

“Loving Jesus and His Sheep”
John 21:15-19
April 25, 2021
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

We come this morning to John 21:15-19.

We are in the epilogue of John’s gospel. Jesus has died, and he has risen. And after his initial appearances to his disciples, which brought them to faith in his resurrection, he now appears to them one morning on the beach.

As we said last Lord’s Day, in this epilogue Jesus is showing his disciples, and John is showing us, what the way forward will be for the Church – for the disciples of Jesus – after Jesus ascends bodily to heaven. [Carson, 665; Roberts]

The first thing he shows them, which we considered last week, was how the disciples were to answer their call to go out to the world with the message of the gospel.

The next thing he shows us is how the members of the Church should relate to one another. And he shows us that through his interaction with Peter.

Now, some reminders on the background may be helpful. Peter, remember, denied Jesus three times after Jesus had been arrested – and that after he had proudly proclaimed his willingness to die with Jesus.

Now, by the time we come to our text (and sometimes this is missed), Jesus and Peter are already reconciled. This is not the first time they have talked since Peter’s denial. We learn in Luke and 1 Corinthians that Jesus appeared to Peter alone before he appeared to the twelve. [Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5] We don’t know exactly what was said in that interaction, but it would seem right to assume that Peter confessed his faithlessness and Jesus forgave him.

Which means that their interaction this morning is not primarily about reconciliation, but about restoration. It is not about forgiveness, but about what calling Jesus will put on Peter’s life going forward, and what role he is to play among God’s people. [Carson, 675-676]

With that said, we turn to John 21:15-19.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this morning.

^{21:15} When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you

know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

Righteous are you, O Lord,
and righteous are your rules.
You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.
Your promises are well tried,
and we, your servants, love them.
Though we may be small and despised,
yet we do not forget your precepts.
Your righteousness is righteous forever,
and your word is true.
Even when we face trials,
your commandments are our delight.
Give us now understanding as we come to your word,
that we might here find life.
Grant this, we ask, for Jesus’s sake. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:137-138, 140-144]

The Expressions of Love We Choose

We see here that Jesus not only asks Peter if he loves him, but when Peter says he does, Jesus tells Peter how he wants him to express his love for Jesus, by caring for the sheep.

And one of the first things we realize is that Peter, again and again, had been trying to express – trying to prove – his love for Jesus in other ways.

Peter wanted to define what it looked like for him to love Jesus.

And so in John 13:8, Peter decided to show his love for Jesus by not allowing him to wash his feet ... and Jesus had to correct him.

In John 18:10 Peter decided to show his love for Jesus by fighting with the sword on Jesus’s behalf ... and Jesus had to stop him.

And in John 13:37 Peter decided to show his love for Jesus by declaring that he would die by Jesus's side ... and Jesus had to contradict him, and inform him that rather than die by his side, he would deny him three times that very night.

The first thing that Peter shows us is that he has tried – repeatedly – to define himself how he would express his love for Jesus – what he would do. And usually what he chose took the form of a heroic act that set him apart. And in every case what he attempted failed. The ways he came up with to express his love for Jesus either misunderstood his relationship to Jesus, misunderstood the mission of Jesus itself, or wildly overestimated Peter's own spiritual strength.

And those failures must have been in the forefront of Peter's mind as Jesus spoke to him – as the three questions of Jesus evoked the earlier three denials of Peter. We're told that it grieved Peter.

And as we consider Peter's repeated, and failed, attempts to define how he will express his love for Jesus, and how he will prove his love for Jesus on his own terms, we should ask: Where do we see the same pattern in ourselves?

What are the ways that *we* try to define what it will look like for us to love Jesus? What are the grand acts that we tend to choose – that we commit ourselves to, either publicly or in our own minds – where we say to ourselves “Yes, if I do that, *that* will really show that I love Jesus.”

