

# Freedom to Serve

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Father, we come before you as your children by grace, as resident aliens in Ottawa in 2024.

And yet, at the same time, Lord, we struggle to live lives worthy of our calling. We find, at times, that it is much more appealing to be citizens, true citizens of Ottawa than true citizens of heaven.

And Lord, we need your help. We need your help to live the way that you have called us to live. And Lord, thanks be to you that you know us. You know how we are made up, and therefore you give us your Holy Spirit, and you give us direction in your word, and you trust, so that we can trust you.

So Lord, help us to be people of faith this morning. And even if that faith is just a mustard seed, Lord, we are reminded that that is still faith in you.

And not in our own ability, but in your ability, and what you have done, and in your character. So Lord, we ask your blessing as we come under your word this morning. We pray this as Christ's people. Amen.

[ 1 : 1 7 ]     Amen. Freedom is an interesting concept. It's something that we value here in the West, and rightfully so. It's a bedrock of our society.

The very concept is seen universally as good. But freedom is a bit difficult to define. I mean, we can all affirm what freedom is not.

I mean, in general, I think it's easier to define things by what they're not than what they are. But for freedom itself, freedom certainly means not being enslaved.

People ought to be free, not owned by another human. But surely there's more to freedom than just not being owned by another individual. In the 1980s, the slogan, Freedom 55 became a thing in Canada.

I don't know if it was in the States, but in Canada it was a big thing. It was the retirement buzzword. Freedom from work, as if a society was full of indentured slaves.

[ 2 : 2 5 ]     Work, evil, freedom, good. But then what? Freedom 55. But what is freedom at 55? Interesting, a lot of literature, and even today, there's a lot of depression that happens once people hit the retirement age.

They're not sure what to do with themselves. They have all this freedom. But what's freedom? Interestingly, there's a whole growing industry, maybe I shouldn't call it an industry, cottage industry, of retirement coaches.

How do we retire? How do we enjoy our freedom? We have an idea of what freedom should be from, but not what freedom should be for.

And that difference is monumental. It's huge. In 1 Peter, in the previous section, Peter beautifully articulates to the Church the realities of our salvation in Christ.

We are a chosen race, a holy priesthood. We are a blessed people, recipients of God's mercy. Whatever lineage we had before we were saved, whether it was great in the world's eyes or not great, we now had a new lineage in Christ.

[ 3 : 46 ] We are inheritors of all the promises and privileges that belong to the people of God. We are united to Christ. We looked at that last week. We are truly free from the previous life of slavery to sin, slavery to shame, slavery to futility.

But now Peter turns to what we are freed for. What is our freedom for in Christ? In short, we don't have a ton of time to define holiness, so I'll try to put just a couple sentences together just to give us some grounding in it.

But we are freed for holiness. And when I say holiness, I don't mean perfect, instantaneously glorified people, but people that are set apart by God for God, growing to be like God.

When we come to freedom in Christ, we are bound to our calling in Christ. And this is what holiness looks like, and this is what holiness is.

So when we are freed, we are not entitled to live any way that we please. But Peter tells us we are to conduct our lives that are worthy of our call.

[ 5 : 09 ] We are called to proclaim the gospel. So we are freed only to become slaves, interestingly. The Bible makes all sorts of, it seems like contradictions.

The call it for peace at the end of morning prayer, I think, summarizes this beautifully. It says, service to you is perfect freedom.

Slavery to God is perfect freedom. So we are freed only to become slaves. But in our slavery to God and our call to holiness, we are free people. And this is what Peter will explain to us from scripture this morning.

So our text is going to help us to understand that the only true freedom we have is found in Christ. And it's always for Christ. So we understand this teaching of Christian freedom as living honorably.

So I've broken this text up into four parts. First part, living honorably. The second is submitting willingly. Suffering faithfully is the third. And finally, following the example of the good shepherd, Christ himself.

[ 6 : 19 ] So if you have a Bible, turn with me to verses 11 and 12. I think we don't have any Bibles left, which is great. In the back, maybe we should pick up a few more. But follow along if you can. And we're going to just jump right into it.

So let's look at verse 11. Second, 1 Peter 2, starting in verse 11. Peter is constantly reminding us in his letter that we are resident aliens.

