“Watch Out For Wolves”

March 13, 2016

Acts 20:28-35

Please open your Bible today to the NT Book of Jude.

Almost everyone can recall the Mother Goose series written by the Frenchman Charles Perrault. One of those stories was called “Little Red Riding Hood.” I certainly remember hearing or reading it as a child. Charles Perrault was making the point that there is wise behavior and there is foolish behavior. And what was the point of this Mother Goose fairy tale? “Watch out! Be wary of strangers because some strangers can be dangerous.” The wolf, as you know, had eaten her grandmother and then dressed up to look like her in order to deceive Little Red Riding Hood.

Now, as a child, the story was a bit scary; as it should be. But, as an adult, we can look on it with a bit of humor. Yet, here’s the simple fact. There are some predators in your life.

Spiritually speaking, you might be naïve and innocent, just like Little Red Riding Hood. And you might not even notice that often, the ones who appear to look very good are really the most insidious. There are some people who are out to overthrow your faith. Sometimes people do have ulterior motives.

So, in light of those who are out to harm you spiritually, I’ve titled today’s sermon “Watch Out For Wolves.” Shall we pray? *“LORD, I pray that your word might be life and truth to my heart today and that I might know you better and live more obediently. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

Now, why would I want to warn you to “Watch Out For Wolves”? Here’s why -- because we live in a world that is nearly filled with lies. We’ve even come to place where you can say “Your truth is your truth. Mine is mine.” And, how many times have you been told, when it comes to the LORD and the Bible “That’s your opinion”? Or “You should be quote tolerant of them” implying anything goes today and that there are no moral absolutes.

Folks, there should be very sound reason for your beliefs. The world may just “make up” theirs. But a Christian can’t do that. And, among the most important things in life is this – truth. To live the Christian life, you want and need to know how to live according to the truth.

And there are wolves in today’s world just like there were in the days of Jude. There will always be someone whose goal it is to lead you *away* from the LORD Jesus Christ; *away* from His Church, *away* from His teachings.

Little Red Riding Hood thought that the wolf was her friend. Why else would she have begun a conversation with him? Why else trust him? Because even a friend can some-times lead you astray and away from the LORD.

So Jude, the little brother of Jesus, wrote his epistle to warn Believers to watch out for those who are counted as wolves.

And just for information, where did I get this “wolf” idea? On the day the Apostle Paul left for Rome and gathered the elders to him at the seaport at Miletus, he told them just that.

Acts 20:28 *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (29) For I know this, that after my departing shall* ***grievous wolves*** *enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*

*(30) Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (31) Therefore watch,…”*

So, would you begin with me at a verse we’ve already considered; Jude 4 where Jude says this. He reminds us that there were *“certain men crept in unawares, … ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [shamelessness], and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Normally you creep into a building for some mischievous reason. These were men who “crept into” the LORD’s Church. And they could not be seen for who they really were. They were somewhat undetectable because they were wolves in sheep’s clothing.

Now, today’s sermon revolves around the spiritual wolves. And the main passage I want to teach you from is verse eight. Jude 8 *“Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.”*

Would you agree with me that Jude is a good writer? You can always like a writer who uses word pictures. Well, Jude uses a lot of word pictures: filthy dreamers. Look down the passage to verse ten “brute beasts.” And verse twelve “spots in your feasts of charity.”

Verse twelve. Jude 12 *“These are* ***spots in your feasts of charity****, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear:* ***clouds they are without water****, carried about of winds;* ***trees whose fruit withereth****, without fruit, twice dead,* ***plucked up by the roots****;…”* Jude had no PC training when he wrote about these people.

You can also enjoy someone who knows his history well. Jude has a good handle on. But I especially like a writer who speaks the truth and brings me personally into direct contact with things that are good and right. And Jude is very adept as a writer

So, today, the wolves.

Now, in order to speak against the wolves of this world, I need to remind you of the term “sheep” and what the LORD says about sheep.

Some of the following comes directly from the mind of a shepherd. And many shepherds would use the following terms to characterize sheep. [Some of these qualities come from a website called [www.sheep101.com](http://www.sheep101.com).]

1. They follow their leader/shepherd; but **they stray easily**. They are prone to wander.
2. They are very social.
3. They are cautious and they learn slowly.
4. They are somewhat unattractive and usually dirty.
5. They are often demanding and quite needy.
6. They are unpredictable.
7. **They are prone to stray**.
8. **They are defenseless.**
9. They operate according to a “herd” mentality. They band together for protection. They call this a flocking instinct.
10. They are dependent by nature. To survive, they need a shepherd.
11. And they are not proud hunters nor are they fierce predators.

[Found on http://www.sheep101.info/201/behavior.html]

I’ve high-lighted just two qualities of sheep that are pertinent to the matter of the attack of a wolf: defenseless-ness and their proneness to stray.

