

"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16)

I. Better to be Sheep than a Wolf

- a. The Lord has appointed us to be called "sheep." Wouldn't tigers be better? Sheep are not the most impressive creations in the animal kingdom. Why "sheep?"
 1. Sheep need a shepherd, they need guidance for feeding and protection from dangers.
 2. Sheep are not naturally heroic. We are to give up the world's standard of heroism.
- b. Verse 16, declares, *I am sending you*, which means the mission of sheep to wolves is not a mistake, but the Lord's design. This is intentional vulnerability. When we are weak He is strong.
- c. Jesus not only intends for His disciples to carry out the mission of preaching, healing, touching, but also to bear the suffering in persecution.
- d. Jesus did not say we are to become sheep, but to go into the world *as* sheep.
- e. Sheep are not primarily fighters and we are not allowed to be haters. This does not mean we are weak, but we are in desperate need of continuous guidance.
- f. Disciples have been set up, strategically placed to lose battles, but to win the war.
- g. The world are the "wolves". The world is deceitful and cunning. The world is like ravenous wolves resisting direction and peace. Also, seeking to destroy the unsuspecting,

II. Snake and Doves

- a. Disciples are not to imitate everything in snakes, only their intelligence (*Be wise as snakes*).
 1. We are vulnerable as sheep, but we should not be stupidly vulnerable. We have the wisdom of God available to us.
 2. Be smart sheep! Do not overestimate the kindness of wolves or the beauty of your surroundings.
 3. The first rule of sheep wisdom is always remember we live and operate among wolves.
- b. *And innocent as doves*. Doves are like sheep, peaceful, harmless and non-violent.
- c. Serpents are *wary of people*. Disciples should not assume that people are basically wonderful.
- d. Disciples are called to love their enemies, but not let their love be idolized.
- e. Disciples are not to be suspicious of everyone, but to trust God as they reach out to the world with the love of Christ.
- f. Our holy assignment, is a mission of love. We do it under the power of Christ. He has sent us!

III. Thoughts and Considerations for Action

- a. Jesus prophetically speaks trouble, but we have no record that the twelve suffered during their tour. Further reading of the N.T., informs us that the Apostles and future disciples did suffer for His name.
- b. We are sent into trouble, but we are to trust in the midst of trouble.
- c. Throughout the history of Christian mission, we have faced imperialism, racism, classism and all other isms. We face all the hate, betrayal and division Christ stands against.
- d. The power to go forward among wolves belongs to Christ. This informs us that we must be dependent on Him in order to accomplish our assignment.
- e. Onward Christian soldier, the Lord has already won the war, we must fight the spiritual battles around us.