He is Sovereign Over the Church

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Open with me, if you would, to Mark chapter 8.

! We're going to be in a couple of different places this morning, but first to Mark chapter 8, we have been walking through the Gospel of Mark and have come to the end of chapter 8.
And we've been considering for a few weeks now what it means to know Christ, to follow Christ, and to fully submit to Him.
At the end of Mark chapter 8, these have become familiar words to us, beginning in verse 34, calling the crowd to Him with His disciples, He said to them, If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?
[1:25] For what can a man give in return for his soul? And after spending a couple of Sunday mornings looking at these specific words, this call, this invitation that Jesus gives, we stepped out of Mark, really just kind of pushing pause there to go to a parallel passage to understand who Jesus is in Colossians 1.

So let me invite you to now turn to Colossians 1. As I shared last week, what's on my mind in doing this is when Jesus makes the call to follow Him, it's a very exclusive thing. It's Jesus reminding us that salvation is found in no name other than Christ.
That Jesus is the only way to the Father. He is the way, the truth, and the life. And we must make sure that when we preach Christ, when we sing about Christ, when we talk about Jesus, when we invite people to follow Jesus, we must ensure that we are being completely clear on who the biblical Jesus really is. Because one of the things that's a real concern to me is that there are many people, and even those who would call themselves churches, those who would call themselves Christians, who will speak of Jesus, but the Jesus that they speak of and the Jesus that they would preach is something entirely different than Jesus revealed to us in the Bible.
And so last week, we jumped to Colossians 1, and though it's not in the Gospel of Mark where we've been studying, it is really an extension of that study because I want us to make for certain that when we say that we preach Jesus and we follow Jesus, I want to be on the record and be clear for everyone to understand that the Jesus we follow is not the Jesus of our invention or the Jesus of our creation, that this is the Jesus, the eternal Son of God revealed to us in the pages of Scripture.
And so the text that we looked at last week, and we're going to end up being this week and probably one more week after this, from Colossians 1, 15 to 20, just speaks of the greatness of Christ, who He is, what He has done, and why He is worthy of our worship. So, let me just connect the dots for you here, that when we say in Mark 8 that we are to take up our cross, that we deny ourselves and we follow Jesus, we want to be certain that we're following the biblical Jesus. And when the question is asked, why would we do that, why would we deny ourselves, why would we take up our cross, why would we follow Him, the answer to that question is found in Colossians 1, 15 through 20, and it's because He is the preeminent One, the One who holds all things together, the One worthy of our worship.
[4:34] As the song that we've just learned together reminds us, this is the way that we are to live, that Christ would be all, and we be nothing. John the Baptist said that Christ must increase, we must decrease.

It's been said that a faithful preacher should have in his mind, preach, die, be forgotten. That sounds good to me. Let me preach while I've got breath. When it's the Lord's will, let me die, and

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then let me be forgotten, and somebody pick up where we left off and keep preaching Christ. Because that's all that this church needs, is Christ. So, Colossians 1, 15 to 20, I want you to have that marked passage in your mind because we're answering the question, who is Christ? Who is this One who says, follow Me? Who is this One who says, deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Me? Colossians 1, 15 to 20, says, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

All things were created through Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. So, in walking through verses 15 to 20 here for a couple of weeks, I gave you one heading last week. Let me remind you of it. From verses 15 to 17, Christ's sovereignty is demonstrated in His authority over all creation. Christ's sovereignty is demonstrated in His authority over all creation. We saw in verse 15, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. We looked last week for some time at that word. He's the firstborn, the prototokos in the original. A word that can mean first chronologically or by context can mean a certain status, a certain rank, or preeminence, which is, we know what is in mind in verse 15 because verse 16 clarifies that by Him all things were created. Christ is not created.

He's the one who created all things. In heaven, on earth, things visible, things invisible. He's above all of the angelic realm. All things were created through Him, and all things were created for Him. He's not only the source, He's the purpose. He's the one who created all things, and all things that exist, exist for Him, exist for Him, to bring Him glory. Christ's sovereignty is demonstrated in His authority over all creation. That's the first thing I want you to see. That's what we covered last week.

