

House of prayer: Monday; Humility, Repentance, & Gratitude

I. Introduction

A. Seven Churches series reminder

1. Jesus, the authoritative word to each of these local churches (2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14)
 - a. Not a guest speaker or workshop
 - b. John, the pastor/elder/under-shepherd is simply relaying the message of Jesus.
2. What we see here is Jesus as the senior leader to these local churches, not symbolically but in reality.

B. The nature of church leadership

1. "Jesus is Lord over the church" is believed and taught in theory but it seems that often, the structure and practice of church leadership does not embody this truth.
2. Human nature always has difficulty with embracing and embodying the teachings and truths of Scripture.
 - a. Love your enemies; turn the other cheek; God or money, you have to choose; don't worry about anything, seek God instead; deny self, take up your cross daily, follow Jesus; the world hated Jesus, expect the world to hate Christians
 - b. I believe all these things, but living them out is a constant struggle.
3. *Recognizing and following Jesus as the leader of my church is critical to carrying out the mission of God in a way that draws people to new life rather than pushing them toward eternal separation from God.

II. What does Scripture say? The New Testament writers are of one mind affirming Jesus Christ as the leader of the church, not symbolic or just universal, but specific and local.

A. Ephesians 1:15-23

1. Jesus' resources:

a. The Word and the Spirit

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, (Ephesians 1:15-18)

b. The mechanisms by which Jesus leads and shepherds the church is the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

2. Jesus' authority

and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above

all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:19-23)

- a. Seated at the right hand
 - b. Above all rule, authority, power, dominion, and every name
 - c. All things under His feet
 - d. Head over all things to the church
3. Jesus, Who is given all power, is given by God to the church
- a. Means the full authority and power expressed in Jesus is at work in the church
 - b. Jesus is enthroned as cosmic ruler and is the ultimate influence over all matters on Earth, particularly revealed in the church.
4. Two things
- And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:22-23)*
- a. The church is the body of Christ, Who is the head. Jesus thinks, sees, hears, speaks, and directs the church.
 - b. The church is filled with Christ, He brings all things in the church into harmony and unity in Himself.

B. 1 Peter 5:1-4

1. Peter's letter is written to the provinces of Asia Minor, the same churches addressed by Jesus in Revelation 2-3.
2. Chief Shepherd identified as Jesus (v4)
And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
 - a. Even in His "absence," Jesus is still in charge.
 - b. He will evaluate and reward those who have shepherded in His image.
3. Qualities of shepherds (leaders in the church)
So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:1-3)
 - a. Not because they must but because they are surrendered
*Belongs to God not to me.
 - b. Not greedy for benefit (money or influence) but eager for what is going to be revealed (culmination of Jesus' return and reward)
*Life's challenges are little in comparison to what awaits us.
 - c. Not delighting/defaulting in the use of authority or power but modeling Jesus' example to the flock
*Sacrificial life trusting God for exaltation.
4. Note: Jesus' example from Philippians 2:1-10
So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind,

having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (Philippians 2:1-5)

- a. Unity under Christ; humility (pursuit of serving and release of equality and entitlement); seeking the God-designed interest of others first
- b. See Jesus' example in vs 5-8

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)

III. What does this mean?

A. We are all followers first

1. Shepherds are followers of Jesus, and their assignment is to follow so well that they are worth being followed. *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)*
 - a. It's not about greater intimacy and contact with a leader in the church. It's about greater intimacy and contact with Jesus.
 - b. The church is led by Jesus, everyone else is a follower.
2. The quality and character of the first followers (shepherds) in the church are radically different from all other contexts.

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to Him with her sons, and kneeling before Him she asked him for something. And He said to her, "What do you want?" She said to Him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in Your Kingdom." Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able." He said to them, "You will drink My cup, but to sit at My right hand and at My left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father." And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles Lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:20-28)

- a. Not so among you
 - 1) Culture: authoritative and dominating; often oppressive; hierarchy structured; strength and decisiveness highly valued; esteems the rights and privileges that accompany being on top
 - 2) Jesus: model of the house servant/bond slave; gave up rights and privileges in order to serve others; humility and dependence highly valued
- b. Leadership is a functional position of power and authority; followership is a relational posture of love and trust.

3. *Jesus as Chief Shepherd of my church means that Jesus is the real and present authority in my church. He alone acts as the protector of the family with all other followers within the church modeling Jesus by obeying the Word and the Spirit. The physical leadership of each church simply follows the example of Christ and models that for the church family. They repeat all Jesus said and keep those following focused on unity with Jesus and each other, humility, and serving one another.

B. My evolving understanding

1. Culture and often structure of church leadership is antithetical to what the Bible models, especially Jesus.
 - a. Pastor pedestal - more the business CEO model than what Jesus and the apostles demonstrated
 - b. The greater the authority and power the greater need for community and accountability - not the case in the church
2. People trust personalities more than they trust institutions. The problem is that there's only one personality that can be trusted, and those who are humbly surrendered to Him will choose a greater degree of accountability and community, and therefore have a greater capacity to be trusted, but not to the degree of Jesus.