

Pastoral Ministry (Shepherds and Teachers)

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Date: 31 October 2021

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 0 0] that are far beyond what I have myself attained in my life. But Lord, I stand here because I have received this ministry by your grace.

Not because of my worthiness, but because you are gracious and merciful.

So I ask now that you would empower the preaching of your word, that your powerful word would have its intended effect as your spirit works in us.

Exalt the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Fill our hearts with overflowing love of Christ, of for Christ.

In his precious name we pray. Amen. In Acts chapter 20, verses 17 to 28. Now from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

[1 : 4 0] And when they came to him, he said to them, you yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews.

How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

But I do not account my life of any value, nor as precious to myself, if only I may fit my course in the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

And now behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

[3 : 0 2] Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.

Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not seize night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these ones minister to my necessities and to those who are with me. In all things, I have shown you that by working hard in this way, we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all. They embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken that they would not see his face again.

[4 : 23] And they accompanied him to the ship. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Almost every single guest preacher we have in our church have commented to me that we have a very attentive congregation, that you guys listen to sermons very well.

But if I were to tell you that this is the last sermon I will ever preach to you, I think you'd be even more attentive because last words, parting words are weighty.

And people share what is dearest to their hearts. This passage contains Paul's last words to the church in Ephesus. And it's the only one of Paul's speeches recorded in the book of Acts that's directed entirely to Christians.

As verse 16 says, Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he might not have to spend time in Asia for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem if possible on the day of Pentecost.

But during his layover at Miletus, he just couldn't pass up the opportunity to address the elders of the Ephesian church one more time. And so he asks them to make the 20-mile journey south to come to him in verse 17.

[5 : 42] And this is how he exhorted him. This is his main exhortation. Remember that elders are called to serve the Lord by shepherding his church. That's the main point of this, his Paul's address.

Even though God will only call some of you to be elders of a local church, since elders are commanded in 1 Peter 5, 2-3 to shepherd the flock of God and be examples to the flock.

And because Ephesians 4, 10-11 tells us that God raises up shepherds and teachers in the church not to do all the work of ministry themselves, but to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

Much of what Paul says here to the elders of the Ephesian church apply to every single Christian. So elders are called to serve the Lord by shepherding his church.

So we're going to look at those two in part. First, the servant of the Lord and his word. That's what elders are. They're also shepherds of the church of God. Verses 18-19 say that when the elders of the Ephesian church came to Paul, he said to them, You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews.

[7 : 00] Paul's farewell speech here is very heavily autobiographical because he's exhorting the Ephesian elders to follow the example that he set for them while he was ministering among them. He's saying, in effect, Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.

And Paul reminds them, You yourselves know this, how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia. Paul was not a recluse.

He did not live in splendid isolation in monastery or a parsonage somewhere appearing once a week to preach and then disappearing again, sheltered from the needs and sins in the lives of the Ephesian church.

He lived among them. And Paul's lifestyle was consistent. He was a part of their lives. And the whole time, from the first day he set foot in Asia, he lived in this consistent way.

And how did Paul live? He says, Serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews. The Greek word that is translated serve here is not the usual word that is used in the New Testament for serving or ministering to someone.

[8 : 13] It's a word that actually means to serve as someone's slave. It means literally to be owned by another, to be a slave, to be subjected.

In many of his letters, Paul describes himself proudly as a slave of Christ. He lived as a servant who was completely disposed to the will of his Lord.

That's what it means to serve with humility, to renounce one's right to rule, to be subject, subject oneself to the lordship of another.

And this is why, precisely why, the ancient Greeks despised humility. If you search ancient Greek literature, you will not come across a single instance where the word humility has positive associations.

The ancient Greeks saw humility as a bad thing, a lowly and contemptible thing, something that is only fitting for a slave. The only strange group of ancient people that extolled humility as a virtue were the Christians.

[9 : 23] And that's because they followed Jesus, who said, whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you must be your slave.

Even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. An elder, and every Christian for that matter, is a servant of the Lord, a slave of Christ.

Have you renounced your right to rule? Have you forfeited your power to set your own agenda? Paul knows that ministry is not about himself.

He doesn't invite the Ephesian elders to admire his accomplishments. He has no accolades to point to. Instead, he points to his core identity as a slave of the Lord Jesus.

He says, remember how I lived among you as a slave, serving with all humility. That's the call of the Christian.

[10 : 31] Paul also says that he served the Lord with tears and with trials that happened to him through the plots of the Jews. Tears and trials suggests that Paul endured much suffering and sadness in service to his Lord, much of it due to the persecutions and the plots of the Jews.

