

**COME
HOLY
SPIRIT**



Sermon Growth Guide

**June 19, 2022
Bring Us Justice**

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Come Holy Spirit – Bring Us Justice

Ezekiel 34:1-16

Key Verse: Ezekiel 34:12 “As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so I will look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.”

Big Idea: Bad shepherds/leaders use people for their own personal gain, but Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will lay down His life for us and bring true justice.



Foundations

You might be asking, “Why is the sermon series on the Holy Spirit based on the prophetic book of Ezekiel and not some New Testament passages that describe Pentecost and the work of the Holy Spirit?” That’s a good question, with a good answer.

The first major thing you encounter in Ezekiel is the description of the rebellion of the people of God. They have abandoned God so that they could build their nation according to their own desires and not according to the commands and desires of God their Savior. Soon their immoralities and worship of idols far surpassed that of the pagan nations. Their hearts became hearts of stone, leading them to exploit and oppress the people of God.

God’s judgment was harsh, but His grace was greater. The rebellious leaders who exploited the flock of God were going to be replaced by God Himself, the Good Shepherd. And God would do what the rebels could not do. He would, by the power of His Holy Spirit, replace their hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. God’s Spirit would bring God’s flock into new life. They would now be able to trust the True Shepherd. The work of the Spirit is demonstrated by setting right the effects of rebellion. God’s Spirit, through His Shepherd, will bring justice to those who have been broken by the bad shepherds. We bring death. The Spirit brings life.

Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Ezekiel 34:1-16

In describing the bad shepherds, Ezekiel also describes the various kinds of suffering the sheep endure. What has happened to the sheep under the bad shepherds? (v. 1-10)

Describe what life will be like for God’s flock under the care of the Good Shepherd. (v. 11-16)

Applying God’s Word

Also read John 21:15-17. What task has the Lord given to us? Given what you learned from verses 11-16, what would that look like in your situation? Be specific.

Witnessing God’s Word

Throughout his prophecy, Ezekiel is very clear that two things will cause people to know the Lord: (1) God’s judgment and (2) God’s gracious restoration. In his sermon, Pastor Tim talked about how we should shepherd God’s flock. He mentioned a transforming benediction from 1 Thessalonians 5:14-16. If we lived into that charge, what would the world see of Jesus? What would justice look like?

A good man is hard to find. Where do you find a good man? We have some in this church! Happy Father's Day. I think it is hard to find a good man. I wanted to hear what people are saying about this, so, naturally, I Googled "How can you find a good man." No kidding, this is what came up [slide on screens]. No kidding. Number one answer: Go to church! Amen! You may not even be religious, it says, but that's not the point! Maybe Google knows a little bit about my interests, I don't know, but I like that answer! I love being around the men of this church. I love being shaped and sharpened as a man, as a father, as a husband by the guys running around here. We need good men. There is no question we live in a time when men, fathers, fatherhood, masculinity itself, are all under attack. Just watch commercials go by. Is the dad portrayed as competent or incompetent? Smart or foolish? More than that is the constant drumbeat against toxic masculinity. Yes, men can behave badly but boys need to know there is such a thing as a good man. You boys need to know that being a man is a good thing. God intends for you to grow up to be a good, godly man! Men need to know there is such a thing as a good, godly man. The world needs good men.

As we continue in our series, **Come Holy Spirit**, we see that the Spirit of God is at work to create good men—good men and good women—who will be good shepherds. Unfortunately, there are plenty of bad shepherds out there. Bad shepherds are self-centered. They use others to benefit themselves. They put their own selfish interests in front of the needs of the people around them. They create injustice and perpetuate injustice for their own profit. We pray for the Holy Spirit to come and motivate us, move us, empower us to work for justice, for life the way God wants it. We pray for the Holy Spirit to come and **Bring Us Justice**. Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation

on January 1, 1863, but it was two and a half years later, June 19, 1865, before it reached the last enslaved black Americans. We wait sometimes for justice. We pray Bring Us Justice.

Ezekiel paints a picture of some bad shepherds. "The word of the Lord came to me: 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock'" (Ezekiel 34:1-3). Have you ever seen a bad leader? Have you known leaders like this? Yeah, a few. One of the great disappointments of my life in ministry is how many key Christian leaders, men, I have seen fall from grace over the last 20 years. You were meant to care for the flock! Not fatten yourself and watch them suffer and get slaughtered. Jesus told Peter, "If you love me, feed my sheep" in John 21. That's why Peter later wrote that this is the primary role of a pastor or elder, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve" (1 Peter 5:2). I'm grateful for pastors and elders, men and women, who embody this humble service.

