

27.8.23 am

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning. A warm welcome to the service today. Good to see quite a number of visitors with us as well. And if you're able to stay behind at the end of the service, there's tea and coffee, and it would be good to get a chance to meet with you.

The intimations, the notices have been on the screen. I'll just run through them for a moment. Gaelic service tonight at 6. That'll be taken by Dan Marig. And then we've got a fellowship, an English fellowship, half past 7 tonight.

And Stuart's going to take the fellowship tonight. And with the prospect of Natalie going away, I think it's a week on Wednesday for Natalie going away.

Anna's going away a few weeks after that. We'll just maybe mark that and pray for them as they prepare to head off. So Stuart will do that, just in case I wobble. The community lunch is on tomorrow.

That's 12 till 2. And please make note of that. And also, for those who can't actually come in and have sit-time and have soup and sandwiches, there is takeaways available.

[1 : 06] Donations for Crossroads Harris as usual. Deacons Court tomorrow night, half past 6. Ladies' Fellowship as usual. And Little Fishers and Road to Recovery on at the usual time.

Still looking for volunteers for Little Fishers. And so if you're able to help with that, please give your name to Joanne. Prayer meeting this Wednesday in person and on Zoom.

And that will be taken by Richard Killer. I'm away Wednesday and Thursday in Glasgow. So Richard's going to take the meeting this week. Services next Sunday, God willing, will be taken by myself.

And any future notices, if you have a particular notice, then maybe you could forward it on to Emma, a killer who's agreed to take that over for the next period.

I'd put a wee note in there saying that Duncan's really busy work-wise. I didn't mean that to go into intimations, but we can pray for Duncan and his busy work period. So these, I think, are all the intimations.

[2 : 10] We're going to start the service and sing to God's praise. We'll sing the words on the screen, that hymn that we've sung over the last few months and got to know what gift of grace is Jesus, my Redeemer.

Lord, with all grace is Jesus, my Redeemer.

He is no more for heaven now to give. He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom, my steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace.

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus, for my life is holy bound to Him.

O how strength and divine I can sing, all is mine yet for my life. Through Christ in me.

[3 : 26] The night is dark, but I am not forsaken, for by my side the Savior He will stay.

I labour on in weakness and rejoicing, for in my need His power is displayed.

To this I hold, my shepherd will defend me, through the deepest valley He will lead.

O the night has been won, and I shall overcome, yet not I, but to Christ in me.

No faith I dread, I know I am forgiven. The future should, the price it has been paid.

[4 : 28] For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon, and He was raised to overthrow the grave.

To this I hold, my sin has been defeated. Jesus now and ever is my plea.

O the chains are released, I can say I am free, yet not I, but to Christ in me.

With every breath I long to follow Jesus, for He has said that He will bring me home.

And day by day I know He will renew me, until I stand with joy before the throne.

[5 : 31] To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus, all the glory evermore to Him.

When the race is complete, till my lips shall repeat, yet not I, but to Christ in me.
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus, all the glory evermore to Him.
When the race is complete, till my lips shall repeat, yet not I, but to Christ in me.
When the race is complete, till my lips shall repeat, yet not I, but to Christ in me.
[6 : 29] Yet not I, but to Christ in me. Let not I, but to Christ in me.

Let's close our eyes, and let's bow our heads, and unite our hearts in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the blessing of being able to gather together in this place and sing praise to your Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we thank you, Lord, for these gospel truths which we have sang in that hymn. We thank you that we are redeemed. We thank you that we have been bought at a price, that we who are sinners have been freed from our sin through the finished work of Jesus.

We thank you that there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners like us who plunge beneath that flood lose all our guilty stains.

So we thank you, Lord, for that truth. We thank you that you save us, Lord Jesus, from our sin when we come to you. We thank you that you redeem us.

[8 : 06] You have bought us with your blood. We thank you that we are freed from the clutches that the enemy had in our soul. We thank you that we are released from the debt of the sin that was around us and within us.

And we thank you that we have been taken from darkness into light. We thank you that we have been taken from death into life if we are trusting in the Lord Jesus.

And so we ask that you would grant to us faith this morning that all of us here would not just be singing these words, but that we would be trusting the Lord Jesus.

We pray that we would not just hear that there is a fountain where we can be cleansed of our sin, but that we would come to that fountain. That we would come to the Lord Jesus.

and that we would find the forgiveness that our souls need. We pray that we would not hear about a light that is offered in Christ, but that we would come from the darkness into the light.

