

Matthew 10: Sheep Among Wolves

We will miss the benefit of these words if we do not realize that Jesus spoke them with US in mind.

Matthew 10:16-33

¹⁶ “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

Shrewd: from root word meaning thoughtful, perceiving, judging- invokes both intelligence AND wisdom

Innocent: without admixture of evil (pure, as metals or wine), free from guile, innocent, simple

Be sheep who know very well the dangers posed by wolves but remain steadfastly sheep, uninfluenced by them.

They cannot make you afraid, nor lure you into their jaws, nor convince you to become a wolf yourself.

The sheep are God’s plainclothes operatives, living in enemy territory. When we carry out our mission, trouble follows.

Who are the wolves?

¹⁷ But beware of men, for they will hand you over to *the* courts and scourge you in their synagogues; ¹⁸ and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

The wolves are those who cause the sheep legal trouble, punish them for blasphemy/false teaching, and even make high-profile prisoners out of us.

This is all very alarming. Sheep would be helpless on their own, but the sheep have a Good Shepherd!

¹⁹ But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but *it is* the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

²¹ “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ²² You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. ²³ “But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish *going through* the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes.

The wolves can be anyone from immediate family to (generically) all people, incensed against us because of Jesus’ name.

²⁴ “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more *will they malign* the members of his household!

The wolves will use name-calling, slander and open criticism to try to lure the sheep into their jaws.

²⁶ “Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear *whispered* in *your* ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

None of the evil they plan against us will remain hidden, and none of the Words of God should either!

Jesus names the two great temptations we face when threatened with hardship: fear and shame.

²⁸ Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

Know your worth in the eyes of God! Could one of His precious children really be suffering and He does not know it?

³² “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

Even in the face of death, do not fear men or be ashamed of Jesus! He is our shield, our very great reward.