

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Wise as Serpents – A Practical Theology of Evil

**(Part 3 – Light Comes into the
World – and Evil Attacks)**

December 20, 2015

Sermon Text: Matthew 2

Scripture Reading: Matthew 2

Introduction-

"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men..."
(Matthew 10:16-17a)

Joh 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (5)

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

I like the Christmas story as given here in John's Gospel best of all. The Word made flesh dwelling among us. Light and Life coming into the world. It is a Creation story, you see. A New Creation story with a new Adam as our Savior.

Joh 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This is Christmas, you see. John gives us the theological interpretation of what was really happening in Bethlehem's manger. The Light, the Glory of God, had entered the world in flesh. The Creator had come to His creation, but His creatures did not know Him.

Now, what I would like to draw our attention to this morning is John's statement in verses 4-5:

(4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (5) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Darkness. Always keep Genesis 1 in mind as you read John 1.

Gen 1:1-3 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (2) The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (3) And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

You have the very same thing in John 1, only the darkness there is spiritual darkness in a fallen world. Mankind was fallen and therefore dead to God. Light and life were absent. And then the Light comes, shining, ready to give life to men.

Darkness. Notice that darkness and light here are both represented as being *active and opposed to one another*. The darkness would overcome the light if it could.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The *moment* Christ comes, evil springs up, striving to overcome and extinguish His Light. Christmas arrives, and the enemy goes to work. It

has been that way since Eden, as we saw last week, and it remains that way to this day. When Christ comes, evil comes. Where the light of the gospel goes, the darkness of Satan will most certainly rise up to extinguish it:

2Co 4:3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. (4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

What is a very large part of the New Testament (if not the whole Bible) but an account of how the kingdom of darkness works to overcome the kingdom of Christ? It cannot. It will never succeed in the end. No more than darkness can prevail in a dark room when you flip the light switch.

Joh 3:16-21 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (19) And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved

the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. (20) For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. (21) But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

Matthew's account of the birth of Christ is a perfect example of these things. The Babe comes into the world, and immediately the enemy opposes with murderous intent. Follow as I read:

Mat 2:1-23 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, (2) saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." (3) When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; (4) and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. (5) They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: (6) "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" (7) Then Herod summoned the wise men

secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. (8) And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

(9) After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. (10) When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

(11) And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. (12) And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

(13) Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." (14) And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt (15) and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the

prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

(16) Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

(17) Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: (18) "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

(19) But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, (20) saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead."

(21) And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. (22) But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. (23) And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Herod here, of course is the prime agent of Satan working with the intent of extinguishing the Light by killing this child. This shows us the depths of Satan's hatred of Christ, and of his fear of Him as well. *The Lord Jesus Christ was hated with a murderous hatred from the very time He was born.* When Christ comes, and where Christ comes, *evil will most surely show up.* Think about it. The MOMENT Christ was born, evil was already moving to kill him. I suppose you could even find statements in Scripture that would indicate evil was working BEFORE His birth to extinguish this Light.

In fact, this is true. Think back through the Old Testament, right from the beginning. What do you have? You have two seeds, the one trying to destroy the other. Two kingdoms at war. If the Jews knew this:

Mat 2:3-5 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; (4) and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. (5) They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

...then you can be sure that the devil knew it. The entire Old Testament is an account of the seed and line of Abraham being subject to attacks of all kinds. Satan knew this promise well:

Gen 3:14-15 The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. (15) I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

So the enemy knew these promises. He knew of this Seed of the woman, and as we go down through the Old Testament you have this very broad description of this Promised One progressively narrowed:

- He would come from Seth, not Cain
- He would be a descendant of Shem, Noah's son (see Gen 9 and 11)

Gen 9:26-27 He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. (27) May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant."

