

“Show-Up”

Shepherding Series 1/8

June 30, 2013

1 Peter 5:1-14

1 Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you 2 to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it —not for sordid gain but eagerly. 3 Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. 5 In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. 8 Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. 10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. 12 Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, I have written this short letter to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. 13 Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

I got to ask a couple of people what they thought when they heard the words ‘Show-up’ the first responses were be there, be presentable, be on time...all good and wonderful concepts that elaborate on the concept of showing up. Our question today, however, focus’ on showing up as a Shepherd of the congregation here at Hooker Memorial Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). You see, we are beginning our Shepherding Ministry launch today, well I should say re-beginning. Because this is not the first time and it is probably not the last time ministries will be introduced, renewed, and tried again in the life of our church.

With this introduction and subsequent new beginning in our church life we have amazing opportunity to immerse ourselves in learning about a critical theological doctrine and concept, Shepherding. As we have discussed before Shepherds, sheep, and Shepherding are throughout our scriptures. From the First Testament to the New Testament we can find all sorts of references. The image given in our scriptures is familiar and comforting. Sometimes we are even so accustomed to it that we almost forget it is there. I do not know if you noticed the image of the Shepherd from our slides but it is our own stained glass window here up front. I invite you, after the service of course, to take a look. It is just one of the many images we have a chance to see of the Great Shepherd, Jesus from whom we draw this theological and scriptural framework.

1 Peter 5:1-14 is from the epistles and although it is accredited to Peter the events that are spoken of in the epistle are such that many scholars now believe it is by an unknown author in the style of Peter. As a side note to write in the style of someone was a common practice of the Hellenistic time. Plagiarism was an unknown ideology and it was actually considered a form of flattery. Masters even taught their students so that those students would be able to speak for them and be like them in all ways whether in speech, writing, or even in art.

1 Peter is only five chapters long but each chapter leads us to explore theological ideas and concepts ending in our reading from today asking us to Shepherd one another and be humble doing it. The request of us to be a Shepherd is

most likely referring to the Gospel of John where Jesus so famously tells Peter to feed his sheep. The story follows the same lines of when Peter denies Christ three times then Christ tells Peter three times to feed his sheep.

How though does this all affect us in the life of our church? I do not know if you have ever heard of Gary Chapman's "Five Love Languages" but it is a fairly impressive study on human needs and interactions within the paradigms of those needs, and I truly do recommend reading it. One of the needs Chapman emphasizes is the need of presence or in his words "quality time". Being there and engaged with a person is a big part of Shepherding and in fact a big part of any relationship, which is the core of what Shepherding is about, being in relationship with one another in light of our love for Jesus Christ and the avenue of our church.

Showing up however is not enough. I can spend an hour sitting side by side with anyone watching TV and although I am with them, I hope we understand the distinction I am making, that I am not truly with them and engaged with them. Both of us are engaged by the TV not by one another. Peter in his scripture leads us to distinguish this delineation further by expressing that there is a distinct difference between Shepherding out of obligation and Shepherding out of love. This distinction can also be pulled from the Gospel of John where the hired shepherd ran at the first sign of trouble abandoning his sheep but the good shepherd laid down his life for his sheep.

Another way to view this is to understand that obligation would be if we were only asking all of our elders and deacons to do it and make it a part of their job description. And while we can all recognize that various aspects of Shepherding are a major part of our faith let us be honest not all of us are called to do it as our ministries. So I am excited that we are not limiting our Shepherding Ministry to those lines but instead are asking any and all who feel the call to volunteer or be nominated. We are asking people who love to be a part of peoples lives to be willing to show up in their day to day and become a part of the network of love that God calls us to be a part of.

I leave us with this story of truly showing up and living our lives after our calling. Adapted from Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul submitted by The Speaker's Sourcebook it has been a story that has reminded me honestly of the power of our presence even when we do not see it.

It is a fable about a young orphan girl who had no family and no one to love her. One day, feeling exceptionally sad and lonely, she was walking through a meadow when she noticed a small butterfly caught unmercifully in a thorn-bush. The more the butterfly struggled to free itself, the deeper the thorns cut into its fragile body. The young orphan girl carefully released the butterfly from its captivity. Instead of flying away, the little butterfly changed into a beautiful fairy. The young girl rubbed her eyes in disbelief.

"For your wonderful kindness," the good fairy said to the girl, "I will grant you any wish you would like."

The little girl thought for a moment and then replied, "I want to be happy!"

The fairy said, "very well," and leaned toward her and whispered in her ear. Then the good fairy vanished.

As the little girl grew up, there was no one in the land as happy as she. Everyone asked her the secret of her happiness. She would only smile and answer, "the secret of my happiness is that I listened to a good fairy when I was a little girl."

When she was very old and on her deathbed, the neighbors all rallied around her, afraid that her fabulous secret of happiness would die with her. "Tell us please they begged." Tell us what the good fairy said."

The lovely old woman simply smiled and said "the fairy told me that everyone, no matter how secure they seemed, no matter how old or how young, how rich or poor, had need of me"

Now I am not waiting until my deathbed to reveal this but like the old woman and most importantly like Jesus Christ asking us to as his faithful Shepherds and Sheep we need to remember that everyone has need of us, so Show Up! Amen!