

Christ in 04 in Isaiah

by Jim Flanigan

The sermon explores the significance of Isaiah as a major prophet and its focus on Christ, highlighting the importance of following Christ's example of a ministry of quietness and care for the weak.

Duration: 49:20

Scripture: Isaiah 40:11, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 42:1

Topics: "Christ's Ministry", "Shepherd's Role"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the ministry of the Lord Jesus as a shepherd. He refers to Isaiah 40:11, which describes the shepherd's role in gathering and caring for the flock. The speaker also draws parallels between the shepherd's ministry and the High Priest's ministry, both of which involve carrying burdens for the people of God. Additionally, the speaker encourages the audience to not long for an easier time or place of service, but to recognize that the Lord Jesus ministered in various locations and circumstances. The sermon emphasizes the comforting and strengthening nature of God's ministry to His people.

Transcript

Now tonight, please, we want to turn to the prophets, and to one prophet in particular, and that is the prophet Isaiah. And I'd like to read from three consecutive chapters, from chapter 40, 41, and 42, just a very brief reading from each of these chapters, the prophecy of Isaiah. Chapter 40, and reading that lovely verse 11, verse 11.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with him. The ministry of the shepherd, a fourfold ministry. Now chapter 41, please, and verse 10.

Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

And from chapter 42, and beginning at verse 1. Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighted. I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law.

Now the Lord will bless that reading from his work. Now I think it might have been Luther who said of the prophecy of Isaiah, this is not a prophecy, methinks he said this is a gospel. And I think of course that many of us would agree with Luther.

Not only is this a gospel, it seems almost to have been written looking back upon the life and ministry of the Lord, but in fact as brethren often point out, this prophecy of Isaiah is really a whole bible. I think it has often been made very clear that there is a very close similarity between the prophecy of Isaiah and the whole of our bible. So much so that it has been called the bible in miniature.

And if for the sake of those that are younger, I might just point out again one or two of these similarities between Isaiah and the whole of our bible. The first obvious thing of course is that there are 66 chapters, and that against the 66 books that we have in our bible. The second thing is that the bible like Isaiah, or should I say Isaiah like our bible, begins with a terrible story of ruin.

And there is a most awful description there of the ruin of the nation, the terrible state of the nation in chapter 1. And it is very like the story of man's fall way back in the early chapters of Genesis. So Isaiah begins as does our bible with the story of ruin. But immediately after the ruin of the book of Genesis is introduced, right at the very same time in the very same garden, there is then the promise of a remedy.

The redeemer is promised. And along with the ruin, there comes the offer of redemption. And it seems that in Isaiah it is exactly the same.

No sooner is that portion finished, which tells us of the terrible state of the nation, but immediately then we have that lovely invitation, come now and let us reason together. And the promise of pardon and forgiveness of sins. So Isaiah, like our bible, begins not only with ruin, but it begins with the promise of remedy as well.

When you come to the end of Isaiah, the story is exactly the same. Because our bible ends, as you know, with a new heaven and a new earth, and it ends with, you might say, a man and his bride in the paradise. Indeed it ends almost as it begins, and the book of Isaiah is the very same.

When you come to the end chapters of Isaiah, you are occupied again with the new heavens and the new earth, and with glory that is yet to come. And when we line that up, of course, with the book of Revelation, it is the man and his redeemed bride, and they are enjoying the paradise. So Isaiah not only has the same chapters as our bible has books, but it begins and ends in exactly the same way as our bible.

Now there is another interesting thing. You know, of course, that our bible is divided into two sets of writings, and in the first batch of writings we have 39 books of the Old Testament, the old covenant writings we call them. And in the New Testament then we have 27 books, 39 and 27 making up the 66.

Now I think that it is not at all artificial that even a casual reader of the book of Isaiah will see that there is a very definite break at the end of chapter 39. And when you come to chapter 40, you begin that last section of 27 chapters, there is a very natural break between 39 and 40, and so really, Isaiah is divided exactly the same as is our bible. Now when you come to our New Testament, you know, of course, that the Old Testament is looking forward to the new, and when you come into the New Testament, it seems that for

the early part of it, everything is leading on to Calvary.