[9 : 21] We pray that we would not only hear of the the words that there is life in abundance that is offered, life that is unending.

But we pray that we would come to Jesus and find and taste and see the blessing of that life. So give to us faith, we pray. We're conscious that there will be some even here who are aware of Jesus, who may have some knowledge of the Bible, but who have never come in faith.

We pray that even today would mark the day where some come forward to the Lord Jesus and find salvation in him. And for those of us who are in Christ, we pray that all that we've sang of would be our testimony, that we would know the presence of Jesus when we're going through the good days and when we're going through the dark valleys as well, that we would have that assurance of your presence, Lord, with us.

And we pray that we would be able to say that our lives are being lived out for the glory of Christ and not for ourselves.

We confess that we are so quick to want to lift up ourselves and to want to increase ourselves. But as John the Baptist has said, we pray that you would enable us also to say from our hearts he must increase and I must decrease.

[10 : 59] So we ask that we would know and that others would see the reality of Christ in us, that your glory would shine from our lives and that you would use us to reach those that you have placed around us in this place and in every place that's represented here this morning, that we would be those who, if we are Christians, we are those who go out with the good news of the gospel into a world that so much needs to hear of that.

We think back to Wednesday evening, we thank you for Martin and for Joyce Campbell and for what they shared of ministry in Afghanistan in past years and in New Zealand and as they prepared to head to Thailand, we pray that you would be with them.

And Father, as we think back on what they said, we recognise that although the Christian message and although Jesus is not in favour in the way that once was the case in this area, although we are no longer a land that we would claim to be the land of the book, we thank you that we're not in a situation where we are experiencing persecution such as they face in Afghanistan or North Korea or Pakistan or India.

We remember brothers and sisters who suffer and who deal day by day with the risk of death even for coming and professing faith in Christ.

We are not living in that kind of culture. Yes, we may get a sharp word back if we speak of Jesus. We may get the cold shoulder. We may have people who laugh and who scorn, but we have little to deal with in the way of persecution.

[12:51] We have much opportunity, so help us, we pray, to take these opportunities that you give us, to speak to those around us about Jesus and his love, to tell them the old, old story that never gets old, that story that's always new.

We ask, Lord, that you would be with all those who are struggling in a particular way today. We think of those who are ill and we ask that you would be near to them.

We pray on for Shona in hospital at this time as one day she is responsive and conscious and the next day she struggles to be roused.

We ask, Lord, that you would be near to her, that you would minister to her, and especially on the days when no one else is really able to reach her, we pray that she would know the ministry of the Holy Spirit, that you would be close to her and that she would know that.

So we pray for her and we pray for our family around her, that you would bless them, that you would reach them in the storm that they're going through. We pray on also for Mary Morrison, for Mary Latham, we thank you for her and Connor being with us today and as she goes for a visit to hospital next week again and as they try to carry out tests, we ask that you would be with the family there, with each of them and that they would know your presence and your peace.

[14:18] We thank you that we can trust you. We thank you that even though we often don't have the answers to all that's going on, you are the God that is trustworthy, so help us to lean upon you.

And for all others, Lord, who are struggling, some with illness, some with loneliness in their own home, some who have been long-term at home and who would love to be here but who can't be here, we ask that you would minister to them.

For those who battle on with addictions, we bring them to you and ask that you would help them, that they would be given the strength to break free from the chains that hold them and that more than that they would know salvation in Christ.

And we ask now that as we continue in this hour that you would draw near to us, that you would speak to our hearts and that we would be enabled to worship you in spirit and in truth.

Hear our prayers, cleanse us from our sin, keep our eyes fixed on Jesus for we ask this in his name and for his sake, amen. Boys and girls, would you like to him out please you alright?

[15:52] you alright Henry? you bump? I'll move the chair over how are you all today? good good anything doing today?

