

#1774

1 Peter 5:1-4¹
4th Sunday of Easter
*Jubilate*²

Pastors, be shepherds of God's flock
under the Chief Shepherd, Jesus
Supplementary Lectionary Series "B,"
Epistles

Pastor A. J. Kunde
Grace WELS Durand MI
April 14, 2013

2 p.m. LWMS Hope WELS Swarz Creek MI
4 p.m. Installation Rev David Naumann, Sag
7 p.m. MLS Band & HSH concerts

^{5:1} Therefore, to the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings, and one who will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must (under compulsion), but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

PASTORS, BE SHEPHERDS OF JESUS' FLOCK
I. NURTURE THE FLOCK
II. SERVE EAGERLY
III. AWAIT JESUS' RETURN

In the Name of Jesus, our LORD, our Savior and our Good Shepherd, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,
I imagine more than once my kids had conversations that went something like this:

"So, what does your dad do?"

"He's a pastor."

"How often does he work?"

"Oh, he only works once-a-week ... on Sundays."

"How much money does he make?"

"Well, I'm not sure, but every Sunday it takes four guys to collect it and two guys to carry it down to him."

In our text this morning, Peter tells us what pastors are to be doing. By extension, Peter also tells us what church leaders, especially elders or deacons, are to be doing. Peter says ... PASTORS (elders and deacons too) – PASTORS, BE SHEPHERDS OF JESUS' FLOCK. PASTORS, BE SHEPHERDS OF JESUS' FLOCK ... I. NURTURE THE FLOCK; II. SERVE EAGERLY; III. AWAIT JESUS' RETURN.

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

² This Fourth Sunday of Easter is traditionally known as *Jubilate* -- Rejoice! We rejoice in the salvation which the LORD has given us in his Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

PASTORS, BE SHEPHERDS OF JESUS' FLOCK I. NURTURE THE FLOCK

Peter writes, "... to the elders among you, I appeal (encourage, urge, exhort) as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care ... (5:1,2a). Peter refers to himself as "a fellow-elder," who is speaking "to the elders among you," that is, pastors among the Christian congregations to whom Peter was writing. Peter was, in other words, a pastor writing to other pastors. But Peter was not just an ordinary pastor.

By God's grace, Peter refers to himself as "a witness of Christ's sufferings." Peter was one of Jesus' Twelve disciples. Peter had witnessed Jesus' three-year public ministry. Peter had been among those favored three – Peter, James and John – who, by Jesus' grace, witnessed the raising of the daughter of Jairus (cf. Mark 5:22ff; Luke 8:41ff) and was present at Jesus' transfiguration (cf. Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36; 2 Peter 1:16-18). Peter had witnessed the sufferings of Jesus – too close, for Peter had denied Jesus three times, when Jesus was being brutally interrogated by the Chief Priests and Leaders of the Jews (Matthew 26:69-79; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18,25-27). Peter was a witness of Jesus' sufferings. Peter was also a witness of Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven (Luke 24:34,36-53; cf. Acts 1:3-11). Peter was a recipient of the special gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, so that he proclaimed boldly: Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead in whom alone there is salvation (Acts 2; 4:12). As a believer in Jesus, Peter looked forward confidently to sharing Jesus' glory in eternity. Now Peter is addressing fellow pastors.

Peter says, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care" (5:2a). The flock, the people, the souls, under the spiritual care of a shepherd or pastor, do not belong to that pastor. They are "God's flock" – they are Jesus' flock – they are Jesus' sheep and lambs (cf. John 21:15-17). Pastors are undershepherds of Jesus; Jesus is "the Chief Shepherd" (5:4a). Pastors are responsible and answerable to Jesus, "the Chief Shepherd."

Pastors are responsible to Jesus. While pastors are called usually through a Christian congregation, St. Paul made it clear in our first Scripture Lesson this morning (Acts 20:27-32), that it is really the Holy Spirit who calls pastors to be pastors. St. Paul wrote, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the Church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The Holy Spirit calls pastors to be pastors – shepherds. A shepherd is to nurture, guard, protect and provide for the flock. An "overseer" "sees over," "looks over," keeps "watch over ... the flock." This is what the shepherd-pastor is to do. What does the shepherd or pastor use to do this?

The shepherd-pastor uses God's Word to nurture, guard, protect and provide for the flock. The shepherd, pastor and overseer, uses God's Word to provide for and nourish the health of the flock. Paul stated that also in our first Scripture Lesson this morning "Now I commit you to God and to the Word of his grace" (Acts 20:32a). It is through God's Word that the pastor nurtures Jesus' flock.