You are sojourners. You are citizens of heaven, even though you are citizens here on earth. Our status is something like a permanent residence here, as we'd understand it in Canada.

I mean, not quite, but if that helps us understand that we're here in the land, but we're not really of the land. The reminder of our status in the preceding section is critical as we enter into this section.

As Peter reminds us again in verse 11, because truly it's very difficult to swim against the flow of water, against the current.

[ 7 : 49 ] It is very difficult to breathe in Roman air in the first century and not become Roman. To breathe in Ottawa air in 2024 and not think and act as people from Ottawa.

And the reason is this. Sin and evil have tarnished and made bent what God created and declared to be good. This is what we understand as the fall or original sin.

And the pervasiveness of this sin, it has so permeated our human existence and all of the created order that the interior of our human lives are bent and tarnished as well.

So our desires, our thoughts, our wills, they become corrupted. But when Christ saved us, forgiving our sins, giving us the Holy Spirit, the power of sin's corruption was broken.

No longer are we now slaves to sin. But do we transform overnight? Tonight, I mean, some of us have come to faith as adults, others maybe as children.

[ 9 : 00 ] Some, you don't really know when you've come to faith. But for those of us that can remember like a day that you came to faith, the next day you still drove the same car, you still ate the same food, you lived in the same house, you had the same friends, you had the same hang-ups, the same quirks.

Everything about you was, in a sense, the same. There was no instantaneous transformation. You were the same.

Except you weren't, because your status has changed forever. Your citizenship transferred to heaven, no longer as slaves. And yet, you were free people. And yet, all so easily we fall, you can remember this, you know, you maybe have two, three weeks after you come to faith, you are zealous, you are jacked up, my life is fantastic.

And then you find yourself going back into your previous life. Or you've been a Christian for decades, and you go back to habitual sin, sin that you just can't shake time and again, as if it was the slave owner.

And you can't, even though you're free, and the cell door is open, you find yourself in the cell. That's why Peter is very honest and real with the church in Asia Minor that he's writing to.

[ 10 : 30 ] He says you have to wage war against the flesh. You have to. This isn't like a situation where you get your citizenship transferred, and things are hunky-dory.

It is a grind. It is tough. It is a battle. It is a war that you have to wage against your passions, because your passions are still bent.

They're still corrupted. They're still tarnished. Your propensity to sin is still there. The difference is you have the Holy Spirit that helps you to say no. So what Peter isn't saying here is that the Christian life is a life of pure austerity and deprivation every minute of your life.

Food and drink are gifts from God. Sorry, back up a bit. He's not saying it's austerity and deprivation. He's saying the abuse of good things, that's the problem.

So food and drink, gifts from God. When you abuse food and drink, it is called gluttony. Sex within a monogamous, heterosexual, covenantal marriage is a beautiful gift from God.

[ 11 : 44 ] When it's abused, when it's engaged in outside of that covenant marriage, it ceases to be a beautiful thing.

It becomes tarnished. When we have these God-given emotions that are wonderful, but we are not in control of them anymore, and we lash out, we're angry, or we can give ourselves over to bouts of self-pity.

And I'm not talking about legitimate depression, but self-pity. Whatever it may be, emotions, if they are not controlled with self-control, they become a problem.

You see, when Peter here is saying in verse 11 and 12, to abstain from the passions of the flesh, he is recognizing that when we come to faith, it's not an instantaneous transition.

We don't transform into perfect people. We need to, by God's help, wage war against our flesh. St. Augustine will talk about this as disordered desires.

[ 12 : 56 ] I think that's very helpful because God has created everything good and everything perfect, and because he is perfect, God cannot create evil.

It's, say, nothing's impossible for God. It's true, except evil. God can't do evil. There's, God has an inability to do evil.

So whenever we see evil in the world, it is not God who has orchestrated it and created it and let it loose on society. We, through our own sinful nature, through a real enemy in the devil and in the spirit of the age, it takes what is good and demands it and bends it and tarnishes it.

And that includes our desires. Peter is calling us to self-controlled and honorable living. And to recognize that our desires are disordered.

But thanks be to God, by his spirit, we do not have to be slaves to our disordered desires. But it's not just for ourselves that this call of living honorably is for.

