



- The Messy Stuff: Ezekiel 34:11-23



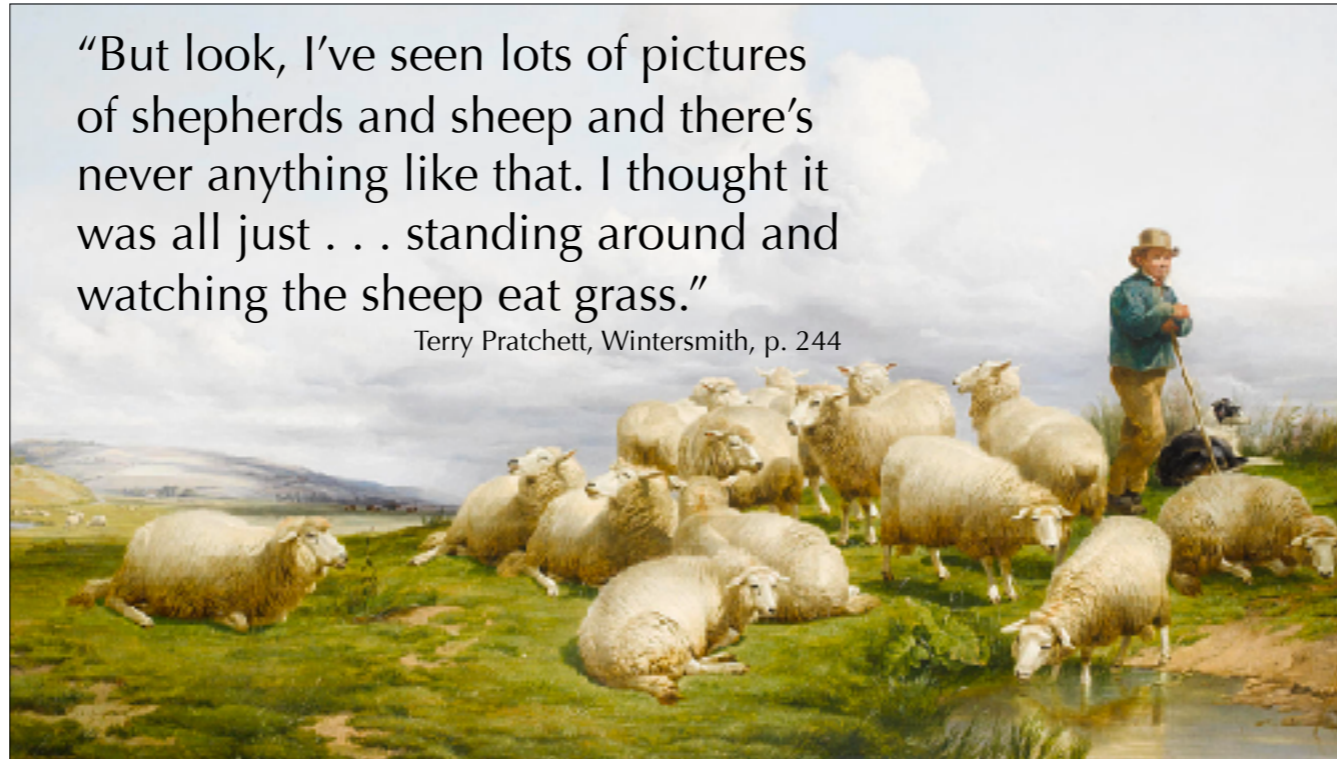
- “But you’re so good at the messy stuff, Tiffany,” said Annagramma in a syrupy voice. “It seems to come naturally to you.” “I started at the lambing when I was small, that’s why. Small hands can get inside and untangle things.” And now Annagramma had that hunted look she got when she was dealing with anything she didn’t immediately understand.
- Pratchett, Terry (2009-10-06). Wintersmith (Discworld Book 35) (pp. 243-244). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.



- “Inside the sheep? You mean up its . . .” “Yes. Of course.” “Untangle things?” “Sometimes the lambs try to get born backward,” said Tiffany. “Backward,” muttered Annagramma weakly. “And it can be worse if there’s twins.” “Twins . . .”