Jesus was no doubt thinking of this passage when He grieved the lack of leadership in His time. Matthew says, "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:35-36). Harassed and helpless. It breaks His heart. "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. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. 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” (Ezekiel 34:4-6).

This passage is kind of a photo negative of a good shepherd. What would a good shepherd do? Not this! A good shepherd would strengthen the weak. If I can stay with men for a bit here on Father’s Day, a good man strengthens the weak. He cares for the sick. He binds up the injured. My dad was an EMT for a while. Whenever he’s around, I know there’s half an ER’s worth of bandages and wound care materials in his truck! Are you ready to bind up the injured—literally and figuratively? How about bring back the strays and search for the lost? Where does that play into your leadership? I wonder if Paul had this passage in mind when he wrote to the church in Thessalonica, “And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:14-19). I used to worship under a pastor who delivered that as the benediction every Sunday. As you go back out into the world, remember the type of man you are meant to be, the type of woman God sends out of a place of worship like this, the type of influence that blesses the world. Do not quench the Spirit. The Spirit intends to drive you this direction, to fire you up for this kind of work. You can be an instrument of reconciliation,

justice, mercy, hope, healing...you can be a good influence in a fallen world.

It’s interesting how Ezekiel says, “you have ruled them harshly and brutally.” Then he says, “So they were scattered because there was no shepherd.” Harsh, domineering, brutal leadership is actually no leadership at all. It just drives people away. To have that kind of father, husband, is to not have one at all, as this reads. It’s not too much of something. It’s not too much of a leader; it is no leader. Harsh and brutal. There is too much of that in the world. We partner with a ministry called Family Life Services that helps women with children find refuge when it is needed. Many women in situations of abuse will say they just didn’t know who to call, how to reach out, to which I would say, call the Domestic Violence Hotline, call TESSA, call Family Life Services. Call us. I hope you would call us, the pastors of this church. We haven’t always hit it out of the park with this. In fact, there are times I have failed and not responded in the right way, but I don’t want to give up on being a safe place to call for refuge and help. Our church is a safe place to find help. This is a community, this is a church, striving to be a refuge for any who are suffering abuse, harsh and brutal, under hands of violence. Reach out. Call someone. Get help. A harsh and brutal leader, father, husband, wife—that’s no shepherd. So they all wandered away and became food for wild animals.

Does God care when we suffer injustice? Maybe God does spiritual stuff and we handle the ways of the world. How does God feel about bad leadership? Does God care when we suffer under the hand of selfish leaders who harass and domineer and abuse? Leaders who are no leaders at all, and ultimately leave us helpless? Does God care? “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no



longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them” (Ezekiel 34:10). This is the Spirit of God moving in the world to make things better.

This is the Spirit of God moving in us to raise up better leadership, stronger fathers, stronger mothers, better leaders, better pastors, better business leaders and government leaders and educational leaders. God names it out loud: “I, God, am against this kind of thing. I am against this kind of leader.” That’s the Spirit on the move, pushing all of us to change. To do what? To cut out the selfishness and serve.

Wouldn’t it be nice if that finished it? There is injustice in the world. Do justice. There is bad leadership in the world. Be a good leader. There are selfish shepherds in the world. Be a good shepherd. There are not-so-good fathers in the world. Be a great father! Well, it’s harder than that, isn’t it? Good dads are good rescuers who fight for what is just and right. Good leaders are selfless and serving and smart. Why aren’t we all just like that? The problem is bigger; and we will need bigger help to fix it. The Lord cares that there are poor shepherds and unjust leaders in the world, but the Lord knows that it will not fix the problem just to call them out and shout, “Do better!” “For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. 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” (Ezekiel 34:11-12). “I will. I myself.” God resolves to intervene. Not just to toss good ideas over the pulpit or lectern. Not just to berate those who struggle at this and can’t find good patterns. Not just to condemn the wicked! But to intervene. To step in. “I myself.”

“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. 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” (Ezekiel 34:13-14). Do you see what is happening here? It isn’t that God shows us the way to do it and sits back to watch. God is resolved to step in. “I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. 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” (Ezekiel 34:15-16).

When Jesus came, He said, “I am the good shepherd.” “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:10-11). God Himself will shepherd the people with justice. Jesus brings justice. Jesus sets things right. Jesus is our good shepherd who lays His life down for the sheep. Men, we try, don’t we? We try and we fail. And we try, and we fail. But we get up and try again, never quenching the Spirit who pours His power into our lives to motivate us for justice, good leadership, and selfless service. But ultimately the one who brings justice is Jesus. He will set all things right, forgive every shortfall, make up every gap, and restore every broken thing. To Him, to the only Good Shepherd, be all the glory and power.

