

## Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Tempe, AZ

Pentecost 4

Sermon by Pastor Christopher Pflughoeft

### ***What does a good pastor look like?***

— Peter 5:1-4

*<sup>1</sup>Therefore, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and as one who also shares in the glory that is about to be revealed, I appeal to the elders among you: <sup>2</sup>Shepherd God's flock that is among you, serving as overseers, not grudgingly but willingly, as God desires, not because you are greedy for money but because you are eager to do it. <sup>3</sup>Do not lord it over those entrusted to your care, but be examples for the flock. <sup>4</sup>And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive an unfading crown of glory.*

Who's your favorite pastor? Now, I am not being fully serious with this question... because I don't want you all to hurt my feelings. I grew up in a large congregation. My church had three pastors. While in confirmation classes, I recall discussing this question with my fellow young Christians.

Some would say Pastor H. He was a jovial, older pastor with an obnoxious laugh. Some would say Pastor K. He was a serious man, but he was clear and caring. These were the two pastors that I had for most of my young life. When we were a little older, Pastor S. joined the pastorate. He was younger and a big fan of Star Wars. Some would say he was their favorite.

So, who is your favorite pastor at Emmanuel? Perhaps, it is Pastor Buchholz. He's smart. He's clear. He has a presence that calls for respect. Yet, he is kind and caring. Perhaps, it is Pastor Pufahl. He came to Emmanuel helping underlay structure and cast visions. He loves to serve the congregation with his varied gifts and abilities. Perhaps, it is Pastor Pautz. He has loved this congregation for a long time. He's the definition of a house going pastor. He loves to connect with the members, and to connect them with one another.

As one evaluates such a question, 'who is my favorite pastor?' First, I hope the question would be done in good fun. I hope that you would appreciate the gifts of all. I hope you would avoid then showing favoritism. Although, this is one of the blessings of a congregation with a four-headed pastorate. There is one pastor that you may lean toward more and that is okay.

There is a better question than, 'who is your favorite pastor?' The better question is one that asks what makes a good pastor. Today, I want us to evaluate, '**What does a good pastor look like?**'

When you consider who your favorite pastor was, I bet you had certain criteria upon which you made your judgement. Maybe, you thought about who delivers sermons in the way that best connects with you. Maybe, you thought about who was there for certain events in your life. Maybe, you thought about who has certain shared interests with you. So, what were your criteria?

For many people, the criteria are not always the important things. Sometimes, it is silly or less important things like his age, looks, and personality. "He's tall, and I think a pastor should be tall." "He dresses well, and I think a pastor should dress well." "He tells the best jokes, and I think a pastor should be funny."

One of the purposes of us pastors wearing robes is to deflect from the personality of the man. When we are up front leading the service, you cannot see many of these things. The robe hides the man. The robe is white with just a head showing. This can make you think about Jesus, who is the head of the church and clothes us in the robes of righteousness.

Ultimately though, we cannot pretend that the man serving as pastor is unimportant. This is because the Bible addresses and answers the question, **what does a good pastor look like?**

To examine this question, we are going to look to the words of Peter inspired by the Holy Spirit. In this section, Peter gives clear indications of what a pastor should be like. Let's examine Peter's exhortations to the pastors now.

First, Peter addresses these individuals as elders. Now, let's not necessarily assume this means that they were older men. Actually, this title was an honorific one. These men that served the congregation were respected. Notice that Peter calls himself a fellow elder here. Peter does not hold himself above them. Instead, these individuals held important roles in the congregations as they served God's people.

Peter's second description of himself is a major one as it applies to himself specifically, yet in a way has importance for a description of all elders. Peter was a witness of Christ's suffering. Now, you could look at the word, 'witness,' in a few different senses. First, he was a witness in that he saw Jesus' suffering. He witnessed what Christ did to save. Second, he was a witness in that he proclaimed this to others. Third, he was a witness to this suffering as he suffered himself for the name of Christ. Peter's role of witnessing to the suffering of Christ can certainly be applied to pastors.

The first appeal that Peter has for the elders is that they '*shepherd God's flock.*' When Peter wrote this, I wonder if he was thinking about what Jesus said to him. Jesus said to Peter, '*Feed my sheep.*' Jesus called Peter to shepherd God's flock. This is what Peter was instructing his fellow pastors to do. They were to shepherd God's flock. That's what pastor means. It means shepherd.

