

BEING SMART SHEEP IN A WOLF'S WORLD

(Luke 10:1-3)

Luke 10:1-3 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. ² Then He said to them, “The harvest truly *is* great, but the laborers *are* few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ³ Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.”

[Intro: Know what you are getting yourself into]

Many years ago when our kids were small, we got to vacation in Hawaii for two reasons. First, because Kelly’s mom and dad lived over there in the winter. And second, because Kelly’s dad wanted to see his grandkids (*not me!*) and paid for our plane tickets and lodging. Anyway, if I am remembering this scenario correctly, Kelly and I became friends with a Christian couple from Kansas who had kids that were the same age as ours. One day, the man (who was a farmer named Dave) asked me if I had ever snorkeled at a place called “Witches Brew” adjacent to Hanauma Bay on Oahu. I told him that I had snorkeled at **Hanauma Bay**, but never at Witches Brew. Well, he told me how great it was and I told him I was all in. It was a beautiful day for snorkeling and so we got some food to feed the fish and then headed to our destination. Now, I probably should have asked more questions about this spot. When we got there, I noticed that we were the only ones there. Also, the ocean looked kind of ominous---I told myself, “I think I know why this part of the bay is called “Witches Brew.” Anyway, I put on my mask, my fins, and my snorkel, grabbed my bag of fish food, and jumped in.” It was a gorgeous spot to snorkel. All kinds of beautiful fish that would come right up to you and eat the food you were providing. I was having a great time. That is, until I looked up and 15 feet in front of **me, a shark swam directly across my horizon** from left to right. Now, I’ve never competed for an Olympic medal in swimming, but as quickly as I could, I did a 180 and made it back to shore in gold medal time. I believe I broke the world record in the 10-meter freestyle event. As soon as I got to shore, I started looking for my friend (who was still underwater) hoping that I would see him again and not have to tell his wife that a shark ate him. About five seconds later, he came to the surface and I yelled, “Did you see that shark?” and he yelled back, “No!” Needless to say, neither of us snorkeled anymore that day, and since then, I have never snorkeled again at “Witches Brew.” (I don’t think I have watched the movie *Jaws* either.)

Now, I want you to know that I learned a lesson that day that applies to more than just snorkeling, and it is this: **“Before you ‘snorkel’ in new waters, it’s good to know what’s in there.”**

And in our text this morning, as our **Lord was sending the 70** out into the “new waters” of reaching people with His divine message, He made sure that they knew what they would face in the new waters they were about to enter as His

messengers. And what He told them is what I would like to speak to you about for a few minutes this morning.

Title: Being Smart Sheep in a Wolf's World

(Prayer)

The Rotary Club magazine *Rotarian* told a story about a bounty of \$5,000 that was being offered for every wolf captured alive. That offer turned Sam and Jed into fortune hunters. Day and night they scoured mountains and forests looking for their valuable prey, but to no avail. Exhausted one night, they fell asleep dreaming of their potential fortune. Suddenly, Sam awoke to see that they were surrounded by about 50 wolves with flaming eyes and bared fangs. He nudged his friend and said, "Jed, wake up! We're rich!"

For some reason, I don't think that is what Jesus had in mind when He said to His disciples He was sending out in Luke 10:3:

"Go your way, behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves."

So what exactly **DID** Jesus have in mind?

I'd like to ask three questions this morning that will help us answer that question. My first question is this:

1. **Who are "the wolves"?**

(1) **Unbelievers in general**

This is very possible. There are a lot of unsaved people who would be very happy to see religious people of any and every kind move to a deserted island and leave them alone. They are the kind of people who "bare their fangs" if you try to say *anything* about God or His wonderful promises. They are hostile. So Jesus could be referring to unbelievers in general here.

(2) **False prophets**

In Matthew 7:15, Jesus said to His followers: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." (Explain).

(3) **Satan and the forces of hell**

The apostle Paul told us:

Ephesians 6:12 ... we do not wrestle 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. (Explain).

So Jesus was telling us: **“Look, you have a great opportunity (the harvest is great), but you will definitely encounter opposition (don’t ever forget that I am sending you out among wolves).”**

Ways Satan opposes you (these are some good Christian “excuses” directly from the enemy himself):

- “Nobody else is doing this, why should I?”
- “It’s God who gives the increase, not me!” (True...but...)
- “I’m too busy”
- (One of his favorites) “I’m not able to talk to strangers about spiritual things”
- “God is going to save everyone anyway so why get all worked up about it?”

