1 Peter 5 (Jordan Senner Rector Installation)

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Preacher: Right Reverend Dan Gifford

[0:00] As we stand, let us pray together. Father in heaven, we thank you that this word is your living word.! And we thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, who opens the eyes of our hearts to your word, to your grace, to your truth, to your deep love for us.

And we pray that as we are under your word, that you will strengthen us to be lights in this world to the glory of Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen.
Please be seated. Well, what a joy to be with you here today. And it is a wonderful day of being with what I will always consider, and Catherine will as well, our church family.
So it always feels like coming home. And I felt very much at home because when I came to Vancouver, an atmospheric river greeted me. And that's the Vancouver I knew and loved.
And it's very exciting to celebrate this new ministry as well. And it's hard to believe it was 12 years ago that you were starting as my curate. And I could tell you all lots of stories right now about him.
[1:17] And because it's too late. Like, he's yours now. So... But then Jordan can tell lots of stories about me, too. So I will... I'll just refrain from that.

And besides, I'm starting to smell the potluck dinners downstairs. Sort of wafting up here. So I better get going. You're on a great series in the Gospel of John.
I'm going to go off that Gospel just for this week because Jordan really wanted me to preach on 1 Peter 5. So if you'll turn there right now, 1 Peter 5, 1 through 11, it is very appropriate for this induction service.
And I want to just remind you that the verb is to induct, not to induce. So Dr. Bill Thomas, he could help pregnant women with induction and has done thousands of those, induced people.
But I cannot do that. But I think it may be an appropriate sort of symbol and image because today this is about the birth of a new ministry.
[2:23] A new ministry of Jordan as the rector of your church. And he chose this passage, Jordan does, because it gives the shape of ministry. It's your marching orders. Saying this is what you're all about.

So it's good for us to spend a little time. And it is God's Word written through Peter, who was carried along by the Holy Spirit. And he is the great first leader of the Christian church.
So it's well worth listening to these words because they are God's own Word for us today. Peter is writing, as you may know, to scattered churches in the central part of Turkey.
And they're under pretty intense pressure from the pagan culture around them. It hasn't yet reached to the point of physical persecution, like many in our Christian church and the Anglican church experience in different parts of the world, including Africa and the Middle East and in Asia.
But it is great social pressure. It's pressure to conform to the pagan ways and understanding of the society around them. Jesus is making this church different from that culture.
[3:35] And boy, it was a culture that could make Hollywood movies blush as well. You see in chapter 4 back there, it says, you know, you're no longer involved in being controlled by your human passions, but for the will of God.

For the times past, it suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, which is living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking, parties, and lawless idolatry.
You can see how the Christian life would be so very, very different from that. And there is probably the danger of Christians losing their status, maybe even losing their jobs, certainly losing influence and opportunities, and feeling that kind of shunning, in a sense, of neighbors and friends in these little communities where they were living.
And that suffering also put pressure on the relationships of the members of those church families with one another. And they were also pressures on their relationship with God.

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Can I trust God in this difficult situation? Am I wavering in that trust? I may be entrusted, I may be tempted not to entrust myself to other people, to look them as suspicious in our church as well.
[5:05] It was a difficult time. And it was a time where there was a particular need for good leadership, leadership that honored the Lord Jesus and was done in his power.

So it's very relevant for us today because, of course, we are in a society that more and more is leaving that Christian way of life and understanding and thinking.
And in fact, tries to catechize us. It was so good to see Esther up here. She's catechist extraordinaire. But that is what we are about as a church, that we are forming one another, helping one another, to live and be formed in who we are by the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ and not by what is preached to us, by the world that is around us.
And the question that we ask ourselves is, how will this congregation be faithful to Jesus? How will we live? How will we believe in a time of great social pressure?
So this letter is super relevant for us. And the answer to that question, how will we live? How do we go forward? Is in two words.
[6:14] If you only remember two words from this whole sermon, remember these two. It is to live and to serve with humility. With humility.

It's a great theme throughout this book of, this letter of Peter. A letter that's dealing with suffering over and over again. How do you deal with all those pressures?
It is with humility. And that's why at the very center of the passage, if you can turn there in verse five, Peter says, clothe yourselves, all of you, each one of us, including your rector, with humility towards one another.
For God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. Humble, therefore, yourselves under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time, he may exalt you.
He may exalt you. That was a revolutionary teaching in that culture and in that time. In the ancient world, humility was disdained.
[7:21] It was considered a weakness in Greek and Roman culture. And so this was very, very literally considered to be lowly, the idea of humility. Because it's exercising power that's all important.