Maybe the things you tend to come up with are good spiritual practices. Maybe it's an ambitious Bible reading plan or prayer schedule. Maybe it's some new giving or new volunteering you tell yourself you are going to do. Or maybe it's general achievement that you hope will reflect well on Jesus. You'll excel at work, or school, or with your kids, or with your home, and that will show the kind of hard worker you are, which will, in turn, prove your devotion to Christ (or so you reason). Or maybe it's something else.

What are the things that you tend to come up with that you find yourself thinking, if you do *that*, then that will show your love for Jesus?

And whatever they are ... how do they fall flat? How do they tend to collapse in on themselves, or backfire, or miss the point, like Peter's attempts all do?

Maybe you accomplish them, but there doesn't seem to be much love for Jesus in you as you do. That shouldn't surprise us much, as the things Peter chose seemed to be more about him than about Jesus – about him proving his worth rather than about him expressing love for Christ. Is that what your spiritual goals tend to be like?

Or maybe you just never seem to reach the goals you set. That shouldn't really surprise us either, as Peter shows us that when we set our own spiritual goals and rely on ourselves to get there, we usually get a front row seat to our own deficiencies.

Whatever it may be for you, we see in Peter what it looks like when we insist on defining the ways we will show our love for Jesus. And what we see is that our attempts often fall flat, and our chosen expressions are often are not things Jesus wants from us.

That's the first thing we see in Peter: the failure of the expressions of love for Jesus that we choose ourselves.

The Restoration We Need

The second thing that we see here, though, is that when we do that – when we fail – Jesus offers us restoration.

And as we said, it is restoration that goes beyond reconciliation. Reconciliation between Jesus and Peter – forgiveness of sins – has already happened. Forgiveness is key, but now, here in our text, Jesus offers Peter something more. Now he offers to restore him to his calling. [Wright, 164]

And that too is a profound act of grace.

Peter had done much to lose Jesus's trust. And we could imagine Jesus at that point forgiving Peter ... but then saying something like "Maybe after all that's happened you should just stay out of the way, try not to mess anything else up, and the rest of us will take care of the important work of the Church now." Maybe you've had someone say something like that to you before – you mess up, they forgive you, but they're kind of done trying to work with you on whatever you had been doing ... they tell you that they'll take it from there. And maybe you imagine that that also reflects Jesus's attitude towards you: you've messed up enough that he doesn't really have anything left that he'd trust you to do for his kingdom ... and so he'd like you to just keep your head low and stay out of the way of the more competent Christians.

But that is not what Jesus does. Jesus doesn't tell Peter he's forgiven, but no longer a part of the work of the kingdom. Instead, as an act of profound grace, Jesus restores him not only to his relationship with God, but to his responsibilities in the Church. Peter is still an apostle. Peter still has work to do for Jesus. Peter still has a purpose in the kingdom.

And so do all of Jesus's followers. Christ has a purpose – a calling – for all who have placed their trust in him. He not only has cleansing for you but, a calling – a commission – a role he wants you to play in the ministry of his kingdom. The question is whether you will receive his calling.

This is the beauty of the restoration of calling that we see here.

So, the first thing we see is that we often try to define ourselves what we will do for Jesus, and then we fail to love him as we said we would.

The second thing we see here is that when we fail, when we fall short, Jesus not only reconciles us to God, but he restores us to a useful place in his kingdom. He has a job for us to do. That's the second thing we see.

The Expression of Love Jesus Commands

The third thing we see is that Jesus tells us how he wants us to show our love for him. And he wants us to show our love for him by loving his sheep.

And here we need to pause and consider a few things.

Three times Jesus has asked Peter if he loves him. Three times Peter has said yes, that he loves him. And then three times Jesus has called on Peter – has commissioned Peter – to care for, to love, his sheep. “Feed my lambs.” he says in verse fifteen. “Tend my sheep.” he says in verse sixteen. “Feed my sheep.” he says in verse seventeen.

After all the unhelpful ways that Peter wanted to express his love for Jesus, now Jesus says to him: “If you want to show your love for me, this is what you should do: love and care for my sheep.”

And we need to appreciate this. Because this is both really straightforward ... and really profound. It's both really simple ... and really difficult.