[7:50] This week, I want us to look here at just verse 18 that says, He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. That in everything, He might be preeminent. And so, we'll add a second thing this morning, and that's this statement, that Christ's supremacy is displayed in His authority over the church. Christ's supremacy is displayed in His authority over the church. So, in Mark 8, when Jesus says, deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow me, He can say that because He is the head, because He is in charge. The reason we follow Him is because He is the leader. We are the follower. The reason why we take up our cross and follow Him is because everything that exists in life exists for Him. And so, the greatest thing you could do is live your life in response to that truth is live your life in response to that truth and follow Christ.

So, in verses 15 to 17 of Colossians 1, it makes clear He has supremacy and sovereignty over creation. Verse 18 says He also has supremacy over the church.

We've got to never forget that. He controls the church. He leads the church. Verse 18 should be at the forefront of our minds over and over and over that Christ is the head of the body, the church, that He is the beginning. He is the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.

So, if Christ is sovereign over all creation, then all of creation should obey Him. And if He is the one who is supreme over the church, as verse 18 says, then certainly everything we do in the church should show that Christ is the preeminent one.

Everything should show that Christ is the head. Christ is the preeminent one. The New Testament makes clear that in a biblical New Testament church, Christ is the head.

[10:34] You've got pastors, shepherds, elders, depending on the passage, depending on the terminology. You've got men of God, called by God, raised up by God to lead the church, not to be the head of the church.

Christ is the head of the church. It's pastors and pastors and shepherds lead the church. It's deacons serve the church. And if a pastor ever thinks he's the head of the church, that church is in trouble.

Because no pastor or group of pastors will ever be the head of the church. Christ is the head of the church. We've got to start there.

We've got to never deviate from there. Christ is the head of the church. This is why every single Monday morning when our staff meets 835, the first thing we do is we all open our Bibles and we read out loud around the table.

We just read through books of the Bible. And the reason we do that is to learn the Bible, to hear the Bible, but also it's a way to remind ourselves every week that every decision we're about to make, everything we're about to talk about, everything we're about to plan, every issue we're about to try

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to work through and resolve, we have to remind ourselves that we are not the authority.
[11:57] Christ is the head of this church. And His Word is what must guide us. And I don't want our staff meeting and trying to make decisions and trying to lead our church in any way apart from the reminder that Christ is the head.

And so the New Testament tells us Christ is the head. He calls out pastors to lead. The church calls out deacons to serve. And then as we'll look at in a minute, every member of that church is gifted for ministry to serve in that church and to use their gifts to help to build the body of Christ.
But if you're wrong on the head of the church, it doesn't matter what else you do to organize, that church is a mess. And so we remind ourselves that Christ is the head of the body, the church.
Now, I want to spend a few minutes this morning and just kind of keep going layer by layer here. So Mark 8, Christ calls us to follow Him.
We deny ourself, take up our cross, and follow Him. Colossians 1 tells us that Jesus we're following is the one who is sovereign over all creation and the one who has supremacy over all the church.
[13:14] So let's be clear on who Christ is. Now, if we're going to obey His Word, we need to also be clear on who this church is that Christ is the head of.

Who is the head of the church? Christ. Now, what is the church? And how is the church to function once we know and establish Christ as the head of the church?
So just, if you would, turn with me. We're going to turn a little more than we typically do on a Sunday morning. Turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 5. Just a few pages to your right.
1 Peter 5. We said Christ's supremacy is displayed in His authority over the church. That Christ is the head of the church.
And what else can we know about how the church should function? Well, 1 Peter 5 is going to speak specifically to the pastors, to the elders, to the shepherds.
[14:16] 1 Peter 5 verse 1. So I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.

Here's the charge to those who lead the church. shepherd the flock of God that is among you. Exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you.
Not for shameful gain, but eagerly. Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.
And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourself, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
[15:28] So in 1 Peter 5, Christ is the chief shepherd. Colossians 1, he's the head of the church.

Same instruction. Christ is the head. Christ is the chief shepherd. Now, under Christ, the New Testament explains to us that men are called up, raised up by the Lord to serve as pastors, shepherds, elders over the flock.
And what can we learn about what they are supposed to do? Well, this passage just lays it out very plainly. Pastors are shepherds. Not dictators.
Not CEOs. Shepherds. Verse 2, shepherd the flock of God that is among you. So all the things that come into mind when you think of a shepherd are the same things that the pastors of the church should provide for the body.
Shepherds lead. They protect. They guide. They serve. They feed sheep. That's what shepherds do. That's the metaphor used in 1 Peter 5.
[16:45] All of this under the umbrella of Christ as the head of the church. So, it's never the case that a church just does whatever the pastor says, or at least it shouldn't be.