And then after Calvary, in the New Testament you begin to look back, and you find that everything now is based upon Calvary. Everything afterwards is the fruits of the cross, and the early parts of each gospel is leading up to the cross. Now when you come to the second part of Isaiah, to the last 27 chapters, you find that the first 27 of those are looking forward actually to something, to someone who is coming.

And when you go to the latter part of that 27 chapter section, you find that those are occupied with blessings, and they seem somehow to be looking back, like as is the rest of the New Testament. Now if you take 27 chapters, and if you take the first half of them looking forward, and the last part looking back, you arrive at the central chapter. And the central chapter of the last 27 of Isaiah is the lovely chapter 53.

It is right in the very heart of that second section, and it seems as if that is just like the Calvary that is right in the very heart of the New Testament. Now I'm sure that my brethren could go on and on, showing that there is indeed a very close similarity between the book of Isaiah and the whole of our Bible. So that makes it a very, very important, a very central and interesting book.

And it is of course, as we say, one of the major prophets. Now when we say the major prophets and the minor prophets, we have no thought at all of inferiority, or of one prophet being more important than another. That's not in our mind at all.

But we think of course of the big books. We think of Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel, and these big books, and these are called the major prophets because they are the biggest prophecies. But when you go to the others then, we refer to the book of the twelve prophets, the minor prophets we talk about, and not that they are inferior in any way, but they are just lesser as far as quantity is concerned.

They are all little books, some of them you could hardly find them when you go to look for a chapter. Well, in all of these prophecies I think we can find the Lord Jesus, and out of all of them perhaps Isaiah is the best known. I trust that when we look for him this evening, in these chapters of Isaiah, that there might be an encouragement to go back to it again, and to look for him in other chapters too.

And then having found him in this prophecy, to see that he is in other prophets too, and Zachariah is full of Christ. And so of course is the book of Daniel. And if you come across difficult things that you don't understand, well enjoy the things that you do understand.

And it was the quaint John Bunyan who said once that nobody throws away the apple just because there is a core. You eat what you can, what you can't, well just set it to the one side anyway. And I think you will find that you go along enjoying the Bible, and don't get stuck and get terribly depressed because there are parts of it that you don't understand.

Enjoy what you can, and keep looking for the Lord Jesus, and this is the interesting way of course to read and to study our Bible. Now I found some time ago a very interesting exercise to go through the book of Isaiah, and I'm not going to do this tonight, but to go through the book of Isaiah and to find Christ in every chapter, and that's lovely. You'll find him sometimes very directly and explicitly referred to, sometimes in a concealed way you can find his ministry or the greatness of his person, but I think that somehow, somehow you will find Christ in every chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah.

You'll find of course that way back at the beginning, in all his greatness he is presented as the sovereign. He's brought out so many times as the sovereign, as the king if you like, and very, very often right through

the prophecy that is how he is seen, but especially at the beginning and at the end you'll find the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus is brought out. And then of course what a wonderful thing to find that he who is the sovereign of the skies in the early chapters before very long he becomes the son of the virgin, and that's lovely to see that one who is so great and all his sovereignty has now come right down and still retaining his sovereignty he becomes the son of the virgin in a very early chapter in the prophecy of Isaiah.

But then we read on a little bit and we discover that he's not only the son of the virgin but his character and his person is guarded and before very many verses follow, many, many chapters follow, we see him now in chapter nine as the son of the father. And if unto us a child is born as the son of the virgin, well unto us the son is given who is the son of the father and we find his greatness and his deity and his glory are constantly being guarded. When you come over a little bit more you'll find him in an interesting title he's called the stem of Jesse.

He's springing out as it were a stem out of the root of Jesse. And then in another chapter you'll find that he is the strength and the song and the salvation of his people and yet another chapter he is our shadow from the heat he's called that and in another chapter he becomes the scholar and he's learning in the school of God as a perfect man and yet another very well-known passage he is the stone or the rock if you like and so you can go on and on and you find the Lord Jesus in every chapter some way presented in this lovely prophecy of Isaiah. Now what we have done or what we want to do this evening is to look at him in these three consecutive portions that we have read chapters 40, 41 and 42.

