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A Community of Sheep

1 Peter 5.1-5

Series: The DNA of TVC

Rev. Andrew Hawkins, Ph.D.

The Village Church

February 11, 2024

I. Why Sheep?

- A. We are concluding a series this morning on the DNA of TVC
 - 1. What are those foundational characteristics of The Village Church that make this local congregation who we are
 - a. What elements define us
 - b. What is our DNA?
- B. In this series we've concentrated on the core elements of our Mission Statement
 - 1. **We are building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ**
 - 2. Core elements
 - a. Forgiveness
 - b. Purpose
 - c. Hope
 - 3. We spoke about what led us to adopt each of those elements
 - a. How in this community there was a need to become assured of our relationship with God
 - b. That in Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself – not counting men's sins against them (**2 Corinthians 5.19**)
 - c. That only in Jesus Christ could we find **forgiveness** for our sins – for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (**Romans 3.23**)
 - d. That if we do nothing else, we need to be a people of forgiveness
 - e. That even if we've gone to church all our lives, we can only have forgiveness if we trust in the life and death of Jesus Christ alone on our behalf
 - f. That any kind of trust in ourselves, including the naive notion that we've been good enough people to stand in the presence of the altogether holy and righteous God, would lead us to destruction
 - g. But God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (**John 3.16**)
 - h. And the reason why forgiveness is one of our core elements in our mission is that as a community of seniors, we don't have much time to get this issue settled
 - i. There's an urgency about being a people of forgiveness

4. And we also mentioned that it's not just forgiveness in a vertical dimension that is critical
 - a. Not only is there an urgency in making sure we're forgiven by God
 - b. There is an urgency in making sure we are a forgiving people
 - c. That broken relationships need to be reconciled horizontally – with our family or friends
 - d. Or even, I dare say, with our enemies!
 5. So forgiveness is a critical element in our mission
 - a. We seek to be a forgiven people
 - b. And we seek to be a forgiving people
- C. We then examined the issue of **purpose**
1. How the issue of purpose looms large for those of us in a retirement community
 2. So much of what we found to be our purpose in life is now in our rear view mirror
 3. What got us out of bed every morning; what vocations defined who we were
 4. Those things are usually in our past
 - a. But we must live in the present
 5. What is our purpose now?
 - a. And so many of us need to redefine our purpose in our retirement years
 - b. And redefine it in relationship to our life in Jesus Christ
 6. **Colossians 3:17** (ESV) — 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- D. And finally, we spoke about what it meant to be a people of **hope**
1. We're coming down the home stretch of life
 - a. And that home stretch has its pitfalls – its challenges, its tribulations
 2. But if we truly trust in Jesus Christ alone, we have hope for an eternity of glory in His presence
 3. So that, as we approach those challenges, we need to exude the joy of the Lord and a spirit of thanks giving
 - a. In a way that will be a witness to all around us of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus (**Philippians 3.8**)
- E. So our mission – building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ – is central to who we are, central to our DNA
- F. We also sprinkled in our **Core Values**
1. That as we seek to be a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus, we are committed to a set of core values
 2. We value the **Glory of God**
 - a. Demonstrated by our passionate devotion to exalting His sovereignty and majesty