In 2 Timothy chapter 4, verses 1 to 4, Paul charges Timothy with a series of pastoral responsibilities. These are the things you must do as a pastor, including preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching.

Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry. But sandwiched in the middle of that list, you find something surprising. The command, endure suffering.

That's one of the job requirements of a pastor. This is why at the time of Paul's conversion, chapter 9, God said of him, I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.

If we are serving the Lord, we will suffer because there will be opposition from the world, from the flesh, and from the devil. But we are commanded to endure.

[11 : 54] And that's what Paul did. And no, it was not easy. Paul was not a stoic. He didn't meet suffering with detached indifference or unfeeling callousness.

He says he endured it with tears. All the setbacks, all the disappointments, all the suffering. And then in verses 20 to 27, Paul tells us the ways in which he served the Lord.

So this section is structured chiastically, meaning the first half of it is mirrored by the second half. And then there's one element in the middle, which is the core, the most important part that he's trying to emphasize that stands by itself that doesn't have a matching element.

So if you look at verse 20, he says, I did not shrink from declaring the word of God. And that's matched by verse 27. I did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God.

Verse 21, he says, I testify to both Jews and Greeks. And in verse 26, he says, I testify that I am innocent of the blood of all because he's spoken to all of them. And then verses 22 to 23, he says, and now behold, I am going to Jerusalem.

[13 : 03] And then in verse 25, he says, and now behold, none of you will see me again. And that leaves verse 24 by itself. And that's what he's really trying to hammer home.

And it is that I do not account my life of any value. If only I may finish the course. So first, Paul says in verse 20, I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house.

That's matched by verse 27. I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Why might someone shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God? Isn't it profitable for them?

Why might some people shrink from telling people what is good for them? It's because as Paul warns in Timothy, in 2 Timothy 4.3, some people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to soothe their own passions.

People who want to pursue their own selfish desires and sinful passions don't want to hear profitable teaching from God's word. They don't want to be convicted or challenged.

[14 : 18] They don't want to hear the whole counsel of God. Instead, they want to cherry pick passages they like. They accumulate for themselves teachers who will scratch their itches and say things that suit their desires.

This is why some elders might shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God. because if they preach from certain passages that go against the spirit of the times, some of their church members might leave.

Some of the visitors might never come back. Some of their church, well, outsiders who are observing might ridicule them, criticize them, maybe even persecute them.

But Paul says he did not shrink from declaring everything that was profitable. because rather than fearing people, Paul loved people.

So whether they wanted to hear it or not, he declared to them anything that was profitable to them. And Paul didn't have the option of not declaring the whole counsel of God because, as we said, he was a servant of the Lord Jesus.

[15 : 28] A servant who is sent out to deliver a message for his master does not have the power to add to the message or subtract from the message. He's merely a messenger. He doesn't get to choose the message because he is already a slave of Christ.

He cannot be enslaved to the opinions of man. And Paul declared the whole counsel of God to all without distinction. He says in verse 21 that he testified both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul preached the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ that all who turn, repent of their sins and turn to Jesus in faith by believing in the life and death and resurrection of the Christ that they might be saved.

And he preached this message to both Jews in the synagogues and to the Greeks in the forum. An ambassador does not get to choose which country he travels to or whom he speaks to.

He goes wherever the president or the king sends him to go. He speaks to whomever the king sends him to speak to. Likewise, Paul, because he's a servant of the Lord Jesus, he does not have the option of choosing his audience, of discriminating between Jews and Gentiles.

[16 : 53] And verse 21 is matched by verse 26. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all. Paul believed that it is his responsibility to proclaim the gospel because if people perish without hearing it, that he'd have blood on his hands.

So he faithfully warned people and he's now washing his hands, figuratively, washing his hands clean. I have warned them. I have preached the gospel to both Jews and Greeks.

So if you don't repent and believe in Jesus, then the blood is on your hands, not mine. I am innocent of the blood of all, is what Paul is saying. The elders of the church and all Christians for the matter are called to testify or bear witness to the Lord Jesus.

We may not go only to the groups of people that we share a natural affinity with, people who look like us, people who share our interests, people who have our social or economic standing, people who share our political views.

You know, we must testify to all peoples without distinction because we are servants of the Lord Jesus. And Paul continues to speak of his servitude to God in verses 22 to 23.

[18 : 11] He says, And now behold, I am going to Jerusalem constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

This is matched by verse 25, which begins with the exact same phrase, And now behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Paul is headed to Jerusalem and therefore he knows that he will not see the Ephesian elders, Ephesian believers again.

