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Sheep Among Wolves

John 18:1-12

Prayer: *Father, we just again thank you for your grace, thank you for this Christmas season, the reminders of the gift that you are to us. And Father, we just again, we want to pray as we are in some sense unwrapping that gift this morning, we just want to pray for your Holy Spirit's presence, we pray that you would again accompany us, give us the ability to open up your book, give us the ability to learn from what is in there and to grow even deeper in our love for you. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, it's the first Sunday of the month and as you know this is the day that we remember Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and for the last time he celebrated a Passover supper with them, and Matthew 26 describes it, it says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for*

many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." So Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and blood then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat the remembrance of his sacrifice on a regular basis and we call that the Lord's table, and we celebrate it once a month and we do that by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus Christ did for us at the cross, by examining ourselves, by asking God's Holy Spirit to partake in convicting us of sins, by confessing our sins and then by participating in the elements. *John 6:53 says: So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well, we've been looking at the life of Christ and we've been spending literally years there. We're up to the 18th chapter of the gospel of John. Jesus has already dismissed Judas some five chapters before in John 13 saying to him in *John 13:28: "What you do, do quickly."* Jesus then spent the next five chapters giving final instructions and praying for his disciples. Now that time has come to an end and the real passion of the Christ is about to begin. It starts in the 18th chapter of John which says: *When*

Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.

The very first part of the passion of Jesus actually takes place as he is crossing that brook. You see, the Kidron was a unique kind of brook. It was actually what's called a wadi. A wadi is a stream bed that's dry for much of the year, it only flows during the wet season or when there's a downpour. But the stream at this time had to be flowing not because of the rain. You see, the garden that Jesus was entering in was less than a quarter of a mile from the temple, and flowing from that temple at this time of the year was the blood of countless lambs. It was the time of Passover. And in that temple, the sacrificial lambs were being offered up. And it's estimated at that time there was up to 250,000 lambs that were being slaughtered as each family had to present one. And along with the blood of those lambs was the ritual cleansing waters that would come out of the temple and fill this wadi of the Kidron with literally thousands of gallons of water in the lamb's blood and it was that blood that Jesus literally had to cross over to enter into the garden. Now just to put that blood into perspective, we have to back up just a little bit and talk about the Passover.

The Passover was a celebration, it was a celebration and a remembrance of what had happened when the tenth plague was sent to Egypt. Most of you recall Pharaoh had repeatedly refused to release the Jews until God finally unleashed the worst of the plagues, the death of the firstborn. And God instructed the Jews in Egypt that there was only one way to escape this angel of death that was coming and it was by taking a lamb and slaughtering it, dipping a hyssop branch in its blood and then spreading that blood over the lintels of this house. This is the instruction that he gave them in *Exodus 12: Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses or to strike you."* God said the only way to be protected from the destroyer was to be under the blood of a sacrificed lamb and the Passover celebration reminded the nation of that literally every year. Now it's no accident that the death of Christ occurred during the week of Passover. It was no accident that as Christ was being nailed to the cross and his blood was being shed at that very

moment, thousands and thousands of lambs were being sacrificed and their blood was being shed. The picture that God had created with the original Passover was that the only protection that they had from death was under the blood of this sacrificed lamb. That picture was being repeated hundreds of thousands of times literally as little lambs were being slaughtered in each household and figuratively as each family sat down to speak about what God had done with the Jews in Egypt. So as Jesus steps over the brook Kidron into the garden to enter it, he can't help but see that this stream that runs only occasionally is now running red with the blood of lambs who are painting the perfect picture of what it is he is going to undergo. And their blood was shed to sacrificially cover the sin of ancient Israel, but that's all it could do. It could only cover the sin, it could not pay for it. Only the blood of a spotless Lamb of God could do that and all of those sacrificed lambs were painting a picture of when the actual day would come when the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world would finally be prepared to offer his blood as the ultimate sacrifice. So Jesus couldn't help but see as he crossed the brook Kidron that the picture that God had been painting for years of sacrificed lamb was now about to become a reality. So, too, was the reality of how this was going to take place. It was going to happen through the betrayal of Judas.

Interestingly enough, this brook Kidron represented yet another betrayal that Jesus was all too familiar with. You see, David's own son Absalom tried to take his father's kingdom and his father's life, and at the height of Absalom's betrayal, David had to flee for his own life and Samuel tells us exactly where he wound up in *2 Samuel 15:23*. It says: *And all the land wept aloud as all the people passed by, and the king crossed the brook Kidron, and all the people passed on toward the wilderness.* Now David, he recorded his intense pain at the betrayals he had experienced not just from his son but from those close and trusted advisors who had turned against him and he recorded it in *Psalm 41*. There he says: *Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.* Those are David's words in *Psalm 41*. And Jesus was quite familiar with that *Psalm*, I mean, it contained the very words that he quoted in *John 13* when he identifies Judas as his betrayer. This is *John 13*. Jesus is speaking to the disciples and he says: *"I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, and then he quotes the exact same phrase, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'* *I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he."* So as Jesus crosses over the brook Kidron, he was no doubt reminded that David also crossed the very same brook fleeing from a betrayer of the worst sort. The difference here is that Jesus isn't fleeing a