- b. One of the chief things we spoke about that helps us to define our purpose
 - 3. We value the **Word of God**
 - a. Demonstrated by our reverential submission to its authority
 - b. That's been implicit throughout this series
 - c. As nothing we've focused on was without explicit support from the scriptures
 - 4. We value the **Sufficiency of Christ**
 - a. Demonstrated by our resting confidence in His all-inclusive work
 - b. Of course, that's central to our mission
 - c. Because our mission – building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope is rooted – in Jesus Christ
 - 5. We value the **Ministry of the Holy Spirit**
 - a. Demonstrated by our acknowledgment that His anointed empowerment is essential for holy living and fruitful service
 - b. The work of the Spirit has been critical to our capacity to fulfill our mission
 - 6. We value the **Great Commission of Christ**
 - a. Demonstrated by our active participation in working toward its completion
 - b. We've seen repeatedly how our mission is integral to the mission Christ Himself gave to the Church for all ages – to make disciples of all nations
 - c. A core value that we'll be emphasizing beginning next week at our Global Impact Week
 - d. And how this congregation has demonstrated its commitment to the Great Commission in how we touch literally every corner of the globe for Jesus
 - 7. We value the **Body of Christ**
 - a. Demonstrated by our whole-hearted commitment to the church, the people of God
 - b. That's what we mean when we say we are committed to building a community
 - 8. We value **Prayer**
 - a. Demonstrated by our unreserved dependence on the practice of prayer
 - b. And we've seen how prayer infuses every facet of the diamond which is our community
- G. I've decided that in this concluding message in this series to focus on building a community – which is in essence, building the body of Christ in this place
 - 1. And to do it by focusing on a specific ministry of TVC
 - a. The **Ministry of Shepherding**
 - 2. The ministry of shepherding has naturally and organically grown out of our mission and our core values

3. It is a ministry in which shepherds are assigned every member of our congregation
 - a. And many in our congregation who are not officially members who desire to have a shepherd
 4. Shepherding is more and more central to our DNA, our culture, to who we are as the people of God in this place
- H. Now there are a number of metaphors that the Bible uses for the church
1. The church is called **The Body of Christ** in numerous places in the NT (**1 Corinthians 12.27, Ephesians 4.12**)
 2. The church is called the **Temple of God** in the NT (**1 Corinthians 3.16-17, 2 Corinthians 6.16, Ephesians 2.21**)
 3. The church is called **The Bride of Christ** in the NT (**Revelation 19.7**)
 4. The church is called the **Family of God**, as God is our Fathers, and our fellow believers are our brothers and sisters
 5. And there are others
- I. But arguably, the most dominant metaphor for the church in the Bible is that we are a community of sheep, and we are led by shepherds
1. This descriptor goes all the way back into the Old Testament
 - a. Moses was a shepherd before God called him to go back to Egypt and rescue the people of Israel from their bondage
 - b. David, the great King of Israel, was a shepherd, and He was called to shepherd the people of God as they moved into the kingdom period
 - c. The prophets used the sheep-shepherd designation is characterizing the OT people of God – indeed, calling down judgment on Israel and Judah for their failure as shepherds and as sheep
 2. And of course, Jesus Himself used the sheep metaphor in many of His parables to describe the people of God
- J. But you might wonder, **Why Sheep?**
1. Why should sheep be such a pervasive identifier for the people of God throughout the Bible?
 2. Well, watch this – perhaps this will explain why!
 - a. **Video – sheep in ditch**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-Wc8vluy0>
- K. Bottom line – we are sheep because we need help!
1. And we need to be rescued
 - a. Over and over again!

II. **Who are the Sheep?**

- A. First of all, the sheep are all those who belong to Jesus Christ
1. Belong to Jesus Christ by faith in Him
 - a. All who are forgiven by Him
 - b. All who have a saving relationship with Christ
 2. They are all those who have heard the voice of Jesus and have responded to His call

