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MATTHEW

Sheep Among Wolves

Matthew 10:26-42

- I. Limited Commission
 - a. How desperate are we for people to see Jesus?
 - i. What is that worth to us? What price would we be willing to pay to make Him known?
 - ii. Those are the questions we are faced with in this chapter of Matthew
 - b. The disciples are sent out in power to announce the kingdom of heaven is at hand
 - i. The king has arrived – the one we have been waiting for
 1. Genesis 49 - The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.
 2. 2 Sam 7 - I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
 3. Zech 9 - Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey
 4. Daniel 7 - I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! ... Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion
 - ii. Just a few examples of “the King is coming soon”
 1. Now the 12 are sent out to the lost sheep of Israel to announce that the King has arrived!
 2. Chapter 10 is Jesus preparing them for that work – the Missionary Discourse
 - c. Good news met with opposition
 - i. ***Matt 9:32 As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. 33 And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, “It was never seen like this in Israel!” 34 But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.”***
 - ii. ***Matt 10:24 “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!***
 1. What was behind their opposition?
 - a. ***John 11:47-48 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, ‘What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him,***

and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.'"

- b. Pilate could see their motives ***Matt 27:18 "For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy."***
- c. Luke 16:14 Now the Pharisees, ***who were lovers of money,***
- iii. Jesus isn't just preparing His disciples for this missionary journey – He is preparing all believers everywhere
 1. The message and the audience have expanded – The King has come and the King has won – that message goes out to all nations
 2. *Here is the uncomfortable truth* – the more boldly and clearly that message is preached and lived – the more it will produce both fruit and stir up wolves
 3. Paul writes in 2 Cor 2 - *"For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?"*
 4. ***Joh 3:19-20 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing***
- d. Opposition and friction can leave us asking “Am I doing something wrong?”
 - i. Purpose of the preparation – don't be caught off guard, they call me the prince of demons
 - ii. Natural responses to opposition – fight or flight
 1. Jesus wants our response to be supernatural – that is what He is training His disciples for

Matt 10:16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

II. Wise as Serpents, Humble as Doves (Foundational for our Witness)

- a. Sheep amongst wolves
 - i. In constant danger, no capacity for self-defense
 - ii. Dependent on the shepherd
 1. *Our battle is not against flesh and blood - but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*
- b. Wise as serpents
 - i. ***Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field***
 - ii. In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament used in Jesus' time), the word used for the serpent in Genesis 3:1 is phronimos (translated as cunning).
 - iii. Guess what word Jesus uses when He tells his disciples to be "wise as serpents"?
 1. He uses the exact same word: phronimos.
 - iv. Cunning – flies in the face of lazy and legalistic evangelism – more about quantity than quality – regurgitating a message over
 1. Snake - Right timing, understood Eve's desires, got close, asked a question, and was precise with his words
 2. Matt 22 – trap was set regarding taxes - Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's...

3. Acts 17 - Paul in Athens - *Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.*
4. As he noticed their many gods there was one that jumped out at him - specifically an altar to the Unknown God
 - a. "I perceive that in all things you are very religious."
 - b. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you
- v. The Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it is often a cover for a lack of compassion
- c. Harmless as doves
 - i. Pure – unmixed, without hidden agenda, free from evil intent
 - ii. Governs the motivation – the why?
 1. Motivation – exploitation and destruction vs deliverance
 2. Means – deception (conceal the hook) vs revelation (uncover the truth)
 - iii. This is what sets believers apart – we don't use the world's tactics – we don't respond in kind – we don't repay evil for evil – we overcome evil with good
 1. Guard our hearts against bitterness and resentment – becoming wolves ourselves

Matt 10: 26 Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. 27 "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot 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 copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

III. Do Not Fear Them

- a. Our fear is often a result of our focus
 - i. Fear what man can do – how it will be received – what they will think – what they will do
 - ii. Solution – change our focus – man's power is temporary, God's authority is eternal
 - iii. Fear of God is the antidote – again we go back to Paul's example
 1. ***Gal 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.***
 2. ***1 Thes 2:4 "But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts."***
 3. Col – don't do what we do for eyeservice, to impress people, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.
- b. The truth will come out, everything will be revealed
 - i. Don't hide it, be bold
 - ii. Jesus boldly stands before the Father and proclaims "He's mine" – do we do the same before men? Or are we ashamed of Him?

- c. Here's the reassurance
 - i. God cares deeply about you – Your life matters to Him – He will not abandon you in your time of need – He is walking with you every step of the way
 - ii. The opposition to the truth is great, but our God is greater

Mat 10:34 “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; 36 and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

IV. The Gospel Is Divisive

- a. Don't be surprised by division
 - i. Jesus makes this even more personal – don't fear what man can do
 - ii. Don't fear what family will do – I have seen parents compromise the truth for their children and children for their parents
- b. What happens when the opposition comes from those we love most?
 - i. Jesus has already said in ***Matt 10:21 “Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.***
 - ii. As one commentator points out - *Jesus does not come to poison family relationships, but rather he brings a division, regrettable but inevitable, between those who respond to his mission and those who reject it*
- c. Following Jesus brings about great gain, but it often brings about great loss
 - i. Taking up our cross means – Lord, my life yours – I understand there will be a price to be paid for following you
 - 1. But like Paul said in his letter to the Phil - *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him*

Matt 10:40 “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”

V. Receiving the Message

- a. Turns His attention to those receiving the message
 - i. The term "little ones" was a common saying used to describe someone of low social standing
 - ii. Jesus is explaining His disciples do not come with worldly power or influence – they are not men of high renown – the power is in the message – and those who receive them in their homes receive the message and in turn, receive Him

- b. Helps us to better understand a difficult passage in Matthew 25 that is often misunderstood and misused – context is key!
- i. ***Matt 25:31 “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ 37 “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40 And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’***
 1. The "brothers" and "the least of these" in Matthew 25 are not just the poor in a general sense, but the messengers, those who are suffering because of the Gospel
- c. Bookends
- i. In Matthew 10, Jesus warns His messengers that they will be "delivered over to courts," "flogged in synagogues," and "brought before governors and kings." He prepares them for persecution and prison
 - ii. In Matthew 25, 5th and final discourse (Olivet Discourse), He judges the nations based on how they treated people specifically in those conditions: hunger, thirst, naked, sick, and imprisoned
 1. When you took them in, you took Me in – when you accepted them, you accepted Me
 - iii. Then He will say to those on the left-hand side depart from me into everlasting fire – you did none of these things
 1. In rejecting my messengers, you rejected me
 - iv. ***Mat 26:46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”***
 1. These are the final words of his final discourse - When we reject the light of the world, we embrace the darkness
 2. But when we invite Him in, He ushers us into eternal life