



## **feeding . . . gathering . . . carrying . . . leading. (Isaiah 40:11)**

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September 6, 2013

Dear Church,

Please forgive this late pastoral letter! It's been a very full week. Stuart closed our "Commendables" summer series this past Sunday by speaking about the unnamed commendables in Scripture, especially in the Gospel accounts. In these unnamed ones—like the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garments, or the wedding servant who obeyed Jesus' direction to fill the many jugs with water—we find examples to emulate and even a sense of solidarity. After all, our names aren't written in the Bible like Job or Moses. But "unnamed" though we may be in that sense, Stuart reminded us that upon entry into heaven we will each be given a new name (even a secret name) by our Father in heaven.

God knows us and He knows our deeds. But therein lies a problem for us. Scripture is consistent in its depiction of humanity as fallen and condemnable. How, then, can we receive the designation, "commendable"? Scripture is clear: only on account of the commendability of Christ, the only perfectly commendable member of the human race. By faith and hope in him we are justified and the verdict of condemnation that looms over us is replaced by a verdict of commendation. We celebrated this as we took the bread and cup on Sunday, as we remembered that our salvation cost something, that the condemnation we deserve fell on Christ instead of us, so that we might receive the commendation of the righteous Christ. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Co. 5:21)

On this side of the cross there is no more condemnation for us, but there still remains a great need for conviction. Whereas condemnation results in exclusion and rejection, conviction leads to repentance and restored relationship. We are instructed in Scripture to maintain a clear conscience, to keep short accounts with the Lord, and when our heart condemns us, to return to the cross, confess our sin, and receive God's grace anew.

Rich blessings,  
Ben

<http://www.christourshepherd.org/pastlet.htm> (and follow links to download MP3 audio of sermon)