But I want to look at them in reverse order and to see the Lord Jesus as the servant of Jehovah as the solace of his people and as the shepherd of the sheep or the shepherd of his flock and the shepherd ministry and servant character and this solace ministry for his people. I think these are three delightful aspects of the person of the Lord Jesus and I hope that we are drawn nearer into a deeper appreciation of him this evening as we look at him in the prophets. Now this lovely portion in Isaiah 42 is very very often quoted our brethren quote these verses so very often when they are leading us in worship and twice in the prophecy of Isaiah we are exhorted behold my servant we get those words twice in the book of Isaiah.

Now when I read these words just a very blunt and unheralded no preliminaries just a very quick exhortation to behold my servant there is one little thing that never ceases to appeal to me and amaze me. You think of the multitude of servants that Jehovah has had even without leaving our bible you think of the host of servants that there are here. You go all the way back to the early days and you think of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and you think of Joseph and you come on to Moses and he was distinctly called Moses my servant and you think of Daniel and you think of some of these other great men David and Solomon and men that really served Jehovah and some of them that served them well to a remarkable degree.

But what never ceases to appeal to my heart is this that when we read such suddenly behold my servant there is no believer ever stops and asks the question and says Lord which of your servants do you mean? Nobody ever asks that question because it seems that eventually there is only but one servant really who was worthy of contemplation and we gladly tonight turn away from all the others choice as they may be and for a little while we are occupied with the perfect servant we are occupied this evening with a servant of whom it is said that he never failed. Now this servant ministry of the Lord Jesus is introduced here and there are three verses verses two and three and four which are all very beautiful verses but I find another rather interesting thing that very often I say to my brethren what does that verse mean and it's amazing really how many there are who agree that this vocabulary is lovely that the words are very beautiful but

when it comes to interpreting what they mean well it's amazing how many brethren are not just quite sure. I want to suggest this evening what I think they mean but then after all that you might not agree with it but at any rate I hope that you'll have a little look at these lovely verses and see these glories of the servant as we have them in these in these early parts of chapter 42.

Now the first problem is this it says he shall not cry nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street well what does that mean is there anything wrong with that because when you go further down the chapter to verse 11 it says let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice so there can't be anything wrong in some sense with that when the cities are encouraged to lift up their voice indeed the verse goes on to say let them shout let the inhabitants of the rock sing and let them shout so we're encouraged not only to lift up the voice but encouraged actually to shout but of the messiah it is said he shall not cry nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street and then the problem becomes more complicated because I come down to verse 13 and I read there he

shall cry yea he shall roar prevailing against his enemies so the day is coming when he is going to cry and therefore what does this mean he shall not cry if in verse 13 I read he shall cry and so the problem increases and of course there is an answer and a reason for but just to complicate it a little bit more we read that verse again he shall not cry nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street and then I go to read in the gospels and when I follow the ministry of the lord in the gospels I find that constantly he's preaching to the multitudes and again and again I read he cried and said and he certainly did lift up his voice and I'm sure that he spoke distinctly and plainly and the people heard and what then does this mean he shall not cry nor lift up nor cause his voice to

be heard in the street when in fact in some senses he did cry and he did lift up his voice and he did cause his voice to be heard in the street and yet this verse distinctly says that he shall not therefore we have to inquire what is the and a rather beautiful verse and what I take it to mean of course is that it is a ministry of quietness that is connected with the lord jesus and if you want to find what this verse means this crying and lifting up the voice and causing it to be heard in the street I suggest that you've got to go to some places where this is seen to be the very cheapest form of publicity and of advertising that is shouting to make yourself heard now some of you visit London and if you visit London and you are familiar with Burdick Street you'll know that every morning

there is a very very busy and a very noisy market goes on at Burdick Street a very intriguing place and a very interesting place to spend an hour but what happens is this you see you go to this barrel or this stall here and you find this fellow he's got something for sale and the way he advertises is of course he's not interested in the times or the newspapers he's not interested in that form of advertising what he does is this he stands at his barrel and he accosts everybody that's passing and he shouts out loudly what he has and very very loudly he tells you the value that he has to offer now you begin perhaps you stop to listen to him and then you find you're having difficulty because here's a barrel right next to his pushed up tight and he's got the same kind of goods but he's

promising something better so what does he do he tries to out shout this fellow here you see and then you go along a little bit further and you find someone else trying to shout even louder than they are and it is I put it to you the very cheapest form of publicity that you shout to attract attention to make people hear you and come across to see what you've got it is the very cheapest and crudest and most primitive form of publicity now messiah was never guilty of that oh what a lovely thing to turn to the gospels and especially to the gospel of the servant which is the gospel by mark and before you leave that first chapter I think you