[ 14 : 05 ] If you look with me again at verse 12, what does it say? Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Growing up, I was told like multiple times a week, maybe a day, that every decision has a consequence. Consequence, in my mind, was a bad word because a lot of my decisions weren't great, so they had bad consequences.

But it was hammered into my young life. How much it sunk into 12-year-old Daniel is debatable. But it's true.

Every decision has a consequence. What we do has ramifications. And what we do also is observed by others, especially non-Christians, for good or for ill.

Peter here is saying, listen, your conduct needs to be honorable because other people are watching you. And you represent Christ. So honor Christ in your lives for the sake of others.

[ 15 : 20 ] Claiming Christ and living selfishly and enslaved to our passions, it's hypocrisy. And we fall into it all the time. So again, it might feel like this is heavy, but this is beautiful truth that helps us to live as free people.

But if we live hypocritical lives, the people around us notice this. The Christian ethic we are to live out must be done authentically. And it's wonderful that the scriptures put such a high value on authentic living.

It matters what you do when nobody sees you do it. Why? I mean, because that's integral, but also because what you do in secret can't be contained in secret.

You can't put a mask on for very long. What happens on the inside will undoubtedly come to bear on the outside. So the call is to live honorably.

For non-believers, the Christian life can either seem like the most beautiful way of life or it looks hideous and self-righteous and purely hypocritical.

[ 16 : 29 ] I'm not saying that people will either come to faith or not come to faith solely based on what we do. But God draws people through his church, by his spirit.

So what we do matters. Last year, when I was overseas for my father's memorial, I was bombing around the day before I left with my cousin and her husband.

I have a man crush on my cousin's husband. He's, I don't know, he's just a great guy. He's huge, like he is a brick house and he's just a cool guy.

Anyways, we're driving around and we're talking about faith and a bit of a shock that I'm a Christian, but that's kind of worn off now. So they asked me a lot of questions when we talk. And interestingly, when we were driving around, he said, I like the Christian faith.

And then he went on to talk about how he loves home and garden shows and how he loves those home and garden shows where the family is moved out and a whole crew comes and completely renovates their home, paints it, makes it beautiful.

[ 17 : 37 ] Then they have that big wall and they wheel it out and the people are crying and it's a giant gift. And he, in his mind, that is Christianity. That is a beautiful picture.

I was taken back and I thought about it after. I was like, man, that is like a wonderful picture and it gets me a bit emotional because I think my family in some respects, my faith is like, maybe like that when it comes to them coming to faith.

But how wonderful it is that good deeds, honorable living, testify to unbelievers of what the grace of God looks like. What we do matters.

Our behavior is being watched. Much more than we know. So the call is to live honorably so that God is glorified and that people come to faith.

And by the way, if they don't come to faith, interesting, verse 12 here has this little bit. So that when they speak against you as evildoers, it's this slander, false witness, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

[ 18 : 41 ] Our hope is that people come to faith in this life. But the day of visitation in the Bible is a picture of judgment. And for those that are God's children, it is a glorious day where Christ will return and he will take his bride with him.

But for those that don't know Christ, it is a day of scary judgment. No matter what side in this life unbelievers fall on, either when they die or when the Lord returns, the scriptures say that every knee will bow.

Everybody will take a knee to Christ, whether it's in this life or the next. So God's judgment is real, but our good behavior may help people to avoid God's judgment now in this life.

So Peter continues to expand on our call to live honorably by calling the church to submit to the authority structures and be law-abiding citizens willingly.

So if you can turn with me, starting in verse 13, we're going to read 13 to 17. Be subject, for the Lord's sake, to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

[ 20 : 06 ] For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the emperor. God, in his kindness and grace, has instituted authorities to curb evil and reward goodness.

This is a, this verse, these verses, these five verses, they're key in political theology. We're not going to get into political theology this morning, but an ongoing question that is asked throughout the ages, especially when there is ungodly authority and ungodly magistrate, is how are we to respond as God's people?

Are we to resist and fight or tolerate and live within? I'm not going to relitigate government lockdowns that we had, not a chance.

However, we need to consider that Peter is telling the early church in Asia Minor to use their eternal freedom that they have in Christ, which was bought by the precious blood of Christ, to submit to the Roman Empire.