- a. **John 10:3** (ESV) —
 - (1) 3 “... The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”
 - b. The sheep are those whose names are called by Jesus Himself
 - 3. They are those who follow Jesus, who follow the voice of Jesus because they know His voice
 - a. **John 10:4** (ESV) —
 - (1) 4 “When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”
- B. Jesus is the owner of the sheep
 - 1. He is no hired hand, who, when the sheep are in trouble, could care less about their welfare
 - 2. **John 10:14–15** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 ... I know my own and my own know me,
 - b. 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;
 - c. and I lay down my life for the sheep.
- C. Not everyone is among the sheep of Jesus, not everyone belongs to Jesus
 - 1. Jesus Himself distinguishes between those who believe in Him and those who don't
 - a. Responding sharply to the Jewish leaders who challenged Him:
 - 2. **John 10:25–27** (ESV) —
 - a. 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe.
 - b. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,
 - c. 26 but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.
 - d. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”
- D. Jesus goes on to say that His sheep are secure in Him
 - 1. That between His own protection and that of the Father, His sheep are never going to get stuck forever in the ditch!
 - 2. **John 10:28–30** (ESV) —
 - a. 28 “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.
 - b. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.
 - c. 30 I and the Father are one.”
- E. The sheep are those whom the Father has taken out of the world and given to Christ
 - 1. **John 17:2** (ESV) —
 - a. 2 “... since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.”
 - 2. **John 17:6** (ESV) —
 - a. 6 “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.
 - b. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.”

- F. The sheep are those whom Christ has bought with His own blood by His death on the cross
 - 1. **1 Corinthians 6:20** (ESV) — 20 for you were bought with a price. ...
 - 2. **Revelation 5:9** (NASB95) —
 - a. 9 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals;
 - b. for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”
- G. So then, dear friends, if you follow Jesus, if you trust Jesus savingly – you are His sheep

III. **What do Sheep Need?**

- A. So then the next question is, what do the sheep need?
 - 1. The first thing to notice is that the sheep need a lot!
 - a. Sheep are, by definition, needy
- B. The trouble is, what we sheep think we need, and what we actually need, are not always the same thing!
 - 1. We think we need material possessions
 - 2. We think we need health and wealth
 - 3. But what we really need is righteousness
 - a. And only Jesus can provide the righteousness that we need
- C. **Romans 3:21–22** (ESV) —
 - 1. 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—
 - 2. 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe....
- D. We also really need peace with God
 - 1. By nature we are enemies with God
 - a. But only the wrath-removing sacrifice of Christ resolves the enmity, and grants us peace with God
 - 2. **Romans 3:23–25** (ESV) —
 - a. 23 ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
 - b. 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
 - c. 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith....
 - 3. **Romans 5:1** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- E. Sheep need all kinds of things that only Jesus can provide
 - 1. Sheep need rest and refreshment
 - a. **Psalms 23:2-3** (ESV) — 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.
 - b. 3 He restores my soul...
 - 2. Sheep need to be led in order to stay on the path

- a. **Psalm 23:3** (ESV) — 3 He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.
- 3. Sheep need to have hope and comfort – the hope and comfort that only a shepherd can provide
 - a. **Psalm 23:4** (ESV) — 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- 4. Sheep need protection from evil
 - a. **Psalm 23:5** (ESV) — 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
- 5. But above all, sheep need to be in the presence of the shepherd
 - a. **Psalm 23:6** (ESV) — 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.
- F. And then, of course, sheep need to be fed
 - 1. That’s what Jesus tells Peter he must do for Jesus’ sheep
 - a. In Jesus’ three-fold restoration of Peter following the resurrection, which takes Peter back to his three-fold denial of Jesus
 - b. Jesus tells Peter that if he loves Jesus, he will feed Jesus’ lambs, feed Jesus’ sheep
 - 2. And of course, that doesn’t involve a literal feeding – like with oats or grain or something
 - a. That’s the feeding of the Word of God
 - b. “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (**Deuteronomy 8.3, Matthew 4.4**)

IV. **Who is the Chief Shepherd?**

- A. So then, who is the Shepherd?
 - 1. Well, we’ve already seen the answer to that question, haven’t we?
 - a. Our shepherd is Jesus
 - b. And there are a number of ways His shepherding of us is expressed
- B. Jesus says that He is the **Door of the Sheep**
 - 1. **John 10:7** (ESV) —
 - a. 7 So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.”
 - 2. **John 10:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.”
 - 3. Jesus is talking about a certain kind of sheep pen – the kind of sheep pen which is out in the country
 - a. Where might only be an enclosure defined by a pile of rocks with only one space for the sheep to come in and out
 - b. In which only one shepherd’s sheep could spend the night
 - c. And the shepherd would lay down in the entrance of the sheep pen