If you want to love Jesus – if you want to show your love for him, if you want to express your love for him – then this is how you are to do it: you are to love his people. That is what Jesus tells Peter here.

Now, on one level, this is a particular commission for Peter. Peter is called to be a special kind of shepherd – an apostle. But in another sense, this calling goes out to all of us.

At least John, the author of this gospel, seemed to think so. Because it's what he said to God's people again and again. In his first epistle he wrote. “This commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” [4:21] Right before that he says “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” [4:20] In another place he writes: “No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.” [4:12] And in yet another place he writes “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.” [3:14]

Again and again we are told by John what Jesus says here to Peter: If we love Jesus, we are to show it by loving his sheep – by loving his people.

And yet ... that's often the last thing we want to do ... isn't it? I mean, we're fine doing some acts of service – the kind that are brief, and concrete, and don't obligate us to anything further. But Jesus has deliberately chosen an image that's not like that. He's chosen the image of a

shepherd. And earlier in John's gospel Jesus has already explained how a good shepherd was called not just to care for the sheep from time to time or only in ways that are convenient – a good shepherd was supposed to consistently and sacrificially love the sheep. [John 10] And yet, so often, it's exactly those kinds of close, long-term, long-suffering relationships with the people of God that we try to avoid. We don't like the obligation ... or the vulnerability ... or the mess. And yet that is what Jesus calls Peter to. And it's what he calls us to as well.

The first question that raises is: Are you willing to do that? And if not ... will you repent?

You may like the idea of loving God on your own – of keeping God's people at arm's length. But as John says: "he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." [1 John 4:20] If you really love Jesus, then you'll tend his sheep. There is ordinarily no relationship to Jesus that can be separated from a relationship to his people, the Church, because Jesus wants our love to him to be expressed in our love for one another in the Church. And so you are not permitted by Jesus to love him without loving his Church – without loving his people.

But what then, does it look like to love his people – to tend his sheep?

We can think of what Jesus calls us to here in three broad categories.

First, Jesus calls us to feed and tend – to care for – other Christians.

Jesus calls on us to minister to people in relationships where we are mostly like the shepherd and they are mostly like the sheep. And unless you are an actual newborn, there is almost certainly someone here that you can minister to in that way. There is someone who could benefit from your knowledge of the Lord, or your experience with the Lord, or the wisdom or the maturity the Lord has given you. There is someone who could be fed and tended by it.

And what that looks like could take many forms. It could be some sort of formal instruction, it could be sitting down with someone one-on-one for some intentional discipleship, or it could be something that looks quite different. Maybe you are gifted in ministering to others more by inviting them into your life and walking alongside them in some way – doing life together. How has God gifted you to shepherd others?

And who has he called you to do that with right now?

Maybe who that is is very obvious to you. Maybe it's your kids. Maybe it's a friend who is a younger Christian. Maybe it is someone else that the Lord has obviously put in your life.

Or maybe it's less obvious. Maybe you need to think and pray about who the Lord may be calling you to pursue.

But the point is this: Jesus has invested in you. Through his Spirit, through his Word, through his Church and through many other Christians, he has grown and equipped you. And what he has

given you he wants you to use. And he wants you to show your love for him by using it to bless his people – by tending and feeding his sheep.

Where is Jesus calling you to tend and feed others? That's the first question to consider.

The second question is: Where is Jesus calling you to be tended and fed by others?

Jesus's calling on Peter implied that just as Peter was called to tend and feed others, so others were called to be tended and be fed by Peter. And so with us, just as we are called to shepherd others, so we are each called to be shepherded by others. But often we don't really like that idea.

We're not too thrilled with that image of being shepherded by others. Or, if we think we like it, that often means we've changed it to be a bit more flattering. Because sheep are dumb and needy. They're usually wrong about what they most need. And they usually need a lot from shepherds. And the shepherds almost always know better than the sheep do, though the sheep may not always think so. And when we think of the metaphor that Jesus has chosen that way, then it starts to feel more insulting ... and then we don't really want Jesus to have called other people to be shepherds to us.