Michael show me your face thank you anything doing today? no? nothing, just the usual you had chocolate pancakes for breakfast well that's a good way to start a Sunday morning I've got a picture to put on the screen and you can maybe guess what this is all about it's from our house that's the clue what do you think this is this is for?

what do you think this is to do with? Henry? Anna's leaving soon to go to college so she's starting to to build up a wee pile of stuff that'll go in the car that'll get taken away so her room is getting less messy in some areas but it's getting more messy in one particular area so she's got the guitar there and there's a duvet I think and there's a keyboard and I don't know what else is in these boxes but that's that's Anna she's getting all her bits and pieces together Natalie I never got a picture from her house but I imagine there's a similar operation going on there because she's closer to going away but what they're doing is they're just getting their stuff together because they're they're preparing to to go into the the hall so Anna's going to Glasgow and Natalie's going to to Stirling so they're getting organised they're getting prepared so that things will be be ready now do you know what would be really handy for them it would be really handy if someone went ahead of them and got the place ready for them so that when they arrived everything would be just right so imagine how good it would be Michael yourself and and your dad went off maybe three or four days early took all this stuff into the room got it all organised you know you got the stuff into the right places got the right food in the fridge you got nice perfumes and soaps and smelly things that girls like to to have in their rooms so when she arrived it would all just be ready and they wouldn't have to do any unpacking wouldn't that be a good thing there is something called school there's something called school

I know I'm just saying let's just think out of the box here let's imagine in a perfect world there's no school there's no responsibilities you can just head off in the car and you can get the the place all ready so imagine that was the case that would be a that would be a great thing for Natalie and for Anna wouldn't it they just arrived and everything was ready and somebody had been there ahead of them now we know that's not actually what happens but in this world in this world that's kind of what Jesus promises to do you know in this world we're going different places we're doing different things and where is Jesus where is God well I'll give Shani a shot he's in heaven yeah and where else I'll come back to you Henry and I'll be sitting I'm going to try and get some of these sleepy heads organised Michael our hearts he's in our hearts where else everywhere he's everywhere so so God is everywhere the big fancy word is omnipresent you can use that to confuse your primary school teachers tomorrow God is everywhere at all times and so there's nowhere that we can go that he isn't already there and that's an amazing thing because sometimes there's things that we have to do and we're a bit nervous about them and we're a wee bit fearful as to you know how's all this going to go and we can speak to God and we can say thank you that you know all about what's ahead of me and so please go before me and please prepare the way and Jesus he said that he'll prepare the way for us so for Anna and for Natalie they might be a bit nervous about going away but they can they can be confident that

[20 : 51] God will go before them and when we've got things coming up in our in our diaries maybe we've got a hospital appointment maybe we've got exams and we're thinking I'm a bit nervous about this we can be thankful that that Jesus he's the good shepherd he leads us he guides us and he goes before us and he even says I'll prepare the way for you and so it's a wonderful thing to know that that's what Jesus does for us now if we pray this morning and ask Jesus to prepare the room in Stirling for Natalie and the room in Glasgow for Anna do you think when they get there that Jesus will have put all the bits and pieces into the right places no that's not that's not what he promises to do that's not what it means but in this world he goes before us and he helps us so he might put people around us that will help us and he might do things for us that when we arrive we think how good

God has been to me because something I thought was going to be so hard he's made so much easier the number of times I've spoken to somebody who's going to hospital and they were really nervous and the first nurse that comes along to speak to them is a Christian and they're so happy and at peace because of that so that's how Jesus works in this world he goes before us he does not organise our rooms but he organises the way ahead of us so we don't have to worry but do you know when we go from this world you listening when we go from this world Jesus has promised that he actually will organise a room for us if we're believing him listen to this the disciples were sitting in a room they were a bit nervous because they could see everybody was turning against Jesus and he was about to go to the cross and Jesus said to the disciples he said John 14 it says do not let your hearts be troubled trust in

God trust also in me in my father's house heaven there are many rooms if it were not so I would have told you and then Jesus says I am going there to prepare a place for you how amazing is that that if we believe in Jesus even now he's preparing a room a place in heaven that will be just for you because he knows us it will be a perfect place just for us so we thank him for that let's pray Lord Jesus we thank you that you love us and we thank you that you are the good shepherd and you promise that you'll be with us in every situation especially the scary ones we thank you that you promised that when there are scary things up ahead you'll go before us you'll prepare the way even for us so that we won't have to be nervous and scared about what's up ahead so help us to trust you with that we don't find that easy we get anxious we get worried about all kinds of things but help us to trust you that you are with us and that you're going before us and that you're preparing the way for us in every time of our lives and we thank you

Lord Jesus that you've promised that when our lives here come to an end if we are trusting in you you will take us even through death into life that's everlasting that place called heaven and we thank you Lord Jesus that you've said you're preparing a place a room just for us and we can't really understand in our minds what that would look like but we believe that you are good and we believe that your words are true and so we thank you for that and we pray for all the boys and girls here and the older ones as well that we would that we would be trusting the Lord Jesus so that we wouldn't have to spend forever apart from him in a place where there's no room is prepared but we pray that we would have the assurance that we have a place in heaven for the time when we go from this

[37 : 00] And we ask all this in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. When we become aware that there's trouble or there's difficulty or there's something challenging up ahead, we tend to plan and prepare and think through how we'll deal with that.

