

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Recognizing True Shepherds

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

Code: 80-270

This is, as I said earlier, a very important week for us and I have been thinking much about how I might prepare you as a congregation and my own heart for the week ahead of us, and I wasn't sure what I would say to you this morning. In fact, it isn't the text that's printed in the Grace Today. That happens occasionally because they call me on Wednesday and say, what's the text, and if I don't know I just give them one and figure out later what I'm going to do.

But as I thought about it and meditated upon the responsibility that we have as a church, coming up in the Shepherd's Conference I was really drawn to a portion of Scripture in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. It's a simple portion of Scripture, it's uncomplicated, it's a practical portion of Scripture and I just want the Lord to use it to prepare all of our hearts for what is ahead of us.

1 Thessalonians chapter 5, just two verses, verses 12 and 13 and this certainly by way of reminder, because these are matters about which we know what God desires, but I would like to awaken you to these again. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, "But we request of you brethren that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work, live in peace with one another."

Nothing would make me more joyful, more satisfied, more glad before the Lord than that all of these who are coming to this conference would feel from this congregation appreciation, loving esteem, and high regard. Many of these, if not most who are coming, as is true in all the lives of those who are the Shepherd's God's flock are dealing with disappointment and wounds, and griefs, in some cases abuse. Rarely does a week go by in my life when I am not involved personally with some pastor who is feeling the agonies of an unappreciative, unloving, even cruel and abusive congregation; seems to go sadly with the territory.

Even Jonathan Edwards, one of the great preachers in the history of the church, maybe the greatest theologian in America's history, certainly the main instrument of God in the great awakening in America, our greatest revival historically. Jonathan Edwards pastored the same congregation for 23 years and through those 23 years while they were hearing the truth of God from the greatest theological mind in the world at that time, they were unappreciative and in the 23rd year they ran him out of the church and did everything they could to destroy his reputation so no other church would call him as pastor and he ended up his life ministry with a little bit more than a dozen Indians, speaking to them about the very basic things of the Christian faith. After all that time, all that profound and

blessed preaching they threw him out of the church.

I read that story some years ago and it was such a tragic story that it never has left my conscious mind, and I always think too of Spurgeon, the greatest Baptist preacher of his day, the greatest preacher of his day period, his sermons would be preached and then he would edit them and they would be on every ship they said that left England and they would go all around the world; there was no one even like him in the world, yet he was thrown out of the Baptist union and the vote was made to do that and it was seconded by his associate pastor who was his brother.

Talk about wounded in the house of your friends. He never really recovered physically from that, died a premature death, and I think it was contributed to in some measure by the severe disappointment. It doesn't seem to matter how gifted, doesn't seem to matter how faithful, how diligent, how hard working a pastor and a shepherd may be, it's amazing how people can treat him with cruelty.

While I certainly don't anticipate a fate like Edwards, I don't anticipate a fate like Spurgeon's, I'm not at the same time impervious to that. I do understand, have understood, continue to understand what it is to be criticized inside the church. What it is to be accused and criticized from outside the church. I understand what it is to be wounded in the house of your friends, I understand what betrayal means. Anybody in Christian ministry does; the enemy of course of the church, Satan himself does anything he can to orchestrate that kind of thing on people's own pride and self will, self love, stubbornness, rebellion contribute to it as well.

There have been moments I confess when leaving Grace Church seemed very attractive; I didn't. Maybe because no one was asking me to go anywhere else and I'm a practical man at the end of the day, but I don't think I ever seriously contemplated leaving, and it's because I love my calling from God so much and my calling is not just to the preaching of the Word of God, it is to the preaching of the Word of God to you in this place. I can't divorce what I've been called to do from where I've been called to do it, and I guess at this point I've outlived my critics. They're gone and I'm a survivor.

But all of it is, for me, a fulfillment of life the likes of which I never could have imagined. I love being a pastor. In fact, I was eating at Carl's Jr. one day having lunch, I live the high life, and I was asked a question about why I love being a pastor and so I did the napkin outline. I began to write down reasons why I love being a pastor. I came up with ten; I don't know why there probably could be more or perhaps even some combined to make less, but let me just tell you what I wrote down that day.