We like to think of ourselves as fully competent, and we prefer to relate to others who might minister to us like they are spiritual consultants we have hired. We choose them. Then they offer us some suggestions. Then we think it over and take the parts we like and discard the parts we don't like. They may have something to offer us, but make no mistake, we are in charge – we are in the driver's seat of this relationship.

But sheep are not like that with their shepherds. Sheep need help with really basic things. They need to be fed, and directed in very concrete ways. And sheep are not independent – they would not do well on their own. And Jesus here reminds us that we are sheep – every one of us. And while he is our chief shepherd, he is using other people in his Church, other Christians, to be his under-shepherds towards us. And we are called to receive the food and the direction they give us. And while we are *not* called to sacrifice our own reasoning or consciences by any means, we are still called to be suspicious of ourselves first, instead of being automatically suspicious of the shepherds Jesus has sent us.

Because we do need such human shepherds. Sometimes we need their greater wisdom, or experience, or knowledge. But sometimes we also need them to direct us in very simple ways: To admonish us to pray more. To call us out when we sin. To direct us again and again to the Scriptures. Because we are each, in our natural state, spiritually dumb ... like sheep.

How resistant are you to that truth? How do you keep the shepherds Jesus has sent you at arm's length? Whether it's your pastors, or your elders, or the deacons, or the leaders of the women's ministry, or a lay leader in the church, or a more spiritually mature friend you have, or a parent if you're younger – how do you resist the shepherds that the Lord has sent you?

The first thing we see is that Jesus calls us to tend and feed others in the Church. The second thing we see is that Jesus calls us to be tended and fed by others in the Church.

The third thing we see is that in many of our relationships, Jesus calls us to both of those things. In many of our relationships with peers, Jesus calls us both to feed them and to be fed by them – both to tend them and to be tended by them. These are the relationships with peers in the Church – with people in a similar spiritual place in life as you are – relationships that do not mainly go in one direction or the other, but in both directions: where we build one another up and bear one another’s burdens.

Again, we often want to avoid this. Maybe we are insulted if a friend – a peer – tries to shepherd us in a particular matter. Or maybe we feel awkward about shepherding them over a certain issue. But this is the kind of “one another” love that God’s people are called to in the Church. And as John says, the command that Jesus has given us is that “whoever loves God must also love his brother.” [1 John 4:21] And love among brothers and sisters means mutual shepherding.

What friendships that you have with other Christians lack that kind of mutual shepherding, but should have it? And how can begin to fix that?

Can you be the first one to invite the other person to shepherd you in a specific issue you are dealing with? Can you bring them a problem or a question, and ask for their help? Can you open the door for that, by making yourself humble? Is that what the Lord may be calling you to?

Jesus tells Peter that if Peter loves him, then he should love Jesus’s people – he should tend and feed his sheep. And so for us.

For us it means that we are willing to shepherd Christians God has called us to shepherd, we are willing to be shepherded by those Christians God has put in our lives to shepherd us, and that we are willing to love those in Christ who are in a similar spiritual place as we are by shepherding one another.

Now, we might think about that, and we might start sorting other people into those categories. But in reality how this works can be a bit more complicated.

A Picture

And Henri Nouwen helps us see that.

Henri Nouwen was a pastor and teacher in the Catholic Church. In the span of his career he published 39 books and wrote hundreds of articles.

And in his short book titled *In the Name of Jesus* he talks about our passage this morning.

The book is based on a talk that Nouwen gave at a conference in Washington D.C. in the late 80s. But the book is especially interesting because Nouwen not only gives you the content of the talk he gave, but the circumstances around that talk.

After twenty years of great academic success, teaching at Notre Dame, Yale, and Harvard, Nouwen came to the conviction that his worldly success was interfering with his spiritual wellbeing. He was burning out, and he was doubting the value of the things he was spending most of his time on. And so Nouwen changed the course of his daily work. He went from teaching at Harvard to living in a L'Arche community – a community where he would both live with and work with mentally handicapped people.