If you're ever in a place where somebody says, I'm the pastor, that's why, you're in the wrong place. It's the Word of God that must drive all that we do.
Which is why it's imperative that you bring your Bible to church and have it open on your lap because it's always true that what the pastor says must come from the Word.
And where you see churches where the Word is not, if you can go sit in a sermon and you don't need your Bible there, there's all kinds of dangers there. But one of the chief dangers is what the congregation is perhaps inadvertently saying to the one who is preaching is we'll just take your Word for it.
It's not the way the church works. We'll take His Word for it, but not mine.

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[17:58] My Word must come from His Word. And the idea in verse 2, to shepherd the flock of God among you includes more than just the preaching of the Word, but never less than that.

So pastors are to be shepherds. And they're to be shepherds of a specific flock. Again, He says that this is the Word He gives to the elders.
The exhortation to the elders in verse 1 is this, shepherd the flock of God among you, which is not only the idea of shepherding, but it's to a specific flock. Shepherd the flock of God among you.
I am called, our pastors of our church are called to shepherd this flock. We're not given the responsibility to go shepherd all the people.
Not only would that be impossible, that's not biblical. I'm not responsible to shepherd all of the people in Mustang or South Oklahoma City or Canadian County.
[19:03] We are given the responsibility to shepherd the flock of God among you. specific shepherds serving, teaching, leading specific sheep. And so as I often say in our new members class, I'm not going to wake up in the morning and come to work and find out what every church in a 10-mile radius taught today and then go correct them if I think it was unbiblical.

It's not my responsibility. I'm not going to drive two miles or 10 miles or 20 miles down the road tomorrow and meet with their staff and ask them what their view was of a certain doctrine.
I'm not the shepherd of those congregations. But to this congregation, the Lord has called out and raised up shepherds who are to shepherd the flock of God among you, which reminds us that it is specific sheep that are a part of the New Testament church and you shepherd the flock of God among you is also a word to the shepherds that you need to be among the people.
This is very important. I really don't think it's a biblical idea for those who are pastors of the church to be hard to get to, hard to talk to, hard to find.
I don't think it's healthy when the teaching pastor of a church slips in right before he preaches and then he preaches and then he prays and then like the smoke comes up and he's gone and where'd he go?
[20:39] You can't ever talk to him. You can't ever ask him a Bible question. You can't ever find out what he believes about something. You can't see how does he treat his wife. You can't see how does he treat his children.

It's just kind of this talking head that appears when he's on and the lights are on and the microphone's on and then he's just gone. I think there's something biblical that's important to know as for those who are called to be pastors of a church that you shepherd the flock of God among you which not only speaks to the fact that it's a specific relationship but it reminds us that the shepherds must be among the flock.
Biblical pastoring is with the people. And those who are pastors in this church and those who are in the congregation who one day the Lord may raise up to pastor in any congregation need to understand that biblical shepherding biblical pastoring is with the people.
It's among the people. He also says that elders are to lead God's people according to God's ways. Go back to verse 2.
Shepherd the flock of God that is among you exercising oversight. So there is oversight that the shepherds are supposed to give but it's not under compulsion but willingly as God would have you.
[22:09] This is so important for the church to understand. That the role of the pastors in a congregation is to shepherd to give oversight as God would have you.

Not as they would want. Not as they would desire. Not according to their whims. Not that their vote wins every single question in the church.
The question is always what would God have us to do? What would God have us to know? And the primary way we know that is through the study of His Word.
Lord. We shepherd the flock of God as God would have you. And so while the influence of the pastors in a church should be evident and it should be quite clear the impact they're having on the congregation ultimately that impact should always point back to Christ.
This is Paul saying in 1 Corinthians imitate me as I imitate Christ. So yes leadership matters and those who are under Paul's leadership are reflecting him but it's something greater than that they're ultimately reflecting Christ because Paul says here's the way the Christian leadership should work.
[23:30] Imitate me while I'm imitating Christ. So the pastors in the church are leading and guiding and giving oversight to the church but it's as God would have them.