betrayer. In fact he's approaching and embracing it. *John 18:2* says: *Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"* Now I mentioned last time that Judas came into the garden with a very large contingent of soldiers probably numbering somewhere in the hundreds. And we talked about the power that Jesus possessed, that by simply stating who he was, he had the power to knock literally all of them to the ground. *John 18:4* says: *Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.* As I mentioned last time, the English translation here doesn't do justice at all to what Jesus actually said. He doesn't just say, "I am he," what he said in Greek was "ego eimi," which is literally saying, "I am" which he's literally claiming to be God himself. It's the name that God the Father himself used in Genesis. And the crowd knew exactly what it was he was claiming. Jesus was claiming a divine title, the "I am" that God the Father also claimed in Genesis. It was a statement designed to do two things, it was designed to speak

the truth and to further seal his fate. It also made a statement about who he was.

As the elders begin to distribute the bread, I want us to put our minds in the place where we're picturing Jesus crossing the brook Kidron that is now running red and that he's realizing as he's crossing this brook and entering into this garden that this was the very place where David crossed who was suffering the very same type of betrayal. I just want you to understand the betrayal that Jesus was about to undergo was something that he willingly embraced on our behalf.

And again, as the communion is being distributed, I would like us also to consider the warning that God gives us in *1 Corinthians 11* where he says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* And again, I say this every month, I say that communion is extremely serious business and if you are not prepared, do not enter into it. To enter into it in an unworthy manner is to court disaster. How do

you prepare for this? Well, number one, if you are not actually confident that you are a child of the King, if you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior or if you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you enter into bringing your sacrifice to the altar, than just pass the elements on. No one's going to think you're strange, no one's going to think something is wrong; instead they may think you are wise. If you do not -- if you are not a child of God, if you do not feel prepared, do not partake of the elements. On the other hand, you can make the mistake of thinking that unless you're spotlessly perfect, you are unworthy to receive communion and that, too, is a mistake. Being a child of the King doesn't mean that we don't sin and that we never fail. What it means is that we recognize that salvation is a gift that no one is ever capable of earning simply by being good. And again, we repeat the quote that Dane Ortlund puts it, he puts it so well, he says: "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." It also means that when we do fail we are aware that we have sinned. Why? Because we have God's Spirit within us, convicting us, and so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us, a Father who says in *1 John 1:9*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the

King does not mean that we are without sin. It means that when we do sin, we are convicted by the Holy Spirit and we recognize that we have an advocate, we have the Lord himself speaking on our behalf in heaven. *1 John 2:1* says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* So it's because we have this alien righteousness, this righteousness that doesn't belong to us, it belongs to Christ and is given to us, because we have this righteousness, we are now free to eat from his table. So if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you. He lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of heaven.

And as we are about to participate in this, I want us to just again go back to that brook that Jesus has just stepped over that is now running red, I want us to consider what Jesus is considering, all that he knows about Judas, all that he knows about this betrayal, all of the history that takes place of crossing that brook, knowing that David crossed that brook, fleeing from the betrayal of Absalom as well. Just think on that for a minute.

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter says this: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night*

when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." So take, and eat.

As the elders begin to distribute the cup, I would like us to go in our imaginations back to the garden. There's a huge crowd there now, Judas has brought this contingent of soldiers that may number in the hundreds. Jesus knows precisely what he's doing when he asks the crowd repeatedly, "Whom do you seek?" See, he wanted the crowd, he particularly wanted the official to narrow their focus down to him alone in order to spare the other disciples. And John tells us why in the very next verse in *John 18:9*. It says: *This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I had lost not one."* See, Jesus knew that the judge of this world was making his final push and that even though they had no idea the disciples were in grave spiritual as well as physical danger. Satan would have loved nothing more than to destroy every trace of everything that Jesus had done including the three years that he had poured himself into his disciples. And so Jesus was determined that the focus of the crowd and the officials would not include the disciples, and that he alone would be the object of their pursuit. Verse 7 and 8 make that clear. It says: *So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you*

seek me, let these men go." Well, they did let them go. So intent were they on capturing Jesus. But there's another reason why Jesus was so intent on putting the focus on himself in order that his disciples might go free. It was because he was the good Shepherd and the disciples were his sheep. Back in *John 10:11-15*, Jesus said this, he said: *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."* See, this was the first time that Jesus' sheep were going to be confronted with a pack of wolves such as these. And Jesus said of his sheep in *John 18:9*: *"Of those whom you gave me, I have lost not one."* Well, now you may say, what about Judas? Don't make the mistake of thinking that Judas was a lost sheep. In fact he never was one. These wolves that are confronting Jesus in the garden are now headed up by a wolf named Judas, a man who for three years successfully wore sheep's clothing but has now become unmasked by his own greed. It is he who approaches Jesus and identifies him with a kiss. What made his betrayal all the more painful was that Jesus saw it and knew it right from the start and Jesus knew that Judas wasn't just a wolf,

that he was in fact something far worse. Jesus said this way back in John 6. He's speaking to the disciples and he said: *"Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil."* He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