find that he tells the demons he tells men he tells a leper he tells them look he says don't tell don't tell go your way when the demons start to shout as

to who he was he forbade them to shout when that leper was healed he says go your way go your way go quietly and he sent them quietly on his way and he told the disciples tell no man and our lord jesus had nothing to do with cheap publicity the perfect servant of god was not interested in crying or shouting or lifting up his voice to attract people to him people will be attracted by his moral features they'll be attracted by what he is they'll be attracted by the lovely life that he lives eventually and that will please god but with cheap publicity the servant of jehovah will have nothing to do it is a ministry of quietness and of course the very practical side of it is this that in days of cheap publicity when the work of the lord is being associated with cheap publicity the lord help us

to follow the example of the perfect servant and to refuse to have anything to do with publicity of a cheap and and of a crude kind and the lord help us that we shall maintain the dignity of gospel preaching and the dignity of the ministry and if we maintain that we are following closely the pattern of the messiah jehovah's perfect servant had a ministry of quietness and would not not be associated with cheap publicity now that is as i see the meaning of that verse and it is the quiet ministry the unassuming ministry the unpretentious ministry of the lord jesus that is in view now you come to the next verse and again it's a problem verse a bruised reed shall he not break lovely language and beautiful vocabulary the smoking flax shall he not quench but what exactly does this mean what is

this bruised reed that he's not going to break and what does this mean the smoking flax that he's not going to quench again i put to you as i see it and i know that many others see it like this but there are some who don't and i can only make the suggestion as to what the bruised reed really is i think that you've got the picture perhaps an eastern scene and you imagine uh one of these little fellows that's sitting in the midst of a flock and he's very quietly watching the flock well some of these lads you know they had many hours on their hands and to while away the time as they sat while the flock was very quietly grazing all about they had a very favorite pastime and i i think indeed you'll find them doing it yet in parts of the east they take a reed they cut it down if it's hollow

that's good if it's not they'll hollow it out just a little reed and then very skillfully with a sharp blade scalpel-like they begin to cut little holes along this reed and in a very very short time they have one of the most primitive forms of musical instrument and you've probably seen pictures of them and they're sitting there among the flock and as the flock are quietly grazing this little fellow is sitting playing his little instrument that he has made himself but now something calls his attention and he rises to go to it and in the process he perhaps drops his reed or he bruises it on the way perhaps he lets it fall and it gets crushed as he comes back again or he puts his foot on it or somewhere or other but this reed gets bruised now tell me what would you do well it would seem to

me that the simplest thing and the logical natural thing would be to say well it's of no value it's a reed you know and it's bruised now and it's not playing the tune like it used to and it's just no use anymore so what you do you cast it to the one side there's plenty more and in a little while you'll have another one as good as that one was just cast it to the one side break it and leave it and throw it away you see but of our Lord Jesus it is said a bruised reed shall he not break in other words i think what it is saying is that he will not discard what men would discard but rather he will try to mend and repair and to restore and to bring back again to its original use and ministry what now is bruised and what is now not playing the tune like it used to play or for which it was

intended the Lord Jesus will not dispose of what men would dispose of he will not discard what we would discard he will not break the bruised reed and he'll not quench the smoking flax now the smoking flax is of course just a wick in a lamp and here it is and for a while it burns brightly but then something goes wrong and it begins to smoke and smolder and it's not burning like it was intended to burn the flame's not clear and it's not doing its ministry as it was intended so what do you do well it's only a piece of flax quench it and throw it away and get another it's as simple as that and i suppose that is what we would do now of the savior that said that the bruised reed he not break like we would and the smoking flax the smoldering wick he'll not quench it like we would quench it but

rather it is a ministry of restoration a ministry of mending and in all of that i think you might say that it is a ministry of gentleness when he tries to repair and restore and to bring back to a previous ministry those that by some means or other have become bruised and smoldering and not what they used to be now what a lovely example then is this for us how quick how quickly we would dispose of brethren now i know of course that never at any time and the young believer will know this never never at any time is the security of the believer ever in question that's not not in question that's not for negotiation and not for discussion at all our security is never ever in question but it is possible sometimes in spite of all the ministry of the lord it is possible that one might fall and

