually fed the Bible.

Paul put it this way in Acts 20:28-29,

*Therefore, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.*

Savage wolves come in all shapes and sizes. Jesus said they even sometimes look like sheep (Matt. 7:15). Satan, a roaring lion, appears as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). So it is our job, even when we are in quarantine, or in social-distance settings, to provide every member of this flock an opportunity to be fed the Word.

Now here comes my nightmare. My great fear, and constant trembling, is that some can easily take advantage of the isolation to stray from the fold. We have no way of knowing all the ways Satan infiltrates this flock and steals, or kills, sheep. My daily prayer, and anxious dread, is that no soul in this precious flock strays from God’s fellowship. Let me say to each of you, just as an ancient author said to the flock he was worried about,

“do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:35-39).

I write these daily devotionals under the heading of “Feed The Flock.” I do so because I (along with all the shepherds of this church) care so deeply about you. We want you to know that you are in every thought and prayer of ours. Please stay alert to drifting from the protection of this fellowship, for that is when Satan’s wolves will strike. If you feel yourself growing weak, call… immediately. We’ll be right there.

If you miss heaven, you miss everything! I love you. – Rick