[ 21 : 25 ] in the first century, Rome was no right-winger's paradise like Texas. It wasn't a left-winger's dream state like a Scandinavian country.

It was the Roman Empire under Nero, where dissent was crushed, where slavery was the norm. And if you were a Christian, waves of persecution were state-sponsored.

Submit to temporal or earthly authorities. Indeed, Peter does not imply that Christians must submit to that authority as above all.

Peter says, but Peter says that it is God's will that they do submit to such authority. And we must be careful here not to see this passage as some kind of exhaustive commentary on how to interact with the state.

That's not the case at all. I think there is a fine case to be made in other parts of Scripture that talk about resistance to tyranny. We are not Anabaptists here.

[ 22 : 35 ] We are not pacifists here. But in this text today, it's remarkable. It's remarkable that Peter is saying to submit to the authorities of the land when Nero is that authority.

He continues to instruct the church to use their freedom to serve and to do good, to evangelize and bring glory to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

He says, again, this is God's will for us to seek the good of the cities we live in. And it's important that we remember that, that our call isn't just to live here and gripe if we don't like something.

But I'm submitting, I'm not pushing back, but I don't like it, but I'm griping a whole lot. The call is to work for the good of the city, the good of the country, the good of the empire, the good of wherever you find yourself in.

It's very important also to remember that that good is defined by God himself and not by us. The good that is defined by scripture oftentimes can be counter to the good defined by the cultural ideas of good, defined by different generations that change, that are fleeting.

[ 24 : 00 ] The good that God commands us to do is eternal. So, this text does not call for the overthrow of the government, the empire, but the submission to its heavy-handedness.

But it's important here that we recognize that it's no less subversive. For one, it recognizes that the ultimate authority is not Nero, that it is God.

It is his will that we submit. It does not say that we submit to the emperor who is the ultimate authority. It says as supreme, but that's just to say that he is the head over the empire.

God is supreme. God is the commander in chief of everything. So, we recognize that God is the supreme leader and not Nero.

It means also not engaging in, like I mentioned, what society calls good. In the first century, pederasty was good. The church is called not to engage in that.

[ 25 : 10 ] It meant to fight against the practice of child killing by exposure. The church is not called to submit to that. It meant writing against barbaric gladiatorial events while at the same time being sent to them.

It meant considering as equal brothers and sisters who are slaves and have no standing when they stand beside you singing God's praises on the Lord's day. We're called to work for the good of the city and to submit to the authorities, but that does not mean a blind submission.

It meant living external lives consistent with our internal lives. In short, these five verses would eventually transform the Roman Empire from pagan to Christian.

I know that there is a lot of controversy, at least in the evangelical world, if that was a good thing, but let me ask you a question. Is it better that Rome continue on in pagan idolatry or embrace Christianity?

I would say it's the latter. Friends, it took less than 300 years for the church to so influence the entirety of the Roman Empire that it was adopted as its state religion.

[ 26 : 33 ] Once again, we are freed not from service, but for service. And this is not incoherent, but it's deeply coherent because Jesus himself will see later on in the text that this is what he did.

Completely free. And what does he do? He lays down his life. He serves. He seeks the good, the true good. He seeks to lead people to the light. So although the Roman Empire eventually would become Christian, it wasn't without persecution and martyrdom.

And Peter continues to help us live as holy servants of Christ by instructing us how to suffer well and faithfully. So if you look with me, verses 18 to 20.

Servants, and really this is slaves, but it's not the same as the generic term for slave. This is more like a household slave.

I think that matters, but I actually don't think it matters. I'll just continue on. Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust.

[ 27 : 40 ] For this is a gracious thing. When mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if when you sin you are beaten for it and you endure?

What if when you do good and suffer for it you endure? Sorry, but if when you do good and suffer for it you endure? This is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

The slave was the most vulnerable individual in the Roman world. They were not citizens, they could be used in any which way that their master saw fit, they did not stand trial for crimes, they could be killed, they did not enjoy the same dignity as free people.

And in the ancient world, slavery wasn't a small matter. In fact, it would be unthinkable not to have slaves. Some estimates in the Roman world had 15 to 20 percent of the population as slaves.