And so he even acknowledges that the Holy Spirit has testified to him that imprisonment and afflictions await him in Jerusalem. But then why is he going to Jerusalem?

He says he is constrained by the Spirit to go and bear witness to the people there. The word constrained literally means to be bound or imprisoned.

The same word is used later in Acts 21, verse 11, when Agabus prophesies of Paul's impending imprisonment in Jerusalem. It's the same word that was used three times in Acts 9, to describe how Paul, prior to his conversion, was rounding up Christians and binding them and committing them to prison.

[19 : 29] And so there's a contrast here between verse 22 and verse 23. Why would Paul travel to Jerusalem where he knows he will be imprisoned? The answer is that he is already bound by the Spirit, constrained by the Spirit of God to go.

He has no choice because he is a servant of the Lord Jesus. He is a prisoner of the Spirit. But he does it willingly, joyfully.

There's no human being because all human beings are sinful who are fit to be masters, to own slaves, but the Lord Jesus who is perfect and righteous and just and gracious is a worthy master that Christians serve joyfully, willingly.

Paul was a happy servant of the Lord. And so we've seen three things so far. One, Paul does not get to pick and choose what he preaches.

He must preach the whole counsel of God. Two, Paul does not get to choose whom he preaches to. He must preach to all, to both Jews and Gentiles. And three, Paul does not get to choose where he preaches the gospel.

[20 : 50] He must go where the Spirit of God constrains him to go. This is Paul's autobiographical sketch. It's a picture of a man who is in total submission to God.

Paul's reminding the Ephesian elders, it's not about doing what you want. Remember how I lived among you, not saying whatever I want or associating with whomever I want or going wherever I want.

No, but saying and doing and going only where God would have me go. That's what it means to be an elder. And all of this comes to a climax in verse 24, which is the center of this chiasm structure that Luke is intentionally emphasizing.

but I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself if only I may finish my course in the ministry that I have received from the Lord Jesus to testify through the gospel of the grace of God.

the world tells us that we should prioritize and protect our own lives over everything else and that makes perfect sense from their perspective because they believe that this life is all there is.

[22 : 10] But for Christians who believe in eternal resurrection life after death, for Christians who believe that our ultimate rewards are in heaven, there is something more valuable, something more precious than life itself and that is to finish the course, the race, to fulfill our mission and to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

That's why Paul uses this metaphor of the race to finish my course. Years later at the end of his life, Paul writes in 2 Timothy 4, 7 to 8, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that day and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

The crown of righteousness is reserved only for those who finish the race. Salvation is reserved for only those who persevere to the end.

Matthew 24, 13. Eternal glory is reserved for those who endure the momentary afflictions of this life. 2 Corinthians 4, 17.

Professional athletes would not endure the afflictions of strict diets and grueling workouts day after day, week after week, year after year if they didn't know that there is a trophy or a medal waiting for them at the end.

[23 : 57] But they do it for a crown that perishes. But we do it for an eternal crown. Likewise, Christians cannot endure. We cannot endure to the end and believe that faithfulness to Christ is better than life unless we keep the end in sight, keep eternity in view.

It's only in light of the eternal rewards that Christ has for us that we can say along with Paul, I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself.

That phrase is quite emphatic. It's literally my life is not worth a single word. an average person speaks, they say 7,000 words per day.

A lot of people considerably more than that. That's 2,555,000 words per year. Expand that to a lifetime.

That's a lot of words. And Paul says, my life is not worth even one word. Not a one, it's not a single word.

[25 : 08] if only I get to finish the course that my Lord has entrusted to me. Compared to fulfilling our God-given calling to bear witness to Jesus, my life has no value.

It's not precious to me. When there are many tears and trials in your life as surely many of you have, when you are paying the price of following Jesus, when serving the Lord is full of pain and suffering, remind yourself of this, my life is not my own.

Jesus already purchased me with his own blood. I am a slave of Christ, completely disposed to the will of my master. And Jesus is more precious than my life.

Jesus, I would rather die than give up serving him. The long life is not a Christian aspiration.

The faithful life is the Christian aspiration. church. Having pointed the elders of the Ephesian church to the example of how he conducted himself among them as a servant of the Lord and his word, Paul now exhorts them directly as shepherds of the church of God.

[26 : 42] So Paul's addressing here the elders of the church in Ephesus as we saw, and he says in verse 28 that they were appointed overseers of the church by the Holy Spirit.