Why I love being a pastor, in spite of the challenges and difficulties, number one I love being a pastor because the church is the only institution Christ promised to build and bless. Christ is only doing one thing in the world; I know that might be shocking to say, maybe sounds a little oversimplified but it's actually the truth. Christ is only doing one thing in the world and that is He is building His church.

God is, through the Holy Spirit, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ calling out a people for His name. A part of history that matters is that the redemptive part, all the rest of human history is simply back dropped, it's dÃ©cor, it's the staging for the real drama which is the drama of redemption, and how exhilarating is it to be in the middle of that? To be a part of the only thing that Christ is doing in the world, and that is building His church.

If I want to be at the epicenter of where God is moving then I need to be in the church. God's purpose in the world is to call to Himself a redeemed people who will live to the praise of His glory, to build His church, to build the body and there is no greater calling possible, conceivable then to be a servant of Christ, an under shepherd in the church. It is of great comfort and great encouragement, and great joy, and produces great gratitude in my heart that God has given me a small part to play in the work of Christ to build His church. I wouldn't stoop to anything else.

Sometimes people will say to me, if you weren't a preacher what would you be? There is no answer to that question. There is no other thought in my mind. I couldn't be anything else, I can't do anything else, nothing else interests me. Sometimes people say, when will you retire? That's inconceivable to me, what would I do? Not be at the heart of what God is doing in the world. Take a vacation from that? It's this overwhelming privilege of being engaged in the building of the church, being an under shepherd under Christ. It makes me love being a pastor.

Secondly, I love being a pastor because the corporate functions of the body of Christ all take place in the church. I love being a pastor because I want to be with God's people, I want to be with God's people when they come to the Lord's Table, I want to be with God's people in baptism, I want to be with God's people when they sing hymns, and I want to be there when they worship God, I want to be with God's people when they pray. I want to be a part of the growth of the church, the edification of the church. I want to be ministered to by God's people as they exercise their spiritual gifts on my behalf. I love to come together with God's people for all the means of Grace, all the disciplines of Grace, all the various opportunities that the church has to celebrate its life.

Samas said come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of His hand. I love to be a part of the flock. I love to embrace all that the life of the church involves. Why would I ever want to give myself to any other arena of activity if I had the calling to do this?

Thirdly, I love being a pastor because preaching is the chief human means God uses to dispense His message. Preaching is the chief human means God uses to dispense His message. Preaching has fallen on hard times in a modern media world, I understand that. It is still, however, true the Bible says, "That God has by the foolishness of preaching determined to save those who believe," and preaching does seem foolish and preachers often to the world look like fools, but it is just by that

foolish preaching, foolish in the mind of a skeptical world that God has chosen to save those who believe. If the saving enterprise moves ahead on the preaching of the Gospel then what greater responsibility, what greater privilege then to be the instrument of that preaching? Every Sunday I come and I have this tremendous privilege to open the Word of God and to become the human instrument by which God has chosen to dispense His saving grace.

Number four in my little list was I love being a pastor because I can be consumed with study and communion with the Word of God and God Himself. I cannot separate God, I cannot separate Christ, I cannot separate the Holy Spirit from the Scripture. When I study the Scripture I am in communion with God for this is the living Word of God. It is alive and it is powerful.

Now there's a public side to me and that's what you see, that is the public side that the congregation sees. As I get up and as I preach, but there is a private side to me. There is a private side of me that is absolutely critical to the public side. Preaching is an immense responsibility; if it is by the foolishness of preaching that God determines to save those who believe, then it's important that if the preacher is going to preach he have something to say, would you not agree? Now that's sort of the basic law of preaching, have something to say. The corollary to that is make sure that what you have to say comes from God. We preach not ourselves but Christ.