You see that in conflict. When it became clear that Ukraine was going to be under attack and it was going from threat to actually aggression, there was plans, there was preparations that were made to try to deal with that.

And even if we scale it down from international conflict to the daily experience of our own lives and the weather forecast, we're islanders, there's a lot of visitors here, but you don't need to be here for long to realise that when you live on an island, you're never far away from XC weather.

So when we're opening our phones, we're probably not checking Facebook. We're checking XC weather to see what the next three or four hours looks like. And when we receive a forecast where there's heavy weather coming in, there's a storm coming, we take cognizance of that.

So you'll see me down at the bottom of the garden trying to tie down the trampoline before it flies over to Scalpy. You know, we're securing anything that might get blown away.

[38 : 46] We're making sure that we have candles or we have torches and batteries in case of a power cut. You know, we plan to try to figure out how we're going to deal with things.

Now, Peter here is writing a letter. This is Peter's first letter to the church and what we now know as modern-day Turkey.

And it's right about AD 63, 30 or so years after Jesus died and rose again. And as Peter brings this letter to a close, the Lord uses Peter to speak to the believers in these different places about what was coming.

And what was coming to them was what Peter describes in verse 12 of chapter 4. It was a fiery trial. So if you glance back from the verses we read in chapter 5 to the section in chapter 4, verses 12 through to the end, that the NIV heading is the heading, Suffering for Being a Christian.

And that's what these believers were already experiencing. They were already experiencing suffering for being Christians, but it was going to get worse. A fiery trial was coming.

[40 : 13] And so in light of the suffering that was anticipated, how were these Christians to be prepared? What was the Lord's plan for his people in light of the storm that was coming?

That was the question. And the answer was elders. It's quite sobering for those of us who are elders.

But that was the plan. That is the next session. And the NIV actually does a bad job here because it omits a word at the beginning of verse 1 of chapter 5, which connects the two chapters together.

The first word in the Greek is actually the word therefore. And that's the word that connects the predicted sufferings of chapter 4 with the Lord's plan to deal with these sufferings in chapter 5.

And the Lord's plan was that elders would be in these different places to help these congregations as they went through difficult times. So Peter writes, first of all, to the elders.

[41 : 38] First point this morning is just simply that. We can picture the address on the card. And Peter directs this section very clearly and precisely to the elders.

To verse 1, the elders among you. And of course, this has been read out to the whole congregation. We're stepping through this a few verses at a time. But when you think back, the whole letter, without chapters and verses, was received in each one of these different places.

And it was read out in one sitting. So the whole congregation is sitting as we're sitting. The elders amongst them. And as the letter comes to conclusion, Peter, or the Lord, as he speaks through Peter, says, now, this is specially for you elders.

There's a focus in this section on the elders. And everyone would have known who the elders were. So maybe they were shifting kind of uncomfortably in their chairs.

A little as I was shifting uncomfortably in my chair in the study, as I was going through this in the course of the week, maybe they're sitting somewhat uncomfortably. As Peter basically shares the job description of the elder with the congregation.

[43 : 03] And he tells both the elders and the congregation what's expected of the elders. And the first thing to note here is just simply the grammar.

Peter, when he writes, he uses the plural and not the singular. He is addressing the elders.

And that tells us that in each place that was mentioned, Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, that's where the letter was going to be distributed in the first instance.

In each place, Peter had that knowledge that there were teams of men who were leading these congregations. And it's worth noting that you don't find one-man ministry in the Bible.

Peter doesn't address his letter to the local celebrity pastor, you know, who's dealing with a kind of multi-campus ministry with a focus on this one guy.

[44 : 17] Peter doesn't write a letter that's addressed to the minister. Peter, he addresses this letter to the elders. So why is it important to have the elders, plural?

Well, it's important for various reasons. It's important because if it all rested on one guy, then if the one guy goes off track, then everyone goes off track.

