

1Peter 11-06-24b

We pick up our study here in 1st Peter chapter 5 and we're looking at the result of having latched on to the opportunity that God has given us to minister. You'll remember there's certain little memory aids that we use that help us and certainly help me remember what's going on. When I think about subjectivity, I can think of three things.

Eyes on people, eyes on things, eyes on self, and it's it's easy. I can work with three things. I can remember three things and when we when we think about the functions that we have in this life, there's three of them.

We wear three hats. We have priesthood, ministry, and ambassadorship and they have directions. Priesthood is our relationship with God.

We are believer priests. We represent ourselves before God. This is why you don't have to go down and say Father forgive me if I've sinned.

It's been 14 months since my last confession or whatever. You don't have to go into the little thing. You don't have to wait for the holy smoke and the wafer.

We are our own priests. We are priests and what's the function of it? It may sound like a nice title, but what does it do? The priest is the go-between. He is the intermediary between God and man.

You go to the Leviticus and the Levitical priests, the sons of Levi. What did they do? They filled the gap between the offeror and his offering, his sacrifice, and God in the Holy of Holies. They occupy the space between.

They carry the blood. They ensure that things are done right. Well, guess what? We get to do that for ourselves.

And by the way, I'm happy to tell you I am NOT your priest. You are your priest. I got my hands full being my priest.

I haven't got time for your stuff. So you've got to do your own priesting. And we are priests.

That's our vertical relationship. Then you've got ministry, which is within the body of Christ. Everybody's a minister.

You know, they say, oh this guy's got a theology degree. He's a minister. You're a minister.

You are just as much a minister as I am. Every bit as much. Your gift is possibly different, probably different.

But you are no less a minister. You are diakonoi, just like I am a diakonos. We are all ministers.

And by the way, we are accountable for our service and our function as ministers. Ministers of the grace of God. We have been given a gift that is designed to do nothing but minister to fellow believers.

It doesn't work anywhere else. It doesn't go in the direction of God, and it doesn't go in the direction of unbelievers. It is specifically designed.

You have something in you. You may know what it is, and you may not. But every single one of us has got a unique something in us that God uses to bless believers that come in contact with us.

It's a weird thing. There's not a list. You can't go down and say, I mean, there's a few that are listed.

If you're a pastor or a teacher, that one's on the list. But most of them don't have a name. But every member of the body of Christ has been blessed with the ability to be a blessing, and that's your ministry.

And then the third hat we wear is ambassadorship. I love these sets of three. The three major aspects of Christ's work on the cross.

What are they? Redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation. And each of them has a direction. See, give me half an hour, and you'll know everything I know, because it's all in sets of three.

So now we come to these crowns, and there are three distinct crowns mentioned in Scripture. And I'm thankful that there's only three. I don't want a list of twelve crowns.

I don't want a list of, you know, fifteen separate possible areas of endeavor. There's basically three distinct crowns mentioned in Scripture. Now, you will often see, and by the way, if you're interested in the more classical treatment of this, understanding is seldom classical, but there's quite a lot that has been done on the five crowns of reward.

If you're interested in that, you can, and I'm serious, you can type it into your search engine, five crowns, and you'll get some really nice studies. One of them that's up there is by a guy that I know, but I don't, as you're about to find out, I don't really hold with the five crowns of reward emphasis, and we're about to see why. I do think that there are three, in fact, I don't think, I know.

There are three distinct crowns mentioned in Scripture. They're easy to remember. Crown of life, crown of glory, crown of righteousness.

Those three are mentioned, some of them more than once. This one is crown of glory. Let me hasten to add, having said that, that this is what I don't picture in heaven.

You've been to high school graduations. You've been to, you know, sports banquets or whatever,

and even in the military, somebody's going to get a Navy achievement medal or whatever, and they usually kind of group them together so they can dole them out to everybody at once. The colonel will come down, and you've got 14 Navy achievements and a couple of Navy commendations, and so there's a table, and they're all sitting there, and the biggest challenge for the guy that's accompanying the colonel is to be sure that he gets the right one in the hands of the CO when he's trying to pin them on to people, and sometimes there's a citation and and so on.