“But look, I’ve seen lots of pictures of shepherds and sheep and there’s never anything like that. I thought it was all just . . . standing around and watching the sheep eat grass.”

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- Being a shepherd (elder) is about doing the messy stuff.
  - Too often, we have a similar problem about elders
  - Dressed up on Sunday AM, greeting, making sure things go smoothly, deciding how to spend the money
    - All important... but distorted view of

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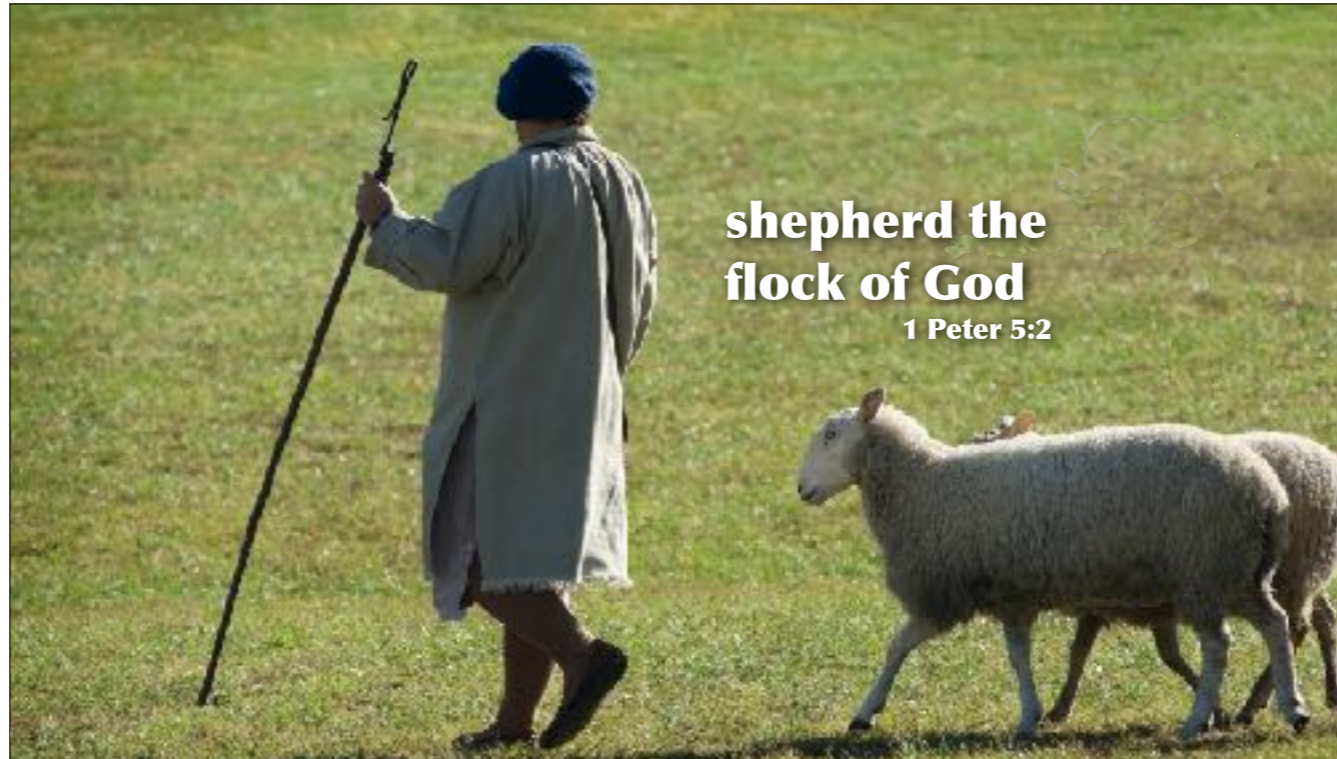


- Often the work of an shepherd is messy: Ezekiel 34:11-24
  - troubled lives of Christians
  - straying saints
  - controversies, arguments, not getting along
  - false teachings, deceptions

