

# Models of Ministry

by John Stott

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*This sermon delves into the role of pastors and Christian leaders, emphasizing humility, servanthood, stewardship of God's revelation, willingness to endure suffering for Christ, and the importance of being like fathers and mothers to the church family. It challenges leaders to embody the humility and gentleness of Christ in their ministry, contrasting it with autocracy and the need for affection and love towards the congregation.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 4:1, 1 Corinthians 4:2, 1 Corinthians 4:10, 1 Corinthians 4:15, Matthew 23:9, 1 Thessalonians 2:7, James 4:6

**Topics:** "Humility in Leadership", "Servanthood in Ministry"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Well, I would like to thank you for your kindness to me during these days. I've met many new friends and renewed fellowship with old ones and I found in the Keswick Convention there is an amazing warmth of love and support and fellowship, for which we who are privileged speakers on the platform are deeply grateful. So thank you so much.

Well our topic as you've been reminded today is models of ministry. It's our fifth Corinthian study, our text is 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and you'll find the outline on page 33 of your convention program. Well, there is much contemporary confusion today about the nature of the pastoral ministry.

What are clergy, if I may use that word? Are they primarily priests, presbyters, pastors, prophets, preachers or psychotherapists? Are they administrators, facilitators, managers, social workers, liturgists or evangelists? There are many options to choose from and this uncertainty is by no means new. Throughout its long history the church has oscillated between two opposite extremes, clericalism on the one hand and anti-clericalism on the other. Clericalism puts clergy on a pedestal and almost worships them.

Anti-clericalism knocks them off their pedestal and declares them largely redundant. Now, now that many churches throughout the world have recovered the Pauline doctrine of the every member ministry of the

body of Christ, radical questions are being asked. Are clergy or other kinds of pastoral leaders, are they necessary any longer? Are they not superfluous? Wouldn't the church be healthier without them so that we all had a ministry? And should we perhaps found a society for the abolition of the clergy? Questions like that are being asked, you know, today.

I don't know if you've read, I hope you have, Mark Twain, the American Wits, wonderful book, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, but there is a passage where Huck got into conversation with Joanna, the daughter of Peter Wilkes, who had just died. And he said that in the church of the Reverend Harvey Wilkes, her uncle in Sheffield, there were no less than 17 clergy. Though he added, they don't all of them preach the same day, only one of them.

Well, says Joanna, what does the rest of them do? Oh, nothing much, says Huck. They loll around and pass the plate and one thing or another, but mainly they don't do nothing. Well then, says Joanna, with wide-eyed astonishment, what are they for? Why, he says, they're for style.

Don't you know nothing? Well, actually, this confusion goes right back to the very beginning. Think with me again of this first century Corinthian church in which different factions claim the patronage of particular leaders. Paul was absolutely horrified by this personality cult that I belong to Paul and I belong to Apollos and so on.

As we saw yesterday, he asked, what on earth do you think we are using this derogatory neuter deliberately that you should give such exaggerated respect to us? So now in chapter four, he proceeds to answer his own question. Verse one in the Revised Standard Version is, this is how one should regard us. This is how you should think of us.

And he proceeds to give four essentials of authentic pastoral leadership. They describe in the first place Paul's own unique apostolic leadership, but as you reflect upon them, you'll note that they, in a secondary sense, also apply to Christian pastoral leadership today. Four models of ministry.

So are you ready for the first? You're following, I hope, in your outline. One. Pastors or pastoral leaders or clergy, whatever we're going to call them this morning, are the servants of Christ.

Verse one at the beginning. That is, before they are ministers of the word and before they are ministers of the church, they are ministers of Christ. They must have a personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the word he uses here for ministers is a lowly word. It's well translated by one commentator as we are Christ's underlings. Now of course there are other New Testament texts, as I mentioned yesterday, that emphasize the nobility of the pastorate.

For example, if anybody desires to be an overseer or a pastor, he desires a noble task. It is a noble thing to be a pastor. And Paul calls the church to hold its pastors in high esteem and to love them on account of their own ministry or work.

Nevertheless, Paul begins his account of his ministry not with a title of honor or a title of glory, but with a title of lowliness. The revised English Bible says we are Christ's subordinates, his underlings, or his subordinates. It's a beautiful phrase.

So fundamental to all Christian ministry and leadership is a humble, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ himself, a devotion to him expressed in daily prayer and a love for him expressed in daily

obedience. So in addition to being Christ's underlings, we are accountable to him for our ministry. For he is our Lord and he is our judge, which is Paul's emphasis in these verses.