But this is what I don't see anywhere in the Bible related to the judgment seat of Christ, the Bema, the time of our evaluation. Neither God the Father nor the Lord Jesus, certainly not the Holy Spirit, is going to be sitting at a big table, and there's not going to be three lines, okay, everybody for the crown of righteousness over here, everybody for the crown of life over here, everybody for the crown of glory over here, what's your name? Sam Hall. I'm sorry, you're not on the list.

Next, please. It's not the, I think there has been a, well, you know what the Jews did, what the Israelites did, when God said, take my law and tie it between your eyes, strap it to your hand, well, they said, oh, okay, and they've got a box on their head, and they got a box, over-literalizing these things and not recognizing that what God is talking about is in the heart. Same thing with the crowns.

For example, this, especially when they talk about the crown of life, and it's the most frequently mentioned crown, there's a big debate, and it's long and endless about, well, is it a crown recognizing what you did in your life, or is the crown actually life? It's a crown of life. It's life and more abundant. It's a life, it's woven of life.

Maybe it's branches of the tree of life, and it's the crown of life. What's it made of? What's it for? Is it, in other words, is the genitive there, objective or subjective? That clarifies it, right? But here's the thing, this isn't like, all right, we've got the Navy Cross, we've got the Bronze Star, we've got the Silver Star, and if you do these certain things, you will get the Bronze Star, you will get the Silver Star, you will get the crown of life. If you do this, you will get the crown.

It's, we're over-literalizing, and people in the ancient world would not have understood it this way. This is a glorious crown, and when the chief shepherd appears, you, not just pastors, they say, this is the pastor's crown, pastors are in a, this is the, back to that pedestal thing, oh, pastors get to vie for a special crown, and amongst the pastors, they're all sprinting to the tape, and as some of them get across, they're gonna get the crown of, no. Everybody has the opportunity in their periphery to be an elder.

Sooner or later, you will be an elder. If there's anybody not as far along in the faith, in your periphery, you are an elder. Congratulations, you're a presbuteros, and you have the opportunity to be an example, and you don't say, well, and start lording it over.

Remember that katakourios thing we looked at last week? By the way, you know, one of the uses of that katakourios, we went over it last Friday, and I said, it's, you know, Lord, Lord-like or lordly, but it also means to, to overpower. You remember the, that, the funniest story in the book of Acts about the seven sons of Sceva, when they were running around saying, you demon, I cast you out in the name of the Jesus that Paul preaches, and they tried it on a guy, and he just beat the stuffing out of him, and they came out bloodied in rags. Remember that? Well, it says the guy overpowered them when they tried, when they said, I adjure you, and I cast you out by the Jesus that Paul preaches, because they didn't really know what they were doing.

They just thought they'd cast these demons out, and the demons just mopped the floor with them, and they, and it says they were katakourio-ed by that guy. They were, they were overpowered and sent packing. That's the word that is used, and so it means not forcing yourself upon, not taking oversight, and I think that many, not all, but in many cases, some mentoring and discipling groups that get started would benefit from a careful study of that word.

We are not here to exert management over one another. As a pastor, it is not the guy's job to manage the people in the church, manage their lives, manage their problems, be their guru, be their personal advisor. You can certainly provide godly counsel, sometimes specific godly counsel, but it should be biblical.

It should be objective. It should be without delving into intimate details. You don't want to get down the road after the crisis has passed and, oh boy, I really bared my soul, and now it's awkward because this person knows these intimate things about me.

It's unnecessary, and it's just not right. Our intimate personal relationship is with God. If you want somebody to get into your innermost thoughts and struggles and failures and successes and whatever else it may be, that's what God the Holy Spirit is here for.

He's the Paraclete, capital P. That's the Lord Jesus. That's your chief shepherd. That's the one with whom you can be as personal and as intimate as you want.

Not me. Please, not me, and don't wait for me to come bearing my soul to you. It's inappropriate and unnecessary.