If the enemy can’t get you thinking like this, he has another method of shutting you up.

If he can’t stop you through **discouragement** he will stop you through **defeat** (in other words---temptation and sin).

Then he says to you, *“What are **you** doing trying to help others? You’re a mess yourself...”*

Either way, he sets out to keep you out of God’s harvest fields.

Folks, the people around us are not anywhere near the problem as the enemy is. Yes, some are hostile, but we need to wake up and understand that the enemy’s goal is to keep you out of the harvest!

He’ll let you sing and lift your hands till Jesus returns as long as you don’t attempt to step foot into the harvest fields!

Question 1: “Who are the wolves?”

Now Question 2:

2. How are lambs to behave among the wolves?

Jesus said “I send you out **as lambs...**”

Most of us might have liked it a lot better if Jesus had said, “I send you out as **LIONS**...!!!!” But He didn’t, and with good reason.

Here it is. When we remember that we’re **lambs** among wolves (in other words, very vulnerable) it will help us trust in the Shepherd’s care and provision.

So what kind of sheep does He want us to be among the wolves?

Well, first of all, persuasive sheep are...

(1) Defenseless (They need to be defended by another).

Because sheep are **defenseless** creatures, they must be **dependent** creatures.

As we go out we remember that we are totally dependent on God taking care of us and doing the work through us.

“Without Me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

(2) Gentle

By nature, most of us tend to be pushy and assertive. But as we become the sheep God wants us to be, we experience His transforming power in our lives and begin to deal with others **gently**.

We are to be ready to give an answer to those who ask “**with gentleness** and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

In Matthew 10:16, Jesus said: “Be wise as serpents **and harmless as doves**.”

(3) Sacrificial

Have you ever thought about the fact that sheep aren’t worth much when they are alive?

- They can’t pull a wagon or plow fields.
- They aren’t used for home protection
- You don’t saddle sheep to ride them.

Their whole life, they prepare for death. You might say that they spend their lives as “living sacrifices.”

To be a living sacrifice is to die to self and to live for others.

Let me give you some examples:

- It's to say "no" to some good things to say "yes" to God's agenda.
- It's using an afternoon to fix someone else's car.
- It's taking a meal to someone when you feel like eating out.
- It's spending hours with players, coaches, and the team when you'd rather be home.
- It's mowing someone's lawn when you would rather be reading a novel or watching a game.
- It's to choose inconvenience over convenience and risk over safety.

Live that kind of a life, and you will suddenly begin to see God do some amazing things through you. It's your faith working through love.

Lambs make sacrifices. They are called to give their lives away. Not easy, definitely worth it!

(4) Powerful

God can put a lamb (of all things) on the battlefield **AND WIN!!!!** Can you believe that? He wins his battles and harvests His fields with scrawny little lambs.

Why?

"God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:6).

Q1: Who are the wolves?

Q2: How are we to behave among the wolves?

3. What help can we expect?

When the Lord said, "I send you out as lambs among wolves," His words (as they always are) were carefully chosen.

Jesus said: "I send you out..."

Folks, I know when we go out into the harvest field, it looks as if we are totally outnumbered (the laborers who join us are few and opposing team has 1000's of players on the field).

But we must never forget that Jesus Himself told us: "**I am with you ALWAYS** even until the end of the age."

I know this is hard for those of us in Dallas to relate to, but in Philadelphia, a school bus was taking kiddos home from the Pine Road Elementary School home when the snowstorm they were in the middle of brought traffic to a standstill. The principal from Pine Road, Dr. Brian Swank, called one of the students on that bus who told his principal that the younger kids were "freaking out." Swank then thought of an idea to get the kids' minds off of the road conditions. Using FaceTime, Swank called back—so the kids could see him as he talked with them—and assured them they would get home safely. But he didn't hang up or leave them. He immediately began to read books to them to pass the time. After four-and-a-half hours, the traffic began to move and the bus was able to drop the students off at their homes.

(Comments RE: Christ never leaving us...)