And, as you already know, we are often referred to as sheep throughout the Bible. And Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd with good reason. Those who follow Him are His sheep. We are literally and truly dependent upon Him for everything. Fifty-three times God refers to people as sheep; in particular; *His* sheep, in the Bible.

But, as I studied on the topic of sheep in Scripture, I discovered that there is one prominent idea that is found in Scripture when it comes to you and as sheep. Here’s what it is.

Numbers 27:17 *“Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not* ***as sheep which have no shepherd****.”*

I Kings 22:7 *“And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills,* ***as sheep that have not a shepherd****:…”*

And Matthew 9:36 *“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad,* ***as sheep having no shepherd****.”*

The LORD’s concern for us; His will for us, His sheep, is to have Him as our Shepherd; that we daily and continually live with His personal leadership in our lives. He strongly prefers that we not be scattered and not operate with a shepherd. Practically speaking, it is dangerous for a sheep to be shepherd-less. God is not willing that anyone be a sheep without a shepherd; period.

Here’s a true story that shows the danger of straying away from the shepherd.

“The Peninsula Qatar” ran this article on July 8, 2005. “Istanbul: Hundreds of sheep followed their leader off a cliff in eastern Turkey, plunging to their deaths this week while shepherds looked on in dismay. Four hundred sheep fell 15 metres to their deaths in a ravine in Van province in Turkey

but broke the fall of another 1,100 animals who survived. Shepherds from a nearby village neglected the flock while eating breakfast, leaving the sheep to roam free. The loss to local farmers was estimated at $74,000 USD.” [Found on [www.thepeninsulaqatar.com](http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com). quoted by Tim Challies on [www.challies.com](http://www.challies.com). December 16, 2009].

Jesus taught us this about sheep. Matthew 10:16 *“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves:…”*

So, you and I are in this world as sheep in the midst of wolves. And you can expect to find sheep in the midst of wolves. But that’s just the opposite of what Jude says often happens. Folks, the reason the Holy Spirit had Jude write this epistle was to warn the sheep, not about the coming of the wolf; but the fact that the wolves were already among them.

Listen with me to Jude again. Jude 4 *“For there are certain men crept in unawares,…”*

What, then, is the message of Jude regarding these who have crept in unawares? What are his words of warning for today?

First, sheep exhibit purity while wolves exhibit impurity. A Christian ought to be someone whose aim is a pure heart and a pure mind.

Look again at the words Jude uses. Jude 8 *“Likewise also* ***these filthy dreamers defile the flesh****…”* By its very nature, a wolf is never concerned with the innocence or the purity of its prey. If anything, a wolf has no awareness of the sheep or the lamb as being anything other than food. The sheep exists for the benefit of the wolf – that’s it!

And Jude tells us that spiritual wolves see things in dreams and then they convey those dreams to others as though had heard from the LORD. So the LORD says they “defile the flesh” implying they are immoral.

Let me ask you to consider this from the other side of the equation. If the person was *not* a wolf, I can guarantee you this; he is *not* an immoral person. Folks, immoral lifestyles may be common in the world. But should someone with an immoral lifestyle lead and teach and minister in the LORD’s Church? That’s what Jude was seeing in some of the Churches of his day.

And remember again with me what the LORD says about immoral. He says that many Christians were once immoral. But now you are saved. Now you are washed.

I Corinthians 6:9 *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [gays and lesbians], nor abusers of themselves with mankind,*

*(10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And* ***such were some of you****: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”*

Immorality was rampant then and immorality is rampant today. Every one of these souls referred to here are immoral.

But not so for the Christian or for the LORD’s Church. So, when Jude warns the Christian Church, he points to the high road of a pure lifestyle.

Jesus encourages us with these words. Matthew 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

First, sheep exhibit purity while wolves exhibit impurity.

Second, sheep submit to those in authority while wolves rebel. It is the Christian way to maintain a deep awareness of the need to be under authority.

Here’s Jude again. Jude 8 *“Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh,* ***despise dominion****,…”*

Again, by their very nature, the last thing a wolf wants is to be under someone’s authority; someone’s dominion. They despise it. The original word Jude uses here is “lordship.” If someone has dominion over you, he’s in charge. And whenever you find “dominion” in Scripture, it’s a reference to authority. Folks, a wolf has no desire whatsoever to be under anyone’s authority.

Folks, the LORD is a God of order. And He is also a God of government. So, by implication, when someone won’t let the LORD’s plan and program for authority operate in their lives, they are basically stubborn and rebellious.

And Jude’s example of rebelliousness goes back to his review of the history of the angels who rebelled as we found back in the Book of Genesis.

Folks, the LORD holds truth on a very high pedestal. After all, Jesus calls Himself the Truth. John 14:6 *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life…”*

And this week as I read and thought about the illustrations and examples that Jude uses here, I wondered why the LORD was so extreme in his judgment. And here’s what I concluded.