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Now let's be crystal clear on this. I have the same Bible you have and I have the same Holy Spirit that you have.
I don't have an extra book of the Bible. I don't have an extra measure of the Holy Spirit. Our pastors have the same scripture the same Holy Spirit that you have which means we can't get in some room somewhere and we get extra access to God or God loves us more.
So how in the world are we going to lead the church as God would have us? Same way that any Christian can know what God wants by knowing his word.
By knowing his word. God which again is why if you come to the church tomorrow at 835 you're going to see us in the conference room Bibles open and you're going to hear us reading scripture out loud.
[24:47] It's how we start every Monday morning. I take some grief sometimes from some friends of mine that say why do you have your staff get here at 830 for stopping the first thing in the morning?

And the answer is because I want the first sound of our week to be the word of God. I don't want to go make decisions on a Monday without being reminded that we are to serve as God would have us.
That it's his word, his will, his spirit, his name that's preeminent over all things. Ultimately it's not about First Baptist Mustang's name, it certainly is not about my name, it's not about the name of our pastors, it is about the name of Christ.
And so the responsibility of the shepherds is to serve as God would have them to serve. And they're to be faithful examples of the flock.
We see that in verse 3, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. Pastors should not be domineering people.
[26:09] Pastors should never be afraid to say, let's see what the Bible says about that. And they are to be examples to the flock.

Now let's be clear, biblically, when you look at 1 Timothy, when you look at Titus, when you look at 1 Peter, all of the examples that talk about what the role of a pastor and the character of a pastor is to be, they are to be faithful in their life, not perfect.
The same fall that impacts you impacts me. The same sin that is evident in the world around you that influences you influences all of us.
And so, we don't ever want to pretend that pastors or pastors' families are perfect. And that can happen from both sides of the equation. Sometimes the church assumes or expects the pastor's family should be perfect.
Sometimes the pastor himself tries to put up some front as if his life or his family is perfect. And all of that is damaging because it's not true.
[27:19] But, while there is no perfection, the pastor, the shepherd, should be examples to the flock. Which means it should not surprise you to find out that I'm not a perfect husband.

That shouldn't be shocking. But you should be able to look at how I treat my wife and see a faithful example.
Not perfect. I need grace every bit as much as you do. but you should see a faithful example. You should be able to watch our marriage and not be shocked that you see an imperfection.
There's all kinds of imperfection. But you should see a faithful example. That's how pastors are to live.
Not perfect. Absolutely in need of grace. In need of patience just like everybody else. But they should be examples to the flock.
[28:31] And so when Mars and I were young and newly married, we just had our 27th wedding anniversary this past week.

When we were newly married, we sat on the front row because I was on a church staff. That was just kind of the job, kind of the way that worked. And when our kids started coming into church, they sat on the front row and if they misbehaved, everybody saw them.
Now, our family's imperfect. We have been perfect husband and wife, imperfect parents, imperfect kids. Everything about our family is imperfect. Everything about every pastor's family is imperfect. But it should be a faithful example. And for those of you who are perhaps teenagers or children and in 10 or 15 or 20 or 30 years, God's going to call you to be a pastor.

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I just want to speak to you, some of our children. Maybe there's a third grade boy here in the congregation and in 30 years you're going to be pastoring a church. I just want to say to you that if you ever forget that you and your family need grace, you've missed it.
[29:53] Because no matter what your title or position or degree you've earned is, you never outgrow your need of grace. Don't pretend you're perfect.

But do live your life as an example to the flock. That's just the way that it is.
And sometimes you hear people who are pastors who just say, you know, I don't want any extra pressure on me or I don't want anybody looking at me.
Well, I want people looking through me to see Christ. But here's the deal. If you're a shepherd of God's people, you are to be an example to the flock. There's just no getting around that.
We're not perfect. Don't be surprised to find out we made a mistake. Don't be surprised to find out that we still have to confess sin. That's absolutely true for all of us.
[30:52] But the church does have the right to look at their pastors and say, I expect to see a faithful example of loving Christ. Not perfect, not flawless, but a faithful example.

faithful. And those who serve and lead in the church are to be humble and lead the church to be humble. We see that in verse five.
You who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourself, all of you, with humility toward one another. So, the pastors have to be humble to remind themselves in verse four, Christ is the chief shepherd, we're not.
And the church is supposed to, all of you, it says, clothe yourself with humility. One of the things that should never be a hallmark of any church is pride.
Should never be the hallmark of it. Should never be a way you would describe that pastor or describe that staff or describe that church. church. Now, here's what's happening in our culture today, though, that's the challenge.
[32:10] What has kind of been this sleight of hand that the culture has tried to pull in the church is that if you are clear or if you are bold or if you are precise, that that is somehow prideful and arrogant.