Or if he gets ill, or gets called away somewhere else, ministry grinds to a halt. It's not a good thing. And elders were there in these places to stop that happening.

They shared in ministry. Elders were, and elders still are, in place to give balance and stability to ministry in every place.

So, you might need your imagination for this one. If I was to get kind of too high and over-excitable, there are some elders who would come to me and who would sort that out.

[45 : 34] Or if I was to get very low and bleak, there are elders who would come alongside and give encouragement. If I was to drift away in preaching from the cross and from the exclusivity of Christ, then there are elders who would address that very, very quickly, thankfully.

I wouldn't reach the door before somebody would have me by the lapels. And that's the way it should be. And when a pastoral crisis comes into our experience in the congregation, it's the elders. You come alongside the person in crisis to give that counsel and that encouragement and that direction. It's not the minister.

It's the elders of whom I am one. So in Pontius and Galatia and Cappadocia and Asia and Bithynia, there were elders.

Peter writes this letter to the elders. And in North Harris, there are elders. I'm almost tempted to get them all to stand up, but I won't do that.

[46 : 55] You know who they are. But I would say be thankful for them as I am thankful for them as a fellow elder and pray for them.

Did you pray for the elders this morning? Do you pray for the elders week by week? Pray for them. Pray for us in the ministry that God has called us to. Ministers come and go. Elders remain in the place.

Pray for them. So Peter, he writes to the elders plural, but as we think through this a little bit more, what is an elder to do or what's an elder, who's an elder called to be?

Well, the second point is the elder is somebody who is to encounter Jesus. The elder is someone who's to encounter Jesus.

[47 : 54] So Peter, still in verse 1, he says, I appeal as a fellow elder a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.

So in this section it has the big address on it it's to the elders and it's from Peter. So who's Peter? Well, Peter's an apostle.

And what's an apostle? An apostle is a very small group of people who were set aside to speak the word of God. They were witnesses of the life, the death, the resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus. And so they were given a special ministry of speaking the word of God. So in a sense, when we read 1 Peter, it's a letter from Peter, but it's actually Jesus.

And when we go through the Pauline epistles, they're written by the hand of Paul, but it's actually Jesus who is speaking through them. They have that apostolic authority.

[49 : 05] And so Peter, he could have written something like, to the elders, I, an apostle of Jesus Christ, instruct you the following. He could have written that and that would have been perfectly in order.

He had the authority to write in that way. But Peter doesn't speak in that way. He doesn't instruct. He appeals. And he doesn't speak as one set apart from them, as an apostle.

He speaks to them as a fellow elder. He speaks to them as those who, like him, have encountered Jesus.

And I want to pause there just for a moment. And I want to ask the question, a very, a very personal question. Have you encountered Jesus?

Have you encountered Jesus? And that's a question for everyone, not just the elders. Have you encountered Jesus?

[50 : 16] Did you encounter Jesus today? You know, it's good to be in church, but what we want, what we need, is to encounter Jesus.

There's no magic dust in the chairs. the chairs don't save. It's Jesus who saves. When we stand before God, and I ask the question about whether or not we are going to have access into heaven, it's going to be nothing to do with these chairs.

It'll be nothing to do with the frame that we walked through. It'll be nothing to do with the denomination that we might have an affiliation with. It's nothing to do with our great grandfather being a missionary in some little place.

It's all about whether or not we have encountered Jesus, whether we are saved in and through Christ. As the sign says above my head, we want to see Jesus.

We want to encounter Jesus. and Peter had seen and Peter had encountered Jesus in that saving way.

[51 : 33] There's two things that Peter highlights that all elders, in fact all Christians, must be able to see. There's two things that Peter has seen and he reflects on in his encounters with Jesus.

The first thing he's seen is Christ's sufferance. The second thing he has seen is Christ's glory. So Peter describes himself as an elder, a fellow elder who has been a witness of Christ's sufferings. And for an encounter with Jesus to be saving, we must see his sufferings. We must go to the cross. We must survey the wondrous cross and see what it has to do with us.

When you think back on it, even if we were to glance at a few places in the Gospels, there are many people who encounter Jesus.

Pharisees encountered Jesus repeatedly. They weren't saved. The crowds were amazed by Jesus as they thronged around him, but the vast majority of them were never saved.

[52 : 48] So how can we be saved? We can only be saved by going to the cross of Jesus. We have to see the sufferings of Jesus. We have to see that he hung and suffered in our place.