You know, it's lording it over others. Having honor, glory, being able to boast, which is why, you know, Paul and Peter have to deal with this issue of boasting all the time.
And wonderfully, what has happened in history is that that revolutionary teaching of Jesus has taken hold.
So Jesus taught that radical humility so clearly in Mark 10. And you can turn there later because I think this is, it's really giving the vision and mission statement for Jesus and any minister.
It says, Jesus says, you know, those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them, but it shall not be so among you.
[8:21] He's turning it right upside down. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever must be first among you must be slave of all. For even the son of man, the most exalted man that ever lived, in other words, even he came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

And with those words, Jesus turned right upside down the understandings of that culture and cultures for millennium to come.
Because as Christianity got influence in the world over centuries, that understanding of humility became more and more part of what it means to live in society, which is a great gift.
One of the great business books came out in 2001, was a business classic called Good to Great by Jim Collins.
And what he did, as you probably know, is that he surveyed and looked at something like 1,400 companies over 40 years and to determine, well, what made the companies that became great, what allowed that to happen?
[9:36] And one of the big things had to do with leadership. And there was an executive kind of leadership the highest form of leadership that was in common quite often.

And the surprise finding that he made is that it was humility that was the key component for top leaders in these organizations. So these people, you know, he said, were modest and often self-effacing.

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And they gave credit to others for success and took blame for failures. But what he said was very interesting. He said, they combined deep personal humility with an indomitable will to achieve organizational greatness.
And that means great leaders are not driven by ego, but he said, by a ferocious commitment to a cause or company that is larger than themselves, channeling their immense ambition and energy outward to serve a greater purpose.
Now, I believe Collins plagiarized God's truth here. And it's the best kind of plagiarism. It's a good thing. He was speaking God's truth there.
[10:48] Jordan, as a leader of God's church, leading with humility means that you are ferociously committed to the cause of Jesus Christ, who is larger than yourself.

You are to channel your ambition and your energy, which I think is probably immense, and to channel it to serve him. That is what humility is in a leader.
It is looking up to Jesus instead of into our natural inclination of ourself. And you all may have heard C.S. Lewis' very helpful understanding of humility, that true humility is not thinking less of yourself. It's thinking of yourself less. It is very much being drawn out to be able to look up to the Lord Jesus, to be able to look out to those that you are serving.
And all of you are in positions of serving and responsibility and leadership of different kinds. Peter says humility is key in this. And it's very interesting that Peter teaches in verse 2 that for people who are leading the church and those who are involved that are leading families and different ministries, he uses the word shepherd.
[12:06] shepherd. And that's what we've been talking about all service today. But when he used that word shepherd, you are to be a shepherd, he immediately, I believe, would have been brought back to that breakfast at Galilee where he faced Jesus and looked at him eye to eye.

And Jesus asked him those three questions to restore him for his three times of denial. He said, Peter, do you love me? Do you love me?
Do you love me? And every time, Peter said, Lord, you know that I love you. You know that I love you. You know that I love you. And then you know Jesus' response to him.
It was his marching orders again. Feed my sheep. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs.
And that was a call for him to be a shepherd, to be an under-shepherd of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so his fundamental identity, Peter's was, is that he was a man who failed immensely.
[13:16] And he was also one who was restored beyond all imagining to shepherd God's flock. And I believe Peter thanked God daily because he would know that he was a shepherd only by the grace of Jesus, the restoring grace of Jesus.

In a real sense, he would have understood that he took Jesus, his good shepherd, to belong to him and to live for him forever at that moment.
And so the question for us when we're thinking about leadership in the church is what does it look like to be a faithful shepherd? And very briefly, there's four things. The first thing is that you're a gospel-shaped shepherd.
And I've heard your preaching, and I've seen your ministry. I know it's gospel-shaped. It's what St. John's is trying to do, is to equip people to be gospel-shaped in their ministry.
It's what Artizo is all about, a great gift to our diocese as well. It is about being gospel-shaped. That's why Peter says in verse 1, be a shepherd as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as the partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.
[14:26] His ministry is defined by the sufferings of Jesus. He saw Jesus on the cross. He preaches the cross of Jesus, forgiving our sins, restoring us, bringing peace with God, and bringing us to be his children forever.