If you're going to preach and have something to say that comes from God, you're going to have spend time in the Scripture. That's why it says you have to be diligent, study, show yourself approved under God, a workman that needs not be ashamed rightly dividing the Word of Truth. I love that private side. In all honesty I love that private side more then I love the public side. What a privilege; it's one thing to preach three hours a week, twice on Sunday morning and once on Sunday night, and other hours in other locations, but week after week to preach here for three hours is a great privilege and I thank God for that. It is a great task and responsibility but even more wonderful then the preaching for the few hours I do that is the many, many hours I spend in the study of the Word of God. For every three hours I preach here there are probably 30 hours of preparation; 30 hours of privileged communication with God; 30 hours as it were in the Holy of Holies, 30 hours in the Scripture.

I went over to the college last night to see a basketball game and I just kind of threw a little jacket on, pulled a hat down thinking nobody will recognize me, I'll sneak it and somebody said, "where have you been? We haven't heard from you for days." I said, "well I've been down, you know I've been in the book." They said, "well is this usual for you?" Well a little more then usual, because I have to not only preach Sunday but I have to preach all next week and then I have to go to the following week to Florida and preach several times more and I need to be sure I'm prepared. So I said, "but don't feel badly for me, this is what I love." This is privileged communion with God. I can't imagine spending a week doing anything else, this is my calling, this is my privilege.

Number five, I love the - being a pastor because I am directly responsible to God for the lives of the people He has given me to shepherd. You know I'm really sort of shocked by that. I think the Apostles were probably stunned when Jesus pulled them out of the rest of the Disciples and said, "I identify you 12 as the next generation of preachers, you're going to be My chosen 12 to proclaim the Gospel to the world, you're going to start the whole thing," and I imagine it was a pretty stunning thing. Certainly it was for Peter even in the end of John's Gospel when Jesus says, "Feed my sheep, feed my sheep, feed my sheep," just after Peter had denied Jesus and it must have been a bit stunning for Jesus to say, "Yeah I know what you're like and I want you anyway and I choose you and I hold you responsible to Me for the lives of the people that I give into your care." We have to give an account, Hebrews 13:17, "We have to give an account to God for the flock." I like that accountability, I seek that accountability. That's a very compelling accountability, that has a powerful discipline essence on my life.

Now I'm a radio teacher, whatever that is. To a lot of people they listen to me on the radio or they listen to a tape or a CD, but I'm not personally accountable for what those people with what I say to them, I'm not accountable for them. I'm not accountable for how they follow up from the truth of the Word of God but as a pastor of this congregation I am accountable. I will give an account for the discharge of my responsibility and my accountability is directly to the Lord Himself, I am and under shepherd under Christ and my accountability is to Him. I watch over your souls as one who will give an account; accountability is very healthy spiritually, it's very strengthening spiritually. I want to stand before the Lord when the day comes that I render that account and I want to demonstrate by the faithfulness of my life that I honored the privilege of that responsibility. It is a glorious thing to be directly accountable to the Lord for the lives of His people, at the same time, it's a frightening responsibility.

Number six, I love the pastorate because I love accountability also the people in the church. One of the reasons that I have stayed here, Patricia and I have stayed in the church all these years together, and we've had such a wonderful life here, is because we don't ever want to hide anything. I say that with realizing that you all know that because I've been here so long, you know what I am, you know my life, you know my wife, you know my kids, my grandkids, you know my personality strengths and weaknesses, you know all there is to know. I cherish that accountability I really do. It's a constant encouragement to me to make sure that I reflect Christ in my life. If I was only going to be here a year, a year and a half, two years, I'm gone somewhere else there's not going to be that need to be too concerned, but when you're in the same place, now heading into year 35, there aren't too many secrets and I am greatly indebted to your faithfulness to a less than perfect shepherd, but I'm also greatly indebted to your expectations that elevate my own commitment to faithfulness. I need that, I wouldn't ever want to be a radio teacher and have no direct accountability to people. I want to be in the middle of life and I want my life to be visible to everyone, that accountability is strengthening.