Now, that's not true. For me to say Jesus is the only way to heaven is not arrogant. It's gospel. For me to say that the Lord has raised up pastors of the church to lead the church is not arrogant.
It's biblical. For me to say that any religion that does not confess Christ as Savior is a false religion, that's not arrogant.
That's what the Bible teaches. And we live in this day where the culture has so infiltrated the church that men who are supposed to be shepherds of the church are afraid to be clear.
And it sounds so humble. I have my truth, you have yours. I have my Jesus, you have yours. I don't know for sure what the word says.
[33:29] Who can really know these things? These are such complicated issues. That kind of language just sounds so humble. It's not humble, it's cowardly. Don't be confused on those things.

It's not humble to be afraid to proclaim the truth. faith. And our culture has far too many men who are supposed to be shepherds and under the guise of humility, what they have is no spiritual courage.
That's not good. But conversely, where you see pride creep in would be where you have men who say, I'm the pastor, we're doing it this way.
As if every decision that we can't chapter and verse has to be exactly what this one man or this group of men want it to be. That's pride.
Pride is demanding your own way all the time. Pride is demanding that everybody think like you about everything all the time. So let's be very clear in the church.
[34:42] Christ is the head of the church. His authority is supreme. And the Lord calls out men to be pastors and shepherds in the local congregation who are to lead and give oversight, not according to their whim, but as God would have them.

And together, collectively, all of us should be growing in humility. And boldness and humility fit together just fine. Arrogance and humility do not fit together at all.
And so it's good for us who care at this church about precision and care about doctrine to sing songs like, may Christ be all and I be nothing.
Because it's not about our name or our reputation, it's about Christ. So being precise on who Christ is, is essential.

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What people say of us is inconsequential. May Christ be all. So Christ is the head, the pastors are called out by God to lead, and the body of Christ, the members are to serve.
[36:11] Go with me back to the left to Ephesians 4. We'll take just a minute here in Ephesians 4. We're not making much progress through Colossians 1, but these issues are so important.

They're so important. it matters so much to me that you understand that what we do is rooted in Scripture. It's so important that you would know and understand that at this church, the question we want to ask more than any other question is what does the Bible say?
Why do we do this? Why are we organized this way? Why is this the way we function? It's so essential that we're rooted in Scripture. So in Ephesians 4, it's talking here about what about those shepherds?
What about the pastors, the teachers? Verse 11, God gives the shepherds and teachers, the pastor teachers, here's what they do, verse 12, to equip the saints. So, in our teaching, in our preaching, it should be an equipping.
This is why Martin Lloyd Jones, for example, one of the great pastors of last century, he would meet with people, but he wouldn't meet with them if they didn't attend public worship.
[37:37] He wouldn't do counseling with couples if they didn't come to church because he would say, every time the Bible is open, I'm discipling you, I'm training you, I'm equipping you, and if you're not submitting your life to the teaching and authority of the Bible, then I really have nothing to offer you.

Every time the word is taught, you should be equipped. That's verse 12, the pastors equip the saints for the work of ministry, which tells us that it's not the pastors who are the professionals and the church members are the spectators.
It's not the way that it is. If you go to an NBA basketball game, you've got a few professionals on the job or on the floor doing their job and a whole lot of people who stand on the sidelines and watch and cheer and boo and clap that's not the way the church is.
Christ is the head. The pastors, the teachers are to equip the body, verse 12, and the saints, that's you, it's the church, are to do the work of ministry.
You've got a lot of churches in our culture today where the ministry is done by just a few just the professional, just the paid, just the ones with titles, and everybody else just sits back and watches.
[39:06] There's so many dangers to that, not the least of which is it's an unbiblical model. The pastors are called out by God to teach and to train, verse 12, Ephesians 4, to equip.

for the building up of the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.
Again, Christ is the head of the church. This is why we equip, so that you know Christ.
this is why you are trained so you can serve for the glory of Christ. Verse 12, to build the body of Christ until you attain mature manhood of the knowledge of the Son of God who is Christ and that we would all have a measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ because Christ is the head of the church.
Christ is the preeminent one in everything that the church does. And so pastors in Ephesians 4 are to equip the saints for ministry.
[40:21] The church is built up and made stronger. We have a unity of the faith. We are to speak the truth in love. Look at verse 15. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ.