And Peter saw he witnessed the sufferings of Christ. Peter could go back 30 years in time and see still in his mind's eye that picture of Jesus hanging for him.

But still day by day, Peter saw the sufferings of Christ for him. He never lost sight of the sufferings of Jesus for his sin.

And for an encounter with Jesus to be saving, we have to see the cross. We have to come to the cross. We cannot drift from the cross.

And Peter saw Christ's sufferings. He was a witness to them. The second thing, Peter, in his encounter with Jesus. And this is a continual thing. He saw and he sees Christ's glory.

[54 : 18] The glory to be revealed. Peter had seen it. He sees it. We could go back to Luke chapter 9. You can do it later. And we see the Mount of Transfiguration and Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration he sees this flash of the glory of Jesus with his own eyes.

He's able to reflect on that. But even if he'd never been to that mountaintop, Peter had seen the glory of Jesus and the character of Jesus and everything that he did and said, the way that he was with people.

He's full of glory. As John said in chapter 1, Peter had seen glory in the life and in the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

Peter could sing the words to the hymn that we began with, to this I hold my hope is only Jesus. All the glory ever more to him.

That was what Peter's life was devoted to, to glorifying Jesus. He saw Christ's sufferings. He spoke of Christ's sufferings.

[55 : 35] He preached the cross. He saw Christ's glory. He preached the glory of Christ. Christ being lifted up. That was his encounter. And that's to be our encounter and especially the encounter of those who are in Christian leadership and eldership.

Have you and I encountered Jesus in this way? Do you see the sufferings of Jesus for your sin? Do you see what he did for you on the cross?

Yes, the cross is far away in terms of time and geography. But if you're a Christian, you were there. your sin and my sin were being dealt with on that cross. Do you see that?

And do you see the glory of Jesus? Jesus? There's lots of people I speak to and they'll say that Jesus was a good man.

[56 : 55] They'll concede that. They'll say that Jesus was a good teacher. Happy to say that. They might even put him on a shelf along with a whole lot of other religious gurus.

But they don't see that he's God the Son. They don't see that he's Lord of Lord, that he's King of Kings. They don't see the glory of Christ. Do you and I see the glory of Christ?

That's the kind of encounter that we need to have with Jesus. We see his sufferings for us. We see his glory.

He is God the Son. And day by day, as we read the Bible, and as we pray, we encounter him in a fresh and in a living way.

It's a continual thing. We come to the cross. We see our sin. We confess our sin. We are saved, but we don't leave the cross.

[58 : 05] We're back there day by day in the word of God. We're taken back there. before Jesus again. We're thanking him for all he's done for us.

We're confessing our sin afresh. We're speaking to him day by day and worshipping him for who he is. It's the glorious one. God.

And you know, that's the calling of an elder above all things. We have to encounter Jesus day by day by day by day. We can't serve.

We can't do anything apart from Christ. So, elders, and it's an application for all Christians, there needs to be that continual, daily, fresh encounter with Jesus.

So, Peter, he applies this to the elders, but the application goes wider. So, it's written to the elders. They're calling us to encounter Jesus, and they're calling, thirdly, us to follow the example of Jesus.

[59 : 15] this is verse 2 and 3. Peter, as God, as Jesus speaks through him, says to the elders, be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care.

It's God's flock, notice. It's not their flock. It's not North Harris flock. It's not some free church flock or Church of Scotland flock. It's God's flock.

This is what makes the flock so precious. be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers, not because you must, but because you're willing, as God wants you to be. Not greedy for money, but eager to serve. Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. So, we're to follow the example of Jesus.

I was visiting a church a while back when I was on holiday and the church that I was visiting and they were having elections for elders.

[60 : 22] The date for the votes was going to be in two or three weeks' time. And so, they had these kind of glossy brochures that were handed out with the intimations and you picked up one of these brochures and you could flick through it, maybe 20 or 30 pages of candidates for eldership.

And I flicked through it, there's pictures, high-gloss pictures of all these serious-looking men in dark suits. And then there was a wee blurb underneath each picture.

And all you were told about the guy who was in the picture was his name, his age, and basically how successful he was in business. Was he a solicitor?

Was he a doctor? Was he an accountant? Was he a vet? I went through the list and I was looking for all the different professions, but that's all I could see.