And he is now a partaker of the glory that's going to be revealed. In preaching and bringing Jesus and who he is, the resurrected Jesus who died for us, that light of the gospel into people's lives, it's a foretaste of seeing Jesus in all of his glory one day when he comes in majesty.
And that is something that we experience now in our living relationship with God that comes as you hear God's word, as you have the gospel shared with you day by day, week by week in this church.
Second, not only are you a gospel-shaped shepherd, but you are a willing shepherd. So verse 2b, it's not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you. And the reason it says that is because there were people who were unwilling shepherds.

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If you were older in these little communities and you had a Christian faith, you were pushed forward to be a leader of that church.
[15:46] You became a target at that point. And it might have been taking a little bit of thought to say, yeah, I'll take up this offering. I will take up this call to become the minister here.

I have a friend that I know, Archbishop Ben Quashie, who I was at a dinner with a couple months ago. He has experienced much suffering. He has been a target.
His house burned down. He has been beat up along with his wife. He has seen people killed in his congregation. And he said, you know, in this experience of suffering, the priest who he ordains and lays hands on, he said, for many of them, the right of ordination is a matter of both pride and grief. He said, because someone undergoing this ordination is in effect signing their own death warrant in that area. They are a target.
And yet, there is this immense privilege of being an under-shepherd to the Lord Jesus Christ. That willingness comes because God would have you.
[16:56] God has called you. God himself has said, will you love me? Will you tend my sheep? And then thirdly, you are to be an eager shepherd.

And here we say that it's, you know, not for shameful gain, but eagerly. God has called you. we're not in a situation in this part of, in any way, in our diocese of people wanting to be a minister because they're going to make lots of money.
As a bishop, I can assure you that that's not the case. But there are times when money can be a distraction, when you can say, you know, is there enough?
Or what is going to happen here with our ministry? What's going to happen with me? And to be very much focused on the lack of or to be fighting over what that money is about.
To allow that to dominate. And instead of that, Peter says, do it eagerly. Do it eagerly.
[17:56] And I love that word here because eagerly is about what animates your heart. What animates your heart? Is it to bring Jesus to the people in your care, in your preaching, in your pastoral care, in your conversations, in the prayers day by day, bringing people to the Lord Jesus, visiting the sick?

Is that the passion you have in your life, that they would meet the chief shepherd in that time of darkness or that time of joy, in that time of being together as God's people?
What animates your heart? Is it that chief shepherd? And then finally, you are to be a serving shepherd. And it says here that it's not domineering over those in your charge.
And I have to say that temptation to dominate is something that is probably more and more a feature in our culture that creeps into the church. That you can feel like, I want to control things.
I want things because I identify so closely with my ministry that any rejection is a rejection of me.
And there's a temptation to use authority wrongly.
[19:09] And Peter says here, instead of that, be an example to the flock. Now that's a very powerful word. I don't know if you noticed that, example.

It is powerful because what it would have brought into Peter's mind, a very vivid picture. And that is the picture of Jesus washing his feet, which Peter was repelled by at first.
So as Jesus says in John 13, 14, which you'll get into maybe in about six or seven months, I don't know. But he said, I have washed your feet. After he washed the disciples' feet.
You also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example. An example that you also should do as I have done to you.
That is about humility. It is the very opposite of domineering. It is about serving, often in sacrificial ways, that may even seem demeaning to you at times.
[20:11] And you do it because of Jesus, the great example. So that's a big sobering responsibility you have, to live in those ways as a shepherd.

You know, one that's really gospel-shaped. One that really is a willing shepherd, an eager shepherd, and a serving shepherd. And that is why verse four is so, so helpful.
Because you are not doing it on your own power. You're not even doing it on your own. You are simply pointing to the chief shepherd. That's what verse says. When the, verse four, when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
glory. And that is what is ahead of you, and ahead of all of you who are faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our whole life is actually centered around that great fact that you will see the chief shepherd face to face.

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But what it means is that you are under-shepherd, as I was sharing with the children, in your ministry. There's a deep grace on this. It's not all on your shoulders. It's Jesus' ministry that you are carrying out.
[21:18] Only Jesus can actually minister to the deepest needs of us, his people. He alone can accomplish the good work that he has begun in you and in this congregation.