And this fact that he's our Lord and judge to whom we are accountable is both a comforting thing on the one hand and a challenging thing on the other. On the one hand, being Christ's servant is a very comforting thing. It enables us to say in verse 3, if we may jump to that for a moment, I care very little if I'm judged by you or by any human court.

Indeed, I do not even judge myself. Now verses 4 to 7 enlarge on this. Verse 4, my conscience is clear.

Literally, I know nothing against myself. But even a clear conscience doesn't prove me innocent. It is the Lord Jesus who judges me.

And therefore, verse 5, judge nothing before the appointed time. Premature judgments are always unwise. Wait, be content to wait until the Lord comes.

For he is the judge and we are not judges of one another, as Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. Judge not that you be not judged. Now that doesn't mean we suspend our critical faculties, but it does mean that we don't stand in judgment on people as if we were their judges.

For we are not. And when he comes, Jesus will bring to light what is at present hidden in darkness, and he will expose even the secret motives of human hearts. Nothing is concealed from him.

So there will be no possibility of any miscarriage of justice. But even the secrets of our lives are known. And it is then that each of us will receive either praise or maybe censure from Christ.

Now verse 6, I am applying this principle, he says, to myself and to Apollos for your benefit. So that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, don't go beyond what is written. Or as I think it should be better translated, don't go beyond Scripture, because Scripture is what is written.

And when you are boasting of one leader over against another, you are going against Scripture, against what is written. And don't make comparisons either, taking pride in one leader over against another. Comparisons, as we often say, are odious.

So verse 7, he asks a series of questions. Who makes you different from anybody else? All distinctions come from God. So what do you have that you didn't receive? And if you did receive it, why are you boasting as if you didn't? Boasting is frankly absurd, as we were seeing yesterday.

So the whole passage emphasizes that as ministers of Christ, we are accountable to him for our ministry. Now dear friends, don't misunderstand this. We must of course listen to human criticism.

We mustn't just sweep it under the carpet and refuse to listen. It may be painful, particularly if it's untrue or unfair or unkind, but ultimately, even though we listen to human criticism, we never forget that we are accountable to Christ. And I reckon that the Lord Jesus is a much more merciful judge than any human being or human committee or human council or human synod.

He is a more merciful judge than they. So that tells us what to do with anonymous letters. Do you ever get anonymous letters? I've received a number in my day.

We shouldn't take them too seriously. Somebody doesn't have the courage to announce their identity. We shall treat their criticism with a fair degree of cynicism and doubt and questioning.

I don't know if you know the story of Joseph Parker, who was minister of the City Temple at the end of the last century. He was a contemporary of Spurgeon in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. And one day as Joseph Parker was climbing the tall steps up to his pulpit in the City Temple, a lady in the gallery threw a piece of paper at him.

So he bent down and picked it up and read. It had one word on it, fool. So Joseph Parker began his sermon that day by saying, I've received many anonymous letters in my life, and previously they've been a text without a signature, but today for the first time I've received a signature without a text.

So we take human criticism seriously, but anonymous letters not so seriously. It's a very comforting thing to be accountable to God, to Christ, and not to any human being or court. But if on the one hand it is a comforting thing to be accountable to him, on the other hand it is also a challenging thing.

His standards are high and holy, and although much of a pastor and a leader's work is unseen and unsupervised by human beings, nevertheless we are always in his presence. And I reckon that if we remembered this, we would never grow slack or careless. If we remember that Jesus Christ is watching us, and that one day we will be accountable to him, then we will, I think, live at the highest possible level in his presence.

We are Christ's underlings, responsible to him. That's the first thing. I hope we'll never forget it.

I hope again before we leave Keswick we will renew our personal responsibility to the Lord Jesus, who is the one who has called us into service to him, accountable to him. We are Christ's subordinates, we are Christ's underlings. Second, pastors are not any servants of Christ, they are stewards of revelation, stewards of divine revelation.

We go back to the beginning, verse 1, and the second part of the verse, and verse 2, Paul moves from our general responsibility as servants to our more particular responsibility as stewards. Now it is quite true that the Greek word stewards, oikonomoi, is not used in the Greek text, but the idea is very plainly there. The New International Version has, we are those entrusted with the secret things of God.

The Revised Standard Version translates it, we are stewards of the mysteries of God. And stewards were dispensers. A steward in a household received clothing and food from the householder and dispensed it to the household.