I love being a pastor, number seven; because I love building a team of leaders from the people God has given me. One of the great joys of being a pastor is to build around you men, gifted men who can share the burden of ministry and multiply the Kingdom in that fashion. When somebody starts a business they can hire anybody they want, when you pastor a church you get whoever the Lord sends. We didn't recruit any of you, you just showed up and we have to work with you. I'll tell you that's the way it's pretty much been and the way we've worked with our staff. As the pastoral staff has developed through the years they came, and they came because the Lord was adding them to the church, and it was just wonderful to see how God had orchestrated who would be here and how they would rise to levels of leadership and demonstrate gifts and to watch the Lord pull together this team. We confess all of us that we are not many noble, not many wise, not many mighty, we are the common and the base and I think that makes it all the more amazing because we all know our weaknesses and when we see the Hand of God powerfully there's no question about where the power's coming from. It's just been one of the greatest joys of my life to work with a band of brothers, to work arm in arm with the wonderful elders and shepherds and pastors that God has brought into our congregation and raised up, and who have shared the load and who have ministered with power and impact because of their faithfulness to the Lord and to His Word.

Number eight in my list, I love being a pastor because the pastor embraces all of life, all of life. I've always had a lot of curiosity; Dick McHugh always says I'm the most curious person he's ever met. I don't know why he says that I've never asked him to explain it, but he just sort of shakes his head and wonders at my curiosity. I think that's probably to some degree true, I am a curious person which made me a real drain on a teacher when I was a kid in elementary school because I was so curious about so many things that I found it difficult to listen to what the teacher was saying. My mind was always chasing after all kinds of alternatives and if you were a person who has the capacity and the interest in the almost endless range of life experiences, I can't think of anything more wonderful than being a pastor, because you embrace literally every issue of life. Always from the perspective of how does the Word of God apply to this matter? I'm there with the joy of parents when they bring a new baby into the world, and I'm there also when they sit in the intensive care unit with that stillborn child still in their arms and tears running down their face. I'm there when they get married, I'm there when they bury their loved ones, I'm there in the joys of life, the celebrations of life, the events of life for which there is happiness and I'm also there in the sad times and the traumatic times. I'm on the phone praying with a lady who's just been told she has cancer. I'm on the phone praying with a gentleman that's just been told he doesn't. All the issues of life unfold, and amazingly, they unfold in an adventurous fashion without any planning on my part.

I always remember the preacher who got invited to speak somewhere a year ahead and he didn't want to go there, so he told them he wouldn't be coming to speak at that time even though it was a year away because he had a funeral that day. Think about it, there are some things you don't know you're going to have a year away, and a funeral is one of them.

They just jump into your life, those are the events that make the ministry, this incredible adventure that can begin at any moment to take a turn you never expected and you have to come into that situation and apply the Word of God and stand in the gap as it were for God in the lives of those people. Unending variety floods the ministry and particularly my life is filled with unending variety since I seem to get involved in so many different things. If ever a man wanted to have his curiosity met mine has been met. In fact, I wouldn't mind if the Lord cranked it back a few notches just for the sake of survival.

Number nine, my little list, another reason why I love being a pastor is I'm afraid not to be. I am afraid not to be; when I was 18 the Lord threw me out of a car going 75 miles an hour. As some of you know I skidded down the highway 110, 120 yards, I ended up saying to the Lord in effect, okay, okay whatever it is you want me to do if You're this serious about it I will do it, and by the grace of God I wasn't killed, I committed my life to serving Christ and everything really turned on that event. If it was that important to the Lord to have me in the ministry then I really wasn't in a position to argue about it. I feel like the Apostle Paul who said, "Whoa is me if I preach not the Gospel." I couldn't turn my back on it. It's not that I'm tempted to do that, it's not that I'm prone to do that, although there are moments when the weariness overwhelms me and I think a really long vacation sounds wonderful, I would be afraid not to preach. I would be afraid not to pastor, not to shepherd because it would be an expression of utter unfaithfulness to the calling of God in my life and I would really rather have God blessing me then chastening me.

