

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 18 June 2023
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: Saved by grace (Acts 10-28)
Passage: Acts 20:13-24
Title: Paul in Ephesus
Outline:

A good will shepherd will

1. Display humility (see also 33-35)
 2. Preach everything that is helpful
 3. Urge repentance and trust
 4. be committed to testifying to God's grace
 5. Warn of danger
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- Confession time: - surprising thing you may not have known about me... but maybe from my background in television and my interest in all things media... a few mornings a week, I have morning television on as I'm having breakfast and getting ready for the day.
- Last week, David Koche had his last morning on Sunrise on Ch 7 after 21 years... and the last morning was quite emotional as they looked back and played highlights and heard from people who had been involved over the years.
- Koche himself and co-presenters – past and present – were all emotional at various moments during the farewell. I felt a little emotional at various points.
- But **Paul** saying farewell to the elders of the church at Ephesus - especially because they knew they'd never see him again – that is **another** whole **level** of **significance** and **emotion**.
- ...and in the speech Luke records for us here, we see amazing insight into Paul as **pastor** and **shepherd**.
- We see the **depth** of **relationship**; the **love**, the **care**, the **heart**... the **bond**... and we get a glimpse into the love and connection the Ephesian elders felt with **Paul** as their **shepherd** for **three years**. ///
- So – as Paul farewells the Ephesian elders, I want you to see five marks of a good shepherd...
- A good will shepherd will
 1. Display humility
 2. Preach everything that is helpful
 3. Urge repentance and trust
 4. be committed to testifying to God's grace
 5. Warn of danger
- First

1. DISPLAY HUMILITY

- Have a look with me from v18 – *When they arrived (that is, the elders from Ephesus), he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents.*
- **Humility** and **tears**...

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- His ministry wasn't about **him**... wasn't drawing attention to **him** – wasn't for **his benefit**.
- And even faced with **testing**, he didn't become **hard** or **arrogant**...
- Look also with me later in the speech – vv 34-35 – “*You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”*
- Again – he wasn't in this ministry for **himself** – he supplied his own needs... he helped the **weak**...
- He followed the commands – and the example of the Lord Jesus... who didn't consider equality with God something to hang on to but took the nature of a servant and become obedient even to death (Philippians 2:5ff).
- If you are in **any sense** a shepherd... clergy, LLMs, Bible study leader, youth leader... SRE or Sunday school teacher or helper... we – **we** must lead with **humility**...
- Ministry – **all kinds of ministry** – is about **giving of ourselves**, not **gaining for ourselves**...
- It's about **Jesus' glory** not **our glory**! /
- The **difference** from this for **clergy**? – Paul had his own reasons for supplying his own needs, but elsewhere he talks of **supporting** those who shepherd and pastor... and I am so grateful – **clergy** are **so grateful** – to have the opportunity to be set **free** from having to supply our own needs because of **your generous support**... (and in some cases the support of BCA or donors from outside the diocese)... you set us **free** to concentrate on **shepherding**... **Thank you so much!** ///
- A good shepherd then displays **humility** and:

2. PREACHES EVERYTHING HELPFUL

- Have a look with me at v20 - *You know that I have **not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.***
- And also v27 *For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you **the whole will of God***
- Nothing **off** the table or off **limits** in the **preaching** – that would be **helpful**...
- This is **SO** important... sometimes preachers feel that they mustn't deal with **this** topic or that **issue** – because it is too **sensitive** and you might **upset someone**... and even the **lectionary** – skips parts of God's word the compilers think should be **left out!**
- No Paul says – I'll not hesitate to **preach anything**...
- Have you been **upset** by something said in a sermon? **Maybe** – just **maybe** – that was because the preacher was **not hesitating to preach the whole will of God** and **YOU needed to hear it!** //
- And notice – that he not only teaches **publicly** but from **house to house**.
- That is **so** important... a pastor meeting with people **one on one** or with a **couple** – in their **homes** – or at a **café** or **park** – **SO beneficial** – not just to have a nice cup of **tea** – Paul says it is about **teaching**...! – but such visits will build **trust, respect, understanding** and **connection**... **clergy** – please – get **out** and visit your **people** – it will make an **astonishing difference** to your **ministry** and the **depth** of your **relationships**... //
- ...and **please** – don't pull back in teaching proclaiming the **WHOLE** will of God... even if it is **hard** or **sad** or **sensitive**...
- Third, we see that a good shepherd...

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3. URGES REPENTANCE AND TRUST