What happens when there is no pastor or the pastor is unfaithful in using God's Word? Then the flock is pitifully lost. The flock needs a shepherd. Without a shepherd, the flock is defenseless, and liable to stray. With a faithful shepherd, the flock is happy, secure and peaceful. The objective then of having a shepherd-pastor is the salvation of souls.

The faithful shepherd or pastor will use God's Word in nurturing Jesus' flock. St. Paul defined this clearly in his Second Epistle or Letter to Timothy:

² Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³ For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will turn their ears away from the Truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵ But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an Evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

“Preach the Word.” From what follows, it is obvious that St. Paul is referring to the proclamation of both the Law and the Gospel for he says, “correct, rebuke ... with great patience and careful instruction.” Correcting and rebuking is Law. St. Paul is also referring to the Gospel. He says, “encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.” This encouragement of the Gospel directs the flock to the cross of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Remember, Peter “was a witness of Christ's sufferings” (5:1b). It was through Jesus' suffering and cross that Jesus paid for the sins of the entire world.

Through his cross and suffering, Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world (cf. 1 John 2:1b,2). Peter made this point at the beginning of this First Epistle of Peter. Peter stated, “You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed ... but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 2:18,19). Constantly and repetitively, the message of redemption through Jesus' blood, is to be fed to the flock – for the flock needs that constant and repetitive nourishment of the Gospel.

APPROPRIATION

Who is up to such a task? Who is worthy of such a task? Who can accomplish such a task? No one can ... on his own. The Apostle Paul puts this matter of faithful shepherds or pastors into perspective. He says,

⁴ Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. ⁵ Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶ He has made us competent as ministers of a New Covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:4-6).

The New Covenant of the Holy Spirit, is the forgiveness of sins, which both pastor and parishioner need daily. In the forgiveness of sins, and only in that forgiveness, can a pastor, a shepherd, an overseer, be faithful.

Sheep too often stray. You heard it in the second Scripture Lesson this morning: “You were like sheep going astray” (1 Peter 2:25a). The devil, the world and our own sinful flesh, lead us astray. Too often, we sheep, do not even realize the danger that confronts us – we are like dumb sheep. Too often we lose sensitivity to sin.

Insensitivity and callousness to sin hounds us. Think back two or three decades. Would some of today’s shows on television have been tolerated? Would some of the language used on today’s radio programs be allowed? Go back half a century, would homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and “shacking up” be socially unacceptable? We are awash in wickedness; we become carefree in callousness; we become insensitive and indifferent to sin. Sometimes we even participate in things we know are wrong. When this happens, our understanding of our deep need for a Savior erodes and fades away. Back to the Law and the Gospel!

The faithful shepherd – the shepherd-pastor – is no less attacked by the wickedness surrounding him. The shepherd-pastor, along with his flock, must also hear the Law.

God’s Law does not compromise with sin – neither your sin nor my sin. God’s Law speaks plainly to you and to me: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law” (Galatians 3:10b; cf. Deuteronomy 27:26). The “curse” for those who do not keep God’s Law perfectly, is death – temporal and eternal death. God told Ezekiel, “The soul who sins is the one who will die” (Ezekiel 18:4b). The kind of death about which God is speaking is not just temporal – not just physical death only. The kind of death about which God is speaking is eternal torment in hell. The Law plainly says to you and to me: Hell is where you are going. This Law creates in us dread and fear and terror. But then Jesus, through the faithful shepherd-pastor, brings the Good News.

The Good News, the Gospel, proclaims that all sins have been forgiven. The Good News, the Gospel, proclaims that Jesus died on the cross to take away the sins of the world. The Good News, the Gospel, proclaims that Jesus’ arose from the dead, triumphant over sin, death and hell. This Good News, this Gospel, motivates Jesus’ sheep to follow him. For St. Paul states,

¹⁴ ... Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (2 Corinthians 5:14,15).

This motivation of Jesus’ death and resurrection, is also motivation for shepherd-pastors, overseers, ... to serve eagerly.

PASTORS, BE SHEPHERDS OF JESUS’ FLOCK II. SERVE EAGERLY

Peter writes to pastors,

² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must (not under compulsion), but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock (5:2,3).

The fact that pastors are to serve willingly and not be “greedy for money,” does not exonerate or release congregations from supporting their pastor. While St. Paul served the Corinthians without support from them, Paul also wrote to them, “It is written in the Law of Moses: ‘Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain’ (cf. Deuteronomy 25:4).... In the same way, the LORD has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should receive their living from the Gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:9&14). However, pastors are not to be “greedy for money.”

Pastors, as well as parishioners, are to heed the Word of God written to the Hebrews, “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have” (Hebrews 13:5). All believers are to remember St. Paul’s admonition to Timothy,

⁶ ... godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

Such words apply to pastors and members. Rather, shepherd-pastors – including elders, deacons and other leaders in the congregation – are to be willing and eager to serve.

