

SHEPHERD THE FLOCK

“A Healthy Church”

Scripture Reading: 1 PETER 5:1-4

-) **SLIDES 1-6.** Bible Jeopardy!
-) Read today’s Scripture text.
-) **SLIDE 7.** We are in a new sermon series “*Shepherd the Flock.*” I have titled today’s message “*A Healthy Church.*”
-) There is nothing more important to me than what church must be. I’m a pretty black and white person when it comes to the Word of God. And the Word of God has a lot to say about church and church people. And I get upset when I see “*church*” deviate from what it must be. On the other hand, I get excited when I see “*church*” being what it must be.
-) And that is where this sermon series is going. In this Scripture text, the Word of God commands the elder (the leader of the church - me) to shepherd the flock (you) and to watch over you.
-) **SLIDE 8.** A review from last week tells us that the man who serves as an elder (pastor, overseer) 1) is WILLING to do so (not HESITANT or RELUCTANT); 2) is eager to SERVE the flock; 3) does not usurp his AUTHORITY over others; 4) does not do this for DISHONEST GAIN (filthy lucre).
-) Today, I want to take our time here this morning to talk about us; BGCC. Who we are. Where we have been. And where we are going. So, today’s message will be more informative than theological. But I want everyone in here to know and understand who we are here at BGCC. We are BGCC.
-) BGCC is a protestant church. We were formerly associated with Disciples of Christ denomination, but we defected from that liberal denomination several years before I arrived.

-) That was a very good move on the part of this church. There is no place for liberalism and unbiblical doctrine within a church. That means we are now non-denominational. We are not affiliated with any Protestant denomination.
-) That is good in the fact that we are not obligated to follow the doctrinal statements of a hierarchy nor do we have to pay any apportionments to a denominational hierarchy. We are completely autonomous. Any tithes and offering we receive here stay here. This building and grounds are all paid for. This church does not owe anyone anything.
-) But being non-denominational can be bad in the fact that the teaching and theology can go to any liberal extreme with virtually no sense of checks and balances except for what you, the congregation, bring to attention. But in my 12+ years here that has not been the case.
-) I love this church. Good things happen here. We are blessed. And I continue to be excited to be called your pastor. This morning I want to share with you 3 separate segments of a church that make a church a healthy church.
-) **SLIDE 9.** An administrative board that **CONDUCTS** business wisely. Every church has an administrative side. Every month these men and women on our BGCC board meet to make administrative decisions concerning the health of this church. We meet the second Sunday of every month immediately after our worship service.
-) The BGCC church board consists of people and committees who make this church run smoothly. We have a chairman who leads our meetings. A treasurer who oversees a general fund. A building committee who oversees the building fund. A cemetery committee who oversees our cemetery and the funds associated with that. A clerk who keeps an ongoing list of members.

-) A historian who searches and records the history of this church. And a recording secretary who records the minutes of every meeting. And one elder. Me.
-) As of our December board meeting on 12/8/19, the total amount of money we have in our three funds amounts to \$124,064.58. We are blessed.
-) And I say this quite often. BGCC is a very generous church. We give because we understand that it is more blessed to give than to receive. We give because we understand that you reap what you sow. And for some reason we always seem to have more money than what we take in. I don't ever want this church to cease being a generous church.
-) Since we are a small church, we are fortunate that most of the time we don't have to make real big decisions. But decisions still need to be made. Decisions are made about the repairs and ongoing maintenance of the building and the grounds. Decisions are made about making the best use of the financial resources we take in. And I am convinced this administrative branch of our church makes wise decisions.
-) Invite the church board to stand.
-) A church does not survive without a strong administrative backbone. When we cease being that type of church board, then we will cease to be a healthy church.
-) **SLIDE 10**. A congregation that **CARES** for others. This second segment is you—our congregation. I have been part of a large church, a medium-size church, and here—a small church. Each size church has advantages and disadvantages.
-) We don't have a great number of people here to do a variety of ministries. But I think that's OK. We don't offer everything to everybody, but that's not who we are. But what we do offer, we do well.

-) And one of the best things we offer is you. It is you who make visitors feel welcome. It is you who prays for others. It is you who encourages those needing encouragement. It is you who cares.
-) But the best thing that I see is this. No one in here feels that they are any better than the next person. There are no cliques. There are no social circles. You are a body of believers who show up on a Sunday morning to worship God in Spirit and in truth.
-) A church does not survive without a caring congregation. When we cease being that type of congregation, then we will cease to be a healthy church.
-) **SLIDE 11.** A pastor who is **CONCERNED** for his flock. The third segment I want to cover this morning is me, your pastor. I am to shepherd this flock; I am to guard you, and protect you, and lead you to greener pastures.
-) I want to talk about my ministry here at BGCC. I preached my first sermon in this church on October 21st, 2007. When I walked into this church that morning, a young man by the name of Phil Thompson met me and introduced himself.
-) After some casual conversation, I asked him the denomination of this church. He said this church was nondenominational. Then I asked him if this church was Arminian or Calvinistic. He said this: *"I don't know what that means. We just believe the Bible."* Then he said, *"By the way, you're conducting the whole service. Just follow the bulletin."*
-) I was officially made the pastor of this church on Sunday, 1/27/2008. I am now in my 12th year here at BGCC. I have preached 579 sermons. I managed to pay attention throughout every one of them. Just about every sermon I have preached can be found on our church website in audio form (listen / download). Some sermons were not recorded.