Nouwen writes: “I moved from Harvard to L'Arche, from the best and the brightest, wanting to rule the world, to men and women who had few or no words and were considered, at best, marginal to the needs of our society. It was a very hard and painful move,” he said, “and I am still in the process of making it. After twenty years of being free to go where I wanted and to discuss what I chose, [now I was living] the small, hidden life with people whose broken minds and bodies demand a strict daily routine in which words are the least requirement.” [22]

Despite these radical changes, Nouwen continued to do occasional speaking engagements like this talk in D.C.

But unlike when he went to such events in the past, Nouwen no longer went alone. The leaders of the L'Arche community now helped choose a member from the community to accompany him on the trip. This time they decided that Bill Van Buren would travel with Nouwen. Nouwen and Bill had become good friends, and of all the mentally handicapped people in the house, Bill was most able to express himself with words and gestures.

And Bill was excited. In the days before they left for the trip, Nouwen recounts how Bill would come up to him often and say “We are doing this together.” “Yes,” Nouwen kept saying, “we are doing this together. You and I are going to Washington to proclaim the Gospel.”

The day came, and they made their trip.

Nouwen's talk was based on our text this morning, as well as the three temptations of Jesus. Nouwen's goal was to contrast the ways we are tempted to do ministry to one another with the ways Jesus calls Peter to do ministry.

The first thing Nouwen notes is that while Jesus puts Peter's focus on Peter's love for Jesus, we tend to put our focus on our relevance to the needs of the people around us. Nouwen sees something of this in the temptation of Jesus to turn stones into bread – thus meeting the immediate felt needs and desires of the people around him. When we try to love, or minister to, or shepherd others, we usually want a product that seems to perfectly fit their felt needs, and that will make them pleased with us. But often we are called instead to give them ourselves.

The Apostle Paul understood this. He said that in his relationship to the Thessalonians he was “like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.” [1 Thessalonians 2:17] A few verses before that he said to them: “we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.” [2:8]

Nouwen's change in vocation forced him to wrestle with this. He could not impress the mentally handicapped people in front of him with the shiny and relevant-sounding products of his mind. Instead, they needed *him* – his vulnerable and loving presence in their lives. [28]

When we want to minister to others, our tendency is to consider first our competence in some area – our ability to meet some felt need. But, Nouwen points out, when Jesus commissioned Peter, his first question was a different one. The first thing he asked Peter was: “Do you love me?”

Nouwen writes: “The question is not: How many people take you seriously? How much are you going to accomplish? Can you show some results? But: Are you in love with Jesus? [...] Do you know the incarnate God?” [37]

And so for us, the most important first question as we seek to shepherd others is not about our competence, but about our love: Do we love Jesus?

The next temptation Nouwen considers is the temptation “to be spectacular” (as he puts it). Nouwen sees this in the temptation for Jesus to throw himself from the top of the temple and let the angels catch him, for all to see. He sees the same temptation in our desires to act as spiritual heroes, accomplishing great spiritual feats for ourselves and for others, and doing it all on our own.

But rather than a call to spectacular solo feats, the second thing that Jesus says to Peter is “Feed my lambs ... tend my sheep ... feed my sheep.” The task Peter is called to is shepherding ... which is not a very spectacular task. And, Nouwen points out, it is also not usually a solo task – at least not as Jesus conceives it. For Jesus always sent his disciples out in groups or pairs to do it.

More than that, Nouwen points out that so much ministry under Jesus is not one person shining for the benefit of another, but it is mutual shepherding – Christians caring for one another. “Ministry,” he writes, “is not only a communal experience, it is also a mutual experience. [...] Somehow we have come to believe that good leadership [or good ministry] requires a safe distance from those we are called to lead [or minister to]. Medicine, psychiatry, and social work all offer us models in which ‘service’ takes place in a one-way direction. Someone serves, someone else is being served, and be sure not to mix up the roles! But how can we lay down our life for those with whom we are not even allowed to enter into a deep personal relationship? Laying down your life means making your own faith and doubt, hope and despair, joy and sadness, courage and fear available to others as ways of getting in touch with the Lord of life.