- d. Only allowing his own sheep to enter, and not letting any of his sheep to wander out
 - C. And then Jesus says that He is the **Good Shepherd**
 - 1. **John 10:14–15** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,
 - b. 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”
 - D. And as Jesus is the Good Shepherd, He is the shepherd of more than one sheepfold, which He will bring together into one flock
 - 1. **John 10:16** (ESV) —
 - a. 16 “And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.
 - b. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”
 - E. But Jesus is not just the Good Shepherd, He is the **Great Shepherd**
 - 1. **Hebrews 13:20** (ESV) —
 - a. 20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep...
 - 2. He is not just good, but great!
 - F. And finally, Jesus is not just the good shepherd, not just the great shepherd
 - 1. He is the **Chief Shepherd**
 - 2. **1 Peter 5:4** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
 - 3. Chief Shepherd = archipoimen (Gk)
 - a. Arch = head, or chief, or first
 - b. Archbishop – the chief, or head bishop
 - c. Poimen = shepherd
 - 4. Jesus, more than anyone else, is the **Overseer of your souls** (**1 Peter 2.25**)
 - a. He cares your souls!
 - b. He cares for your spirits, for your minds, for your hearts – even for your bodies!
 - G. So Jesus is the shepherd, the good shepherd, the great shepherd, and the chief shepherd
- V. **Who are the Undershepherds**
- A. Now, if Jesus is the chief shepherd – the head shepherd – that implies that there are other shepherds
 - 1. That there are undershepherds
 - 2. And who, then, are the undershepherds
 - B. First of all, according to the NT, **the apostles were shepherds**
 - 1. Most notably was Peter – to whom Jesus gave the responsibility of feeding the sheep
 - 2. But Peter was not alone in this responsibility

- a. All the apostles had the responsibility to care for the fledgling NT church
 - b. They cared for the body of Christ; they fed the body through the preaching and teaching of the word
- C. But not only that, **pastors were called to shepherd** the flock
- 1. **Ephesians 4:11** (ESV) — 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers...
 - a. Shepherds = pastors in other translations
 - b. **Shepherds, pastors = poimen (Gk)**
 - 2. And the primary way pastors do their shepherding is by teaching
 - a. In fact, the Greek construction in Ephesians 4.11 is “pastor-teacher” or “shepherd-teacher”
 - b. **Poimen-didaskalos (Gk)**
 - 3. That’s why I do what I do
 - a. Whatever else you think a pastor is supposed to do, feeding the sheep is the primary task of the pastor
 - b. And it is my primary responsibility
 - 4. And by the way – my primary responsibility is to provide good, solid, nutritious food
 - a. Yes, I might throw in a little ice cream every now and then
 - b. But you can be assured that you’re going to get meat and potatoes and vegetables when you come in here
 - c. You can’t survive on sweets and candy all the time
 - d. That’s why you have to eat “propitiation” every now and then
 - e. Just think of it as spinach, or broccoli
- D. But according to the NT, pastors weren’t to do all the shepherding themselves
- 1. The elders of the local church were also called on to help pastor the church, to shepherd the flock
 - 2. **1 Peter 5:1–3** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 So I exhort the elders among you,
 - b. as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ,
 - c. as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:
 - d. 2 **shepherd the flock of God that is among you,**
 - e. exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you;
 - f. not for shameful gain, but eagerly;
 - g. 3 not domineering over those in your charge,
 - h. but being examples to the flock.
 - 3. There is so much to unpack in these verses – and we regularly call attention to it with our elders
 - a. But shepherding is the primary responsibility of the elders of the local church
 - b. Overseeing the preaching and teaching ministries – including the worship services, the classes and Bible studies, the ordinances like baptism and the Lord’s Supper, the small groups