What does that sound just like? Colossians 1. Scripture does not want you to ever lose sight of this. That your pastors, your elders, your shepherds, your leaders, they are to do a task given to them, but Christ is the head.
And so in Colossians 1, in Ephesians 4, in 1 Peter 5, the Bible never wants you to lose sight of that, so it keeps reminding you, Christ is the head, Christ is the head, Christ is the chief shepherd.
We never want to forget that. We are to grow up into him who is the head, into Christ, that the goal of all of our preaching is to point people to Jesus.
Not impress people with ourselves, not impress people with our knowledge, but help people know Christ more and love Christ more. Go back to Colossians 1 with me.
[41:48] Colossians 1 verse 18, he is the head of the body, the church, he is the beginning, the word beginning there is an important word, arche, it carries with it the idea that of source and primacy, Christ is the source of the church, he originated it, and of primacy, he is the highest rank in

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the church.

And then again at the end of verse 18, and he is the firstborn from the dead, there's that word again, prototokos. We'll look next week what it means to know Christ as the firstborn from the dead. We'll come back to that next Sunday, but look at the end of verse 18, that in everything, he might be preeminent. That in everything, Christ is the preeminent one.
In our preschool ministry, children, youth, college, adults, senior adults, in our music, in our teaching, in our outreach, in our fellowship, in our prayer, in our evangelism, everything we do, let us never forget Colossians 1.18, that in everything, he might be preeminent.
The church is not run by pastors, it's run by Christ, as revealed through his word, word, so that the people who are called out by God to oversee the church would lead, but as God would have them, and not in a way that would bring the glory to them, but would remind people that it is Christ who is the preeminent one.
[43:58] Which is why, I don't think I'm speaking prophetically here, that's why if I take my last breath tomorrow, I hope a few of you come to my funeral service by the end of the week, but next Sunday morning, no one's wondering what do we do?

you sing about Christ, you preach Christ, you make disciples, you teach and you train, and you call on people to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Jesus.
And the fact that a certain leader or a certain voice or a certain face that a church has been accustomed to seeing or hearing is removed has no bearing on what that church does.
because the church was not about the person, the church is about Christ. So, if the Lord grants me another 20 years to serve here, I hope it's 20 years of pointing you to Jesus.
If He gives me 30 years to serve here, I pray it's 30 years of pointing you to Jesus. And at some point when my voice is gone, the church should have no trouble knowing what do we do next Sunday.
[45:23] We point people to Jesus. Because Christ is the head of the church. Christ is the source and the preeminent one.

And so, let's go back to where we began. In Mark 8, Jesus says, if you want to come after me, deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow me.
Who are you to command us to follow you? Colossians 1 says, here's who He is. He's the one who is sovereign over all creation, and He's the one who is sovereign over the church.
That's why we follow Him. How do we follow Him? Well, that's what we've looked at today. By having biblical pastors who are faithful examples, faithful shepherds, who lead you, and teach you, and guide you, and feed you, not according to their whims, as God would have them.
And members, according to Ephesians 4, who are trained and equipped and do the works of ministry so the church is made stronger, and that we never forget it is Christ who is the head of the church.
[46:41] And we've got to remind ourselves over and over again about these truths. Because one of the things that happens in a church like ours, where by God's grace we're able to add new members all the time, we've got lots of new people coming, we've got lots of new faces that are among us every single Sunday, which we're so thankful for, but we have to remind ourselves of these truths, and not assume them, because the church cannot afford to be wrong on Jesus.