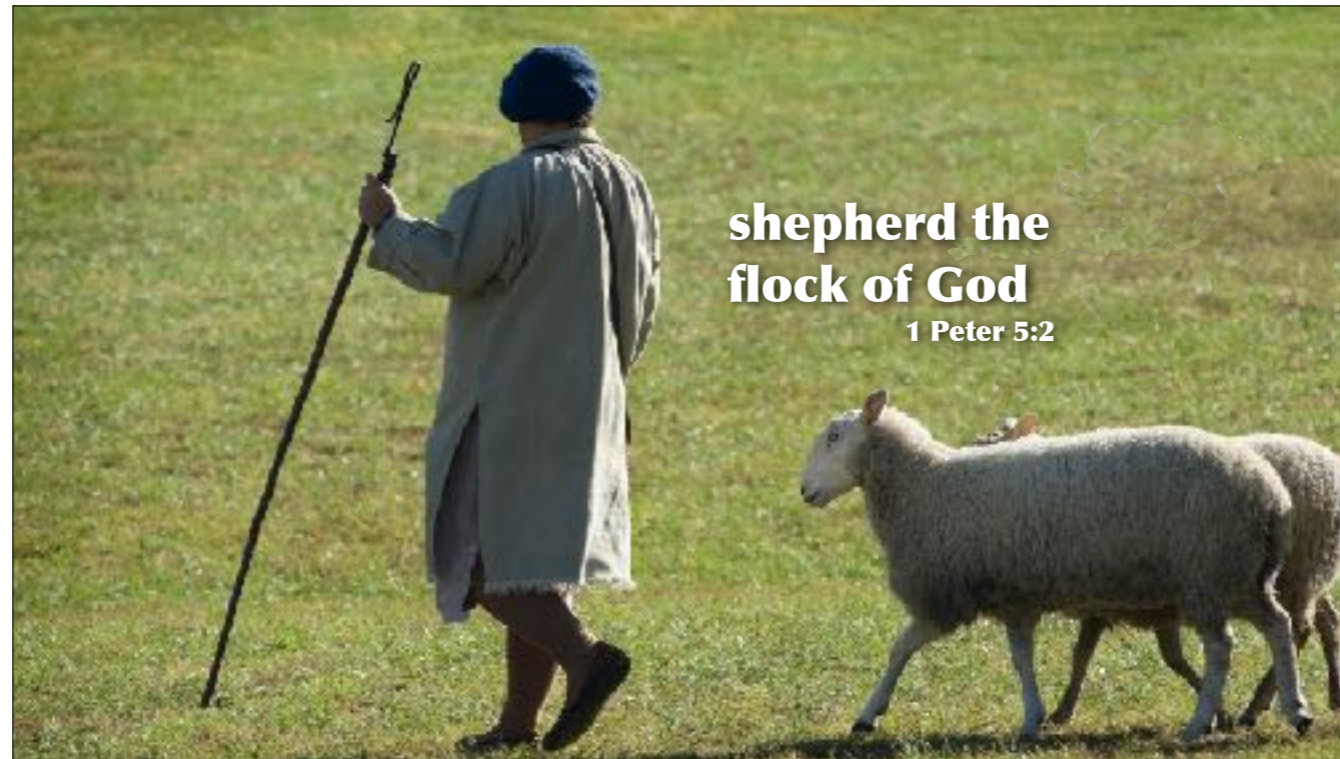


- Acts 20:28 (ESV): Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.
  - Care (Shepherd)
    - Vine: to act as a shepherd





- 1 Peter 5:2 (ESV) shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;



- What is the work of a shepherd?
  - daily needs: food, water
  - emergency: illness, predators
  - long term: growth
  - care, lead, feed, protect
- There is no area of the care of the flock that is not overseen by the Shepherd.
  - Everything
- Count the cost!



- Ezekiel 34:2 (ESV) Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! **Should not shepherds feed the sheep?**



- Daily Feeding
  - Ezekiel 34:14 (ESV) I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel.



- Titus 1:9 (ESV) He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to **give instruction in sound doctrine** and also to rebuke those who contradict it.
- 1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV): Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**,



- 1 Timothy 5:17-18 (ESV) 17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially **those who labor in preaching and teaching.** 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."
- Strauch: Knowledge of Scripture; readiness to teach; able to communicate



- Ezekiel 34:16 (ESV) I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and **I will bind up the injured**, and **I will strengthen the weak**, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.