“We are not the healers, we are not the reconcilers, we are not the givers of life. We are sinful, broken, vulnerable people who need as much care as anyone we care for. The mystery of ministry is that we have been chosen to make our own limited and very conditional love the gateway for the unlimited and unconditional love of God.” [61-62]

Where do you make the mistake he describes? Where do you treat ministry like a spectacular solo performance, instead of ordinary shepherding, in community, in which you share not just a

shiny product, but your very self with others, and where they minister to you just as you minister to them?

Finally, the third temptation we face in ministering to one another is the desire for power and control. We see this in the temptation in which Satan offers Jesus all the kingdoms of this world. In contrast to that, consider what Jesus says to Peter in verse eighteen of our text. Jesus says to him: “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.”

When we love, and care for, and minister to others in the Church – whether they be in our family, or among our friends, or in some formal setting, we want to be in control. But Jesus tells Peter that the path of shepherding is not one where control is more and more gained, but one where control is more and more given up ... with the final result in Peter’s case being his death (as John tells us in verse nineteen).

That means that the direction of ministry is very different than we tend to think it is. But it also means that the way ministry shapes us is much deeper than we tend to believe it is.

After all, dying for Jesus was exactly what Peter had earlier pledged, but failed to do. But here Jesus tells him what will make him able to give his life for Christ. And the thing that will do that is living the consistent pattern of dying to himself daily for Jesus’s people. That is the training ground Peter needed.

Which means that even when Peter is the shepherd sacrificing for the sheep, the sheep are still shaping him, and often ministering to him.

And that is a reality that Nouwen learned in a deeper way as he gave this talk at the conference in Washington.

Nouwen admits he never really knew what Bill had in mind when he talked about doing things together. But he soon learned. Because once Nouwen began his address, Bill got up out of his seat, walked up to the podium, and stood right behind Nouwen. Every time Nouwen finished a page from his notes and moved it to the side, Bill took that sheet from the podium and set it on a nearby table. [96]

And then soon Bill began to chime in. When Nouwen referenced a Bible story Bill knew, he said loudly for everyone “I have heard that before!” When he told a story about the L’Arche community, Bill chimed in with a few more details. At the end, Bill even added a few words of his own, and then made an effort to meet as many people as he could when people talked and mingled after the address.

Bill’s participation was endearing, but Nouwen quickly realized that it was more than that. Bill was offering both the audience, and Nouwen himself, spiritual food and direction that they needed.

Nouwen's talk could exposit the Scriptures, and Nouwen could describe the L'Arche community, but Bill's presence, his desire to help, his sharing about others in the community, his desire to know others at the conference, *that* displayed the significance of the actual relationships Nouwen was speaking about in a way that Nouwen's words couldn't do. Nouwen understood that the people there would remember those things Bill displayed far longer than they would remember Nouwen's words.

Bill had ministered to that auditorium of ministers. And Bill had ministered to Nouwen. Christ had used Bill to shepherd them.

There are at least two things we should take from that.

One is that we should be open to whomever the Lord may use to shepherd us. In our pride we so often think that only the impressive and the advanced have something to really offer us. But God delights in using those overlooked by the world to minister to his people. We must beware not to overlook them, but be sure to receive the Lord's care through them.

But second, it also means that with all humility, we cannot put limits on the ways the Lord may use us to minister to others. We are often good at making excuses about why we should not reach out to someone and try to care for them spiritually – why we have little to offer, why someone else should do it. But once again, God delights in using weak vessels.

On that day in Washington D.C. the Lord used the mentally handicapped Bill Van Buren to shepherd the highly intelligent and accomplished Henri Nouwen. Who knows whom he may want to minister to through you.

And so, if we love our Lord, let us love his sheep. Let us submit to the shepherds he sends us. Let us care for the sheep he has entrusted to us. And let us shepherd and love one another, confident that through us, Christ himself is caring for his people, and making us into disciples who can walk in his footprints.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

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