resist attempts perhaps to restoration and i know that as far as service is concerned that sometimes we may become castaways and the apostle paul he dreaded that and he feared that that having preached to others himself in service might become a castaway now that in no sense entertains any doubt about the security but rather as far as service and ministry is concerned the man might become a castaway nevertheless a man might well be restored again to assembly fellowship and he might be restored to a happy state among the lord's people but still never be fit again for the public eye i think that perhaps there may be things that will disqualify a man for life from public service that it would not be for the good of the testimony of the assembly for that man again to be involved in a public

ministry that might well be but the lord jesus wherever it is at all feasible and possible he will not discard he will not break the bruised reed and he'll not quench the smoking flax but he'll do what can be done to restore and if it's possible to restore to the original ministry then that of course is very good but that is not always possible when i think of it i sometimes use the illustration i have one of these little drawers at home you know where you keep all sorts of little bits and pieces nearly everybody has a little drawer like that and every now and again of course it needs a bit of tidying and i go through these items and i think of one particular item that's there it's an old pen and i don't know how many times i i have made up my mind that i must throw it out you see and

it's no good hasn't hasn't worked properly for years won't write at all not at all hardly sign your name with it now but it it blots or else it won't write at all it just won't work and it's been like that for years and so i take it i've tried my best i i've done all sorts of things with it but no it won't write won't won't won't function properly at all and i take this pen in my hand and and somehow intelligence says throw it out throw it out you see and i'm about to throw it out and then i have a look at it and i think of where i got it i remember the circumstances by which it became mine and then i think of letters that i wrote with it and i think of things that i signed with it and i have another look at it and i say it's mine and i put it back in the drawer and it's there yet but you

see it's a castaway it will never again be any use in ministry in service but still it's mine and i can't part with it and the lord jesus remembers that and if the failure the sin on our part has not been of such a nature that

it precludes public ministry then the lord jesus will not quench the smoking flax and he'll not break the bruised reed he'll not just quickly lightly discard and find another but he will restore repair he will refresh revive and he'll bring us back he will not discard as men discard it's a ministry of gentleness and i trust that we follow his example and that we be gentle with those that have fallen by the way now this other lovely verse of course is very clear if there is a ministry of quietness in that he refuses this cheap publicity and if there is a ministry of

gentleness where he not quickly discard but gently try to restore then there is a ministry of steadfastness and in the ministry of steadfastness it is said of the lord jesus he shall not fail how lovely is that he shall not fail and it doesn't matter where you find him it doesn't matter what he's doing it doesn't matter how he is or where he is you can write across the gospels wherever you find him he shall not fail and it is a ministry of steadfastness unfailing steadfastness that applies only to the perfect servant but isn't it an instance even of that same gentleness that we've been talking about that the man who was chosen to write the gospel of the perfect servant was himself a failing servant because john mark the servant who went back is the one who was chosen to write the story

of the perfect servant that is a little evidence of that same gentleness that we've been speaking about and as you go to the gospel by mark you look for the lord jesus in all of those circumstances and what a variety of circumstances as there are and every time you find him you just shake your head and say he shall not fail it doesn't matter what he's doing to whom he's ministering what kind of ministry it is it doesn't matter he shall not fail and it's a ministry of steadfastness all the way through now we sometimes have a way of reasoning at least i have i find others have too sometimes we think it would have been nice to have lived in another age and we think how easy things must have been then we think sometimes it would have been nice perhaps to have been called to serve in another

part how easy things are in such and such a country compared to another country and very often we think if only we had lived at a different time in a different place things would have been so much easier i ask you sometime in quietness to read down the first chapter of mark's gospel and to see the variety of places where the lord jesus ministered the first place you'll find him standing is in the river in the river bed of jordan he leaves the river and he goes to the desert he comes from the desert right into the semigog from there he goes to the seashore from there he goes into a home from the home he comes to the city from the city he goes out again to the wilderness and you'll find that in such a variety of places the perfect servant is found even before you leave the opening chapter