- c. That is what the elders are called upon to do!
 - 4. The elders are called to be examples to the flock
 - a. That they need to be spiritually qualified to be elders according to the qualifications addressed in passages like 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1
 - b. That, while not perfect men, they are men of God
 - c. Men worth emulating by their speech and conduct
- E. We at TVC are committed to the shepherding ministry of the elders
 - 1. It's part of our DNA
 - a. Part of the way we value the Body of Christ
 - b. Part of the way we build a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope
 - 2. And we do that in two ways
 - a. We have a board of **Governing Elders** who meet once each month and consider the spiritual ministries of TVC
 - b. And we have another group of **Shepherding Elders** who assist the Governing Elders in caring for the members of our congregation
- F. And let me tell you – you are very fortunate!
 - 1. We have a number of spiritually qualified people, many of whom have served as pastors and elders in other churches
 - a. Who care deeply about the church and about this local church – TVC
 - b. And who care about each one of you
 - 2. And they are all assigned people
 - a. Often they are assigned because they have ongoing relationships with those to whom they are assigned
 - b. But they are assigned people for whom they are committed to pray for regularly
 - c. And to contact from time to time to see how you're doing
 - 3. And if additional contact is appropriate by our pastoral staff, they will make contact with Pastor Don or me or with Tim or with Garth or one of the other assistant chaplains if they find themselves in one of the health care facilities
- G. I would never want to be a member of a church without someone like that praying for me
 - 1. Caring about me
 - 2. Checking on me from time to time
- H. It's a responsibility that the Bible gives to the elders of a local church
 - 1. There are certainly others who assist in this kind of caring
 - a. Sometimes the wives of elders
 - b. Often the deaconesses who visit women who are in Larsen
 - c. The assistant chaplains who care for residents in the ALF's
 - 2. But ultimately, the elders are called to shepherd the flock of God

VI. **What are the Responsibilities of the Sheep?**

- A. Now we've said a lot about shepherds and elders as shepherds
 - 1. But what about sheep?
 - a. What responsibilities do sheep have?
- B. Since our DNA involves our valuing the Word of God
 - 1. Let's see what the Word says
 - 2. In this passage in 1 Peter 5, it describes the responsibility of the sheep
 - a. The sheep are contrasted with the elders
 - b. They are "those who are younger"
 - c. So – take that as a compliment!
- C. **1 Peter 5:5–11** (ESV) —
 - 1. 5 Likewise, you who are younger,
 - a. be subject to the elders.
 - b. [hupotasso – a military term of submission to authority]
 - c. [place yourself *under* the elders]
 - d. [respond to their call]
 - 2. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
 - a. 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,
 - b. [You're sheep – you need shepherds; pretending you don't is not humble!]
 - 3. 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.
 - 4. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
 - a. [Know where the ditches are; avoid them!]
 - 5. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.
 - a. [You're not alone in your suffering; you're in a fellowship of suffering with brothers and sisters all around the world]
 - 6. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.
 - 7. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- D. So yes! Sheep have responsibilities
 - 1. To be willing to be shepherded
 - 2. If you're not already a member of TVC...
 - a. Is this where you're being fed?
 - b. Is this where people care for your souls?
 - c. What are you waiting for?
 - 3. But even if you're not a member, you can still have a shepherd
 - a. Just see Pastor Don and he'll connect you with one
 - b. And if you know an elder and want to get connected with one you know, let Pastor Don know that and he'll make that happen
 - 4. Be willing to be shepherded

VII. Conclusion

- A. Groucho Marx used to say, “I would never join an organization that would have me as a member”
 - 1. It’s a good punch line
 - a. A little self-deprecating humor
- B. But no!
 - 1. The local church is the opposite
- C. I say, “I would never join a church that did not have someone who cared enough for my soul that they prayed for me and connected with me”
 - 1. This is that church
 - 2. And it’s part of our DNA