

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
September 10, 2017

## Feed My Sheep

1 Peter 5:1-4

5:1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:

5:2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

5:3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

5:4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

We've been studying the First Epistle of Peter since last year. Today we'll study the first part of the last chapter. This part is the command to the church leaders, and teaches us about "ministry," "attitude," and "reward" of the church leaders. Let's learn each one.

### **1. Ministry of Elder**

The church leaders are called "elders" in today's verses. "Elders" literally means "older people." The word also means "leaders" in Jewish society. They were called "elders" even though they were still young. Since the church was born in Judea, the church adapted the same word, "elders," for their leaders.

What is the ministry of the elder? It's "to shepherd" the flock. The word "to shepherd" as a verb has the same word stem as the word,

“flock” or “shepherd” has in the original language. This means to control and raise livestock. The job of stock raising was not respected, but the word was used for the governing power. The kings of Israel was called “shepherd,” and they “shepherd” their kingdom. The authority given to the elders was almost same as the authority of king who ruled his kingdom. Elders governed the church with the authority.

Elders were also called as “shepherds,” “pastors,” or “teachers” since they shepherd the flock. The church leaders are called as “overseers,” “pastors,” and “elders” in the Bible. I think these words pointed the different roles of the single ministry in the early church, though each word pointed the different ministries later in the church history. The church leaders were called as “overseers” when they supervised the church. They were called as “pastors and teachers” when they taught the Word. And, they were called as “elders” when they led the church.

The Greek word of “elder” became “presbyter” in Latin, and the English word, “priest” came from the Latin word. Therefore, the church leaders serve God as priests as well as they serve people through their leadership. They are given the spiritual ministry by worshiping God, praying to God, and asking God’s will with other church members.

We believe the priesthood of all believers as it is written in 1 Peter 2:9. All believers are given priestly ministry. If so, and the word, “priest” came from the word, “elder,” all Christians are also given the ministry of elder. The teaching of priesthood of the believers does not deny the professional priests, elders, pastors, and overseers. The professional people work for the entire body of Christ, but the

believers do the ministry of the priests and elders for the people who they serve for. For example, Small group leaders and Sunday School teachers take care of their groups or classes, and pray for the members or students everyday. And, parents pray for the family members as their priests. They also work for the family members' growth of faith as their elders. . . of the family members

Therefore the teachings shown in these verses are given not only to the professional church leaders, but to all believers. Let us remember that all believers are given the ministry of priests and elders. Let us learn about the attitude of the ministry.

## **2. Attitude of Ministry**

Verses 2 and 3 teach three points about the attitude of serving the church. First is “not under compulsion, but willingly”, second is “not for shameful gain, but eagerly” and third is “not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock”.

The first teaching of “not under compulsion, but willingly” teaches the basis of serving the church. If you do serve the church out of heavy responsibility, then there is no joy doing it. If you do it willingly, then you will have joy. But it does not mean the serving the church comes without any responsibility. The serving the church is your responsibility, which is a sacred responsibility given by Christ. In church, we serve God as well as serve each other using the gifts and talents that God has given to us; however, you don't do it just for your pleasure. It is not good that you pick what you like or what you want to do. The service for the church is to fill in what lacks in church with what you can do. Therefore, sometimes you have to do what you are

not good at or when you don't feel like doing. In most of the cases, you begin it with responsibility. It is Christian's responsibility to fill in what is missing in the body of Christ, therefore, serving the church remains to be responsible. But if you take it as "precious responsibility given by the Lord" and do it willingly, then your service for the church will not become heavy responsibility but a pleasant responsibility.

The second teaching "not for shameful gain, but eagerly" teaches the purpose of the service. The service in church is done without monetary compensation, except pastors and church staff. Therefore, we don't usually do it for money. But occasionally, benefits other than money can be a purpose. One of them is compliment and recognition from other people. It is good that people thank for someone's good service. We need to appreciate other people's service. But if you do it only to get compliments from others, then it is not going to please Lord even if it pleases people.