And that was it. And as I was reflecting back on that and thinking about this passage here, I could imagine Peter, because he's the kind of guy he is, I could imagine him visiting that church, flicking through the brochure, and scrumpling it up and throwing it over his shoulder.

[61 : 33] Because what use is it? If you're trying to have an election as to who is going to be the next batch of elders, what would have been much more helpful would have been information about how these men are currently shepherding within the congregation, and how they're serving within the congregation.

I don't care whether an accountant, a lawyer, a doctor, a bin man, a cleaner, or whatever. That's what we need to know. Because that's the example that Jesus gave the elders to follow.

They, we are to be shepherds, and we're to be servants. Be shepherds, verse 2, of God's flock that is under your care.

Remember, this is Peter that's writing this. And what's Peter thinking about? Where is his mind going? His mind is going back to what we know as John 21, to the night where he was recommissioned, to the night where Jesus took him aside.

And where he was made to confess his sin openly and publicly. And where Jesus recommissions him.

[62 : 50] It's as a shepherd. John 21, and at verse 15, when they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Yes, Lord, he said. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again, Jesus said, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

He answered, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Jesus said, take care of my sheep. The third time he said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you love me? He said, Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep.

Be a shepherd. That was the calling, that was the example that he was to follow. It was the example of the good shepherd.

[63 : 49] And I don't need to tell you about shepherds, you know shepherds better than I know shepherds. I was thinking of Alistair from Mardazic when I was thinking about a shepherd. He's early 80s, you won't see him sitting in a chair, you'll see him in his oil skins on a quad bike with a dog on the back of it.

There's a force eight gale just about blowing the dog off the bike. The wind is howling, the rain is coming down, and he's out there, he's working. All weathers, all conditions, working hard, caring for the sheep.

And that's the example that Jesus left us to follow. And it applies to all Christians, but especially elders, were to work hard for Jesus. I don't think Peter had the AD 63 equivalent of a Netflix and a Sky Sports subscription, because he was too busy being an under shepherd.

feeding the lambs and the sheep as he preached the gospel. Caring for the sheep as he wrote letters to warn them of spiritual danger and encourage them to stay close to Jesus.

So we're to follow the examples of Jesus as elders. We're to be shepherds and we're to be servants. Serving as overseers, it says in verse two.

[65 : 24] The word overseer means to care for. Within the word in the Greek it kind of has the meaning of care for, visit, watch.

It's an instruction where elders are to be aware of how people are doing spiritually. It's spiritual oversight.

It's nothing here about church buildings and accounts by the way. It's nothing here about procedures and practice and I think by omission Peter is saying to us leave all that to other people.

That's not your main priority. That's not what you're to be giving your time and your attention to. I want you to give your attention to the spiritual welfare, the oversight of the sheep and the lambs.

I want you to know where all the sheep and the lambs are in their hearts. Never mind the nuts and the bolts. That's what's important for the elder.

[66 : 34] I was thinking back, going back a generation or two, elders would often ask questions like, how's your soul? when were you last asked the question, how's your soul?

The other question that was commonly asked was, are you growing in grace? These are two questions that are kind of hard to escape from.

I've been in the end of them, but I have to say I haven't asked them too many times. That's a failure. Is it cheeky?

Is it intrusive to ask these kind of questions? I don't think so. Jesus asked very penetrating direct questions. And the elder is to follow the example of Jesus to serve the way that Jesus served.

God's servant. So that's the task. Be a shepherd. Be a servant. And then Peter, he goes into the motivation.

[67 : 51] He says, not because you must do this. Be a shepherd. Be a servant. Not because you must, but because you're willing. As God wants you to be.

Be not greedy for money, but eager to serve. Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

That's to be your heart. That's to be your motivation. And as we think on these words, we see Jesus. Jesus came from heaven to earth, not because he had to, not because somebody said you must, but because he was willing.

Jesus went to a cross, not because he had to, but because he was willing. Jesus wasn't greedy for money.

He became poor, didn't have a house, didn't even have a pillow to put his head on. He became poor so that we might become rich.

[69 : 16] It's one of the old hymns used to say, I say old, 70s hymn probably, he laid aside his majesty. He gave up everything for me, suffered at the hands of those he had created.

And even though Jesus was the Lord of lords and the King of kings, he came to this world not to be served, but to serve, to be a servant.

And that takes you in your mind to John 13. where we see the disciples all sitting in the room, dirty feet. Who's going to wash the feet?

