

LEADING LIKE JESUS

1 Peter 5:1-4

Good morning! A beautiful Sunday once again. Great that you can be with us in-person and online.

Today, August 8, is the last day of the Olympics, right? Well, I think it has already ended because it's now past 11 in Tokyo. The closing ceremonies started at 8 PM, Tokyo time. And today is also the last day we're talking about the 5 crowns we'll receive when we get to heaven based on certain criteria. Today, we'll look at the last crown, the Crown of Glory. So, to recap, there are five crowns mentioned in the Bible that the Lord Jesus, as the righteous judge will award to Christians at the end of their journey in life. These are the Crown of Righteousness, the Incorruptible Crown, the Crown of Life, the Crown of Rejoicing, and the Crown of Glory.

Now, although we're done with the crowns, we're not done with the series. Because there are three more messages left that we'd like to share with you so you can prepare yourself better in this marathon called life. And you can compare life also to the sport of hurdling. Just when you have jumped successfully over one hurdle, there's another hurdle that you need to jump over. Life is a series of challenges. It can even throw a curve ball at you. But, praise God, he is faithful. He goes through life with us. Just when we think we're down, he's there ready to pick us up and sets us back on the right track.

Our message is entitled, "Leading Like Jesus". It's taken from 1 Peter 5:1-4. Let us read together.

In the very beginning of this passage, Peter is encouraging the elders of the churches. Now, the word "elder," is a translation of the Greek word "presbuteros" which literally means someone who is an older person, a wise person, or a leader.

Presbuteros sounds familiar because it's been translated in English as Presbyterian. That's why the Presbyterian church calls their pastor as a teaching elder. There could be many teaching elders. They have ruling elders as well. These are men who are lay leaders in their church. Now, even though we are a Baptist church, you can call me an elder, too, if you want because pastor and elder are synonymous in the Bible. And if you call me older, that's fine, too. I'll be one year older at the end of the month anyway, if you don't know. Just don't call me elderly.

So, Peter encourages them as a "fellow elder," because he was a leader of the church. In fact, he was the acknowledged leader of the church but he didn't look at himself that way. He didn't think of himself as being the most elder, if there's such as term. He considered himself equal with other elders or pastors at the time. Just like pastors we have today. No one is an overall pastor of the whole Christian church from which we receive direction and teachings. We sort of operate autonomously.

Now, it was necessary for Peter to encourage Christians especially the elders. In fact, his two letters, 1 Peter and 2 Peter are all about encouraging the persecuted church. At the time, Christians have spread far and wide in the Roman Empire and they were meeting in houses. They were being persecuted. Nero was the emperor and he hated Christians.

Today, whether they use the title or not, each church has elders. Each church has a group of individuals who provide the backbone of the church. They lead the way in giving, they lead the way in serving, they help define the church's vision, and on and on. But the idea is the same: these are the individuals who take responsibility for what happens in the church, and they are committed to doing what it takes to help the ministry move forward.

But I want you to understand that his words apply to all of us, because all of us serve in a leadership capacity in some area of our lives.

You may not be an elder in this church, or even a leader in this church, but you are a leader somewhere—at work, at home, in the PTA, in the Little League—and these areas desperately need leaders who lead according to Christian principles.

Today I want you to think about the areas that you lead, and I want you to think about how you can put Peter's words to work. So, as I go through this passage and unpack it, I want you to be thinking also about how you can apply these principles in your own sphere of influence.

Let me now share with you three suggestions on how to lead like Jesus. Let's take a look at each one.

1. Take a great interest on people.

Peter says, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care." (1 Pet. 5:2) Other translations say, "Shepherd the flock." I know a pastor who expresses his job description like this: "I take care of people." When asked to elaborate on this he said, "I try to teach them what they need to know. I try to warn them when they need to be warned, encourage them when they need to be encouraged, scold them when they need to be scolded, comfort them when they need to be comforted. I treat them as if I am personally responsible for them, because I am."

Now, Jesus is called in the Bible the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd and here in verse 4, he is called the Chief Shepherd. And under the Chief Shepherd are those elders, like me, who are shepherds of the flock of God. We are the under shepherd working under the direction of the Chief Shepherd.

Now, pastor is actually Latin which means "shepherd". It's where we get the word "pasture". And pasture is what you call the place where shepherds graze, right? So now, you see the connection between the elder, the shepherd, and the pastor. They're all the same.