It's a huge amount. different. But this is not, and this is why it matters, this is not chattel, man-stealing slavery that we see, that we saw rather in the transatlantic slave trade.

[ 28 : 56 ] Slaves could be doctors and managers and tutors. They could own slaves themselves and purchase their freedom. The slavery of the Roman Empire was not based on ethnicity, complexion, regional background.

So it does matter that it's different than the transatlantic slave trade. But why it actually doesn't matter in some ways, because you're not your own, you're still owned by somebody. Having a good as a slave is still, it's not as good as being free.

Slavery still meant being owned by another human. It meant that you were property. So why doesn't Peter call for the abolition of slavery altogether? Is Peter missing a huge opportunity?

I'll briefly touch on this. The New Testament actually never calls for the outright ban of slavery. It's there in Scripture. But what it does do is it tills the soil to allow for the planting of the seeds that would flourish, that would grow, that would be the abolition of slavery.

And slavery that was abolished was influenced completely by the gospel of Christ in the 1800s. No other faith or ideology has done that in human history.

[ 30 : 17 ] Slavery is ubiquitous in the human experience. It is a thing across different faiths and ideologies. So in Islam, for instance, slavery is commended.

Hinduism, the caste system, is enshrined. It is almost a type of slavery. It is at the very least a dehumanizing of human beings to something other than image bearers.

In communism, we see in the Soviet Union tens of millions sent to forced labor camps. And here in the West, we have this ability to turn a blind eye to labor shops in the developing world.

Slavery was and still is a universal human problem. So what Peter is doing here, number one, I think it would be unfair then to say the Bible condones slavery.

I don't think so. It certainly doesn't. But what Peter here is doing is applying the gospel within the existing framework of society, of Greco-Roman society. He understands that it's slaves that are coming to faith and he is working and teaching and instructing and exhorting those people to live as free people within the existing norms.

[ 31 : 37 ] He is claiming that even Christian slaves, the very lowest of low in Roman society, are actually the truly free. In fact, the most free, for they are in Christ.

And Christ is subject neither to sin nor to death. He is sitting at the right hand of God the Father. And if he is there, slave, you are there with him. You are free.

Peter is using slavery here as a paradigm to proclaim the incredible, deep working power of the cross that provides true, eternal, and forever deep freedom, even to the Roman slave.

But this freedom was not to be used to throw off their shackles. Instead, they are to now be like Christ. Again, freedom not from, but freedom for.

In this case, holy living. And it was inevitable as slaves to suffer unjust suffering. This bit about being beaten, this isn't, again, I don't think Peter giving approval to masters beating their slaves, but just to describe what happens.

[ 32 : 51 ] Listen, if you do bad, if your conduct is bad, and you suffer the consequences for that, that is not suffering unjustly. When you do good and suffer, that is unjust suffering, and he's making this distinction here.

So the freedom is a freedom not from, but for. They are to be like Christ in their holy living. They are not to give in to the humiliation, but rather proclaim the goodness and grace of Christian service to the undeserving.

is that not what Christ has done? He has laid his life down for the undeserving. He has taken upon him the very life of a slave, dying a slave's death, and extending his grace and kindness as a result.

By bearing under unjust evil patiently, with this eternal celestial dignity that is ours in Christ, the Spirit of God, what does he do? He bears witness to Christ in our lives.

And that breaks the bonds of slavery. It is not enough to just buy your freedom, but what happens if slavery itself is seen as so ugly and wrong because the gospel of grace has transformed not just an individual or a family or a region, but an entire empire?

[ 34 : 17 ] That's how you break the bonds of slavery. And this is what Peter is commending the slaves to do. It proclaims also that the earthly authority that claims them as slaves can only claim their flesh and not their soul.

God and God alone owns our souls. So the person whose soul is free in Christ can never be humiliated and truly enslaved. It is the application of Jesus' words in John 8.

What does he say? So if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed. Many of these spiritually free slaves would be martyrs.

In fact, many Christians, slave or not, would be martyrs. Their freedom would be used in service of Christ even in their death, suffering unjustly. The sufferings and death would not be to their shame but would be to the glory of God and the growth of his church.