and it seems to me that it didn't matter to him where he was or what his time wherever he is whatever is to be done and whatever the circumstances he shall not fail and the perfect servant delights the heart of god a ministry of steadfastness now in that connection there's another very important principle and very interesting too so far as i know the lord jesus never ever took orders from men now nobody ever served men like he did nobody ever served men like the savior did nobody ever was as busy as he was in the service of men and how constantly is he teaching and preaching and healing and comforting and moving in and out amongst men so much so that maybe that's what that little verse means the son of man hath not where to lay his head that he seemed to be the unresting servant of

jehovah i repeat no one ever served men like he did but he never ever took orders from men why was that because he was the servant of jehovah what an important principle is that that the lord jesus has the glory of jehovah and of his father in view and he doesn't ever take orders from men nevertheless he serves men very busily but he is always the servant of jehovah the lord help us that while we must consider our

brethren and while we must work in fellowship and try our best to be in harmony with them nevertheless to remember that ultimately our responsibility is to the lord and if you remembered that about me and if i remembered that about you and if you and i remembered that about ourselves what problems would never arise if only we remembered that every man was the lord's servant and

as the apostle says ye serve the lord christ and our responsibility ultimately is to him so the ministry of the servant and it's a ministry of quietness of gentleness and of steadfastness and if you want three more delightful words to put around the ministry of that servant you can say that it was a ministry of faithfulness it was a ministry marked by fruitfulness and it was a ministry marked by fragrance and those three things characterize all of the days of the ministry of the lord jesus so he is the perfect servant of jehovah now how interesting then to turn back and to hear him say fear thou not for i am with thee perhaps now we turn to an aspect of his ministry that might be more like priesthood and we hear the savior say be not dismayed i will strengthen thee yea i will help thee i

will uphold thee you see what we read of him was behold my servant says god whom i uphold and now we hear the savior say to us i will strengthen thee yea i will help thee yea i will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness and our time runs out but there i think we might see and write down this chapter we can see a ministry of solace of comfort for his people and what what a great uh very necessary a ministry is that the ministry of the comfort of the savior and tremendous things he does when you go further down this chapter you hear israel and being referred to in verse 14 as thou worm jacob fear not thou worm jacob what weakness is this that old jacob is seen to be like a worm and yet when you come to the very next verse he says thou shalt thrash the mountains imagine a worm

thrashing mountains and beating them small but you see everything is possible when he says i will strengthen i will help thee i will uphold thee and it's a ministry of solace for his people now because of time we leave that chapter and we come back again then to chapter 40 and here is the ministry continuing of the lord jesus but now we see it to be a shepherding type of ministry and in this lovely verse very very simply and very obviously there is a fourfold ministry and isn't it really very like the ministry that we found the other evening in connection with the high priest we found the high priest aaron carrying four burdens for the people of god and it might be that here is that very same ministry just in another form presented to us the fourfold ministry of the shepherd in verse 11

now it is a ministry that gathers the people of god together he shall gather the lambs with his arm anything that divides i think we might say categorically is of the devil now i know that of course there is such a thing as separation but we must be very careful to distinguish between separation and division between separation from what is evil and the dividing of god's people we must be very very careful to distinguish between those two things the ministry of the shepherd here is a ministry that gathers together and this ministry of gathering how does he do it because you see he's in heaven and we're on earth how then does a shepherd in the glory accomplish a gathering together of the lambs and the sheep if he is in the glory and the flock is on earth well doesn't this then involve the

responsibility of under shepherds because in another epistle we read that he is the chief shepherd and if he is the chief shepherd then it follows that there are those who are under shepherds and they need all our prayers those who shepherd the flock when the apostle addressed the elders you remember on that occasion this is what he urged them that they feed the flock they were shepherds in the midst of the flock and when you go of course to john 21 you get the very same thing again and in that chapter you get an important principle that the very basis the basic requirement or qualification for shepherding the lord's

people is love to christ love us by me and peter acknowledges thou knowest that i love thee and with that basic requirement love to christ then he is encouraged to feed and

tend and care for the lambs and for the flock now there is a desperate need for shepherds as you know i couldn't i suppose over overestimate i couldn't over emphasize the desperate need that there is for shepherds among the launch people and they need our prayers and they need our sympathy and they need our help they have a very difficult task which is not just involved of course uh maybe uh an hour or two a in the hall here oh no this is a ministry relay where if the shepherd has a real shepherd heart and is involved with the flock it's i suppose uh 24 hours a day he's on call is the shepherd with the shepherd heart now these are the men then that accomplish this ministry for the chief shepherd and with the lord jesus working through the under shepherds it is a ministry of gathering