So it is that God has given us his revelation and we dispense the revelation, we teach it to others in the church. So God's mysteries of which we are stewards are of course his revealed secrets, previously concealed but now revealed. Truths that are known only by revelation, truths about Christ and his salvation, and the fact that we are members of the universal body of Christ, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, on the same terms.

This incorporation of Jews and Gentiles in the church is one of the great mysteries that Paul said had been revealed to him. So of these revealed truths, contained in the New Testament now and in the Gospel, the apostles were the original stewards, or trustees, as we saw in our first or second study. Chapter 2, verse 10, that God has revealed these things to us, apostles, by his Spirit.

But although they refer in the first instance to the New Testament, to the apostles and the New Testament, nevertheless, in a secondary sense, they apply to Christian pastors and teachers today. Because God has committed the scriptures to us in order that we may expand and teach them to others in the church. God has entrusted scripture to us.

Now that reminds us of three things. One, pastors are primarily teachers. I hope we're clear about that.

It's very clear in the New Testament. One of the chief evidences, I think, is in 1 Timothy chapter 3, where Paul is giving the qualifications, the eligibility for the pastorate, and he gives ten or eleven things. And nine or ten of them, depending where you draw the line, nine or ten of them are what you might call moral qualities, not drunk, not gentle, not hungry for money, and all these things, moral qualities.

And then one in the list is what you might call a professional quality, and that is didacticos, having a gift for teaching. Everything else is moral, you see, self-controlled, gentle, not with a bad temper, and then suddenly didacticos. Now, the candidate for the pastorate would not need to have a gift for teaching unless the pastorate were a teaching ministry.

It is a teaching ministry, and nobody should enter it without having some gift for teaching. That is plain. Pastors are essentially teachers.

Two, what we teach has been entrusted to us. We haven't invented it. It's not our own.

It's been given to us by God. And thirdly, we are required above all else to be faithful to the Scripture that has been entrusted to us. So, the Revised English Bible translates verse 2 like this, Now, stewards are required to show themselves trustworthy.

It's all a play on words about trust and trustworthiness. We might say that having received a trust and been appointed trustees of the New Testament, we are expected to be trustworthy. Let me say that again.

Having received a trust from God, Scripture, and having been appointed trustees of it, we are expected to be trustworthy, worthy of the trust that has been given to us. But it is very easy to be unfaithful stewards. And I'm afraid we have to admit that there are many such in the Christian community throughout the world today.

Now, rejecting the authority of the Word of God and preferring their own teaching. Now, neglecting to study it. Now, failing to relate it to the real contemporary world.

Now, manipulating it into meaning what they want it to mean. Now, selecting from it what they like and discarding what they don't like. Now, even contradicting its plain teaching and substituting their own threadbare speculations.

And now, flagrantly disobeying its ethical teaching. No wonder the church is languishing in many parts of the world because of these unfaithful stewards, who in different ways fail in their trusteeship. Dr. Donald Coggan, Lord Coggan, an earlier Archbishop of Canterbury, who came to Keswick several times.

You probably know he died about three or four weeks ago in his old age. Donald Coggan was a great believer in the teaching of the Word of God. He was a preacher himself.

He wrote three different books on preaching. And I quote from one of them that is called Stewards of Grace. He writes, The Christian preacher has a boundary set for him.

When he enters the pulpit, he is not an entirely free person. There is a very real sense in which it may be said of him that the Almighty has set in his bounds that he shall not pass. He's not at liberty to invent or choose his message.

It has been committed to him. And it is for him to declare, expound, and commend it to his hearers. And he adds a little later, It is a great thing to come under the magnificent tyranny of the Gospel.

So our boundaries are set for us. We expound Scripture and nothing else. So are you with me in our first two, the first two points that the Apostle Paul makes? We are servants of Christ and we are stewards of revelation.

And now you prepare yourself please for a shock. Thirdly, we are the scum of the earth. And the Apostle uses three very vivid metaphors from the Greco-Roman world of his day in order to illustrate what he's talking about.

A. He takes us into the public amphitheater in which criminals fight with gladiators or wild animals, even to the death. B. He takes us into a kitchen in which the floor is swept and the cooking vessels are scraped. And C. He takes us into a plague-ridden city in which scapegoats are sacrificed to the pagan gods.

There are three very vivid metaphors and I think we need to spend a little time on each of them. A. Paul takes us into an amphitheater on a public holiday. Imagine the arena packed with excited crowds.

Event follows event throughout the day and as the climax or the grand finale criminals are thrown to the lions or forced to fight with gladiators. One commentator translates it, God has put us apostles last on the program of the day's sports like criminals condemned to die in the arena. Or the second part of verse 9, we have become a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels and humans.