Not me. What about you, Peter? I'm not doing it. What about you, John? I'm not doing it. Then Jesus gets up with the water and the towel and he washes the feet of the disciples.

He serves them in the lowest possible way and then he says to the disciples, I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

[70 : 31] So elders, these are our tasks and this is to be our heart.

We're to be like Jesus. And as a congregation, when you come to the stage of looking for new elders, this is what you're looking for.

You're looking for men who don't need to have their arm twisted. You're looking for people who don't have any kind of a grudging acceptance of the office, but who will willingly and cheerfully and selflessly and humbly and bravely serve.

And serve in a way that looks like Jesus and leads people to Jesus. So how much we elders need your prayers?

This is why you need to be praying for us as elders. As the job description as pastor and the congregation, pray for us. How much we need your prayers, how much we need God's grace as we seek to follow the example of Jesus.

[72 : 09] So it's written to the elders, to those who are to continually encounter Jesus, see his sufferings, see his glory. We are to be those who are to follow the example of Jesus, and finally, we are those who are to expect the return of Jesus.

Very briefly, I'm not preaching tonight, so you'll get full value this morning. verse 4, we're to expect the return of Jesus.

When the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. I was visiting Angus Alec, a week last Friday I think it was, sitting in the chair just having a cup of tea as usual, and his daughter Catherine and Raymond walked through the door, and Angus Alec's face lit up, but he was so surprised they nearly fell off the chair.

They were due to come back on the Monday, but they came back on the Friday three days early. So Angus Alec's absolutely delighted to see them. But Rachel, their daughter, who was supposed to be looking after the house, and keeping it in good order, and keeping it tidy, she was less delighted when she heard that they were back three days early.

She was phoning Casalda saying, can you go and take them out for dinner or something please? Just keep them away from the house for the next three or four hours. See, the house was a mess. There was planning stations.

[73 : 51] She wasn't expecting them. And Peter says to all of us, and again, the application here is wider than just the elders, but he's saying to all of us, expect the return of Jesus.

Do you expect the return of Jesus? Have you thought today about the return of Jesus? Jesus. Because if we have that sense of expectation, if we live with that sense of expectation, we will keep on repenting of the mess of our sin.

And we will keep on striving to live as Christians and as elders in a way that pleases him. the will be to live as as elders as elders as elders as elders do.

So why be an elder? Well, not for status. Not for the approval of people because we often won't have it, but for the approval of Jesus.

That's why we do it. we do it not for cheers, but for the crown that Jesus speaks of through Peter.

[75 : 15] and this crown we need to remember is not a crown that we earn. It's a gift that we receive.

We receive it. I think we could say we, we can receive a crown of glory that will never fade away because Jesus wore a crown of thorns in our place.

It is not of merit, this is all of grace. Can I ask as I finish, is there a crown with your name on it? Is there a room that we're thinking about with the children that has your name on the door that's been prepared? are you and I ready to meet with Jesus?

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We are conscious of how penetrating it is and how convicting it is because we see how far short we fall of the tasks that you call us to as elders and as Christians we see also how much we fall and fail and drift.

[76 : 58] But we thank you that you are gracious and we thank you that you are loving, we thank you that you are kind. We thank you for the cross where our sin was paid for.

We thank you for the resurrection where the glory of Jesus was witnessed. We thank you for the calling that we have day by day to encounter Christ in a new and a living way.

And we pray that that would be our experience, that we would encounter you Lord Jesus today and each day and that we would serve you in whatever task that you have called us to.

That we would live not for our glory but for your glory. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to finish Mission Praise 458 man of sorrows what a name for the Son of God who came ruined sinners to reclaim Hallelujah what a Saviour.

And then the last verse when he comes our glorious king all has ransomed home to bring then anew the song we'll sing Hallelujah what a Saviour. man of man of man of sorrows what a and him what a singing what a Pain, shame, and scoffing rude In my place condemned he stood

[79 : 11] Sealed my pardon with his blood Hallelujah, what a Savior Hilt divine and helpless we Spotless Lamb of God was he Full at home with God in free Hallelujah, what a Savior Lifted up was he to die It is finished was his try Now in heaven exalted time

Hallelujah, what a Savior When he comes, our glorious King All his grants have come to bring Then anew this song we'll sing Hallelujah, what a Savior And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father The fellowship of God the Holy Spirit Be with us all now and forevermore Amen Amen