So, think about what a shepherd does. Shepherds do two key things in watching over the sheep. They feed them, and they protect them from danger. Think of what the shepherd does for his sheep in Psalm 23, "*He causes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters.*" (Psalm 23:2) The shepherd brings the sheep to the location at which they are fed and drink. The pastor does this by feeding the sheep with God's Word and sacrament. The shepherd protects the sheep. Think of what the Good Shepherd does as opposed to the hired servants. Jesus said regarding himself, as the Good Shepherd, "*The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired man, who is not a shepherd, does not own the sheep. He sees the wolf coming, leaves the sheep, and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them. Because he works for money, he does not care about the sheep.*" (John 10:11-13) The pastors protect the flock from the dangers of false doctrine and sin. They do this by sounding out warnings from God's law. In this role as shepherd, Jesus operates as the ultimate example for the pastors.

The reminder that Peter has for these shepherds is that those under their care are God's flock. The pastor is called to care for them. Ultimately though, the flock is God's. And God calls the pastor to watch over his flock. According to Peter, the pastor is to then serve God's flock willingly. The pastor is happy to take on this responsibility. He is not doing it simply because he must be the pastor. He is willing, not forced.

Peter also has descriptions of the pastor's moral character. In this regard, Peter says that the pastor is not to pursue dishonest gain. They are not in the job for the money. Instead, they serve faithfully. Also, the pastors are to be examples in all areas of life for the flock. The pastor is to give an example of the Christian life. Often people say that they want the pastor to be relatable and normal. Let's remember that relatable and normal cannot mean that the pastor is wrapped up in sin and not living in an exemplary way.

**What does a good pastor look like?** This is what the pastors do. They watch over God's flock. They feed them with God's Word and Sacrament. They protect them from the dangers of false teachers and sin. They do so willingly as ones called to serve God's flock. They do so as examples in their Christian living. They do so with Jesus, the Good Shepherd, as their example. This is how Peter describes a good pastor. Other sections of Scripture add more thoughts.

So, our congregation has many active, former, and retired pastors. Therefore, this text can hit us in a different way. This is appropriate. Consider your service as a pastor. Did you faithfully feed God's flock? Maybe sometimes the sermons or Bible studies were lacking. Maybe sometimes you were busy feeding them your thoughts and feelings. Maybe you were busy feeding them the fake food of pious sounding thoughts. Maybe because of your own laziness, the flock did not receive a full meal. Did you faithfully protect God's flock? Or did you not warn against false teachings because you didn't want to kill any sacred cows? Or did you not protect them from sin because you did not want to upset families? Did you serve faithfully? Did you serve with the Good Shepherd as your ultimate example?

As I examine myself according to the instructions for pastors, I see where I have failed. I see my sins. I recognize that I have done what I thought is best rather than what God calls me to do. I have served begrudgingly, and not always willingly. I have failed to always be the good pastor Christ called me to be.

Most of you do not serve as pastors though. There is still application for you. Consider again what you look for in a pastor. Think about what you think a pastor should be. Do you desire a pastor that serves you with the Word and Sacrament, serves as an example in his living, and points to Jesus? Or do you value much less important things? Do you value personality, hobbies, and political leanings more? If that is what we value more in a pastor, our desires are wrong. Then, we desire something less than one sent by Christ to shepherd us.

How about when it comes to being shepherded? Do you welcome your pastor's service? It is difficult for a pastor to shepherd you if you regularly skip church. It is difficult for a pastor to shepherd you if you reject his efforts to connect with you. It is difficult for a pastor to shepherd you if you ignore his words. Ultimately, this is a big deal not because you hurt my feelings or those of another pastor. This is a big deal because your pastor is called to serve as an under-shepherd of Jesus. These pastors are called by Jesus. These pastors serve you God's Word. Such an attitude is disrespecting Jesus, which is sin.

So, to both the ministers and laity, when we look at pastoral ministry in a disrespectful way, we are disrespecting Christ. When you don't serve faithfully... when you refused to be served... you are sinning against God. You are disrespecting the Holy Spirit who works through the Word. This is sin.

So, listen, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. When you fail to appreciate it, Jesus still gives you his pastors to serve you. They feed you with the Word and Sacrament. They protect you from the dangers of sin, death, and the devil. They do this by pointing you to what God has done to forgive you and save you. The Father sent his Son for you. The Son lived a perfect life for you. Jesus died on the cross to forgive you for your disrespect of him and all your sins. Jesus rose from the grave. This is the wonderful truth of what Jesus your Good Shepherd did to save you. He will give you the unfading crown of glory.

So, **what does a good pastor look like?** Jesus. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. His pastors are called to point people to his love. So, it doesn't matter if the pastor is short or tall... likes sports or not... sings well or poorly... he is called to shepherd God's flock by bringing them to Jesus.

Finally, young men of this church, I want you to consider this question, **what does a good pastor look like?** A good pastor could look like you. Amen.