We're like a bit of cosmic theater. Now Paul is deliberately contrasting himself with the smug security and self-satisfaction of the Corinthian Christians. Back to verse 8, Already, he says, not without a touch of sarcasm, Already, he says, you are filled.

Already, you are rich. Already, he might have added for the third time, you are kings reigning without us. So twice he uses the already of a realized eschatology and the third phrase means the same thing though he doesn't use the word ready a third time.

They are, if you like, enjoying a private little millennium of their own. They are eating and drinking and feasting and reigning and celebrating as if in the millennium. Well, Paul says, we wish we could get there with you.

We wish we could be kings with you. But we know, he implies, that the only path to glory is the path of suffering. It was for Jesus and it is for the followers of Jesus.

We are like exhibits in the amphitheater condemned to die for Christ. You are kings but we are criminals is the contrast, the striking contrast that he makes. So thirdly, see, he's taken us into an amphitheater.

He's taken us in a bee, sorry, he takes us bee into a kitchen. Second part of verse 13, he uses two very unusual words, Greek words. Perikatharmata means sweepings or rinsings while peripsema means scrapings from a dirty saucepan or other kind of pot.

And both of them, if I may quote another commentator, are the filth that one gets rid of through the sink or the gutter. It's not very polite to us as leaders, is it? Anyway, it comes on to the third, see, he now takes us out of the amphitheater, out of the kitchen, into a plague-ridden city. A Greek city stricken by some calamity like the plague.

And in order to appease the supposed anger of the pagan gods, some wretches are taken from the community and are thrown into the sea and drowned. And these scapegoats were called the scum of the earth. And that's what we are, says the apostle Paul.

Well, you'll agree these are extraordinary statements. And between verse 10 and verse 13, he explains what he's talking about. He's referring to his sufferings in contrast to Corinthian complacency.

He is being ridiculed for Christ. But, verse 10, we are fools for Christ, but you, you are wise. We are weak.

You notice the reference to weakness and strength, wisdom and folly, again, with which we began our Bible studies. We are, he goes on, we are honored. You are honored, but we are dishonored.

We are despised and rejected like our master, but you are, you are honored. We are hungry, thirsty, in rags, brutally treated, homeless, persecuted, slandered. We work with our own hands, et cetera, et cetera.

Indeed, we are the scum or the refuse of the world. Well, it all sounds extremely remote from us, as we enjoy the comfort and the safety of the Keswick tent, and we enjoy the grandeur of lake and mountain around us. In fact, the difficulty we have in applying words like these to ourselves may indicate how far we've drifted from the New Testament.

Today, even in a non-Christian society, even in a pluralistic or secular culture, it is still a tolerably honorable and respectable thing to be a pastor. Well, you know, in some cultures, pastors are even given travel concessions and tax concessions, and sometimes people even murder the English language and call us reverends. Did you ever hear such a thing? But it's not always so, and it should definitely not be taken for granted.

I speak very personally now, but I myself believe that we need urgently to hear again the words of Jesus, woe unto you when all men speak well of you. Woe unto you when all men speak well of you. So, friends, beware of the temptation to be a popular preacher.

There are many preachers here, lay readers, lay preachers, clergy, and so on, many. You've been called to the preaching ministry, but beware of the temptation to be a popular preacher. I doubt very much myself if it is possible to be popular and faithful at the same time.

I think we either go for popularity at the expense of faithfulness, or we are determined to be faithful at the expense of popularity. I think we have to choose between them, and it is not possible to be both simultaneously. For the cross is still foolishness to some and a stumbling block to others.

Well, I want, if I may, because I've often asked myself this, what is it about the gospel that is so unpopular? Why is it that if we are loyal and faithful in our preaching and teaching, we will suffer for it, we will be ridiculed? Why is that? What is it about the gospel that is so offensive? Well, I tell you how I answer my own question. I give three answers, which may or may not be helpful in your own thinking. One, the gospel offers eternal life as a free gift.

Romans 6, 13, the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. But we are such proud creatures that we don't want to be given a free gift. We began to think about this the other morning.

We'd do anything to be able to earn our salvation, to achieve it, or even at least to contribute to it. And we need again to remember that eternal life, salvation, is a gift that is absolutely free and utterly undeserved, and is a totally non-contributory gift of God. I remind you again of that phrase of William Temple, that the only thing of my very own which I contribute to my redemption is the sin from which I need to be redeemed.