When I think about it, the inherent joys and blessings, and benedictions of being engaged in this ministry are far, far greater than anything that could happen were I to step away from it. I don't want to be unfaithful, I want to be faithful and I'm afraid not to do what God's gifted me and called me to do and also since He has called me to faithfully equip the saints for the work of the ministry that's never really, ever done because they keep coming into the Kingdom and they all need to be equipped and there really is no end to this responsibility.

Then number 10, the last one in my list. I love being a pastor because the rewards are eternal. There are temporal rewards, I feel appreciated by this congregation. I feel by the expressions of your love, you write letters and notes and people are so kind to me I feel like what God has called me to do has had an impact on your life and that you've been blessed by His work and by His word. That's a wonderful thing, to be appreciated, to be a servant of the Lord that gets the feedback from folks who say that service matters in our lives, it makes a difference. That reward in itself is wonderful. I love reading cards and notes from people. I love to know that somebody has come to know Christ through a message I preached or somebody has had a turning point in their life spiritually through something that was taught out of the Word of God or someone has come to love Christ more, or know more about Him through the teaching; that's reward in itself.

When I think about the ministry as wonderful as that reward is, I think about the eternal aspect of it, that some day I will be able with greater capacity to praise and glorify my Lord forever and ever. So when I think about being a pastor, when all is said and done, the source of joy and fulfillment found in this ministry far outweighs any disappointments that might come and were I to be chased out of this church I would have to find my way into another one, because there isn't anything in this world that I want to do that carries the wonderful privilege at the same time weighted responsibility that this does.

I know the driveways out of church parking lots are blackened with skid marks from the hasty exit of abused pastors being bashed by heartless people, but for me, were that to happen to me, I'd land somewhere else doing the same thing.

It is sad that pastors are treated this way, who have this noble calling, this high calling, this grave responsibility, and we live in such a sick society don't we? So full of pride and self love and self will. Our society as a whole has no appropriate understanding of respect for people who should be respected in this bizarre, twisted, egalitarian society everybody thinks that his own opinion and his own little space is as important as anybody else's. It's a tough environment for the survival of those who are given divine authority.

Sometimes being a pastor is a little more than a joke to some people. Think about the guy who was preaching all the time and there was a man in his congregation that slept through every sermon. Finally, it bugged him so much he said, I'm going to go to the guy and ask him, so he did. He said why do you fall asleep when I'm preaching my sermon? It shows a lack of respect. The man said; well would I sleep if I didn't trust you? What are you going to do with a guy like that, huh?

Then there are churches who just can't wait to get rid of their pastor, they want to get rid of their pastor. You know when people want to get rid of their pastor I make a suggestion. Unite in prayer for the man, pray passionately and incessantly for that man, he will become so effective that a larger church will take him on off your hands, that's a good plan.

A survey of 3,000 churches, pastors and layman included, asked what are the main reasons people drop out of the church. The common reply was I don't like the pastor. This isn't a personality contest, this isn't a beauty contest, we're not talking about unfaithful men, we're not talking about heretics, we're not talking about wolves in sheep's clothing or wolves dressed as shepherds, we're not talking about pastors who are unfaithful, we're talking about faithful men. What is our responsibility to them? Look at the text; you knew we'd get there sooner or later.

First of all, "We request of you brethren that you appreciate those," appreciate them. That's not hard to understand is it? That's pretty straight forward and simple, just appreciate them. What does it mean? Well it's the Greek verb *Oida* and it usually is translated know, but it's not some kind of second

hand knowledge, some information passed down, it's to know by experience, to have learned and therefore to know, to have experienced and therefore to know.

The first responsibility that we have to these shepherds is to appreciate them because we've gotten to know them. Don't let your knowledge of them be superficial. This is calling for a deep knowledge that leads to understanding what they go through, what they do, no one understands the tyranny of having to preach every week of your life, like writing a dissertation twice a week you have to do one and preach it on Sunday morning and preach it again Sunday night, no one understands this kind of bondage. No one understands this kind of relentlessness who doesn't do it and then at the same time you're struggling not only to understand the word of God but to apply in all of the serendipitous occasions that come up in the life of the church and it's a heavy burden. Get to know in a deep way and experiential way your pastor.