We have much better counsel. We have much better comfort. I would be the most ham-fisted, awkward, doing-it-wrong guy if I tried that.

Just don't even try to put me in that position. I would fail at it dismally. What's worse is people that are good at it, because even though you're good at it, you're not supposed to do it.

We speak the truth to one another in love. We share biblical perspective, divine viewpoint, our hope, our love for the Lord, and the things of the Lord. We do not get into each other's intimate business.

It is a breeding ground for sin. It will inevitably split people, because you will get polarized. Some information just has radioactivity in it, and you don't want to cause future problems.

It may seem wonderful at the time. It's not. So the idea here is, notice, when Peter talks to these Presbuteroi, he doesn't say, you know, get close and personal, get intimate, get involved, go down there and, you know, roll up your sleeves and, you know, do some one-on-one counseling.

He says, be an example. Lead by example. Offer example.

Point to examples. Those of us who are pastors, we point to the example of Paul. We point to the example of the Lord Jesus.

Paul says, follow my example. He can say that because he's an apostle. I am NOT an apostle.

I will never tell you to follow my example, because I'm not an apostle. That's an apostle thing. Be an example to the flock is in your Presbuteroi function.

You do your best to live your life of faith, and when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the glorious crown that does not fade away. And this isn't just reserved for pastors. It isn't some kind of special, limited edition, exclusive, only the first 500 who call in can get one of these.

It is a glorious crown. It doesn't fade away, and it is available to you, just like it's available to me. And you'll see that even that is a little bit of an overstatement.

But as you look at these crowns, let's take a look at just a few of them here. There's the three that I mentioned in particular. All of this is at, we're talking about the judgment seat of Christ.

You don't get a crown now. It's not like the imperial margarine commercial. It's not going to come down and appear on your head as soon as you butter your bread.

This is future. This is a recognition, and you know what this means. Your life is over at the point that this crown does or does not get presented to you.

So you don't know whether or not it's there, or whether you did whatever it takes to get one, until your life is over. And there's a good reason for that. It isn't that you can do something episodic.

You can't do one epically great act of faith, and oh, I've secured the crown. I can check that off my list. It's not like getting badges as a Boy Scout.

It's not like earning, you know, filling up a green stamp book, and now I can get that blender. This is based on an evaluation of our entire life, and what that boils down to is, did we finish well? These elders are elder. They're older, and if they're still a good example, if they're still being an encouragement, if they're still sensitive to the people around them, the flock of God that is in your midst, and careful not to browbeat them, not to take charge of them like a demon-possessed

man.

I've got you now, and I'm gonna make you the great disciple that I am. Not for gain, not exploiting people. And listen, there's different kinds of gain.

It's not just monetary gain. There is spiritual scalp taking. Some of you have seen this.

I have impacted this person. Because of me, they're no longer on drugs. Because of me, their marriage hung together.

Because of me, and you know, it's offhand. It's toe-in-the-dirt, and all shucks, but it is nevertheless there. There is a pride of accomplishment in feeling like you have taken a wayward sinner and turned him back to the narrow road.

And I haven't observed it in our periphery, but in large, large groups where there's a lot of spiritual immaturity, you will see this happen. And there's sort of a, well, you know, who have you disciplined, and how many are there, and how long have you been doing it? What's particularly glorious is if you can figure out how to get the disciplined person to come up and say, this is the person who changed my life. If you ever introduce me like that, I will smack you.

God is our Heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior. The Holy Spirit is our Comforter.

Anybody that's going to get any credit for any good thing that happens in our life, that is where it goes. Period. End of discussion.

I have been blessed by association with many, many people, including most everybody here. But, now don't read, what do you mean most everybody here? Who's? Some of you are younger. You haven't had a chance to bless me as much as I expect to be blessed as time goes on.

But, you know what I'm saying. We appreciate what God does. We appreciate the blessings that come through ministry.

But, our appreciation should be directed to God, who put that person there, and gave them that gift, and enabled them. It is all of God. It is all of grace.

We can appreciate one another. We can say, thank you. I appreciate you.

You're great. Don't get me wrong. But, we just have to be really careful.

