

One Body, Gathering the Scattered Sheep

Մէկ Մարմին, Հաւաքելով Տրուած Հօտը

Ezekiel 34:1-8; 1 Peter 5:1-4

Lately, I have been officiating many funerals. Sometimes I know the person who passed away, and often I don't know them. I used to grumble about these funerals. Not that I am avoiding my responsibility as a pastor to officiate funerals but saddened that I am too late in meeting them. I would like to know and meet my "scattered flock." I want to have coffee with them. I want to reach out to them and lead them as a pastor (Shepherd) when they are alive. I want to meet their families and their kids. What bothers me more is when I find out that once they were members of our church; they were baptized here; they were married in this church; they brought their children to Sunday school; some of them even were volunteers in the Christian Education. Oh Lord, how sad is this... my scattered flock.

Here is my topic today: "**One Body, Gathering the Scattered Sheep.**"

It is addressed to the leaders of the church. And when I say leaders, beside badvelis, all of us somehow have a role in leadership.

-Last Sunday my passage was from **Nehemiah**, where the scattered sheep of Israel were brought back to Israel after exile, to rebuild the city, the wall, the Temple, and not only physical construction, but **spiritual reconstruction as well**. One of the important parts of their worship life was **confession**. I pray that you do take seriously those sermons and apply them in your life.

-Today I am going back in their history to the time of exile. Here is a situation where the prophet Ezekiel describes what happens when the leaders ignore their responsibility, and worse where they misuse their position and do not take care of their sheep. The sheep were scattered, and worse the sheep went astray.

The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? ³ You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. ⁴ You have not strengthened the weak or

healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. ⁵ So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. ⁶ My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.
(Ezekiel 34:1-6 NIV)

Shepherds, oh shepherds, leaders, active church members, we have a responsibility to take care of the flock.

-Moses and David were called shepherds. They were called to serve the sheep. One was a **prophet**, and the other was a **king**, leaders of the community. What do we find about the leadership (kings of Israel):

You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally... (4)

Instead:

1. First, they misused the people who were under their care, robbing them and fattening themselves at their expense (v.2,3).
2. Secondly, they did not show any pastoral quality, such as caring for the weak and the defenseless (v.4).
3. And thirdly, they did not keep the flock in safety. They allowed them to be scattered. Which means the wolves could devour them (vs 5,6).

John B Taylor describes saying:

“They had exploited the people as if the flock belonged to them, the shepherds. But the people were the Lord’s flock (*my sheep*, 6) and the kings ruled them by the Lord’s appointment (*my shepherds*, 8). Therefore, the shepherds would be punished and the sheep, scattered by exile, would be rescued and returned to their own pastures and cared for by God as their good Shepherd.”¹

Oh how serious is this, my dear congregation.

We are talking about one body in Christ.

Am I responsible for my brother and sister? Yes, we all are.

-One body: some are here, and some are scattered.

-Some attend other churches. That gives me some relief that they are not stray; they are following the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

-But we have a big number who are scattered. And we have a responsibility to find them, invite them, gather them, and care for them.

-The second warning is that the church leadership, and the congregation should **examine themselves** and see **Christ is the center** of their church ministry.

WARNING: The church can easily end up like a social gathering with banquets and coffee hours and nothing else.

We should not turn to be an organization. We should be different as the body of Christ. One Body of Christ. One body in Christ which serves...

-Illustration; In one of my funerals that I was officiating, I met a person who was very active in our church life. Now the person is away from church life.

I asked, why? The person said: **“Church became too political.”**

I see his point. Maybe he is using this as excuse not to attend the church. But that is not the issue, what that person said is true.

We had a good conversation trying to explain that Badveli Kevin and I do our best not to make our church a political organization. I told that person that I would pray that he/she can return one day to church, to their home.

And furthermore, I told that person that I am not perfect, I will make mistakes, but I will do my best that my life is centered around Jesus. And I will do my best to lead my congregation towards that direction.

I believe many of you believe in this principle.

-The role model of GOOD SHEPHERD is Jesus himself. He became our **ultimate shepherd**, the Good Shepherd, not a hired one. We do learn from him to become shepherds..

Ezekiel’s description of how the shepherds should take care of the sheep:

“healing the sick, bounding the injured, finding one sheep which is lost and bringing it back to the flock...”

What was the first sermon of Jesus:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:18-21 NIV)

Isn't this true when we think about ministry of Jesus? The Good Shepherd carrying the sheep on his shoulder; he left the 99 and went behind the one who was stray.

The same invitation is to PACC leadership, and I will add the active members of the church. One body in Christ means also the ministry of reaching out.

Peter, Πέτρον my man, oh he learned from Jesus to become a shepherd. Here we find him addressing the church elders:

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: ² 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; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Peter 5:1-4 NIV)

I find important points to address in this passage.

-Peter's letter is written to the church which was in persecution and suffering under the Roman occupation.

I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings

Do you remember where he was when Christ was arrested, tried, and beaten, and crucified? That was an important turning point in Peter's life.

I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed

Then on Pentecost, when the HS came, he tasted the glory of Jesus as well

-Peter is encouraging the church to stay firm in these trials.

-He is guiding them how to live within the pagan world with Christian values.

(Read chapter 2)

-Peter is a good shepherd who learned from Jesus, the master.

Peter also experienced the resurrected Christ who asked Peter three times:

Peter do you love me?

Feed my sheep...feed my sheep....

-A genuine shepherd does not escape from his responsibilities when danger appears. No, he is facing difficulties.

-Be a shepherd willingly, not as a duty; watch over the flock because you love them, care for them, not as an obligation.

-Then Peter talks about integrity; don't do this to gain stuff, whatever is that, fame, prestige, money... but be eager to serve...

“Peter’s words remind us of Paul’s charge to the elders of Ephesus. Paul reminds the elders that he had borne witness to the gospel to Jews and Greeks, enduring trials and plots against his life. He pleads with the elders to remember his example, and to shepherd the flock, the church of the Lord, purchased with his blood. For Paul as for Peter, sharing in ministry means sharing in suffering: suffering now, and glory to come.”²

Application

1. Examine your motivations.

-Are you serving unwillingly?

-Are you expecting gain (something in return)?

-Are you being bossy or are you being an example?

2. Prayerfully think of someone who has left the flock. Reach out, invite.

(Someone invited a friend and said, “Come to church, and we will sit together.” She came as she is still here).

3. Welcome newcomers. (I heard of a church who invites to lunch anyone who comes for the first time).

4. Care for the young people

The days of Cultural Christianity are over. People came to church for social status. If there are any young people here, it is because they want to be here. They could have gone anywhere else on a Sunday morning.

The Lord is My Shepherd

We are one body. We belong to each other and need each other.

Lord, Make us ONE in CHRIST.

1. John Taylor, *Tyndale Commentary Ezekiel* p214

2. Edmund P. Clowney, *Bible Speaks Today 1 Peter*, P 198