Don't sit at a distance and criticize. So why are you telling us this? Don't we appreciate you? Of course you do; I'm telling you this as we begin our Shepherd's Conference because there are going to be men coming here who are really not receiving this. We're not here to dump on them information that they've never heard. We're not here to be this great treasure repository of all the truth that they need to know. We're going to share around the things of God but it is important to us that we embrace these men in a loving environment. Make a sacrifice this week; don't come for your own sake come for their sake. Come on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, just come, sit down, get to know these men and just tell them you love them and you appreciate what they do and you esteem them very highly and a love sake for their work because they may not be hearing that at all.

He's not saying know the name when He says that you should appreciate them using *Oida*. He's not saying you should know their names, He's not saying that you should know the names of their wives and their children, that's not it, it's a deep, intimate, personal acquaintance that leads to appreciation and a sense of the worthiness of this calling.

One of the most common statements that people make to me that don't know me when I meet people around, they listen to me on tape or radio. They'll say very often, and Patricia's heard them say this many times, I feel like I know you, I feel like I know you. I always say, "Well you do, you do." If you've listened for years you know me because that's my heart. That's the kind of knowledge we're talking about, it's easy to be unkind, it's easy to be critical, it's easy to be indifferent to those shepherds that you don't know deeply for which you don't have a respect born out of personal experience with them.

So it starts with appreciation and it says, "That we are to appreciate those, not for their personality, not for their unusual giftedness, not for their charm, appreciate those who diligently labor among you." I mean they're giving their life for you, they're your shepherds, they're making the sacrifice, they diligently labor, that's *capiallo*, they work to the point of exhaustion and the world is run by tired men, you know that don't you? The world is run by tired men; everybody who is in any position of

importance in the world is tired. Mental weariness, physical weariness is a necessity if you're in any responsible position of leadership and that's true in the church. The church is basically shepherded by tired men who literally have given their lives away for the sheep and very often get little back in return.

So He says appreciate them because they diligently labor among you and appreciate them because they have charge over you in the Lord. They have charge over you in the Lord. They literally *prohistemais* the Greek verb, it means to stand before, that simply means they are in front of you, they are your leaders, they preside, they direct. By virtue of God's calling the shepherd is the shepherd, He leads the flock, He is the leader, He is the overseer. Acts 20 says, "That the Lord has made you overseers, you are to rule and to rule well." Now what does this mean? It means to give spiritual direction.

We had this seminar in Russia this week, Rick Holland was teaching a group of about 60 or 70 young Russian pastors how to preach and we did it with our satellite interactive video system and I went in a couple of times, once at the beginning and once at the end, and Rick carried the heavy weight, five hours a night for five nights teaching them how to preach. But I came in for a question and answer and one of the questions that one of the young men asked me and we can see each other on video, it's really wonderful, was to tell him about the pastor's authority.

Well I mean I don't know what the Russian perspective is; historically they had a Czar, which would be like a king, and then after that it was series of totalitarian dictators that they had, so the model of leadership would be a bit different than Scripture. So he said, what is the pastor's authority and I said, "Well you have absolutely no authority from your office, you have absolutely no authority from your title, you have no authority from your position, the only time you have any authority is when you speak the Word of God." I don't have any authority to say buy that land, build that building, paint that room green, put money over here or over there, that's collectively what the leadership of the church determines. I exercise no authority over that. I'm not even the chairman of the elders here.

But when I say, "Thus sayeth the Lord," there comes the authority. Look, these men, these dear shepherds have given their lives sacrificially to the point of exhaustion, *capiallo*, to exercise spiritual leadership, to stand before you and to direct you, to give you spiritual leadership and furthermore, the end of verse 12, "They give you instruction, they teach you, they're your teachers." How valuable is that? It's the most valuable thing there is because listen folks, the most important thing in the universe is the truth of God. It's the most important thing. If a man is giving you the truth of God, you ought to be more thankful for that than everything else in your life.