-) Do I remember everything from all my sermons? No. And neither do you. Have I ever preached the same sermon twice? No. Have I ever preached someone else's sermon? No. Have I ever bought a sermon or a sermon series from the internet or some other place? No.
-) Genuine sermon preparation and writing comes by following the lead of the Holy Spirit. I sit there in my chair in my office in my house, usually on a Sunday night or Monday morning, and wait for the right words to come.
-) I preach reformed theology—the theology as laid out by the protestant reformers of the 16th and 17th centuries. It is a God-centered theology and not a man-centered theology. God is sovereign. Man is not. Some may think that makes my preaching old, boring, and out-of-date. I prefer to think of it as sound, relevant, and Biblical.
-) I do not concern myself with the number of people attending BGCC. Jesus says in MATT 16:18 that He will build the church on the rock of the gospel message. That's good enough for me. I concern myself with the depth of the truths I preach, and Jesus will continue to take care of the breadth of the people who show up.
-) We have learned new and big words like theodicy, soteriology, propitiation, proliferation, exegesis, eisegesis, context, didactic, cessationism, continuationism, sovereignty, and many others. We are off the milk, folks, and have moved on to the meat.
-) The Word of God is offensive. And that's because the truth matters. The truth divides. The truth will hold one accountable. But the truth will also set you free. If a person is sitting in here and is offended by what I say, they have four choices. 1) They can leave; 2) They can sit through what I speak and suck it up; 3) They can start the process of removing me from this position; 4) They can sit through what I speak and allow the Word of God to change them. (ANGRY)

-) None of these choices will ever change me from proclaiming the Word of God. I am not here to please anyone by tickling itching ears. And there have been many a Sunday I walked out of here with my own toes tramped on. Folks, that's called growing Spiritually.
-) How do I grow in my Spiritual walk? I study trusted preachers from the past such as Charles Spurgeon and John Calvin, and I follow modern-day preachers like John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul, Paul Washer, and Voddie Baucham.
-) One last point. I am commanded by the Word of God to shepherd the flock. And shepherds protect their flocks.
-) We will not have church if the weather could jeopardize someone's safety. In the 12 years I have been here, we have missed 24 Sundays due to bad weather. Your safety is very important. And we will miss more Sundays in the future.
-) But more important than that, Last Sunday in Fort Worth, TX, a man walked into a church with a gun and killed two people. This intruder was then shot by a member of that church. What about us here at BGCC?
-) I preached this message on self-defense back on 7/9/17. Here is an excerpt from that message. Listen if you like.
-) I, along with this church board, will allow any person within this church to carry a concealed weapon onto church property and into this sanctuary, but only with the proper law-abiding permits. I do not know who you may be, nor will you know if I am carrying a concealed weapon or not.
-) I will advise anyone who feels like they need to bring a concealed weapon into this church, that it should never be known to anyone else that you have such weapon on your person. That's not what we do. We will abide by the rules that are established by this church board.

-) Because of the laws of our state and because of how our governing authorities have defined self-defense and because of our right in the 2nd amendment to bear arms, we will follow ROMANS 13:1-5, submit to those authorities and laws, but we will never usurp them.
-) The position of BGCC on self-defense will be this. If at any time during the assembly of the worshippers within this building or anywhere on church property, if any member of this congregation believes we are under immediate threat and we reasonably fear that any innocent party will be killed or be grievously injured, we will take the necessary precautions of self-defense to protect this body of believers.
-) We will be responsible adult Christians about this issue. You never know when some individual just may walk into this church and want to do harm to the people assembled here. We will not allow that to happen. I am convinced that self-defense in such cases is what God would want us to do.
-) If you, in any way, feel uncomfortable about this decision, I certainly understand. We do not have to agree. I would be willing to talk with you in private about this matter. But I assure you, this position will not change under my leadership.
-) Personally, I would be more comfortable to know that someone in here has the means to stop evil aggression—to stop someone who wants to do any of us bodily harm. I am glad you got my back. I want BGCC to be a safe place. I am responsible, not only to feed you spiritually, but for your physical well-being also.
-) We good?
-) A church does not survive without strong preaching, teaching, and shepherding. When I cease being that type of pastor, then we will cease to be a healthy church.

-) So where are we going in 2020? We will continue to be an administrative church board that makes wise decisions and is generous with our finances. We will continue to be a congregation who cares by praying for, encouraging, and making every person who comes into this church feel welcome.
-) And I will continue to be a pastor who preaches sound doctrine and not what anyone's itching ears want to hear. And this flock will be protected.
-) A church is not an organization but an organism. And organisms must remain healthy to grow. This church must and will remain healthy. If you are in this church, this is what we must do. If you are new here and you want to be a part of this church, you are welcome to join us. But this is what we must and will do. We will not deviate in the future what we have done well in the past—things that have enabled this church to be a blessed body of believers and a healthy church.
-) 2020 will be another very good and blessed year for BGCC. I hope you want to be a part of who we are.

1/5/2020 at Beech Grove Christian Church