

Saint Timothy Lutheran – Edmonds, WA

May 9, 2010 – Rev. Craig A. Patterson

“The Pastor: Made To Be An Overseer & Shepherd Of Souls.”

(Text: Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:7)

Context: The Apostle Paul addresses the “elders” (pastors) in Asia Minor on his journey back to Jerusalem. He gives them a charge to “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers*, to *shepherd* the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). In Peter’s letter to the first century church, he encourages the pastors to ‘serve as overseers – not because you must, but willingly as God wants you to be...not lording over those entrusted to you’ (I Pet. 5:2,3). In the third passage, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews admonishes the believers in Christ to submit to and obey their leaders “for they *keep watch over your souls*, as those who will give an account” (Heb. 13:7). These three passages illumine the pastor’s role as overseer of souls. What does it mean to be an “overseer of souls?”

- I. Today, Churches Are Tempted To Seek After Pastors Who Are Similar To The Secular World’s Sought-After CEO’s And Big Name Coaches.**
 - A. Like the ideal would-be coach or CEO, wished-for pastoral candidates for one’s parish are often described as being “winsome,” “energetic,” “innovative,” and “motivational.”
 - B. Parishioners and pastors are tempted to think in terms of the numbers (of members and of offerings) in order to measure the “success” of a ministry.
 1. Comments like, “Pastor so and so grew the parish to be a mega-church,” or “Pastor so and so really filled the pews,” or “Pastor so and so really built this church.”
 2. Like an ‘eye-catching’ act, the devil would have us covet a pastor who captures the imagination of the people and is a mesmerizing speaker.
 - C. Thinking of the pastor of our church as an “overseer of souls” ushers in no thoughts of greatness nor of becoming a church that will impress the community.

- II. God Calls And Sends Out Pastors To Serve As Overseers/Shepherds Of Souls.**
 - A. Danger to our souls truly exists. (“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (I Peter 5:8).)
 1. The devil targets our faith in Christ.
 - a. Peter adds these words, “Resist him (the devil), standing firm in your faith” (I Peter 5:9).
 - B. False teachers are on the loose (II Peter 2:1).
 1. They teach falsehood.
 2. Their motives are self-seeking. (II Peter 2:1-3)
 - C. God declares that His shepherds of souls will have to give an account of their ministries. (They will have to give an account to God at the end of time.)
 1. God gives them His Word and Sacraments with which to share with the people. a. “Preach the Word...” (II Timothy 4:2).
 2. God gives the pastors the needed attributes for this role. (I Tim. 3:2-7).
 3. God fills their hearts with His kind of love with which to love even the unlovable.
 - D. Thus, a faithful, humble, loving shepherd of souls is to call out warnings to the flock, to individuals under his care, and to feed the souls charged to his care with God’s Word (Both Law and Gospel).
 1. Calling falsehood, falsehood when others fear to do so.
 2. Declaring God’s truth in a world muddled by all kinds of falsehood.
 3. Offering true and eternal comfort in connection with Christ to seeking souls.