And the overseer is the Greek word from which we get the English word episcopate which refers to bishops. And then Paul also uses a shepherding imagery throughout verses 28 to 30 exhorting the elders to pay careful attention to all the flock mourning them of fierce wolves that will devour the flock.

So this shows that the three terms that the Bible uses elders overseers or bishops shepherds pastors they're actually all terms that are used interchangeably to refer to a single office in the church that of the office of elder.

They're not separate offices in the church. An elder is an overseer is a pastor and this section wonderfully captures what pastoral ministry is all about.

In their book *The Deliberate Church* Mark Dever and Paul Alexander summarize the responsibilities of a pastor with helpful alliteration. He says they guide they guard and they graze.

[27 : 57] And we see those three tasks here in this passage. First he talks about guiding or governing the flock in verse 28. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood.

pastors must not be negligent or complacent in their care for the flock. They must pay careful attention to all the flock. They must know the conditions of the flock who is starving, who is weak, who is injured, who is hurting, who is going astray, and they must care for the whole flock, not just a part of it.

Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor, old and young. But notice that the pastors are not only to pay careful attention to the flock, they are also commanded to pay careful attention to themselves.

This is similar to Paul's exhortation in 1 Timothy 4, 16, keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

If pastors don't pay careful attention to their own lives and their own doctrine, then they might mislead their flock by their example and by their teaching, and that's dangerous.

[29 : 27] So they must pay careful attention to themselves and to all the flock. Ancient Near Eastern shepherds typically led the sheep from the front, not from the back.

So the pastors of the church must lead by example. Lest after preaching to others they themselves should be disqualified. Christian author Paul Tripp writes in his book *Dangerous Calling*, which is about pastoral ministry, that what gives a ministry its motivations, perseverance, humility, joy, tenderness, passion, and grace is the devotional life of the one doing ministry.

pastors must pay careful attention to themselves and to all the flock. And two things convey the gravity of pastoral ministry.

First is this, that the fact that the pastors are appointed by God himself, it says the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.

of course there is a process by which the local church recognizes and appoints elders, but it is ultimately God who calls up and raises elders. That means elders are not their own boss.

[30 : 50] God is their boss. So they better pay careful attention to the work that they do. The second thing that conveys the gravity of pastoral ministry is the precious value of the people of God.

Pastors are the care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood. This is a reference to the atoning work of Jesus Christ, his death, his resurrection.

God the Father didn't die on the cross, but since the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity did die on the cross, it is not inaccurate to say that God obtained his church with his own blood.

God, this is why the church is the church of God. It is not my church. It is not the pastor's church, it is the church of God, because he paid for it.

And the price you pay for something communicates the value of that item. Think of the most valuable possession that you have. maybe a car, computer, a house.

[32 : 11] You probably protect it, maintain it, and perhaps even insure it. The church of God was purchased with the blood of God's own Son.

Jesus, whose life has infinite, inestimable value. That means the Christian brothers and sisters sitting to your left and to your right, the sheep of God's pasture, sure, they might be bruised and battered, maybe even malnourished.

maybe they don't appear very valuable to you. You might think they're not worth your time and investment, but don't let your eyes deceive you.

Remember the price God paid for them. God gave his only Son. The Lord Jesus obtained them with his own blood, and so the elders must govern and guide the flock of God with care.

The second thing elders must do is to guard the flock. Paul warns them in verses 29 to 31, I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you and not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.

[33 : 42] Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. Some of these fierce wolves will come in from the outside, but others, Paul says, will rise up from among your own selves, from within the Ephesian church itself.

A telltale sign of a wolf is that he speaks twisted things. He doesn't speak the straightforward truth of God's word. Instead, he speaks twisted things in order to draw away the disciples after them.

Their ultimate goal is division and schism. They're interested in making disciples who follow after them. This is a sobering reality and I think Paul speaks so confidently and definitively in verse 29.

I know, he says, I know that after my departure, fierce wolves have come. I think he could say that because he knows that wherever there are sheep, there will be wolves.

and it's for this reason that pastors must be alert. But it's important to note that there is a difference between sheep that disagree with the shepherd and an actual divisive wolf.

[35 : 05] Being watchful of wolves and being cynical and suspicious of sheep are not the same thing. And it requires humility and discernment to tell them apart.

So the pastors are to guide and guard and thirdly, they are to graze the flock in the green pastures of God's word. It says in verse 32, and now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

The word of his grace is the same thing as the gospel of the grace of God that Paul mentioned earlier in verse 24. So yes, pastors are supposed to preach the whole counsel of God, but because all of scripture points to Jesus and is fulfilled by Jesus, the work of preaching always involves commending people to God and to the word of his grace.