I've no other contribution to make. So, we would love to get to heaven under our own steam. We'd love to be able to boast of our success in getting there.

So proud, so arrogant, so conceited is our human heart. But it is free, and we find that unbearably humiliating. Then secondly, the gospel not only offers eternal life as a free gift, secondly, the gospel proclaims salvation in Jesus Christ alone, and declares that he is the only Saviour.

For he is unique in his incarnation, in his atonement, and in his resurrection. There is no other leader who is the God-man. There's no other leader all down history who has died for the sins of the world, and there is no other leader who has risen from the dead and conquered death.

In those three things, Jesus is unique. So we're not content to say that Jesus is the great. We can say that Alexander was great, the great Alexander the Great, we can speak of Napoleon the Great, Charles the Great, but not Jesus the Great.

He isn't the great, he is the only. There is nobody like him. He has no peers, no competitors, no rivals.

He is unique, but I don't need to tell you that in this pluralistic world, that is anathema. Pluralism and post-modernism means that you have your truth, and I have my truth, and he has his truth, and she has hers, and they have theirs. We've all got our own truth, but we mustn't try to persuade anybody to accept our truth.

There's no such thing as a universal truth, or a truth that is objective and true for everybody. No, we've all got our own. But Christianity says, on the contrary, God has revealed the truth in Jesus Christ, who said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Now, if we are loyal to the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ, either graciously and gently, we may do so. I tell you, friends, we will suffer for it. We will suffer more and more as pluralism and post-modernity grow in many cultures in the world.

Now, thirdly, not only does the gospel offer eternal life free, not only does it proclaim salvation in Jesus alone, but the gospel demands holiness. It doesn't demand holiness as the ground of salvation. Of course not.

But it does demand holiness as the evidence of our salvation. It calls us, as we saw last night, to surrender to the supreme lordship of Jesus Christ. It compels us to accept his moral standards.

And we say, but if only Jesus would oblige us by lowering his moral standards just a wee bit for our benefit. If only he were willing to become a little bit more flexible in his moral standards. No people, you

see, want to set their own standards and they resent having to submit to the moral standards of Jesus.

So here are three gospel stumbling blocks. The freeness of the gospel, the exclusiveness of the gospel, and the high moral demands of the gospel. Each is an offense to human pride and arouses people's opposition.

So I quote from the great Bonhoeffer in his book, I recommend, if you haven't read it, called *The Cost of Discipleship*. You know, of course, he was a Lutheran pastor during the Second World War who was imprisoned because of his complicity and the attempt on Hitler's life. And then he was executed in April 1945 at the direct orders of Heinrich Himmler.

And Bonhoeffer wrote in this book *The Cost of Discipleship* and he knew what suffering meant. Listen carefully. Suffering is the badge of the true Christian.

It's an amazing statement. You know what a badge is. We all wear a badge to indicate what society we belong to.

If you want to indicate you belong to the society of Jesus, what is the badge? Answer, suffering. Suffering is the badge of the true Christian. The disciple is not above his master.

Luther reckoned suffering among the marks of the true church. And one of the memoranda drawn up in preparation for the Augsburg Confession, the Lutheran Confession, similarly defines the church. Listen to this definition of the church.

The community of those who are persecuted and murdered for the sake of the gospel. Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ. And it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer.

And another Lutheran pastor, Pastor Niemöller, said, if a church is not a persecuted church, it ought to ask itself whether it is a church at all. These are amazing things. We need to go away and reflect on them and ask ourselves if we're ready to accept them and experience them in our own lives.

The pastors are the servants of Christ. Pastors are the stewards of revelation. Pastors are fools for Christ's sake, the scum of the earth.

And now fourthly, pastors are the fathers of the church family. And in the chapter's final paragraph, verses 14 to 21, the apostle calls the Corinthians his dear children. Verse 14, in which case he must be their father.

He says he's writing to warn them but not to shame them. And in verse 15 he adds that although they may have 10,000 guardians or disciplinarians or tutors who will discipline them, they don't have many fathers to love them. Whereas he has become their spiritual father in Christ and through the gospel.

And he urges them to imitate him and tells us in verse 17 he's sending Timothy to them and they are to listen to Timothy and imitate him as well and so on. Now this claim of Paul to be the spiritual father of the Corinthian church troubles and perplexes many Bible students because Jesus told us in Matthew 23 verse 9 not to call anybody our father. Of course we all have a father in, or have had a father in our home but he is saying that we're not to call anybody our father in the church.

