

Sermon #8

Don't Call Me Pastor!

God is gracious and kind, wondrous and good.
He is always watching out for us,
 leading us away from temptation and evil.
 He gives us the freedom to follow or not.
God takes exceedingly good care of those who follow Him.
It is good to follow God,
 to believe what He says and obey it in speech and action.

In spite of God's faithful provision of Jesus to be your shepherd,
 many of you look to me to be your shepherd.

Do you know who I am?
 I mean, do you REALLY know me?

I have been your Pastor for [three] years. That is what you hired me to
 be; that's what it says on my office door, on the church letterhead
 and on the sign outside; I think it is even trumpeted in the church's
 yellow pages ad.

Most of you call me "Pastor", but have you ever asked yourself
 whether you should be looking to me as your Pastor?

Have you ever considered that I may not be qualified to be your Pastor?
Until recently I arrogantly thought that I was qualified to be your
 Pastor, but when I humbled myself and asked God to show me the
 truth, I saw clearly that I am NOT qualified to be your Pastor.
Let me show you a few of the reasons why. . .

FIRST of all, a child is more qualified than me!

Jesus said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You
 have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have
 revealed them to babes. ²⁶Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in
 Your sight."

Matthew 11:25-26

and also, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:3-4

I confess to you, that I try very hard to be wise and learned, adult and authoritative—and I'm very proud of it!

But Jesus indicates that this is keeping me OUT of the kingdom of heaven. And if I am not entering His kingdom, how can I lead anyone else into it?

You'd be better off to follow a three-year old child than to follow me!

SECONDLY, I have little faith.

Jesus said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?. . . ¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast [the demon] out?” ²⁰So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.” Matthew 17:17-20

Can any of you honestly say I have mountain-moving faith?

Who have I healed or purified?

Have you seen me part the river, wither the fig tree, raise someone from the dead, or feed five thousand people with a basket of food?

If not, how can I lead you into the mountain-moving faith which we know is available through Jesus Christ?

A THIRD REASON that I am not qualified to be your Pastor is that I am not good or righteous in myself:

Jesus spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as

this tax collector. ¹²‘I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ ¹³And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Luke 18:9-14

and He also said, “Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is, God.*”

Matthew 19:17

And Isaiah says, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. . ." Isaiah 64:6

I have portrayed myself as "good" even though Jesus says I'm not.
I have been proud of my righteous deeds, and thought that since
I tithed to Him and pastored His flock for Him it makes me
special in His eyes and deserving of special rewards.
I have carefully groomed my exterior,
while hiding the evil lurking in my heart.

All of this disqualifies me as Pastor,
for I am self-righteous and deceived.

**MY FOURTH DISQUALIFICATION is that Jesus warned you
about hypocrites like me.**

A hypocrite is a person who pretends to have qualities, beliefs, values
or feelings that he does not really have, like an actor.
The external image is carefully crafted to portray himself as something
better than what he really is internally.
His true motives and feelings are hidden and controlled so that people
will be fooled into believing the outward image.

The religious hypocrites like me are the ones who persecuted and
crucified Jesus Christ.

Here are a few excerpts from what Jesus had to say about the religious hypocrites:

"Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' . . ."

Matthew 23:5-7

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel."

Matthew 23:23-24

"You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."

Matthew 23:27-28

I confess to you that I take pride in this pastoral robe, especially the three stripes on the arm that tell you the heights of my educational achievement. This robe sets me apart and conveys special authority to me in your eyes.

I enjoy being called "Pastor" and given preferential treatment at church dinners and functions. Each week I look forward to your greetings and praise after the worship service, especially when you tell me how great my sermon was.

I also confess to you that I have thoughts and feelings that, if you knew them, you would probably never speak to me again. You certainly wouldn't sit in this sanctuary week after week and submit yourself to my hypocrisy.

So, it is undeniable that I am a religious hypocrite.

Listen to a few of the things the religious hypocrites did against Jesus, the Christ of God:

They said that Jesus was a deceiver.
They said that He was demon-possessed and unclean.
They told Him that His testimony wasn't valid,
and they rejected what He said.
They decided it would be better for Him to be killed
than for their religious system to be brought down.
They questioned His authority.
They sought false evidence against Him.
Because of envy, they handed Jesus over to Pontius Pilate
and asked him to crucify Him.
They chose to set a criminal free rather than Jesus.

Now many of you may be thinking that I would never do anything
like the Pharisees, elders, chief priests, and teachers of the Law did.
Well, you're wrong.

If some guy came in here infringing on my territory and making a
bigger impression on you than I do, or freeing you from my
religious oppression, I would certainly do what I could to discredit
him and run him off--even if he was healing you and teaching you
the truth!

I am ashamed to say this, but it's true.

My position and accomplishments are very dear to me, as are your
money and service, and I protect them jealously.

**THE FIFTH DISQUALIFICATION is that Jesus himself made it
clear that we are all equals in Him.**

When we choose to follow Christ, God is our only authority, teacher
and Father.

Jesus tells us to be equals in Him and not to exalt any man.

He said, "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one
Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth
'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you
to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The
greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts
himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be
exalted."

Matthew 23:8-12

Calling me "Pastor" is pretty much the same thing as calling me "Rabbi" or "Teacher."

THE SIXTH DISQUALIFICATION, and the most difficult for me to admit to you, is that I would not lay down my life for any one of you here.

I came here to advance my career, earn money to support my family and me, build my reputation in the sight of man--NOT to lose anything, and especially not to lose my life for a person I barely know.

I'm not sure I would even do that for my wife, much less one of you. I've seen this church as just a rung on the ladder of my pastoral career, and I have looked forward to moving on to a bigger church after doing a few years time here.