The truth is what sets a man or a woman free from himself. It sets us free from our sins. It sets us free to a life of obedience. The truth sets us free to know and to love the LORD and others.

But what happens when we resist the truth? What happens when we insist on living our lives as we choose and apart from His principles? We exhibit qualities for which the LORD must intervene. And He must intervene.

Go back with me, for just a moment to the three examples Jude has already given. Note with me the complete loss of authority.

First, the ones who died in the wilderness. They refused to be led by LORD or by His servant Moses.

Second, the angels who rebelled. They chose to go contrary to God’s normal and nature order when it came to angels and human beings.

And third, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. They chose the immoral lifestyle over God’s ways.

Can you see how, in each case, they dismissed their God-given authorities?

Folks, each of you, each of us, has seen the practical value of being submissive to the authorities in our lives. We all know we are accountable; both to God and to man. And when the wolf arrives on the scene, he has no use for dominion. Actually, he despises dominion. He is fulfilling the role of a wolf.

First, sheep exhibit purity while wolves exhibit impurity.

Second, sheep submit to those in authority while wolves rebel. It is the Christian way to maintain a deep awareness of the need to be under authority.

Third, sheep see the need for respect whereas the wolf has zero reverence. Here’s Jude again. Jude 8 *“Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and* ***speak evil of dignities****.”*

Wolves aren’t afraid. They really aren’t afraid of anything or anyone. They have zero reverence. They would just as soon attack a large animal as they would a sheep. They are prone to attacking caribou, moose, and elk. So, that being the case, you can be sure they’ll attack a sheep.

“Dignities” here, is a reference to all those who hold in respect. They were men who held office in the land; but especially when they stand up for the law and for what is good for society.

Peter refers to this same group in his second epistle. II Peter 2:9 *“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished: (10) But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.”*

Dignities are the leaders in society; those elected and appointed to positions of leadership for the common good. Whereas sheep know the benefit and value of respect, wolves do not. If anything, they often have nothing good to say about those ought to be respected. They are critical and even condemning.

Folks, as sheep, you and I need a high respect for those God allows to be recognized as leaders in the Church and in the community.

Wolves, not just wolves in general, but wolves that are a danger to God’s people, are the topic of Jude’s epistle. Some simply creep into the LORD’s Church. The sheep are easily deceived. So Jude warns us that the wolves are often nearby.

Lastly, do you remember the three history lessons Jude has already used? He reminds us about those who died in the wilderness; the unbelieving. He reminds us about the angels who rebelled; the rebellious. And he reminds us about the people of Sodom and Gomorrah; the immoral.

Folks, wolves, even in sheep’s clothing, are often, though not always, immoral. They lack any desire for authority. And they have little or no respect for those the LORD calls us to respect.

So, as per Jude, remember the end of those who live a life of a wolf. The unbelievers died in the wilderness. The angels who rebelled are reserved in everlasting chains and under darkness. And the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Would you agree with me that Jude’s epistle carries a very serious message?

Folks, God’s way is always good. It’s always for our benefit. It’s the best way to live in this world.

So, what will you do with the warnings given by Jude, the brother of our LORD?

Through the example of Jude 8, God will bring conviction in your heart. Yet, in His love and grace, He’s the One Who has taken all *your* sins upon Himself. He received the punishment you deserve. And He’s calling you to Himself. He’s calling you to receive His free gift of forgiveness for all your sins. Will you let the LORD bring His conviction to your heart and turn you into a right direction? Will you submit to His ways? Will you surrender your right to be right?

Jesus shed His blood for your sins. That’s history. And that’s the truth. And that blood is the only ground that brings you into a right relationship with God. Jesus became both our Substitute and our Representative on the Cross that day. Yes, we all sin.

So, what is there to be done if you as a Christian are guilty of unbelief and murmuring and being fearful and worrying? Repent. Change your mind. Come to Him in humility and the awareness that your sins are the only thing that keeps you from enjoying a close walk with Him. Come in confession. Say the same thing about your sins that He says about them.

See them for what they are; an extreme offense to Him. Then in confession, accept the power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse them and restore you to a place of close fellowship with your Creator and Savior.

History, as you’ve heard before, should move you to action. So, what will it be today? Will you submit to Him? Will you surrender to Him? Will you come to Him? It’s your choice. Let God have His way today? Will you pray “I will obey you, LORD, I surrender my thoughts to your thoughts?” What will it be?

Will you surrender yourself to His strength and control? Here’s the Sinner’s Prayer. *“LORD, I admit I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died in my place on the cross. I repent of my sins. I want to be completely forgiven today. I am trusting you right now to save me. Thank you. Amen.”*

Now, as we carefully reviewed what the LORD says in His word, let’s prepare our hearts for the receiving of the elements of the Lord’s Table. So, let’s pray.

Sing Hymn # \_\_\_ “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”