And we can't afford to be wrong on the church. And those two things go together. If you're wrong on Jesus, you're going to be wrong on the church.
Because if you don't see Christ as the preeminent one, then what you're going to do is you're going to have a church that's run by somebody less than Christ. And you know the way that works.
It can be a pastor who thinks everybody's got to do everything his way. It can be the wealthy members of the church who are always dangling their money over the church, and if I don't get my way, I'm going to leave, and everybody's afraid to lose them.
Or it's going to be the cranky people in the church who are always unhappy about something, and if you don't do exactly what they want, they're going to make life miserable for everybody. Or it's going to be about the influential people in the community who go to that church.
[48:06] And if we're not careful, the church will forget very quickly that Christ is the preeminent one, and the one who leads that church will be all kinds of different things, all of them less than Christ.

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And none of that is pleasing to God. And so, we need to remind ourselves, how is the church supposed to be organized?
Christ is the head, the pastors and shepherds lead, the deacons serve, and all of the body of Christ uses their gifts in a way that strengthens the church and brings glory to Jesus.
Jesus. Now, that's a beautiful place to be. Many of you have been in churches that were far different than that. But when you find a place where on a Sunday morning, hundreds of people open up their Bible and will say to the preacher, I'm listening, I'm ready to be taught, I just want to make sure what you say comes from here, it's a beautiful place to be.
When you sing about the greatness of Jesus, when you read about the greatness of Jesus, when your fellowship with each other is pointing people to be more like Jesus, it's a great place to be.
[49:45] And so, I want to say of our church, what I said about pastors in 1 Peter 5, our church isn't perfect, let's never pretend that we are. Our church is always in need of improvement, always in need of grace, always in need of instruction.

But the true biblical church should always be a faithful example to other churches. Just like the pastor's families aren't perfect, but should be a faithful example of the flock, so a biblical church will never be perfect, but we ought to be faithful examples to others.
And I will just kind of lay my cards on the table here. I have no interest at all in comparing how big our church is to somebody else's, or what our income looks like to somebody else's, or any worldly standard or measure of how people measure success, that holds no sway with me at all.
What I do care about is that people could come to this church and say, though imperfect, this was a place that taught me the Bible and helped me love Jesus more.
I care about being a church that other churches could look at us and say, not that we're perfect, but that our church was an encouragement to them of what a faithful church should be.
[51:35] So that when we preach the gospel and invite people to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Jesus, it will be crystal clear to all who we mean when we say, follow Jesus, and clear to all what we mean when we say Jesus is the head of the church.

And these are not things we can afford to assume. These are not things we can afford to hope people understand. This is the rock foundation, the solid, impenetrable foundation of who we are and of what we believe.
When we invite people to follow Jesus, it's because He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Because He is the way, the truth, and the life, and because nobody comes to the Father except through Him.
Why would you ever want anyone else to be the head of the church? It belongs to Christ. Let's sing of Him. Let's preach of Him.
Let's pray to Him. Let's live for Him. And let's make sure that in all things, He would be the preeminent one among us.
[53:07] Lord, we thank You today for Your Word and for the instruction. we pray that it would encourage us, correct us, inspire us, remind us of what matters.

Lord, I pray that we would forever be looking to Your Word for guidance. In all things, remind ourselves that Christ is the preeminent one.
Lord, I thank You, Lord, for the leaders You have put in place at this church. I thank You for the pastors that You have given to this congregation, imperfect men, but men who love You and love Your Word.
I thank You for those You have called out in the leadership that oversee ministries and age groups and help to point people to Christ.
I thank You, Lord, for our deacons, godly group of men who love Your Word and love to serve. I thank You for the privilege it is to partner with our deacons in serving the people of this church, men who desire to make much of Christ, men who desire to see this church reach the neighborhoods and the nations.
[54:27] I thank You for the members of this church, men and women and boys and girls who love the gospel, who love Jesus, who want to serve each other, who want to help our church be a New Testament biblical congregation.

All of it because we want to be faithful to share the gospel and to give the invitation as Christ gave it to us that we would ask others and call on them to repent, to deny themselves and take up their cross daily and to follow Jesus.

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We pray in His name. Amen. I want to invite you to be back tonight. This is our last evening service until August.
We take the summer weeks off from evening service because of all the camps and VBS and mission trips and things that we do. But tonight we'll be gathering together. We're going to complete our study on the armor of God from Ephesians 6.
We're also going to take the Lord's Supper together. We'll have a great time as we do those things. We'd love to have you come and be a part at five o'clock for our evening. God bless you.
[55:56] God bless you.

God bless you. offering you. God bless you.

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