Here are these shepherds laboring to the point of exhaustion with all of the issues of ministry that flood them that they can't plan for and they can plan for, and in the middle of it all they also are exercising spiritual leadership and directing a congregation both collectively and individually into the things of God and they do it by faithfully giving instruction. In fact a man can't even be a shepherd in

the church unless he's a skilled teacher, that's why Hebrews 13:7 says, "Follow their faith, they've given you instruction follow their faith. They taught you, follow the teaching. Remember those who led you, who spoke the Word of God to you and consider the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. They were your teachers." God has given these men to the church and they're very diverse but they are God's shepherds, Christ's under shepherds to serve the church, to take authority over the church by virtue of the Word and to teach the church, and for that they should be given, says verse 12, "appreciation." Does that should like a lot? Get to know them and show them appropriate respect and it goes even beyond that.

In 1 Timothy chapter 5 Paul says, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching." What is double honor? Well first of all it's honor, it's respect, it's high regard; if they work hard at it but it's more than that because the next verse says, "You shouldn't muzzle the ox while he threshes and the laborer is worthy of his wages," and what double honor means is not only double respect but doubly pay. Figure out what they're worth and give them twice that.

I'm not asking for a raise, you already do that and more. In the early part of that 1 Timothy 5 chapter He dealt with the support of widows, here He deals with the support of pastors. 1 Corinthians 9 deals with that same thing, "Those who preach the Gospel have the right to live of the Gospel." That is to be supported by the people of God through their preaching. *Time* means not just respect, it means money, respect and remuneration as needed to expedite the service, they're working hard at it.

So we are told to appreciate them, to appreciate them with respect because we've gotten to know them, to appreciate them with remuneration because we know how valuable they are, but not only appreciate them, there's a second thing here and it comes in verse 13, "And that you esteem them very highly in love." That's a pretty comprehensive statement, it would be enough to say that you esteem them, _____ the Greek, it means to consider them, but it has the overtones of to consider someone in a very special way, give them consideration we would say in our language, but not just to consider them but to consider them highly, but not just highly, very highly.

Well how is this different than appreciating them? Well to appreciate them means to respect them for the work they do and to remunerate them for the work they do, but to esteem them goes beyond that because it says, "Esteem them very highly in what?" In love, now we're talking about not something that's in the mind but something that's in the heart, now we're talking about the affections.

So many pastors are just shattered by the lack of love, devastated by the animosity and the bitterness and hostility and even hatred that they suffer. Just in the last couple of weeks I can think of three pastors in my own life who have gone through devastating hostility from the churches they were lovingly and faithfully shepherding. So when these men come this week I just want you to be ready, I want you to be here this week and I want you to embrace them, love them, and I want you to respect

and appreciate them. They may not be getting much of that at all in their own environment.

Galatians 4 is a good illustration of this, 4:14 - actually in verse 13 Paul talked about a bodily illness. He had some kind of ugly, physical infirmity and he says in verse 14, "That which was a trial to you in my bodily condition." There was something about his bodily condition that was repulsive enough that it was a trial just to be around the guy. It may have been infectious but it was certainly something I guess we would say today gross, something ugly, but he says and of course to start with he wasn't particularly handsome, his presence was unimpressive, his speech was contemptible and now he's got some ugly disease, some ugly ailment and he says, "There I was in my bodily condition and you didn't despise or loathe me but you received me as an Angel of God."

Now there is a pastor's dream come true. Nothing about him physically attractive and from the world's standpoint his speech is unimpressive, his presence is equally unimpressive, and to add insult to injury, there's something about the guy that's sickening. He's got this malady that's just repulsive and he says, "You treated me like an Angel of God, more as Christ Jesus Himself," and in verse 15 he says in the middle of the verse, "I bear you witness that if possible you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me," and that makes many Bible commentators think that whatever this malady was it was some eye problem, perhaps some infection, some ugly oozing malady, and if the people could have they would have given them - they would have given their own eyes to him.

Well this is the kind of love we're talking about. Why did they have such love for Paul when he came? Because he preached the Gospel to them. It is really unconscionable for churches to treat faithful men the way they treat them, so I hope this week that we can maybe give these men a week when they feel like an Angel of God or like Christ Himself.