What does Peter mean when he says shepherd the flock? The next part of verse 2, we see the answer, “watching over them”. To watch over someone is to take a great interest in someone. In fact, it is an idiomatic phrase that means “To guard, protect, or ensure the welfare of someone or something, often through close observation.” Now, we know that a shepherd feeds the flock. And that’s what a pastor is supposed to do. It comes with the turf. I mean, it’s a given. If you’re a shepherd, your primary role is to bring your sheep to the pasture where they can eat grass. If you’re a pastor, your primary role is to deliver the Word of God to the church. But Peter wishes to emphasize something else here. He has in mind something than simply feeding the flock. He means first of all, that a pastor is to guard the flock.

Remember the story of David. How David was a shepherd when he was a boy and out in the fields watching over his father's flock. A bear came to destroy the flock and he fought the bear, and a lion came to destroy the flock and he fought the lion. Well, David was a true shepherd.

Paul says in Acts 20:29, “I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.” So, a big part of the pastor’s responsibility is to guard the flock of God and protect the flock from those who would enter in and divide the flock of God.

Wolves are those who would enter the church and introduce false teachings or those outside and you see a lot of them on TV or internet brandishing false doctrines in order to lead the sheep astray.

David says of the Lord his Shepherd, “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)

David knows that God is watching over him always and therefore he wasn’t afraid.

He had a lot of struggles, he had his ups and downs, he had his mountains and valleys, but through it all, he knew that God was always with him, keeping watch over him. And it's interesting to note that the rod and staff, those two instruments that a shepherd uses to discipline the sheep are a source of comfort to David. So, David understood that because God watched over him, God would see to it that he was walking on the right path.

I remember the story of a friend of mine many years ago. He said that in his church, he came to know someone in the church who was separated from her husband and because she was a new Christian, he eagerly did a Bible study with her. My friend was single but getting involved with this woman was far from his mind. He just wanted to disciple this woman. But he didn't know better then. He should have asked another lady in the church to disciple her. Their study went on for several weeks. Their pastor noticed that and one day his pastor talked to him. The pastor thought that he was developing feelings for the woman which he denied. He was kind of offended but in the end, he realized that his pastor was just looking after his interest.

Take a great interest in people by guarding their spiritual lives. Another principle to be able to lead like Jesus is to

2. Give without getting.

In the last part of verse 2, Peter says, **"not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve."**

You know, if our generation had a slogan, it would be: "What's in it for me?" It's how many people think. Why should I help him or her? Will it benefit me? Why should I give to this cause? Will it benefit me? Why should I spend my time with this and that? Will it benefit me?

As Christian leaders, our thinking must be like that of the Good Shepherd.

Jesus says, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) In other words, the pastor should be ready to serve others even at a moment's notice.

Years ago, I remember an experience I had in my former church in New York. I was young in the ministry. I guess it was just my second year as a pastor. Anabel and I traveled out of town one Saturday. Now a few days before, Jose, who was a member of our church asked me to drop by his place on our way home. He was having a gathering of sorts. I don't remember anymore. He had invited some friends and some folks from the church. I told him we were coming.

Now, it turned out that where we went that Saturday from morning till afternoon was kind of hectic. I don't remember exactly where we went but I was so tired by the time we drove home late in the afternoon. It was a long drive. It was already around 9 PM when we arrived in New York. Now, I was really tired but not too tired to stop by Jose's place. And yet, I called Jose to say we couldn't make it. He said it was ok but I noted the sound of disappointment in his voice. In my mind I just said that I'd make it up some day.

The next day, a lady from the church called me. She was at the gathering. She knew I was invited. Then, she gently rebuked me for not stopping by. And I realized my big mistake. Though it was inconvenient, I should have showed up that evening.

The next year, I had another experience. This time, I was with some church members who were at the church rehearsing a presentation for the next day for our Sunday service. It was already evening when we finished, probably 8 pm. As I was driving home, now really tired, someone called me on the phone.

It was a friend who had a ministry with seafarers in the navy yard in Brooklyn.

He said that a ship just docked, and he started to talk to a few seafarers but because there was a lot of them, he asked me to come over and share Jesus with them as a group. My first thought was it was late, I was hungry, and I had to prepare my sermon. My second thought was I should not repeat the same mistake of not showing up.

So, I asked for God's strength. I drove to the navy yard, walked to the ship and climbed aboard. My friend ushered me in one large room which was filled with men from different nationalities. So, I shared the gospel with them. Not sure how long it was, maybe 20 or 30 minutes. Afterwards I gave an invitation for them to receive Jesus and many hands went up. I prayed with them. My friend was so happy. And unknown to me, he recorded everything on video. Then, he gave me the video. On my way home, I realized I could use the video for my sermon the next day which happened to be about evangelism. And the church was blessed with that video seeing how those men responded to the gospel.

