

Theme: Mind Your Own Business

1. Take care of God's Word
2. Consider the faith of others
3. Leave the rest to God

Ezekiel 34:11-24 "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: **I myself will search** for my sheep and **look** after them. **12** As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so **will I look** after my sheep. **I will rescue** them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. **13** **I will bring them out** from the nations and **gather** them from the countries, and **I will bring them** into their own land. **I will pasture** them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. **14** **I will tend** them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. **15** **I myself will tend** my sheep and **have them lie down**, declares the Sovereign LORD. **16** **I will search** for the lost and **bring back** the strays. **I will bind up** the injured and **strengthen** the weak, but the sleek and the strong **I will destroy**. **I will shepherd** the flock with justice.

17 "As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: **I will judge** between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. **18** Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? **19** Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

20 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: See, **I myself will judge** between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. **21** Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, **22** **I will save** my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. **I will judge** between one sheep and another. **23** **I will place** over them one shepherd, my servant David, and **he will tend** them; **he will tend** them and be their shepherd. **24** **I the LORD will be their God**, and my servant David **will be prince** among them. I the LORD have spoken.

Last weekend we talked about sheep in our sermon. Our primary focus was on Jesus as the Lamb of God as John saw Him in the vision of Revelation. Today, we reflect on a portion of Scripture that we mentioned last weekend, from Ezekiel. In this text, the Lord looks at us. In the immediate context He judged the immoral, unrighteous spiritual shepherds of Israel. This makes us think about how we treat God's Word today, especially pastors and teachers. But, even though the emphasis is on our lives, or more appropriately an activity of our faith, God is dominant in this section.

But before we get into the text, consider this application. One thing that little kids get caught up in so much is what other people are doing, especially their peers. This is such a common thing that parents continually echo the same refrain, "Mind your own business." Sometimes, a little kid is a tattle-tale. They hide behind the mask of good intentions when all they really care about is getting someone else in trouble. Sometimes, a little kid uses someone else's wrongdoings to excuse their own – "He or she did it first!" Sometimes, a little kid doesn't like that another little kid is having fun so they walk over and kick the toy their playing with or they push them over. There are plenty of example. Mind your own business.

The thing is we all need to listen to that rebuke. It's not just little kids that exhibit these attitudes, they creep into adult lives much easier than we think. Feelings of discontentment abound when we focus

on what others have and what we don't have. Anger and grudges grow unchecked when we can't get over the one who started it first. Gossip lingers as we spend all our time looking at what is going on in other peoples' lives. The Lord says the same thing – Mind your own business.

In this text, the Lord is directing the message at us, but so much of what He says is about Himself. He's telling us to mind our own business, because that's what keeps us from straying from His will. The transition of the text is found in the phrase, "**As for you...**" in verse 17. God is bringing our attention to that verse. "Listen up" He says, this is something *you* need to be concerned about. This is *your* business. Yet, the most important thing to remember in these verses does not come from that section, nor is it focused on us. The most important thing in understanding our business is to know what is only the Lord's business, and leave it all to Him. The rest of the context is dominated by God's business.

Twenty-four times in these verses, the Lord says He will do something. Many of them repeat. He's describing His business.

I will...

- Search
- Look
- Rescue
- Gather
- Bring them out
- Bring them in
- Pasture
- Tend
- Have them lie down
- Bring back
- Bind up
- Strengthen
- Save
- Judge
- Be their God

It is unmistakable that the emphasis here is on the Lord's power and work – even in a section that is directed at our lives. *Do you understand the purpose?* To know your role, you have to know the Lord's. To serve Him, He must serve you. We get into trouble when we don't mind our own business by letting the Lord do His. So, when we do get to that phrase, "As for you..." what does the Lord say?

First, take heed to His Word. The LORD tells Ezekiel that the false shepherds muddied and contaminated the precious waters and pasture for the flock. The spiritual import of this judgment is not difficult to discern. Jesus taught that He could give living waters to people so that they would never thirst again. Jesus instructed His followers to eat the bread of life which according to Jesus was "**every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.**" When a pastor or teacher allows false teaching to enter the church, they are treading over and muddying these waters and bread.

Sometimes, we wonder why the pastor puts up so much of a fuss about the doctrine of God's Word. We are familiar with the common thoughts that enter our minds and that we hear in the world. "That teaching isn't central to salvation or the gospel, why are we arguing with others about it?" "Wouldn't it be a better use of time to agree to disagree and work on bigger issues?" "What's so wrong about

letting people believe what they want to?” It’s easy to think like this. We’re constantly bombarded with temptations to trample down the truth of the Word of God. Even pastors think like this from time to time. Yet, these verses show us why it’s so important not to budge an inch in matters of doctrine. There’s plenty in life that we can leave to a person’s individual liberty, and we should, but when God speaks clearly in His Word it’s His decision.

As we continue in God’s discourse to Ezekiel we see *why* this is important. Verse 19: **Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?** What we do with our faith affects others. Ultimately, as far as impact is concerned, faith is between you and God alone. But, when you live in a world with other people and when you make statements and confessions about what you believe, you will affect their faith too. God tells you to mind your own business when you consider the faith of others. Earlier, He described the impact that the false shepherds had on others: **You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. 5 So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. 6 My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.**

When you speak about your faith, do you consider the impact it has on others? Do you think about how you speak? Is it in love? Is it based on God’s truth? These are all considerations that God requires of you as a Christian. In another “as for you” section of the Bible, Paul instructed Titus, a young pastor, **But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: (Tit 2:1 NKJ).** Similarly, to Timothy, another pastor, Paul warned about falling into the attitude of telling people only what they want to hear. Rather, he instructed, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” (2Ti 4:2 NKJ)**

To give people the living waters and the bread of life means at times we will have to rebuke and admonish. Preaching the truth of God’s Word is not about telling people what they want to hear. As sinners, we resist the truth. We simply are not loving or caring for God’s flock if we ignore what He says. That, God told Ezekiel, is leading to flock to slaughter.

There is so much for us to keep track of as it concerns our business as Christians. It can feel overwhelming at times. However, do not forget the most important part your work – what God has done. Remember that in this section, which speaks so clearly to how you handle the Word of God, the emphasis is still on God. And even more so, the emphasis is on Christ. The LORD concludes His message by saying, **23 I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. 24 I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.**

This is pure Gospel, as clear a Messianic prophecy as there can be. When God said this to Ezekiel, David was dead and in the grave. The true Davidic prince was not the greatest of Israel’s earthly kings, but rather David’s greater Son and Lord – Jesus – King of Kings. Through His reign, established at the cross and in His love for the whole world, peace has come to earth. He is the one shepherd. The one to right wrongs. The one to heal the ones and bind up the brokenhearted. The one to feed the flock in truth. The one to complete what all the other shepherds could not. Because Jesus did that, you now can do your part. Because He took care of His business, you have a place to serve. Don’t butt him out of your life by forgetting His daily grace and power. Don’t trample over His

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Word or muddy up the precious life-giving waters of forgiveness by removing His Word from your heart. Believe that He has done what He has promised.

As for you...there are many responsibilities to being a Christian. But, don't be overwhelmed and don't get ahead of yourself. It's good to mind your own business. Much more vital than "as for you" is what God will do, and what He has done. "I will" your Lord and Savior declares, and He has in Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God that now there is a place beside Him for you and me. Amen.

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