Most of the voluntary work are not recognized by others. In fact, works for the Kingdom of God are supported by many services which people don't recognize. It is sad if no one recognize you, no one thank you, or no one give you kind words. But even in these situations, we would like to feel joy and satisfaction of serving God.

The third teaching "not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" does not mean leaders at church don't have any authority. As the words "elder" and "to shepherd" have meaning of "ruler" and "to govern", church leaders are handed authority from Christ. But they cannot dominate other people with authority. The leaders are taught to be obedient to authority of Christ

and serve others by being examples to the flock.

This is what Jesus taught in Mark 10:42-45, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” This is what Brother Armour calls “Samurai Verse” and is also called “Servant Leadership” in English. Those who know how to serve are true leaders.

When Dr. Schweitzer gave a lecture in the States, there were a lot of questions. One of them was “what are the three most important things for teaching children?” Dr. Schweitzer answered “First is to become a role model, second is to become a role model, third is also to become a role model.” It is often said that children don’t listen to their parents but they imitate what they do. When you want to be a role model, you cannot be a perfect role model. But even if you are not a perfect model, if you look up God and ask for His forgiveness, children will see your attitude and they become to trust God. When we become God’s servants and follow Him as a role model, then we can better guide our children.

### **3. Reward of Ministry**

Lastly, we would like to look at “Reward” of service. In verse 4 it is written, “And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

Every Christian has been appointed as a “little Shepherd” in each

position or situation by Jesus Christ, who is the chief Shepherd. Therefore, Christians should be accountable to Jesus Christ, the chief Shepherd in their service. Moreover, the evaluation of the service is given by the chief Shepherd. In this world, you might hear the people's voice, saying, "That pastor is great!" "That church is doing very well!" "That family is blessed!" and so forth. On the other hand, we might hear opposite opinions. But these evaluations are made by human. All motivations and results of service will be evaluated by Christ. What we need to seek is, to do the ministry that Christ has given us with the right motivation, that is "Love".

In John 21:15-17, there is an account that Jesus asked Peter, saying, "Do you love me?" Jesus was the Savior and Peter was the one who should be saved by Him. Jesus was the Master and Peter was his disciple. And, Jesus is the Peter was a servant. Jesus could ask questions such as "Do you believe in me?" or "Do you follow me?", and that should be enough. However, Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" He asked Peter "love" that supported his trust and obedience. Why Jesus asked "love" to Peter. Because Jesus was about to give the ministry to feed His flock. We can not do this ministry, that is to "shepherd the flock of God" even if we had various spiritual gifts. We can not do it with human ability or skills. It should be done by "love."

In John 10:11, Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." What Jesus has done for his flock is loving them. By this love, Jesus gave his life to his flock for feeding them by his life. Therefore, if you are those who are serving church, the flock of God, you should know that you are loved by Christ and answer his love..

To the question, “Do you love me?”, Peter answered, “Yes, Lord. You know that I love you.” Then, the Lord replied, “Shepherd the flock of mine.” And he entrusted his flock to Peter. When Jesus asks us to serve his church, he would ask us the same question. The Lord always asks us the same question in any services. The One who asks, “Do you love me?” is the One who loves you. Lord gives us the ministry of serving the church because he trusts us. Let us answer to his love with our pure love. Let us answer to his trust with our sincere faith. Lord Jesus loves us, and we love Lord Jesus. There is no greater relationship than this. The perfect and best gift of God is love. And love is the highest action that only human can do. Let’s keep doing the given service with this love. Then, the reward of service will be given to us.

Christ, the chief Shepherd, will give “the unfading crown of glory” to the those who completed their service and love for the Lord. The crown might be honor to us. However, this “glory” may be Jesus’ glory at the same time. We see the glory of Christ and worship the Lord. This is the most blessing and indispensable glory to us. No matter what the service is, let us do it for the glory of Lord now and in the coming day of Christ. Let us serve the Lord seeking his glory..

### **(Prayer)**

Dear Father God, we have received our ministry from Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord showed us how to serve You through his role model,, and Jesus will reward us by himself. Please make us put our eyes on Lord Jesus Christ, the chief Shepherd, and serve his flock. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.