But Paul does call himself a father, so is Paul contradicting Jesus? No, indeed he isn't. He's not doing what Jesus told us not to do. Jesus was telling us not to adopt towards anybody in the church and not to require anybody to adopt towards us in the Christian church the attitude the dependent attitude in relationship of a little child to a father.

We are not to behave towards other people like that. Christians are to grow up and become interdependent. Maybe I could say there are to be no gurus in the Christian community.

There are to be no teachers in the Confucian mold where Confucius taught that we are to bow down and kowtow to our teachers and believe everything they teach and so on. No gurus and no teachers like Confucius whose authority is unchallengeable. No tribal chiefs as in Africa.

No, the Jesus Jesus was forbidding us to assume the authority of a father. But Paul is referring to a father's affection for his children. So he is not contradicting Jesus.

Indeed in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 5 he likened himself to a mother with her babies as well as a father. It's a beautiful picture of the love and the gentleness and the self-sacrifice of a pastor in loving the flock like a father or a mother. Now of course there is still a place of discipline in the church which needs to be exercised collectively as in the next chapter 1 Corinthians 5 that we're not able to reach today.

But what is the authentic characteristic of a Christian pastor? What is the authentic characteristic of a Christian leader? I hope you get the answer right. It's not severity but gentleness. We are to be fathers and mothers towards those we are called to serve.

We're not to be stern disciplinarians whom they fear. And Paul asks if he is to come to them with an apostle's authority verses 18 to 20 whether he's to challenge the arrogant because the kingdom consists of power, although it's power through weakness, it's still power and then he goes on verse 21 which would you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip symbol of authority and discipline or shall I come to you with a spirit of love and gentleness? And he leaves his question unanswered because it is up to the Corinthians to reply and to choose. I bring this, draw this to a conclusion.

I have the privilege as many Catholic speakers have of traveling in different parts of the world and observing the church and observing the church's leaders and I've become convinced in my travels indeed I've developed a firm conviction that there is too much autocracy among Christian leaders and not enough gentleness. There are too many gurus there are too many autocrats who lay down the law in the local church in defiance of the teaching of Jesus. There are too many who behave as if they believe not in the priesthood of all believers but in the papacy of all pastors.

And that's how they behave. The great need among Christian leaders is less autocracy and more affection and gentleness. James Stalker whom Scots here I'm sure know who flourished at the end of the last century in Scotland wrote a book in 1891 called *The Preacher and His Models* James Stalker wrote this When I first was settled in a church I discovered a thing of which nobody had told me and which I had not anticipated.

I fell in love with my congregation. I do not know how otherwise to express it. It was as genuine a blossom of the heart as any which I had ever experienced.

And it made it easy for me to do anything for my people. So now let me recapitulate and conclude. Here are four pictures which the apostle paints in the first case of his own apostolic ministry but in the

secondary sense to us as well.

If we are pastors pastor assistants church leaders of any kind in the Christian community this is how you should regard us. We are the underlings of Christ we are the stewards of revelation, we are the scum of the earth and we are the fathers and mothers of the church family. And the common denominator of all four is humility.

Humility before Christ whose subordinates we are. Humility before scripture of which we are the stewards. Humility before the world whose opposition we are bound to encounter.

And humility before the congregation whose members we are to love and serve. My prayer for you, I hope your prayer for me, our prayer for one another is that God will richly bless whatever ministry it is that he has called us to exercise and that our ministry may be characterized above all else by what the apostle in 2 Corinthians 10 verse 1 calls the humility and the gentleness of Christ. Let us pray.

Once again we'll have a little time of reflection. These are challenging truths from the apostle that we've been seeking to wrestle with. Underlings, stewards, scum called to suffer and fathers and mothers of the family.

Maybe it's helpful to go through them in our own mind and memory and ask God to make us like that in our own ministry to which many of us will go back tomorrow. Some will have a ministry on the Lord's day, the day after tomorrow. May these things be seen enough and especially the gentleness and the humility of Christ.

Silent reflection and prayer. Lord Jesus Christ we want to thank you that you said I am meek and lowly or gentle in heart. We want to thank you together for the marvelous humility and gentleness that you displayed on earth and in comparison with it we are ashamed of our own autocratic tendencies, our desire to rule the roost, to be the boss, to order people about.

Please forgive us for these tendencies in our fallen human nature and grant that this mind may be in us which was also in you. Humility, meekness, and gentleness. We ask it Lord Jesus Christ for the glory of your great and worthy name.

Amen.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/JiWY3NxTDVg.mp4>  
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