You can throw a stumbling block. There are communities, there are cases where this turns into sort of a competition, where it turns into a glorying in the flesh. It turns into sort of a hobby and a pastime.

Who can I influence for the good? Who can I mentor and disciple and bring along? Who can I get

into my shadow, and give the benefit of the wind under my wings, and sort of, you know, bring along, because I'm getting pretty good at this. You know, I'm getting good at it. I think maybe that's my gift is, you know, helping people become as good as I am.

And, that isn't it at all. This is an exhortation from Peter, and he says, look, I'm your fellow elder. What is he exhorting them to do? This is the same kind of exhortation they should give.

Remember, as you live your life, and as you try to please the Lord, that it is also serving as an example. And, there are people looking at you and saying, well, when there's pressure, what are my options in dealing with it? I can fall apart. I can go ballistic.

I can feel sorry for myself. I can complain. I can rant, which seems to be the common thing, especially now that we've got electronic devices.

People want to rant. They want to go online. They want to, you know, vent.

But, you can be an example by doing nothing. People know you've had a hard scrape. People know you've had a bad bump.

You've hit a jolt, and your equanimity is undisturbed. Your peace is evident. And, for younger people, and people that aren't as far along as we might be in the faith, they say, the next time they hit a bolt, a jolt, or a bump, or a scrape, they say, you know, there's another option here.

I've seen people get through this kind of thing without going nuts. And, that's your ministry. And, you did it, and you didn't even know it.

And, you were just trying to do your best to live your life, and you've been a blessing to someone else. That's the way God works. It's all of God.

We couldn't have planned it. We couldn't have foreseen it. We didn't know it was there.

Well, what happens at the judgment? Your life is over. This is the point. In a way, the crowns are going to be kind of a turning point.

The judgment seat of Christ, where we are judged, it's good and bad, gets evaluated there. I always wonder if there's negative crowns. Are there going to be thorny crowns that get given at the judgment seat? You get the crown of life.

You get the crown of, well, I'm giving you this rusty crown. You get the crown of plastic. You get the Burger King crown.

You know, you lived a fake life of righteousness. I'm going to give you a fake crown of righteousness, and you get to wear the thing, kind of like a dunce cap crown. Thankfully, I think God is more gracious than that.

But, it is a judgment seat. It is an evaluation, and there will be shame, and there will be sorrow at the judgment. But, we're all still alive.

And, remember, this is at the end. It isn't what we've done up to this point. It's what we do from now on.

How well do we finish? This is a finish line evaluation. You may start slow. You may stumble and fall.

You may get all muddy. You may take a wrong turn. But, how do you look crossing the tape? The grace of God is so wonderful that it's, if we pick up, dust ourselves off, and sprint to the finish, that's what he's looking for.

How do you endure? You have a need of patience. You have a need of endurance. So that, after you have suffered a while, you receive an inheritance.

And, this is basically a metaphor for inheritance. I believe, and this is Sam talking, I would encourage you to go look at Five Crowns of Reward Studies. There's an excellent, excellent book called Reign of the Servant Kings by Jody Dillow.

There's another shorter one by, and I'll give you the title and author when I think of it. What's that? Going for the Gold, by? Yeah. Yeah, I know him.

I've met him. I've went to a pastor's conference with him. I just can't think of his name.

He's out west. He's out, but it's called Going for the Gold and it's also a good book on rewards. And there's a detailed study.

We're not going to do detailed study because Peter does not do a detailed study. He's not saying, please pause here and do a in-depth evaluation and count of all of the crowns. And we're not going to do it either.

Here's the point. These are recognitions of seizing opportunities. All of us have opportunities.

All of us have the chance to exploit them, to make use of them. You say, well, my stuff is small. I'm just living an ordinary life.

I'm below the radar. Nobody's going to see me. I am no great shakes.

Yes, you are. Every individual that has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ is as valuable as that blood. You aren't worth what you were before you're saved.

You are worth what you're worth after you're saved. How, you know, this is the eBay thing. You always search completed auctions, right? You want to sell a thing? Let's say you've got a, let's say you've got a, you've got a piece of China.

