

Title: Returning to the Shepherd: Union, Communion, and Submission in a World of Uncertainty

Sermon Summary: Drawing from 1 Peter 2:13-25, this sermon explores how believers are called to live in genuine union with God through Christ, which produces communion, identity, and intimacy with him. The pastor challenges both secular culture and contemporary Christian culture, arguing that the Christian life is not primarily about prosperity or comfort, but about submission, suffering, and perseverance. Just as Christ submitted to the Father's plan even unto death, believers are called to submit to human institutions, to one another, and ultimately to God himself. This submission is not passive resignation but an active, Spirit-empowered choice rooted in a secure identity in Christ. The sermon concludes with the image of Christ as the shepherd and guardian of souls, to whom believers continually return, finding rest, restoration, and the strength to endure whatever hardships life brings.

Key Points:

- Union with God through Christ is the foundation of the Christian life, and from that union flows communion, identity, intimacy, expectancy, and perseverance
- Contemporary Christian culture often distorts the gospel by promising wealth, health, and comfort, but the biblical call is to a countercultural life of submission and suffering
- The Greek word *hupotasso*, meaning to place oneself under in an ordered way, describes the posture believers are to take toward God, human institutions, employers, and one another
- Submission is not something God forces upon believers but a voluntary choice empowered by the work of God in a person's life
- Christ is the perfect example of submission under unjust suffering, and believers are called to follow his example by resisting retaliation, blessing those who wrong them, and entrusting outcomes to God's justice
- Suffering serves an eternal purpose: though it cannot save, it can illustrate the transforming power of salvation in a believer's life
- The Spirit of God speaks through the Word of God, and apart from engagement with Scripture, believers cannot reliably discern spiritual guidance

- Returning to Christ as shepherd is not a one-time event but a continual, daily practice of confession, repentance, and re-submission
- The Lord's Supper is the moment where union becomes communion, not only with Christ but with all believers across the ages

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Peter 2:13-25, which serves as the primary text covering submission to authority, Christ's example in suffering, his atoning work on the cross, and the image of believers returning to the shepherd and guardian of their souls
- 1 Peter 2:17, summarizing the call to honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor governing authorities
- 1 Peter 2:24-25, describing Christ bearing sins on the cross so believers might die to sin and live to righteousness, and the image of straying sheep returning to the shepherd
- Colossians 3:23-24, on working heartily as unto the Lord rather than for human approval
- Romans 12, on not repaying evil for evil and overcoming evil with good
- Romans 6:9-11, on being dead to sin and alive to God in Christ
- John 10:27-28, on the sheep hearing the shepherd's voice and being held securely in his hand
- Psalm 23:1-4, on the Lord as shepherd who leads, restores, and accompanies his people even through the valley of the shadow of death
- Proverbs 22:3, on the prudent person who sees danger and takes shelter
- Ephesians 5:21, on mutual submission among believers

Stories:

- The pastor recounts years of experiencing criticism and personal attacks, describing the temptation in his younger years to vent to others and build a coalition against those who wronged him, contrasting that worldly pattern with Peter's call to a deeper way of handling conflict
- He shares the story of an older mentor named Roy who, after the pastor repeatedly complained about a difficult boss at a Christian organization, firmly told him that his

responsibility as an employee was either to submit or to resign without undermining his superior; the pastor resigned two months later and later refused to hear negative reports about that same boss, citing the principle that gossip harms the one who receives it as much as the one who spreads it

- He references two stories he heard that week about individuals in the present day who were miraculously healed from disease without medical intervention, using these accounts to illustrate that such extraordinary healings are the exception rather than the norm in the Christian life

- He reflects on nearly fifty years of marriage to his wife Terry, acknowledging that his grumpy and difficult temperament in the early years of their marriage tested the relationship, and attributing its survival entirely to God's grace

- He describes his own ongoing struggles with patterns formed during three years in the United States Marine Corps, including foul language and a deeply ingrained anger, using these personal admissions to illustrate that the call to righteous living is not about moral perfection but about continually returning to Christ