- Then Abraham is identified –

Gen 15:1-6 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." (2) But Abram said, "O Lord

GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" (3) And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." (4) And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." (5) And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (6) And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

And on it goes. Isaac, the son of promise. Jacob, not Esau. From Judah, not from the other sons of Jacob, Messiah would come. A son of David. And so He did:

Luk 2:21-32 And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. (22) And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (23) (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") (24) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

(25) Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. (26) And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. (27) And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, (28) he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, (29) "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; (30) for my eyes have seen your salvation (31) that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, (32) a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

There it is then. At the same time we have this wonderful announcement of the birth of Christ, we must also understand that the battle was raging that very moment and that it is still raging. Wherever Christ is, wherever His people are, wherever His Word is announced, evil is going to show up and work to murder and lie:

Listen to this summation of exactly what we have been saying this morning. All of Jesus' earthly pilgrimage was a battle. Evil

continually tried to extinguish Light and Life:

Joh 8:31-59 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, (32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (33) They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

(34) Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. (35) The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. (36) So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (37) I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. (38) I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

(39) They answered him, "Abraham is our father."

Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, (40) but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. (41) You are doing the works your father did." They said to him,

"We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God."

(42) Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.

(43) Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. (44) You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (45) But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. (46) Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? (47) Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

(48) The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (49) Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. (50) Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. (51) Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

(52) The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon!

Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' (53) Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"

(54) Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' (55) But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. (56) Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."

(57) So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" (58) Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." (59) So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Don't miss this. This was the "clergy" of the day in the "church" (temple) building of the day. Evil had established itself in the very leadership positions of what was supposed to be God's covenant nation.

Conclusion

The darkness did not and could not overcome the Light. Evil came, evil tried its best, evil even appeared to

have been victorious when Christ was crucified. But it wasn't. Christ was the Victor.

We must remember these things. This world hates Christ. You see it all around us and this hatred even seems to be increasing. It is CHRISTmas that is banned. It is the name of JESUS that is forbidden. Evil will come. It will appear. Jesus is the great divider of men and if you really belong to Him, you will experience this division and this hatred against you, for Jesus' sake. The division comes at the most intimate levels of life:

Mat 10:32-39 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, (33) but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. (34) "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (35) For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (36) And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. (37) Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (39) Whoever finds his

life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Mat 10:19-22 When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. (20) For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. (21) Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, (22) and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Luk 12:51-53 Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. (52) For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. (53) They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

These are the expected fruits of evil as it wars against Christ. These are the very faces of its agents you will most surely meet:

- Father
- Mother
- Daughter

- Daughter-in-law
- Members of your own household
- Brother
- A child

Christ brings this great sword of division, you see.

Let me close with this example. It is an example of how badly Christians, pastors, and all of us need to come to terms with the fact that just as evil showed up in Bethlehem that night, so it always comes among us as we follow Him. This past week one of the ladies who has experienced great evil in her life shared these comments with us. She is a strong, genuine Christian, and she suffered greatly at the hands of her church and church leaders who should have helped her:

In not speaking up against evil, the church stands with it. I found greater understanding and comfort in four days of a self-defense class with non-church folk than I did in nearly a decade of assembling and serving alongside congregants and church leaders. In this class I was taught how to draw a line in the sand and keep it there. In church I was instructed to keep a gate over my lips and tolerate real evil.

I didn't even tell them [at the self-defense class]93393 my testimony. It

was the police captain (a man) who lead the class, the curriculum, and the supportive trainers (who were all women, except for one man who was there last night as one of the 'attackers' during our final night's review/testing scenarios) who made me aware of the fact that they understood evil without my saying one word. We students were instructed to tell no men what we learned - even if asked - because, as the captain told us, "Husbands become ex-husbands, and men are competitive. You tell them what you know, and they'll want to show you how they can beat it. Then your confidence is deflated and then they also know what to expect from you when you fight back." I wish every female could take this course. I'm going to try to get it in our local public school because if they teach sex education, they need to teach this too. I plan to take flyers around to the local medical centers also.

This is wisdom. Wise as serpents, innocent as doves in regard to evil. And as we are, as we stand for Christ no matter what the cost, we are victorious. Always.

Rev 12:11-12 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. (12) Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and

sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

1Jn 5:4-5 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (5) Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?