

Sermon on **1 Peter 5:1-11** for 4th Sunday after Pentecost 6.28.20
St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church – New Ulm, MN – Pastor N. Scharf

This is a special time of year in our church body. Recent graduates of our seminary and college start to serve at their churches and schools. July 1 is a regular start date. Here at St. Paul's we have been regularly installing called workers in our church and school these past few years, myself included in that number, as well as yearly interns from the college who serve here for a time. This weekend we install some men into positions of leadership in our church. Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd of the sheep, gives godly leaders and ministers to his church to bless us. The Apostle Peter addresses pastors especially in his words before us today, but his words apply to all our ministers, teachers, and leaders here at St. Paul's in the various scopes of service. Those who serve and are served:

Pray for godly ministers.

Humble leaders.

Humble people.

Give thanks to our Gracious God.

Pray for godly ministers. *"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"* (NIV 2011). This isn't easy. Peter and the congregations he wrote to were suffering persecution and it was only going to get worse (time of Nero in Rome). Tough decisions, antagonist government, and the devil on the prowl meant mental, physical and spiritual suffering was going to continue. Peter addresses the leaders and shows that he too has this important privilege of serving God's people. Peter witnessed Christ's suffering for us. That is a comfort in the sense that Christ's suffering really won forgiveness, eternal life, and peace for us undeserving sinners. What is also a comfort though is Peter shows that suffering is not weird for the Christian. When we live our lives fighting against sin, showing love and patience when we are mistreated by others, and we struggle trying to live godly lives in an ungodly world, we are not alone. It happened to Jesus, our Savior. We follow in some great footsteps. And what a comfort – when Jesus returns in all his glory, we too will share in that glory.

Pray for godly ministers. Humble leaders. *"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. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."* This congregation, this group of Christians is God's flock. We are God's sheep and lambs. Jesus *laid down his life for us* and took his life back up again. The LORD *"makes us lie down in green pastures, leads us beside quiet waters, restores our souls."* Yes, you call me and some of your other ministers "Pastor," which means "shepherd." Really, we are under-shepherds of the Good Shepherd. What a comfort for all of us. What a privilege to be a part of and serve *God's flock*.

When you find yourself in a position of leadership and overseeing, especially pastors, staff ministers, teachers, elders, council and board members, Peter shows us our attitude is extremely important. And people can pick up on it. Are we doing this because we are guilted into it? That's not a good reason. Personally, did I have to become a pastor because dad or mom wanted? They encouraged me to consider it, but left the door open for me to choose freely how I wanted to and in sanctified wisdom how I felt best to serve. God doesn't want you to feel like this is drudgery or slavery. When you serve and he equips you to lead, let it be because you want to do it. It's not that you aren't going to have bad days or stressful days or you'll never meet failure. Serve because this is good work our gracious God gives you to do and you're excited to serve. You know he'll help you. We don't do it to get rich. A professor once told us at Seminary what his dad told him. He said if you are going into ministry to get rich, you are stupid. It's not a reason to go into ministry. Yes, a congregation has a solemn obligation to provide for the needs of those who serve them with a decent standard of living, and you do it joyfully and regularly, thank you. But a minister has the solemn obligation not to be motivated by money and to guard against that. We don't lord our positions over those we serve, like a husband acting as a unloving dictator in the home. We dare not be popish as we aim to serve and equip the saints of God. Give God's Word and let your service to others and your care for them speak for itself and like a letter press you will be an example that others want to imitate and follow.

The Chief Shepherd cares about his under-shepherds and what they do and he cares about his flock and what they do. When he returns, coming on the clouds, he brings a *crown of glory* – his gift to each one of us. There is nothing better than that. There is no better gift of his grace. There is no better reward any of us could think of in time or eternity than to have the king of kings let us wear *the crown of glory*. **Pray for godly ministers. Humble leaders. Humble people.**

In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." Pride ruins everything doesn't it? Since Adam and Even thought they had found a better way than God's and reached out and took that fruit in the Garden of Eden, you and I have been falling for the devil's trick ever since. Pride peeks its head out from the pulpit position as the minister or leader complains about the people they serve. The attendance numbers are not what I'd like, even before CoVid 19 hit we are just about 100 down a weekend on average from just a couple years ago. The only supposed conclusion must be that My people must be spiritually immature. There are many who don't give offerings here. My people must be worshipping money and things and putting wants first or mismanaging their money. I prepare a Bible Class and not that many people come, or as many as I feel should be there. My people must not care about God's Word. My sermon was awesome and nobody said anything. People must not have been listening. While some of these are legitimate concerns for the flock of God, my conclusions that my pride jumps to are not warranted, and in some cases not true in the least. Pride robs us of joy and blinds us to the good things God has given us and is doing amongst his people, and the slow growth we can't always see on the surface. Pray for humble leaders and for more of them.

Pride putters out of the pew too, doesn't it? I also sit in the pew. Communion ware is up front and the thought crosses the mind – This service is going to be looooooonnnnggggg. Oh, they are preaching, or presiding? Worship is going to be boring, or it's going to be great. Oh, this person is playing, well then worship will be good. I don't like these songs. The story is told of a parishioner who came out of worship and told the pastor, "I didn't like the songs today." The pastor told the parishioner, "Well, that's ok, we weren't worshipping you." That didn't happen here, at least I don't think it did. I don't like that person over there. Worship isn't that important. It's not worth the hassle. While service length, excellence in worship and practicality in worship are important, our pride quickly degenerates into pettiness, self-centeredness, blindness to God's gifts and downright neglect of the great things God gives in our time here in worship through his Word. Pride robs us of the opportunity to speak and deliver our thanks to God and build up our fellow believers. Pray for **humble people**.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers through the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. Peter shows us why we humble ourselves and are alert and of sober mind. We have God. In his great love and mercy he has redeemed us, sending his Son to take our place, suffer for the punishment of our sins, and die. God raised Jesus from the dead to prove our forgiveness won and that God is the only God, a God of love, our God. He is mighty to save. Our Savior is mighty to rule. When he allows suffering in our lives of whatever type, especially that of persecution, we humble ourselves. We know and trust he will lift us up and deliver us. We humble ourselves before him by casting our cares on him. As the song says, "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong, they/we are weak, but he is strong." He cares for us. He makes us a concern for him – our day to day. **Humble people – we need God!**

We have big enemies, the devil – the accuser, who throws temptation in our path and makes us afraid by rubbing our sins in our face. It is like a heard of sheep bedded down for the night, and on the edges you hear the roar. The tempter is looking to devour you, gobble you up whole. That's his only desire. The devil is never your friend. He would tempt you to be scared of suffering for your faith or for doing what's right and try to tempt you to avoid it by going along, by sinning, simply so he can accuse you and drag you away. We have a big enemy, but our God is mighty and his mighty hand has conquered the devil, taken the sting away from death, and he gives us strength to resist the devil and stand firm. We are not alone. Your fellow believers go through the same things.

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. You have a **Gracious God**. He puts a limit on your suffering. Heaven is your home for all eternity. And he goes with you through everything. When you are weak, he is strong. He restores you, makes you strong, firm and steadfast. Praise him for his love for you in Christ. Pray to him, humbling yourselves before him by giving him your cares and worries. You will share his glory. **Give thanks to our Gracious God.**

It's a great time of year to **Pray for Godly Ministers**. Pray God give us **Humble Leaders**. Pray God make us **Humble People**. And thank God for being our **Gracious God**. Amen.