together the lord help us that we shall never be uh responsible for scattering the flock but that we as best we can gather the flock and keep gathering them together so the shepherd ministry is a ministry that gathers now another thing it does it says he carries them he shall carry them in his bosom and here is a ministry that carries in comfort again carrying the people of god along and you notice too that it's the lambs here that are being carried in his bosom when you go over to another chapter in isaiah you find that there it says that even to whorehead even to whore hairs whorehead will i carry you so that right to the very end he's carrying and i suppose that there are two types of persons physically physically two kinds of people that need a lot of care and a lot of attention one

is the very young and the other is the very old and physically i'm speaking of in family life the very young and the very old they need a lot of gentleness and a lot of care and it might be that in both cases you know they do things that well in some senses you can't very harshly blame them and it might well be that the things even which you might say they're not responsible they're very young and they're very old they physically need a lot of care and i think it's the very same in spiritual things that we need certainly to tend carefully the lambs in the flock and then there are others of course and they have gone on for a long time and they get a little bit impatient and the late mr tom ray said to me he said you know old age entitles you to be belligerent that's what he thought anyway

he said and you know he said i'm very impatient sometimes i don't know that he was but well he could have been a little bit abrupt i suppose and there he was and he constantly bemoaned it and i think more than once he wrote letters of apology to me for little things that he had said in his abruptness but that's the kind of good man that mr ray was well there you are the young here are being carried on the bosom of the shepherd and then when you go to the other end the old even the whorehead will i carry you and the shepherd cares for the young and he cares for the old and then bringing them both together it says and shall gently lead those that are with young now that doesn't mean as it appears to mean it doesn't mean those that are carrying their young doesn't mean that it means shall

gently lead those that have young with them young are walking along with them by the side of them and he shall gently lead so it's a ministry that gathers it's a ministry that carries and it's a ministry that leads along now and gently leads those that are with young now why the gentleness required again because the young sometimes can't keep the pace but notice too the important principle that at least the young are with the old and that is a very important principle we live in days when there is a great deal of emphasis on youth and i mustn't be hypocritical i speak to young people and at young people's meetings but i keep saying that it is not the ideal at all not the ideal the ideal is when young and old can meet together and together listen to the ministry of the word and the young

understanding as much as they as they can from a ministry that might sometimes be suited to them even when the old are there that is the ideal when the old but we must remember that there are young and when the young are there well then the flock has got to go gently you've got just can't go racing on you know and leaving the young like as if it were the survival of the fittest you've got to remember that the young are here and they need to be cared for and treated gently and i suppose that we have lost some young because we have treated them rather roughly i trust the lord will help us to see that we are responsible for carrying out the shepherd ministry in the midst of the flock and it's a ministry that gathers a ministry that carries and it's a ministry that gently leads all of the

flock both young and old together now the first ministry that's mentioned we have left out and it is the ministry of feeding he shall feed his flock like a shepherd now how much we need to be fed how much we need the ministry of god's word and that's the only thing and perhaps an expository ministry of god's word is the only thing that will make us grow nice to get together and to sing choruses and hymns and and to talk and enjoy things together but in the end the only thing that will help the lord's people grow is the expository ministry of the word of god a teaching ministry is the only thing that will help us and i trust that we keep that in mind too and that remembering that there are young here young with us all the time at every meeting that we somehow break the bread small as we

say so that the young can understand so here is a lovely shepherd ministry then and he gathers and carries and leads and feeds and how does he do it he does it through the ministry of the under shepherds and it is a great privilege to be working together with him and under him and trying to accomplish on earth his purpose for his people so isaiah is filled with christ and isaiah is but a typical prophet and the prophets are filled with the person of the lord jesus right here in the very heart of isaiah's prophecy we have a ministry of a perfect servant we have a solace for the afflicted and the sorrowing and we have a shepherd ministry for the lambs and the sheep of the flock alike here is just a little a little look at the greatness of the lord jesus in this lovely prophecy i trust that

you will get again yourself through this prophecy of isaiah and search for christ in it and saturate your soul in the greatness of this person you'll not be disappointed when you look for christ in the prophecy of isaiah may the lord bless our meditation

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