- James 5:14 (ESV) Is anyone among you **sick**? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
- Acts 20:35 (ESV) In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way **we must help the weak** and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'





- Danger: complacency of the routine...
  - every day, same thing
  - The world offers “food” that will harm, kill sheep
    - Not just immoral things
    - False things: googling spirituality.



- Must keep focus of flock on Jesus.
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17 (ESV) But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.



- Not by proxy (preacher): responsibility is given, in part, to elders: must be teaching.
  - Opportunities for studies
  - Organize
  - Encourage
- Tendency to become spiritually lazy, undisciplined, prayerless, weary
- Contrast with “Harassed and Helpless” Jews (see Mt. 9:36)



- Acts 20:29 (ESV) I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;
  - Come in among you
  - not sparing flock
  - draw away disciples after themselves



- Titus 1:9 (ESV) He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.



- Titus 1:10-11 (ESV) 10 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. 11 They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.



- Beware
  - Scribes
    - Mark 12:38-40 (ESV) And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces 39 and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, 40 who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”



- Pharisees
  - Luke 12:1: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.





- 2 Timothy 2:16-18 (ESV) But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

**fierce wolves**



- 2 Corinthians 11:13 (ESV) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

## **fierce wolves**



- 1 Timothy 6:2-5 (ESV) Teach and urge these things. 3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

## **fierce wolves**



- 2 Peter 2:1-3 (ESV) 1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.



- Ezekiel 34:12 (ESV) 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.



- Ezekiel 34:16 (ESV) I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.



- Jude 1:22-23 (ESV) 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.



- Ezekiel 34:17-22 (ESV) 17 “As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats. 18 Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet? 19 And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet? 20 “Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21 Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, 22 I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep.





- Galatians 5:13-15 (ESV) 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.



- Church in Corinth...
  - 1 Corinthians 1:10-11 (ESV) 10 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. 11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

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- Sheep don't take vacations from eating and drinking; predators don't stop hunting.
  - Jacob on shepherding: Genesis 31:40 (ESV): There I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.

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- One reason so few congregations have elders, esp. good shepherds, is because, in general, men can be spiritually lazy.
  - Spiritual laziness is a major reason many churches never establish elderships.
  - More than willing to allow others to fulfill their spiritual responsibilities: wives, preacher

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- Do we need good shepherds?
  - Who will step up to do the messy work that we need done?
  - Who will prepare themselves for the work?
  - Who will you help prepare?
  - Prepare yourself to follow shepherds?

**We implore you on  
behalf of Christ,  
be reconciled to God.**

**2 Corinthians 5:20**

Let all that you do be done in love.

1 Corinthians 16:14



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Shepherd in Field painting: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/27/Thomas\\_Sidney\\_Cooper\\_Shepherd\\_with\\_sheep\\_1868.jpg/1280px-Thomas\\_Sidney\\_Cooper\\_Shepherd\\_with\\_sheep\\_1868.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/27/Thomas_Sidney_Cooper_Shepherd_with_sheep_1868.jpg/1280px-Thomas_Sidney_Cooper_Shepherd_with_sheep_1868.jpg)

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Wolves and Bones: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecology\\_of\\_the\\_Rocky\\_Mountains#/media/File:Wolves\\_and\\_bones.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecology_of_the_Rocky_Mountains#/media/File:Wolves_and_bones.jpg)

Shepherd leading sheep: [iStock\\_000008170193Small.jpg](https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/000008170193Small)

Fighting: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ram\\_fighting#/media/File:Asrlar\\_Sadosi\\_2008c.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ram_fighting#/media/File:Asrlar_Sadosi_2008c.jpg)

Sheep being attacked: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheep#/media/File:Coyotekilling.jpg>

## The Messy Stuff

Ezekiel 34:11-23

Synopsis: The good shepherd does not just stand out in a field watching sheep. This idyllic view of a shepherd neglects to consider all the very difficult and messy things that a shepherd must do to properly care for the sheep. In this lesson, we'll look at the messy stuff that shepherds of Jesus' body must be prepared to cope with.

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**"Let all that you do be done with love."**