There's another element here and we'll close with this one. Three responsibilities that the sheep have toward the shepherd, the first one is to appreciate them, get to know them so that there is respect and proper care of them for the work that they do, and then there is that affection aspect, the heart, esteemed them very highly in love, that is to hold them in high regard with love, and one more, verse 13 closes, "Live in peace with one another."

Submit to them, submit to them; familiar exhortation by the way, all through the New Testament there are these commands to believers to pursue peace. Romans 14:19 is one, "Let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another." The end of 2 Corinthians also verse 11 of chapter 13, "Finally brethren rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like minded, live in peace, live in peace."

There are all kinds of injunctions in the New Testament to that. I will tell you it's hard not to be appreciated, it's hard for a pastor not to be appreciated, not to be respected, not to be remunerated generously, it's heartbreaking, it's hard for a pastor not to be loved, not to have the affectionate care

of his people directed to him, but I'll tell you what's perhaps even harder. That's to have a church full of conflict, to have a church full of fights and squabbles and bitterness and pride.

Paul wrote one of the really most wrenching statements of all his letters in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 20 he said, "I'm afraid that when I come to you," to the Corinthians, "I'm afraid when I come back I'm going to find this, this is why I don't want to come back, this is what holds me away. I am afraid that I am going to find strife and jealousy, and angry tempers, and disputes, and slanders, and gossip, and arrogance, and disturbances, and so when I come God's going to humiliate me and I'm going to mourn." This just breaks the heart of a pastor, what is it? Discord, disunity, fighting, turf battles, ego fights, we just encourage the sheep to just be peace makers. If you appreciate your shepherd for the labor, for the work he does, for the Kingdom work that he does, the highest calling, if you love him from the heart and hold him in high regard in that love so that he knows you have a heart of affection toward him, then you will do everything possible to make sure that he ministers in an environment of peace.

Turn to Hebrews 13:17 if you will and we'll close with this, Hebrews 13:17 says this, "Obey your leaders and submit, obey your leaders and submit, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account." This is such a serious thing; we have to give an account to God. We're trying to watch over your souls so obey, submit, let them do this, this watching over your souls, so as to give an account. "Let them do this with joy and not with grief. You don't want a grieving pastor, for this would be unprofitable for you." An unhappy pastor makes a very unhappy congregation. If people only knew the joy of their pastor becomes their joy. You do everything you can to love your shepherd and the return will be he ministers with joy and that is profitable for you, that's profitable.

This is a message that congregations all over this country need to hear, not from me, but from the Word of God. Its truth they need to deal with. It's very hard for preachers to preach it because it sounds self serving and that's one of the reasons I preached it today. One, I want to prepare you to show this kind of love to these men and two I wanted to provide a tape that maybe they could take back and ask some of the folks in their church would listen to it. These faithful men suffer undue indignities when they should be loved and appreciated and respected in the way that the Scripture calls us to do that.

So pray with me will you this week that we as a church congregation can put our arms around these who come and for this week treat them as an Angel of God or even Jesus Christ Himself for the great work they do, for the faithfulness they exhibit, for the teaching that they give, and I just pray that you will be the instrument of the Lord for their encouragement this week.

Father, we thank You for the simple instruction you give us in Your Word, unmistakable. We know exactly what it is Your asking of us and we pray that we might be faithful to fulfill that. I thank You personally for the congregation that you have given to me to shepherd and to other shepherd's here

along side me. Thank you for the fact that we do this ministry with joy and not with grief and that this then becomes profitable for them and that this joy comes from their love, respect and care, and I would pray that that which they so freely give to us they might give to others that they meet this week, that we might be in its source of encouragement to all who come and who faithfully serve you. We want not just to pass information along to them this week but we want to pass along our love and our encouragement as a real gift that we give them. May they be encouraged in their faithfulness, even in hard places by our affection toward them and may You accomplish a great work in all our lives as we go through this wonderful week together, we pray in Christ's name Amen.

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