

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

1 - Shepherds

Announcements:

1/3 @7:30 -

Prayer

1/4 @6:30 -

Grace Group

1/7 @8:30 -

Sunday School

1/7 @6:00 -

Family Night

PSALM 9

ICE BREAKER: What is one of your favorite biblical “pictures” (for example, the Church as the Body of Christ, Jesus as the vine, God as a “strong tower”, etc)?

One of the reasons that I personally do not like doing topical studies (like the one we are currently in!) is that for any given topic there is almost always MORE in Scripture than you could ever cover in one given sermon. So while on Sunday we tried to give an overarching look at what Scripture says on the topic of Eldership, there was much that we left out. We didn't get a chance to see the examples in the Old Testament, the commands for those overseeing the people of God in the Law, or a great many other New Testament texts that speak to this subject. So today we will be diving into one of these “other texts” that I just did not have the time to cover on Sunday.

READ: 1 Peter 5:1-5

In this passage Peter uses the imagery of shepherds to drive home the job of Elders. In his book “Biblical Eldership” Alexander Strauch spends a great deal of time on this very thought. He says: “The Biblical image of a shepherd caring for his flock is precious... We must view Christian elders to be primarily pastors of a flock... As keepers of sheep, New Testament elders are to protect, feed, lead, and care for the flock's many needs.” In other words, while on Sunday we looked at the great many duties of Elders as outlined in other places, we could summarize those duties here with one word: Shepherding. But what does this particular shepherding look like?

The first thought that we can see here is that it is UNDER shepherding. The elders are given a great task and many important duties (more on that later). They are called to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you” (verse 2). But they are shepherds that await the appearance of the “Chief Shepherd” (verse 4). In other words, one of the most important thoughts for elders to see here is that their authority comes not from themselves, but from the one who is the head of ALL believers. Elders are, in some sense, middle management. They do not make the rules, only enforce them; they are not in charge of policy, only making sure the body follows the policy that is set before them. For the elders themselves this is an important reminder of their place, but for all of us it is important to see the true source of all truth and authority and power and care and all of these things is Jesus himself.

DISCUSS: Why is this picture of “under shepherds” so important? How does this empower all believers, not just the elders?

The next thing to see here is what *really* matters to Peter. It is not the actions and duties in particular of the elders, but rather their heart. They are to do these things “willingly” and “eagerly” (verse 2), not “domineering” (verse 3), and (along with all people) “clothed in humility” (verse 5). Above all else, this becomes a test to put the elders too. What is their heart in doing whatever it is that they are doing? Is it for fame and fortune (probably not at this church!). Is it for power and prestige? Is it for a pat on the back or the perceived sense of importance? Or is it in service and love both to God and to the Church that they are leading?

DISCUSS: Why do you think Love is so important for elders to have? What does this mean of OUR responsibility to them?

The final thought to look at there is also in some sense the most difficult one. We could think back to Sunday's sermon and think through the idea that elders are to be “above reproach”, or we could see a small phrase in the middle of the text there. Elders are to be “examples to the flock.” Their lives should be examples, they should be following Christ in a way that is seen and inimitable by all believers. This is, for me, the most important and difficult job of Elders.

DISCUSS: What does it mean that Elders are examples? In what ways is this true of all of us? In what ways should it be particularly true of them?