**Humble Servants**

Based on [1 Peter 5](https://biblia.com/books/esv/1Pe5)

Preached on April 10, 2019

Lenten Midweek 5

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

St. Peter wrote his first epistle to the “elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” From the beginning, the one true catholic and apostolic church has been dispersed…*scattered* throughout the world as exiles. But the church is still a whole,--one in mind, one in spirit, one in baptism, one in faith, one in the Lord Jesus Christ. **Just as the soldiers divided Jesus’ outer garments, but his inner tunic remained seamless, so too the church may be scattered outwardly, but is inwardly united by the seamless doctrine and faith delivered once for all to the saints.**

This seamless doctrine is spread across both time and space. This teaching is not only the same from one side of the world to the other, it is the same today as it was 2000 years ago in the time of Christ and the Apostles. The doctrine is given in Holy Scripture, including for our meditation today -- The First Epistle of the Apostle Peter.

In Chapter 5, the final chapter, Peter urges humility. This is a tricky teaching…and I mean it in this way. Though we are all equal in Christ…but Christ was not an anarchist. To be humble is to renounce power, but there are still, what the cynical would call “power relationships” that Christ wants us to observe and to obey. This is not only in the government, at work and in the home. This is also in the church.

So, Peter addresses the ministers or leaders of the congregation. There is no one universal title for those who have been called to ***the office of the holy ministry***. But, Peter calls them presbyters…“elders”. Even a young minister in the church is an “Elder”, which means “older”. So the minister is to be respected, the same way you are to “respect your elders.” Peter also uses the verb “shepherd”, to describe the minister. So we use it as a noun and for a title: “Pastor,” which is Latin for shepherd. The minister has a flock under his charge, and he is to pastor them. He is to guide, direct, lead, exhort, rebuke, encourage…like a shepherd. All this he must do according to God’s Word, and insodoing, Christ is the one really doing the shepherding.

Such power can be abused, and so Peter gives limit. The Pastor is to serve willingly and eagerly…not as though his flock is a burden to him, not as though it is “work”, but lovingly as a calling.

In this way, he is to serve his calling as an amateur. An amateur is one who practices something because he loves it, not because he get’s paid for it. Yes, the laborer deserves his wages, and the minister should gain his livelihood from the gospel; but he should not seek a “career in ministry.” He should not be a “professional”…as among lawyers, academic professors, doctors, etc. He should not have a guild and a union. He should preach the gospel because he loves the gospel, and if the people care to hear it and receive the ministry God has called them to receive from him, they will make sure his family doesn’t starve. // If not, if the gospel isn’t as important to them as the other luxuries they purchase or investments they make…he may rightfully kick the dust off his feet and relocate to where the word is appreciated. He may not change the gospel, in order to make it something entertaining or relevant to goats. That is a hired hand, working for ***shameful gain*** rather than for love of the gospel that saved him. No, a shepherd has a labour of love.

Finally, a pastor is to be an example of humility to the flock. He should not be “domineering over those in his charge”. This doesn’t mean that he must soften God’s law, or tell them their sins aren’t that bad. This doesn’t mean that he changes doctrine in order to please the masses, because he’s just one guy. No, in all things in the church he has authority, and the flock is in his charge.

Obey your leaders, they will give an account to God for your souls. They will be judged by a higher standard than you. If you believe that, then you will not envy a pastor’s authority, you will respect it. If you believe that, you will not scoff or try to fire a pastor—even if he is domineering. If he is domineering, all the worse for him. Pray for his soul, because Jesus says God will give him a millstone necklace and cast him into the sea.

There are three sins that ministers are to watch out for in themselves…laziness, greed, popishness. God will judge him, not you. And God will not lose one of his elect, not one single sheep from his flock, due to a domineering pastor. But God sends you one, and you cast him out…Jesus says “whoever rejects you rejects me.” Don’t fight over power, suffer if you must but respect the authority God has ordained.

The Christian life is one of humility and joyful acceptance to the vocation you have been called. So Peter says: “Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for **God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble**”. And St. Paul gives instruction in humility in the example of Christ, who, though he was equal with God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking on the form of a servant…a minister.

And pastors are “ministers” that means servants. Jesus says he did not come to be served but to serve. So too, we are to count others as more significant than ourselves. In Christ, you are equal to all pastors and all Christians. Even so, do not insist on your equality, but upon your lowliness. **When someone receives more than you, do not demand your rights, but be grateful for any crumbs that fall from the masters table.** One crumb of eternal life is worth more than anyone’s pride. God will not condemn you for suffering unjustly, but he will condemn the proud. God will not despise those who are mistreated; but he will despise those who demand more for themselves than what they bother to provide for others. Often children will complain that their brother or sister got more of some good thing than they did. However, when they are the ones who get more, they don’t complain at all. Be like children in faith, but not in sin.

**6Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.**

Be sober minded. Do not be intoxicated with unexamined emotions or spirits, but keep your mind on the Logos, the clear and convincing word of God. Resist the devil, don’t listen to his lies. He says you don’t deserve to suffer. You do, but you do not suffer for your sins…you suffer for your faith…which is not a burden, but a joy to those who believe; even as Jesus Christ embraced the cross, scorning the shame, on account of the joy set before him.

So too, **the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**