**BE SHEPHERDS OF GOD’S FLOCK**

 May 17, 2020

1 Peter 5:1-14 / Key Verse 5:2a, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care,”

Today’s passage is the last chapter of Apostle Peter’s first letter. As we learned, Peter wrote this letter to those who are going through all kinds of trials to remind them of their new life in Christ, their living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and their true identity as God’s chosen people – a royal priesthood and a holy nation so that they may live holy and godly life, love each other not superficially but deeply from the heart, and rejoice in participating in the sufferings of Christ to build up God’s church. The goal of Peter’s letter is to make all the scattered saints in Christ strong, firm and steadfast until Jesus returns. To manifest this work of God, Peter knew that the church leaders’ role is very crucial. So, in today’s passage he urges elders to be shepherds of God’s flock. In our UBF ministry, the term elder is not used so frequently. Instead we are familiar with the term shepherds who are able to take care of others. Of course, depending on spiritual maturity and the size of ministry not all of us can be church leaders. However, we all agree that the role of shepherd is very important because all people need a shepherd who has genuine love and is able to help. Then let’s learn what kind of shepherd God wants us to be.

**First, be examples to God’s flock (1-4)**

Look at verse 1. “To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed.” In the New Testament, the words, “elder,” “overseer” and “pastor” are used interchangeably. (Ac 20:17,28; Tit 1:5-9; 1Tim 3:1-7) Historically, the role of elders may go back to the time of Moses. When Moses felt the burden of shepherding the Israelites too heavy and cried out for help to God, God directed him to choose seventy elders to share with him the burden of taking care of the people (Num 11:10-17). As we see here, an elder’s job was to take care of God’s flock. In the New Testament also, it was common for a team of elders to be appointed to take care of God’s flock. (Ac 14:23) In our North America UBF ministry, we have 9 elders who were elected by around 90 representative members who represent around 2000 NA UBF members (from around 100 chapters). Elders in the church are not appointed based on physical age but depending on spiritual maturity. The most important thing about elders is to be witnesses of Christ’s sufferings and put their hope not on earthly things but in Jesus who will return in glory.

To the elders, Peter’s main exhortation is, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care…” (2a) Here let’s think of why being a shepherd of God’s flock is so important. It is because this is what God really wants from leaders in his church. Ezekiel 34 well describes it: “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?... You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd.” (Eze 34:1-5). God also said, “I myself will search for my sheep and look after them… I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak…” (Eze 34:11,16). This is exactly why God sent his only Son Jesus as the good shepherd for his people. As a good shepherd, Jesus shed his own sinless holy blood to purchase his people. So, each sheep like you and me is absolutely valuable to him. They are God’s flock not ours. God really wants church leaders to be shepherd of his people one by one. John 21 shows our Good Shepherd Jesus’ heart’s desire very well. After 3 and half years of discipleship training; when Peter failed to be a faithful disciple, Jesus restored broken love relationship with him and reinstated him as a pastor of Jesus’ sheep. Jesus asked him 3 times, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” and he said 3 times, “Feed my lambs; Take care of my sheep; Feed my sheep.” Since that time on, Peter knew what our Good Shepherd Jesus really wants from himself and from all the church leaders. So he exhorted to the elders in the church as a fellow elder just like Jesus did to himself: “Be shepherds of God’s flock.” Because being shepherds of God’s flock really pleases God most, caring God’s flock is the great privilege and honor to shepherds. This is why Apostle Paul confessed that God’s flock under his care was his joy, glory and crown (Phil 4:1; 1Th 2:19-20). Such a glorious reward has great appeal. But there is a danger to pursue it with a wrong motive. So Peter exhorted them to have a right motive and attitude as shepherds of God’s flock.

Look at verses 2-3. “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” The words, “watching over them” comes from the verb form of the noun “overseer.” This tells us what a shepherd does. He “watches over” God’s flock. He observes carefully, understand what is going on in their lives and figures out what they need to grow. By knowing these things, he can protect them from harm, feed them with right word of God at the right time, and serve them according to their need. In serving God’s people as a shepherd, motive and attitude are vital. Peter makes three contrasts to explain this.

**First of all, shepherding should be done willingly, not because one “must**.” The word “must” signifies a sense of obligation as a leader, without joy or love. Such people feel burdened and burden others. Our bible students can sense it and they don’t open their hearts. So Peter urges church leaders to be willing, as God wants them to be. God wants us to do his shepherding work voluntarily; willingly; joyfully. This comes from knowing God’s own heart. God was willing to save lost sinners. So he gave his One and Only Son Jesus Christ to shed his sinless holy blood for us on the cross. Jesus was willing to forgive all rebellious sinners who are nailing himself. So he prayed even in his great pain on the cross, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” When a wretched man with leprosy came to Jesus, begging, “If you are willing, you can make me clean,” Jesus reached out his hand touching the man, saying, “I am willing!” and he said, “Be clean!” Then immediately the leprosy left him and he became clean, not only in his body but in his heart as well (Mark 1:40-42). So shepherds always need to focus on God’s own heart not on their human obligation or humanistic love. Then we can learn God’s shepherd heart.

**Secondly, shepherds should not pursue dishonest gain but be eager to serve**. Sometimes shepherds can be asked after bible study, “How much do I owe you?” Then our answer is, “Nothing, we do not charge for bible study.” It is because Jesus said, “Freely you have received, freely give.” (Mt 10:8b) Yet even though we do not seek material gain, we can seek gain through our bible students in other ways. For example, shepherd can seek human praise and recognition through their sheep. In such wrong motive of shepherd, a genuine love relationship cannot develop and sooner or later sheep will leave. On the other hand, when we serve them eagerly with genuine love in Jesus, a beautiful trust and love relationship can develop, and they can open their hearts and learn Jesus.