- This is surely connected to not hesitating to preach anything that will be helpful and proclaiming the whole will of God... but have a look with me at v21...
- *I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.*
- Urging people to **repentance** and **faith** is both a **privilege** and a **responsibility**.
- Those who are not yet Christians, must be **urged** to do this – to **turn** from their **rebellion** and from serving **idols**, to **serve** the **living God** – and to put their **faith in** – to **trust Jesus** for forgiveness and **salvation** and **life!** //
- If you are here today and are not **yet Christian** – you are **precious** and **loved by God** – and he longs to **welcome** you **home** into his **family** for **now** and all **eternity** – and I urge you to **repent** and put your **trust** in Jesus **today!**
- But not only for those who have yet to **turn** to **Jesus**.
- **Christians** also need to be **urged** to **repent** and have **faith**... There may be an area in your life in which you are currently now **totally disobedient**... **whatever** area that might be – I urge you to **repent** and put things **right**... and **trust** God for his **forgiveness**.
- You know, urging people to repentance and faith has gone out of **fashion** these **days**.
- There are many preachers who **never** urge people to repentance and faith... for they think it is not their place – or that you may upset **someone**.
- So many sermons are just nice **descriptions** of **things**... and the take home action – well there **is none**... the best reaction you could hope for is ‘well – that was **nice** wasn’t it?’
- Preachers – as part of preaching the whole will of God – don’t shy **back** from **boldly** calling on people to **repent** and trust **the Lord Jesus**...! ///
- So a good shepherd displays **humility**, doesn’t hesitate to preach **anything** that is helpful, urges people to **repentance** and **faith** and **fourth**:

4. IS COMMITTED TO TESTIFYING TO GOD’S GRACE

- ...no matter the **cost**... no matter the **dangers** – the **unknowns** – the **challenges**...
- Have a look with me at vv22-24 - *“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.*
- we’ll hear more about this next week – what Paul was **warned** about in terms of what he will face when he goes up to **Jerusalem**...
- but he knows it’s going to be **tough**.... **prison** and **other hardships** await... //
- but notice what he says – his life is worth **nothing** to him – a life lived for **himself** is worth **nothing**... because he has **singular aim** in **life**... to do what he’s been given by **Jesus** to **do**... which is to **testify** to the good news of **God’s grace**...!
- that’s **all** that **matters** to him. All that **counts**. All that is **important**.
- And note the **nature** of the task – not to tell people to pull up their **moral socks** or turn over a **new moral leaf** – NO – it is to **testify** to **God’s grace**...

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- God's **grace** in the **astounding gift** of his **Son** – by whose death and resurrection come **forgiveness** and **eternal life**... another reminder friends – **ALL** is of God's **grace**...!
- **Shepherds**... NO – you are **not** the **Apostle Paul** – and **his** commission is not the same as **yours**... but surely there are **parallels**.... From your **ordination commitments** if **ordained**, or your **undertaking** as an **LLM** – or in any way you shepherd and serve...
- are you similarly **singularly minded**, to do **all** that it takes – despite the **challenges**, the **hardships**, the **setbacks**, the **distractions**... to **keep on testifying** to the **good news** of God's **grace**?? //
- Don't lose **sight** of what we're **on about**... don't lose **hope** or give **up** doing **this**... //
- It is the **riches** of God's **grace** we **all** **need** to **hear**... and become absolutely **clear about**! ///
- And finally, a good shepherd...

5. WARNS OF DANGER

- *v28 - Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God,^[a] which he bought with his own blood.^[b] ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.*
- So Paul urges the elders to keep **watch** over themselves and all the flock... and to be **shepherds** of the **church** – so precious to God for he bought with this own blood – that's a lovely insight into how God feels about US isn't it... we the church are SO **PRECIOUS** – not the least of which is because he has made us **his** through the **shed blood** of the **Lord Jesus!!**
- And **that** is why the warning takes on even **more significance** – **elders** – **watch yourselves** and the **precious flock** – because after Paul leaves, savage wolves will come in... so there will a threat to the church from **OUTSIDE** – **and** – even from your **OWN NUMBER** men will arise and **distort** the truth in order to draw **away** disciples – so there will be a threat from **INSIDE too!! //**
- Brothers and sisters – **this is still the case today** – so – **shepherds** – please keep on **watching** – be **diligent!**
- Threats today from **OUTSIDE** include legislation which wants to prevent faith-based schools from employing only faith-based people.
- Threats from **INSIDE** include those who say the Bible is **NOT** the word of God, that the resurrection was not **real**; that **everyone everywhere** will make it to **heaven**... etc....!
- Shepherds – **keep watch** – and **warn!**
- Make sure people today are **open** and **alert** to the **dangers**... //
- But if I can just add something here.... Sometimes the dangers are not **huge** things like doctrinal differences – the dangers are **smaller** things – like **conflicts** on **parish council**... **disagreements** about the nature of **services**... things like that – put a **stop** to these... because these have as **great** a chance of stopping the **advancement** of the gospel as anything **else!! //**
- Let me bring things to a close...
- A good shepherd will display humility, will not fail to preach everything – the whole will of God – that will be helpful; will urge repentance and faith; will do anything it takes to keep on telling you the good news of God's grace; will warn their people about anything that might take them away from the Lord Jesus!
- If you are in any leadership capacity... **ARE YOU** a **good shepherd?** //
- And my final word.... Especially the connection we see here between Paul and the elders... //

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- For those churches in our diocese who currently **have** a **minister**: can I ask you two questions:
do you sense their **love** for **you**? Does it match the love we see here between **pastor** and **elder**? My great sense is that **ALL** our current clergy, **love you, their people!** /// If this be **true** – **trust** them to **lead** and **guide you** – even when you may **disagree** with **them**.
Second question: Do **you** love **them**? Would they **know** that? What **practical** steps can you take to show your appreciation for **them**? How might you **encourage** them, **support** them, and **assure** them of your **love**? ///