You've got a gravy bowl and you say, well, the rest of my China is all broken. I'm going to sell this gravy bowl. I'm going to put it on eBay.

Well, how much, where should the bid start? How much should I expect? Don't go to the other gravy bowls like yours that are up there for sale. Go to the completed auctions. How much have people actually been willing to pay for this particular item? That's its value.

That's what you are likely to get. So look at us. You say, well, you know, we're not much.

I feel like I'm not much. I'm not, I'm not anything that, you know, God's doing things with angels and great evangelists and televised pastors and things. So he's, you know, what, we're just small potatoes.

Bad answer. Look at the completed auction. What was paid for you? What was paid for me? There is nothing more precious than the blood of Jesus Christ and you and I are his purchased possession.

If you sell yourself short, you are trampling underfoot the Son of God. You are devaluing the blood by which you were sanctified. It is sinful to have an inferiority complex.

It's sinful. Jesus Christ bought you and he bought me and we are worth that much in God's sight. God has given his Holy Spirit.

He has put a gift in us. He has given us his word. He's made a big investment in us.

Don't try to let yourself off the hook and say, well, I'm just not much. Ask God how much you are based on his investment in us. It's a big investment and we have a responsibility as well as an opportunity to do something with that and the daily seemingly insignificant, seemingly mundane challenges are worth a lot.

Nobody's got them but you. You are the one person with the one chance to do this situation right, to prevail by faith and not fall into sin. Nobody else has got that test.

Nobody else has got those people. Nobody else has got that circumstance. This is part of the great fabric of God's plan.

I've got a quilt. We have a quilt that we bought going back and forth to Oklahoma and there's these ladies up in one of those little Oklahoma towns and they sit around quilting all day long and then they, every so often, they hang them out and you can stop and buy these beautiful homemade quilts. Well, I look at these quilts and I think, wow, these ladies just spent, I don't know, hundreds of hours.

It's hand-stitched. It's little tiny pieces that somebody cut them out. Some of you, you know, Diana has done beautiful quilting and some of the rest of you have, but it's a huge amount of work.

Well, I was looking at that quilt the other day and one of those little pieces has come loose. The edge of it has come loose. That thing is made of hundreds of pieces of cloth, but it only takes one coming loose and you say, well, my quilt is spoiled.

You and I are pieces of God's quilt. Don't come unglued. Don't fall apart.

Don't think your stuff doesn't matter and, well, it's okay if I shred here. It's not okay. We are part of the fabric and the interweaving of God's glory.

Let me show you something here as we close related to this. All of this is when Christ appears. Our life is over.

We're going to enter a new phase. We're going into the eternal future. What did we do with this life? What did we do with the time that was given to us, with these daily little opportunities? Somebody drops it and it breaks.

Somebody says it and it hurts. Somebody fails to do it and it annoys. We have these challenges.

Of course, you can tell that's autobiographical. It challenges us. We've got a mental attitude test there.

What are we going to do? Well, at the appearing of the Lord Jesus, our test score is going to come in. You had, you know, it's a lot more than a hundred questions, but each one of them has points. Let me just read you a few of these.

We probably don't have time to turn to them. Jesus said in Matthew 25 31. You know that end of Matthew? Matthew 24, the Son of Man, the Sun, the Moon, nuclear winter, and everything else.

Then in 25 he says, 25 31, when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. What's the noun that is repeated twice at the appearing of the Lord Jesus when he himself describes his return? What does he say? When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him, what are the angels? Those clouds of angels are a reflection of God's glory. Then he will sit on the throne of his glory.

The day of the return of the Lord Jesus, the day of judgment and evaluation, is a day of God's glory. To what extent are we able, to what extent did we build up enough shiny surface area in this life to reflect the glory of God? That's why it's a crown of glory. It is a crown that reflects God's glory.

It is a crown made of glory, God's glory. That's why we're here. Paul says in Colossians 3, 3, and 4, you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is our life, then you also will appear with him in glory. When Christ, who is our life, appears, crown of life, then you also will appear with him in glory. 2 Thessalonians 1, 7-10

The Lord Jesus is going to come and give you who are troubled rest with us.