So, I learned another lesson. When we serve with eagerness, God honors that. He rewards us in a way that will bless us and glorify him.

Now, sadly, Christianity is increasingly getting a bad name because of some church leaders, pastors, evangelists, who are being exposed because as they do ministry, they ask for money. They resort to all kinds of gimmicks just to get people fill their coffers.

A pastor, a minister, a church leader, or any Christian for that matter should do ministry without expecting anything in return. If you're in need, ask God, not people. But don't let that need prevent you from serving others. Don't put a price tag on your service. In the secular world, we can do that. But not in God's church. God is faithful. He knows your need. He will provide.

And he will provide in ways you can't imagine. That's why I'm so blessed in this church knowing that many of you are doing ministry for the sake of ministry.

We must keep this in mind when we serve people. It's not about what we're going to get, but it's about giving of ourselves to others. And as Peter mentions also in the same verse, willingly. If we must serve, we can ask, what can I do to help? Without asking anything in return. And God who sees in secret and knows our motives will reward us. It's not about what we can get, but what we can give.

To lead like Jesus, take a great interest in others, give without getting, and

3. Set a good example.

Peter says in verse 3, "Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

One of the best examples that Jesus gave to his disciples was when he washed their feet during the Passover meal, just before he was arrested. He gave them an example in humility. Many of them did not get that at first, including Peter. Peter was known to be a hotheaded individual. He was a natural-born leader and yet he was reckless and impatient. He wanted to lead but he didn't know how to lead. He rubbed people the wrong way.

Probably you know some people who are like that. Maybe your boss, maybe your teacher, maybe your spouse, maybe your pastor. In the sports world, some are perceived to be like that.

Bill Parcells, former coach of the Dallas Cowboys, is a great football coach—no question about it. He has a little saying that I just love. He often says to his assistants or his players: "Don't tell me about the labor pains. Just show me the baby." He doesn't want people to come to him whining about how difficult their job is; he just wants to see results. His style of leadership is clearly effective in the NFL. He has the Super Bowl rings to prove it. But listen carefully.

As much as I respect Mr. Parcell's skills as a coach, we've got to remember that his style of leadership — the "I'm only interested in the bottom line" style of leadership—has no place in the home and no place in the church.

But somehow, it has infected some church leaders. I know of at least two pastors of megachurches who in recent years have been accused of bullying, aggression, and intimidation by church members and were investigated and forced to resign.

Going back to Peter, because he was reckless, he needed a massive dose of humility. When Jesus was arrested that night and Peter denied him three times, he got his dose all right. He was so humbled that he wept bitterly and left the ministry Jesus gave him.

But Jesus was understanding and loving. After his resurrection, he restored Peter's ministry. In their famous one-on-one encounter, Jesus asked him three times, "Peter, do you love me?" And Peter answered three times, "Yes, Lord, I love you." And after each "I love you" by Peter, Jesus told him, "Feed my sheep".

That was the beginning of Peter becoming the undershepherd. That was the beginning of his transformation from being proud to being humble. So, he wrote this verse with that in mind.

A pastor then should not act and behave like he is the lord of the church. He should instead be an example of humility. Which I'm still learning. But some day I'm going to write a book entitled, "How to be Humble Like Me".

Albert Schweitzer said, "Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing." To be an effective leader, you have to be able to say, "Do as I do." That's why Paul so often said, "Imitate me in following Christ."

Paul and Peter followed the example of Christ. Especially as it relates to humility that's why they became effective leaders. Someone said, "Humble leaders make the best leaders".

Jesus showed an example in humility by washing his disciples' feet.

But Jesus expressed the best example in humility by coming down to earth like one of us even though he was God. The Bible says Philippians 2:6-8, “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature[a] God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature[b] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

And that, my friends, is the reason why the Lord Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He took great interest in us who are fallen, who are sinners; he then gave his all without expecting anything in return, and he set the example of humility so that we ourselves will be humble enough to admit our failures and sins and come to him.

Friend, I don't know your situation in life. I don't know even whether you've already given your heart to Jesus. But one thing I know. If you accept Jesus in your heart, he will make you a brand-new person. He will cleanse you inside and out. The Bible says that we are all sinners condemned to die. If you're feeling guilty or you feel you're lost in life it's because you need someone to save you from your sins. Only Jesus can do that. He died on the cross as the Bible says for your sins. Then he was buried and on the third day he rose again from the dead. He resurrected to show that he has conquered sin and death forever.

Friend, you too can conquer sin and death forever. You will receive the gift of eternal life as the Bible promises when you put your faith in Jesus. But first, you must ask forgiveness for your sins. You must repent of your sins. You must no longer do wicked things you used to do.