That sinners deserving of the just wrath and punishment of God may be forgiven and reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus. That salvation is not something that we earn through our hard work or good work, but that it is a gift from God to be received through faith.

That is the gospel, the good news of the grace of God. And that's the news that builds up the saints and it is by persevering in our faith in that gospel that we receive our heavenly inheritance.

[36 : 33] And then Paul returns again to his personal example in verses 33 to 35. He says, I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me.

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus. How he himself said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

In the Roman Empire there were various kinds of philosophers, itinerant philosophers that traveled and spoke in various places and they gained fans and followers. And these itinerant teachers had four different means by which they supported themselves.

The first was to rely on a wealthy patron or patroness who would host these luxurious dinners where they would be the honored guests giving lectures. The second was to charge fees for their speaking and their teaching services.

And third was to rely on public charity by begging, by asking for donations. And the fourth, and by far the most despised way among the Greeks, was to work as manual laborers.

[37 : 50] Because these itinerant philosophers viewed that as beneath their social standing. And the great apostle Paul refused compensation for his ministry, worked with his own hands as a tent maker so that he might provide for those who have need.

He says, with these hands, it seems like as Paul speaking, he's lifting up his hands, showing his hands to people saying, with these hands I provided for myself. Probably callous from all that tent making.

This is not because Paul doesn't think that elders should be provided for by their churches. He does say in 1 Timothy 5, 17 and 18, that elders who rule well and labor in preaching and teaching deserve their wages.

However, Paul himself decided to forego this right, and he did manual labor in order to provide for himself as well as for his fellow missionary companions. And Paul did this, he says, in order to help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said it is more blessed to give than to receive.

The weak is likely a reference to people who were in one way or another incapacitated or limited, therefore unable to provide for themselves. As Christians, we don't hold a job and work merely to provide for ourselves and for our families.

[39 : 21] We also work to give generously to those in need. Ephesians 4, 28 says, let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

This is the example that Paul set for the Ephesian elders, and he confirms it with Jesus' teaching, it is more blessed to give than to receive. I was just talking to, I think it was Jen mentioned, Gary told her about this Instagram handle called pastors and sneakers.

You guys know about that? Preachers, sorry. Pastors and preachers. Or, no, preachers and sneakers. Sorry, I guess that rhymes better. Apparently, the guy who has the handle just came out with the book.

He's kind of, he's criticizing the way consumerism has taken over some parts of church and clergy and how the church culture is following the world's celebrity culture.

\$5,000 sneakers. I didn't even know such things existed. I didn't know such things. The pastoral ministry is not a platform for self-promotion.

[40 : 57] How many poor widows gave for that? The church offerings are not a means for personal enrichment.

Church members are not a platform for pastoral celebrity and self-promotion. Pastors must remember that they are called to feed the sheep, not feed on the sheep.

And that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This is really the attitude that befits every Christian. Think more of what you can give to the church than get from the church.

Think more of how you can serve others than to be served. It is human to give in return for something else. It is Christian to give without expecting anything in return.

Because we know that God will ultimately repay us. That's the appropriate Christian attitude because Jesus came to be, not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[42 : 16] Pastoral ministry is ultimately patterned after the ministry of the good shepherd, our Lord Jesus. Jesus said in John 10, 11 to 15, I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees. And the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.

Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep. The people of God throughout history have been shepherded by many hired hands.

Rulers and leaders who clothed themselves with the wool and slaughtered the fat ones who didn't strengthen the weak or heal the sick or bind up the injured and bring back the strayed or seek the lost sheep.

[43 : 23] None of your pastors that you ever have, including myself, are not going to be the perfect shepherd. None of the things that you turn to for your comfort, for your provision can be that perfect shepherd.

But our Jesus is the good and perfect shepherd. If you are hungry, he is the shepherd that can feed you with manna from heaven, bread from heaven.

If you are walking through the valley of the shadow of death, Jesus is the shepherd who has his trusty and comforting rod and staff to assure you so that you may not fear.

When you feel weary and heavy laden, when you feel weighed down by your own guilt and your own failures and your own sins, it's the Lord Jesus alone who can be the good shepherd that lays down his own life for your salvation, for your forgiveness.

What kind of shepherd gives his life for a sheep? For a sheep. The shepherd who truly loves the sheep, who really owns the sheep.

[44 : 48] It's because we are his that Jesus cares for us in this way. And as we follow him, surely goodness, surely mercy will follow us all the days of our lives.

And we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Let's pray. God, we thank you.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.