Pastors, church workers, members, are to be eager to serve. For pastors especially, there are no restrictions or limits on their service. Pastors do not have a job. Pastors are not hired and fired. Pastors are called by the Holy Spirit through the Christian congregation. Pastors have a “divine call”; and their service time is not nine to five but twentyfour/seven.

APPROPRIATION

Not 9 to 5 but 24/7! Such responsibility can weigh heavily on the pastor as well as his family. No, the pastor’s family does not come first. Some have said that but can present no Scriptural evidence to back it up. Moreover, the words which God spoke to the Prophet Jeremiah, apply also to today’s pastor: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). God appointed the pastor to be a pastor from eternity. That transcends wife and family. At the same time, wife and family are also part of the pastor-husband-father’s responsibility. Difficult? Yes, indeed! Moreover, a pastor’s lack of visible success will weigh heavily on the pastor, elders and other leaders in the church, as well as the faithful members of the church.

Your pastor and elders are wrestling presently with a membership list in which there are so many who no longer attend. We see so many who may have gone through our previous Lutheran Elementary School, were confirmed, but no longer come to worship and Holy Communion. These are lost sheep. These are straying sheep. These are lost souls. It is disheartening. The temptation for pastor and elders and congregation is to give up. For pastors, there is temptation to rebel against the 24/7 responsibility. There is temptation to chafe at humble service. To add to this, Peter also calls for the shepherd-pastor to be an example for the flock.

The shepherd-pastor is to be an example! How often your present shepherd-pastor has failed to provide a godly example to this flock. What is the remedy? The same remedy for your pastor is there for you – return to Calvary’s cross!

It is only in the forgiveness of sins by faith in Jesus that a faithful pastor can continue to be a pastor-shepherd of Jesus’ flock. But, in that faith and forgiveness, the pastor, along with the flock in his care, looks forward to enjoying eternal glory with Jesus.

PASTORS, BE SHEPHERDS OF JESUS’ FLOCK III. AWAIT JESUS’ RETURN

Peter expresses his confidence in seeing and sharing Jesus’ glory in eternity. Confidently, Peter refers to himself as “one who will share in the glory to be revealed” (5:1c; cf. 5:4). The “glory to be revealed” is revealed when Jesus returns on the Last Day – Judgment Day.

Peter writes concerning the appearance of “the Chief Shepherd” (5:4a). The Chief Shepherd is, of course, Jesus. Jesus is the only Chief Shepherd and Good Shepherd. Only Jesus, the Good Shepherd, laid down his life for his sheep and took back again his life for the sheep, as you heard in the Gospel Lesson this morning (cf. John 10:11-18). Jesus’ suffered and died on the cross to take away the sins of the world; Jesus rose again three days later, on Easter Sunday morning, as the public proclamation that the sins of the world had been taken away (cf. Romans 4:25; 1 John 2:1b,2). Jesus will come again in glory to raise all people from the dead and to judge. What happens then?

Peter says, “When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away” (5:4). During the time of Peter and Paul and the other Apostles, as well as before their time, the Greeks would hold their competitive games – their Olympics. Winners would receive a crown – a wreath of leaves and flowers. But leaves wilt and flowers fade. The crown that Jesus gives is “the crown of glory that will never fade away.” Yet, this “unfading crown of glory” is given by grace alone through faith alone.

Olympic participants trained, worked and competed. The winners earned the wreath of victory they wore. Jesus’ flock – faithful pastors and faithful parishioners alike – receive the crown of glory by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus – a faith that is also given to them by the work of the Holy Spirit in the Means of Grace – the Gospel in Word and Sacraments.

APPROPRIATION

This unfading crown of glory is guaranteed to you and me! It is guaranteed! It is guaranteed – not by what we do! Not by who we are! It is guaranteed by who our Good Shepherd is – Jesus, our LORD, our Savior, our Good Shepherd. This unfading crown of glory is guaranteed to you and to me by God's grace through faith in Jesus! No questions! It is guaranteed by Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who died and rose again.

CONCLUSION

Yes, pastors do work more than one day a week. No, pastors are not so wealthy that it takes four men to collect and two to carry the offerings. Pastors, like all believers, have to guard against the desire for more and more material things. Pastors, like all believers, are to be content with what they have – content with what the LORD has given to them by his grace. Most importantly, shepherd-pastors, called by the Holy Spirit, are to proclaim God's Word – Law and Gospel – in truth and purity. That Word of God creates and nourishes faith in both the shepherd-pastor and the flock – the congregation. By that faith in Jesus, pastor and congregation confidently look forward to sharing Jesus' glory in eternity. Amen.