So Tertullian penned the famous words regarding martyrdom and this is what he said. We are not a new philosophy. He's talking about Christianity in the church. We are not a new philosophy but a divine revelation.

[ 35 : 31 ] That's why you can't just exterminate us. The more you kill, the more we are. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. And so it was. We are not slaves here in Ottawa but we live, but if we live faithful lives under Christ we will indeed suffer unjustly.

Will you endure it? Will you try to vindicate yourselves? Will you try to maintain your own dignity even though the dignity of Christ himself rests upon you?

that you are in Jesus? Will you rely on his strength to endure or your own? Will you seek vengeance and revenge?



Or will you entrust that to the Lord who sees and is just? Will you suffer unjustly so that God will be glorified and maybe, just maybe, your workplaces and your homes and your families and your children your friends.

They might see your good works and praise your heavenly Father. Maybe even come to faith. But this is an impossible task without the empowerment and example of Christ.

[ 36 : 51 ] So it's very important that we don't end at verse 20 but continue on in verse 21. Look at verse 21 to 25. For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps.

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed for you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your soul.

We can't, I guess here's a question, why do we have to suffer? Why can't we just enjoy the glories of Christ? I mean he's suffered, why do we have to suffer?

He's suffered on our behalf, so we should enjoy the fruits of Christ's suffering. suffering. But to desire only to share in the glory of Christ and not identify with him in his death, in his suffering, is to not be authentic to our faith.

[ 38 : 07 ] For we grip our lives too tightly. We forget that our freedom means slavery to Christ. So the Apostle Paul, he's speaking to the Corinthian church on the importance of walking as Christ's servants in purity of heart and he says this, this is 1 Corinthians 6 19.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? Here it is. You are not your own, you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

The call to genuine, authentic Christianity is to suffer for Jesus. It's to lay down our lives, our own prerogatives for his glory, for his renown.

And that's something we need help with. We need his spirit empowering us to live this way, but also the example of his life. Here it talks about he is our example that the, it's a picture of, it's like there's Christ's life and then there's our life on top of it and we stencil our lives based on Christ's example, on what Christ's life looks like.

It is a hard call, but friends, it is the only call. We are called to follow Christ, the suffering servant who gave his life as a ransom for many. So it's interesting here that out of all of the New Testament, Peter is looking at the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and applying it to our lives and explaining it to us so that we can mimic Christ more than any other place in the New Testament.

[ 39 : 53 ] And Isaiah 53 is a huge, huge theme throughout the New Testament. It's a fulfillment of prophecy. It speaks to who Christ is.

Jesus, and here Peter is using it to help us understand how Christ suffered so that we can then imitate him. You see, Peter, he tried one time to enjoy the glories of Christ without the suffering of Christ.

If you remember at Caesarea Philippi, he says, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. He affirms who Jesus is and then Jesus says, I'm going to die for the sins of the world.

And Peter says, no, you're not. He rebukes him. He wanted the glory, but he didn't want the suffering. And now we see a different Peter, do we not? A Peter that is embracing the true, whole fulfillment of what it means to live as Christ's children.

He is saying that this is freedom. Friends, this is our good shepherd. This is the one who gathers the wayward and the lost. It's the one who left his glories and majesties and divine prerogatives to take upon human flesh so that we could, or so that he could be beaten, die and rise again.

[ 41 : 12 ] Not so that we can live, but first so that we can die and then live unto righteousness for him. Friends, he did not seek his own dignity.

He suffered humiliation, but he was dignified above all, rising from the grave, defeating sin and death. This is Christ Jesus, our Lord, the good shepherd.

And when it says he is the overseer of our souls, that means he's going to protect us and provide for us and preserve us. In light of what he has done, who he is, and how he continues to bless and pour out his grace upon his church, friends, let us lean into our calling as free people to be slaves to Christ.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for the beautiful example of your blessed son who, even though he was completely free, took upon himself the life of a slave so that by dying the life of a slave and rising again to new life, us slaves to sin could enjoy freedom in Christ.

Lord, help us to live lives honorably in light of that. We thank you so much that you are always working and growing and providing for your church.

[ 42 : 36 ] And Lord, we look to you afresh this morning for that help, because we need it to live the lives that you've called us to live. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.