So your great task is to bring the gospel of Jesus to this flock. In your preaching, in your visiting of the sick, in your Bible teaching, your spiritual counseling, even in your suffering, even in the numerous meetings, which I'm not purposely putting next to suffering, but there might be something there.
You bring the light of the gospel into suffering and the dark places in people's lives. And it is the light of the chief shepherd. So I want to close by saying something that this passage ends with, which might be surprising, but actually it's not because that's what is behind the suffering, the things that seek to break down the people of God.
And that is that we do not wrestle with flesh and blood as those who are ministers of the gospel. We are actually tearing down what Satan would love to see take place.
Jesus, the gospel, is invading the dark places in this world. And he will work against that. Verse 8, your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking somebody to devour.
[22:43] There is a devil. Jesus knew that. It's not something that is perhaps the case or something that is fondly invented. Jesus says there is this.

Be aware of this Satan, but do not be fascinated or dismayed by it. This is what the teaching of Scripture is. And he says that in here that we, as we understand this, kind of the spiritual struggle that we are in, that we are to be sober-minded.
Which doesn't just mean not being drunk. It's actually having Jesus clear your mind. To be sober-minded is to have the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, who humbled himself to the point of dying on a cross and was exalted as Lord over all.
Always have the cross of the Lord Jesus before you. His gospel clear in your mind always. Have this mind that is in Christ Jesus that Paul shared with us, humbling himself to death on the cross.
And I think one of the gifts of Holy Communion that you have week by week is the news of Jesus made clear to us. Clearing our minds in the prayers, in the receiving of bread and wine, our whole body, through our physical senses, our spirituality, our emotional experience and senses, the gospel of Jesus is presented to us.
[24:12] We feed on him in our hearts with faith and thanksgiving. We feed on God's word as the bread of life. And that clears our mind. It makes us sober-minded as we face the wiles of the evil one.

And the lion does tear down, he tries to tear down God's flock. The way he does it is by trying to get us to distrust God and to distrust one another.
Very simply, that often is the way that he is working. And Peter says here, resist him. That's an amazing gift that we have. Just resist him.
Firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. We actually go through this together. And I believe that humility that he's talking about here is so important because it is a powerful way of resisting the evil one.
Because the evil one is all about accusing. He accuses God of not being for your good. He accuses God's word of not being true or twisting it.
[25:27] And this is something that we can be very much deceived in very, very easily. Not only is that accusation happening to God, but it's an accusation of one another as well.

The person next to me is my rival. They are about tearing down my agenda. I will accuse them of wrong motives. That's the work of the evil one again.
Do you remember the Garden of Eden? Jesus said, did God really say that? He just wants you not to know the difference between evil and good.
You would become God and he's not allowing you to do that. He's not about your best interest. He doesn't want you to enjoy the things that you really want. Humility is the way to resist the devil because in humility I can trust the Lord Jesus.
I can trust God's word. I can submit to his ways in the face of those accusations. And not only that, but humility allows me to be clothed in humility towards one another.

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[26:42] So I choose to serve those people in my life instead of comparing myself to them. Or instead of feeling threatened by those in my church family, I seek the best in them.

To see that God who began a good work in them will complete it. And to seek in my humility to bring the Lord Jesus to those I am really tempted to separate from.
But I want to close the sermon by saying that over and against that roaring lion that I've been talking about, there is the irresistible purpose of God.
And this is what God is doing here in this church of St. John's. His grace and his power and his authority is over all things and over this church as well.
God controls the enemy. He shortens the time of suffering and trial. And he brings us to his ultimate home. It is the sure thing that we rely on.
[27:47] Always ahead of us is this certainty of verse 10. After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish.

To him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. All of those words add up to Christian stability and perseverance and flourishing, growing in the goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which will be brought to completion on his day.
It's starting now. He's doing that work now. Despite the roaring of the lion, the God of all grace keeps us on the foundation of Jesus and his living word.
May that be so here at St. John's. Jordan and this dear family, this flock that God is doing a mighty work in, may the Lord give you the grace of humility so that in love you continually bring one another to your chief pastor, who is Jesus Christ.
for he himself will restore, he will confirm, he will strengthen, and he will establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever.
[29:07] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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