**Thirdly, shepherds should not lord it over those entrusted to them but be examples to God’s flock**. Here the word, “lord it over” means to exercise authority oppressively or abusively. In the world it is common to see a man who has a position of power exercise his authority oppressively. Often they manipulate people for their own benefit. But Jesus said to his disciples, “Not so with you, Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.” (Mt 10:43) Jesus showed the example by washing the disciple’s feet as their servant even though he was the Lord and Master of them. When we follow Jesus’ such example by humbly serving God’s flock, the final reward will be truly great beyond our imagination. It is to receive the crown of glory that will never fade away when our Chief Shepherd Jesus appears. On that day, all our tears and toils for shepherd life will be rewarded and we will enjoy everlasting glory with Christ. Not only that, while we are serving as shepherds of God’s flock, we will grow in Jesus’ image; the image of Good Shepherd! What a wonderful and most honorable life it is! God wants all believers to grow in the image of Jesus because that is what we were called for.

**Second, clothe yourselves with humility (5-14)**

In verse 5, Peter shifts his attention to a different group of people with the phrase, “In the same way…” For the church to grow healthy, not only the role of elders but also the role of younger people is important. So, Peter briefly instructs younger people, “…submit yourselves to your elders.” In times past and present, young people tend to be rebellious toward authority. This is actually all human beings’ fundamental sinful nature regardless of age. Just one thing is clear. In general, younger people have had just shorter opportunity than elders in learning discipline for the submission to God. So, they need to learn submission to grow spiritually mature. When young people submit to godly elders, they are actually submitting to God’s authority. As they do so, they can grow spiritually more and may even become good elders or pastors in the future.

Beginning in verse 5b, Peter gives general instruction to all believers. **First of all, he exhorted** **them to be humble**: “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.” Why being humble is so important? It is because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Satan became Satan because of his pride. The first man Adam fell because of his pride. Jesus could become our Savior because of his humility. St. Augustine emphasized the most important virtue of Christians; first, humility; second, humility, and third, humility, too. In verse 6, Peter says; when we humble ourselves before God under his mighty hand, he may lift us up in his due time. One misconception that some people may have about humility is that they relate humility to low self-esteem or inferior complex. This is wrong idea. Humility has nothing to do with low self-esteem or inferior complex or cowardice. Fundamentally speaking, humility is related to whom we trust in or rely on. In original Greek, verse 7 which says, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you,” is not a new sentence, but a continuation of verse 6 by means of the participle “casting.” Proper humility is always attained by casting all of our anxieties on God because he cares for us. When anxiety comes, proud people are the ones who rely on themselves or others or things of the world rather than God. There is no submission to God in them. On the other hand, humble people come to God in prayer casting all their worry on God when anxiety comes to them because they trust in God and rely on him. This is their practical submission to God. This is humility.

**Finally, Peter exhorted the believers to be alert and of sober mind** (8a). “Be alert and of sober mind” is repeated in Peter’s letter 3 times (1:13; 4:7) It is because our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. The devil tempts us in various ways to make us lose our focus on Jesus. Sometimes, the devil appears us in an appearance of angels, sometimes in a very sneaky way like snake, sometimes like a roaring lion to intimidate us to make us surrender to him not to God. In any case, one thing we should remember is that we should resist the devil. How can we resist the devil? By our own strength? Of course not! In our own strength, we will fail always. The devil is stronger and smarter than us always. Only by faith in Jesus we can defeat the devil. When we are tempted and attacked by the devil, we should remember that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. We are not alone. We are surrounded by great cloud-like pilgrims who had walked (Hebrews12:1) and are walking now in the same kind of sufferings.

Personally, this year I had a wake-up call from God when I received an email from Dr. Henry Kim in January. He recommended me to be a NA representative member. Later M. Luke Hong who is one of the elders in NA UBF ministry sent an email that I was approved to be elected as a NA representative member. I trembled in holy fear because I knew that I was not worthy to be chosen and at the same time I knew what it meant to be a representative member (it means “be shepherds of God’s flock”). Frankly speaking, I was losing my confidence in serving God’s campus mission. I have had health issue, difficulty in raising two children in godly manner and serving young students with word of God. Sometimes, Satan attacked me that I would not be able to continue to serve campus mission and I would be kicked out by God miserably without any fruit. But God did not give me up. He still showed his love and hope for me. I cannot deny Jesus’ life-saving grace for me. This grace is enough reason why I should and want to give my life to him. I have undeniable God’s calling that my life should be used for young people who do not know Jesus and need to grow in Jesus. So, I pray continually for all the brothers and sisters in our ministry with love of God so that somehow, I may participate in building up God’s loving community and bringing more wandering souls to God.

In conclusion, from today’s passage we learn that all church leaders are encouraged to grow as good shepherds of God’s flock in genuine love of Christ Jesus by being good examples for God’s flock and also learn humility by casting all our anxiety on God trusting that he cares for us. May God help us to look up to Jesus our true Good Shepherd who was willing to lay down his own life for us and humbly served us by washing our dirty feet as an example so that we too may follow his footstep! Amen.

**Big Idea: Let’s grow as good shepherds of God’s flock in humility!**