

# Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

June 14, 2020—Second Sunday after Pentecost

*“When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36)*

A pastor is a shepherd. His or her calling is to shepherd the flock. But it is not just pastors who are shepherds; we all have shepherding roles in various areas of our lives, including our church lives. As Lutherans, we confess that we believe in the priesthood of all believers, but we might also affirm the pastor-hood of all believers. How can we all be better shepherds?

Let’s consider pastors first. Shepherding has many aspects including the care and nurture of people, which many pastors do well. However, it also includes leading and protecting the flock, which many pastors fail at. There are two reasons for this failure: fear and ignorance. Many pastors are so afraid of conflict that they suppress truth to maintain peace. Second, in dealing with controversial issues, many pastors don’t know what the proper course of action is. Why? Because they don’t know how to apply God’s law, except to the most obvious issues of personal morality. For many, the law is just a theological set up for the gospel, not a moral guide for all of life.

But what about laypeople? They also have shepherding responsibilities. And often, they too are paralyzed by the same fear and ignorance. They avoid conflict like the plague, and don’t know how to adjudicate conflict Biblically. As a result, they contribute to the unhealthy dynamics of their churches, making it harder for their pastors to fulfill their shepherding obligations to them.

So, whether we are pastors or laypeople, let’s become better shepherds. Let’s nurture, guide, and protect others, especially in the midst of conflict. Conflict is a normal part of life; avoiding or suppressing it only makes it worse. But when we handle it properly, we all grow stronger. For this to happen, however, we must know how to adjudicate conflict Biblically and how to speak the truth in love.

Many people today are harassed like sheep without a shepherd. We have a gospel opportunity to serve others in the name of the Good Shepherd!

**Prayer:** Lord, give us the courage and the knowledge to handle conflict in a godly way that we might shepherd others.

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