When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who did not know God, on those who did not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, these will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. Separation from his glory. When he comes in that day to be glorified in his Saints and to be admired among all those who believe because our testimony among you was believed, it is all back to the great quality of the Lord Jesus.

What is his glory? It's his quality. It's who he is and what he has done for us, what he manifests of God the Father. 1 John 2, 28 Now little children abide in him that when he appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Judgment seat can go either way. Abide in him. 1 John 3, 2 Beloved now we are children of God.

It has not yet been revealed what we shall be but we know that when he is revealed we shall be like him. We shall see him as he is. What is the Lord Jesus? What is he like? He's like that moment on the Mount of Transfiguration.

He's like the vision of John on the Isle of Patmos. He is glorious. He used to use the word effulgence, the effulgence of glory.

It's the exceeding brightness, radiance. If we can learn to be of service to one another in humility, in dedication, in faithful obedience, not trying to get control of one another, not trying to impact one another, living our lives as unto the Lord, trying to be good stewards of what he has entrusted to us, when the Chief Shepherd appears, we all, not just pastors, not just deacons, not just somebody that's got elder next to their name, everyone has the opportunity to receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Our efforts here are momentary, but they earn for us an eternal weight of glory.

And it's not my glory. It's not the keys to my mansion. It's not my heavenly Maserati.

It is the opportunity to be a continual reflection, an eternal memorial to the grace of God and the glory of God. That's what we want. People always get kind of feeling awkward about, oh well, aw shucks, I don't want a crown.

I don't want any rewards. If I had it, I'll just cast it at his feet like the 24 elders. We've talked about that crown casting of the 24 elders.

That's their crowns. That's not our crowns. The 24 elders have got a totally different crown.

We are not the 24 elders, and these crowns do not fade away, and they don't get thrown down and cast away. It's our privilege to reflect the glory of God forever, and we don't cast that privilege away. Totally different thing going on with the elders.

We'll maybe talk about that another time. But whether it's the crown of life, the crown of righteousness, or the crown of glory, it's all the same thing. These are not recognizably, in my view, in my understanding, they're not recognizably different crowns.

They don't sit on different tables. They're not different lists. The crown of glory is the crown of life.

It is the crown of righteousness because they're all the same thing. All of the glory and life and righteousness belongs to God. If you're reflecting one, you're reflecting all.

They are synonymous. They are talking about inheritance. They're talking about the great gift that God has given us through Christ to have our life mean something.

Why do we come to Bible class week after week? Why do we meditate on the Word of God between Bible classes, as I am confident that you do? Why do we do that? This life is meaningless without it. Without our connection to God and eternal things, you're just dust in the wind. You're here today, gone tomorrow.

The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of our God lives and abides forever. When it's in us, when we reflect it, when we live it, we become a part of it. We wear that crown, these crowns.

So Peter offers this by way of encouragement to people who are facing very difficult circumstances, something their fathers did not know who lived in the land. And they're Jewish Christians, which is doubly challenging when they get to Jewish communities. But Peter says, look to eternity.

Look to the purpose of your life. You're here for a purpose. Recognize that purpose.

Fulfill that purpose. And the consequences are eternal. Well, we'll pick up at verse 5 next time where we're going to see what the responsibility is for the younger.

We've seen the responsibility for the older. He's going to address likewise you younger people next time. Father, thank you for the truth of your Word.

Thank you that the guidance that you leave us is specific. It is meaningful. It is pertinent.

It is applicable to the situations that we face, the circumstances that we encounter each and every day. We thank you for your personal love and attention for each one of us. We thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us enough to come and die in our place and on our behalf, and intercedes on our behalf now and will one day soon return to gather us to himself and to you.

We thank you for the grace that is reflected in your plan and purpose. And we pray that the Holy Spirit will keep us ever mindful of these great opportunities and potentials that you have given to

us in Christ, and we ask it in his name. Amen.