Here is what Jesus has to say about me: ¹²“But a hireling, *he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.* ¹³The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.”

John 10:12-13

Some of you may be thinking, “Well, since he’s so vile, I’ll go find a good pastor.”

But before you go running off in search of another man to lead, guide and teach you, listen to the truth:

There is only one Good Shepherd, and that is the Messiah.

He is the personification of God:

truth, love, righteousness, mercy and faithfulness.

His teachings are recorded in the Gospels, so study them and follow them.

The Messiah also is willing and able to come directly to you, spirit-to-spirit, and live with you and in you if you allow Him to do so.

His still, small voice, the spirit of Truth, will teach and guide you whenever you listen and seek.

So the best replacement to me is to fling wide your arms and heart,
receive the Good Shepherd, and ask Him to deliver you from evil.
He will lift you up to Himself.

The Messiah is the perfect Pastor and Teacher.

I solemnly warn you, that if you seek anyone else to be your Pastor
you will be misled to some degree.

Jesus unflatteringly calls human pastors “hired hands.”

Some pastors hinder their sheep from entering the kingdom of God;
others build a Berlin wall to hold them prisoner,
away from freedom in truth.

THE FINAL DISQUALIFICATION for me being the pastor of this church is that I can no longer in good conscience agree with and commit to this church's job description for me.

This church has a lengthy and detailed job description for those it hires to be pastors. Most of the requirements and expectations are acceptable to me, but a few are not, because I believe it requires me to have loyalty to the organization as my employer rather than Christ as my Master.

I hereby repent of agreeing to this misplaced loyalty, and thus resign as Pastor of [First Church of the Ozarks].

Here is the “job description” God has given to me:

Follow Christ.

Believe God.

Trust God.

Obey God.

Continue to preach as He leads.

And when I fail to do any of these according to His will,
I am to repent and go forward in Him.

Now, before you get all distressed thinking that you don't have a pastor, let me reassure you that you do in fact have a Pastor, and He will pick up where I left off.

I consulted with Him about this last night and He assured me that
He will take over and lead this congregation as its Pastor.
May I have the honor of presenting Him to you?

Your true Pastor existed before the world began;

He is in you, with you and among you to whatever extent you will
receive Him.

He charges no fees for His services,
nor does He require a salary or manse.

He is the Pastor of multitudes outside of this congregation,
and He loves and cares for them also.

Here are a few of His many qualifications:

He is completely humble, like a child or lamb.

He is pure and without sin; completely righteous.

He is not a hypocrite; there is no facade, pretense, feigning,
dishonesty, falseness or deceit in Him.

He has great faith.

Although he has never been to seminary, He has perfect knowledge.

He has already laid down His life for each one of you.

He lives and dwells in any one who will receive Him.

He knows each one of you intimately and has the solution
to all of your problems.

He not only has entered the Kingdom of God -- He governs it!

Here are some Scriptures about Him:

The Lord is our shepherd, we shall not be in want.

He makes us lie down in green pastures,

He leads us beside quiet waters; He restores our souls.

He guides us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
we will fear no evil, for He is with us;

His rod and His staff, they comfort us.

He prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies.

He anoints our heads with oil; our cup overflows.

Surely goodness and love will follow us all the days of our lives,
and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

¹¹For thus says the Lord GOD: “Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. ¹³And I will bring them out. . . ¹⁴I will feed them in good pasture. . . There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶“I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.” Ezekiel 34:11-16

And Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly. ¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. . .

¹⁴I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. ¹⁵As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.” John 10:10-16

²⁸“Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

Today I choose to accept the invitation of Jesus Christ to come to him.

I choose to give up my exalted position of Pastor,
and ask Him to be my Pastor.

I choose His easy yoke of trust and obedience,
and give up the oppressive yoke of my own ambition;

I choose His light burden of humility,
and give up the heavy burden of trying to be superman.

I repent of holding out to you that I was qualified to be your Pastor.
Will you forgive me, and accept me as your equal in Christ?

NOW, will you accept Jesus Christ, the one and only Good Shepherd,
as your Pastor, from this moment forward?

If your heart and soul are testifying "yes!" to this question,
the Spirit of Christ is already there,
establishing Himself as your Shepherd, King and God.

Now listen to His voice, and follow Him.

Look away from me, and look in faith to that great Shepherd and
overseer of your soul, Jesus Christ.

Jesus the Messiah is our true Pastor.

I am your brother.

The Christ is our one true Teacher, the way, the truth and the life.

I am a student like you.

There is only one Father, in heaven, and we are all siblings.

There is one High Priest, Jesus Christ, and His work is so complete that
He has no need for human priests to help him.

And there is one Rabbi, or master, who is able to lead and guide each of
us, individually, to God. He bridges the gap between us and God.

So please, for your sake and mine, don't look up to me: look to Christ.

Let Him teach you and shepherd you.

The truth is, you don't need me or this church organization at all;

Christ is sufficient for all of your spiritual needs.

My work is to tell you this, and urge you to seek a personal relationship
with Jesus Christ—your true Shepherd and overseer—

“I, the Lord your God, AM your Shepherd.

I AM the Christ, the Messiah, the Spirit of Truth.

I AM with you always.

I know you completely and love you wholly and eternally.

All that I have is yours, and I give it to you as I see it is for your good.

No man can do for you all that I can do, so put your trust in Me.

I love you very much. My truth, grace and goodwill are yours.

Believe and receive!

**Follow Me, not man. Ask Me to reveal the truth to you and give you
the strength to obey it. I can and will do this for you.”**