Jesus also knew that Judas's greed had turned him into an embezzler who resorted to lies to cover up his tracks. John describes Judas's reaction to an extravagance made by Mary for Jesus in *John 12*. It says this: *Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him) said, "Why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor? He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.* Now John wrote his gospel after Judas had exposed himself as a thief, a liar, an embezzler and a betrayer, but you know, all during Christ's three-year ministry his disciples had become completely fooled. I mean even as Jesus exposed Judas, even then his fellow disciples just couldn't put two and two together. This is *John 13:21-30*, Jesus is speaking, he says: *After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified,*

"Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. You think that would be evidence enough but it gets worse than this. Matthew's gospel tells us that Jesus directly confronted Judas to his face and he told him you're the one who's going to betray me. This is Matthew 26. Speaking of Jesus, it says: He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so." Amazingly even after this confrontation by Jesus in front of the disciples, they still don't get the full impact of what it was Jesus was saying. This is John 13:27, it says: Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need

for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

Well so far, so far we've learned three things from these scriptures. We've learned, number one, that only God can read the inside of a person's heart; and number two, Satan is an opportunistic predator; and number three, that his wolves will stop at nothing. First, only God can see the inside of a person's heart. I mean Judas gave every single appearance of spiritual life when he had none. And at the very least, he fooled the disciples. In reality, there was nothing in his heart but greed and lies. And we look back at those three years and we say how many nights had Judas sat at Jesus' feast and listened and prayed with God in the flesh and yet all the while, according to Jesus, he was a devil. Jesus made that statement about Judas some six months before we now find him betraying him. But you have to understand, it's not just Judas, the entire church, in fact the evangelical world is also filled with wolves. Some of them have been unmasked, many still parade around, looking for all intents and purposes, as healthy as Judas once looked. This should come as a surprise to no one. Jesus said in *Matthew 7:15*: "*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*" Paul said in *Acts 20*: *I know that after my departure fierce wolves will*

come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. You could put Judas in that category. See, his real goal was not the advancement of God's kingdom but the advancement of his own kingdom. And we know what Jesus said, he said in *Matthew 6:21*, he said: "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" And we also know what Judas treasured. What he treasured was money and prestige and power. His heart actually had nothing of Christ and kingdom and so it was very easy for Satan to enter in and take over, which is precisely what he did because Satan is an opportunistic predator. That's point number two. You see, Satan is quite content to lay low and wait for just the right opportunity to pounce. And so we think, well, if that's the case, how come that doesn't happen to me or why shouldn't I be afraid that that's exactly what Satan is going to do to me? Well, understand the reason why Satan successfully entered into Judas's heart was because Christ was not there in the first place. Where Christ resides, Satan fears to tread. See, it is Christ who terrifies demons. *1 John 3:8* says: *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* See, Christ came to this planet to rescue us from the clutches of the enemy and it is Christ who breaks down their home and plunders their goods who happen to be us. When Jesus was accused of casting out demons by the power of Satan, he responded in *Luke 11* by saying this, he

said: *"If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."* And then he explains why. Listen to what he says here. In verse 21 he says: *"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil."* Understand what Jesus is telling us here. Jesus is telling us that he has come down into Satan's kingdom which is planet earth and that he has broken down the doors of his palace, that he has overcome him and snatched away his prizes dividing the spoil for one reason. He is the stronger one. Verse 22: *"When one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he has trusted and divides his spoil."* And what is wonderful to realize is that the spoil that Jesus is talking about is you and me. We are what he came after. He came to destroy the works of the devil and to ransom and rescue us. And so you have to understand that when you are in Christ, Satan cannot touch you.

I mentioned this before but it bears repeating. If you've ever gotten nervous about Satan and demons and what they can do to you, just go to the Bible and look up all the different times that Jesus interacted with Satan or with his demons and in almost every case

you will find that is the demons who are begging for mercy. Consider the demons of the Gadarenes. This is *Matthew 28*, it's a description of some terrifying demon-infested people. It says: *And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. This is them meeting Jesus. And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"* These are terrifying demons and they see Jesus as their ultimate tormentor. These are entities that are able to terrify every single human being that came near them and at the sight of Jesus, they are the ones who are terrified. In fact they're the ones that are begging for mercy. In verse 30 it says: *Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs."* Now you have to understand, these demons are not ordering Jesus, they're begging him. They're saying instead of kicking us out, please, please, we beg you, please send us into these pigs. Verse 32 says: *And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.* You see, the pigs all drowned because it wasn't pigs that Jesus was interested in saving, it was sheep. And understand, the greatest privilege you will ever have is to be one of the good Shepherd's

sheep.

Jesus told the disciples that he would be with them but to never lose sight of the fact that he was going to send them out as sheep among wolves. In *Matthew 10:16* he says: *"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and as innocent as doves."* Why would Jesus send his sheep out among wolves? Listen to what he says in *Matthew 10:16*. He says: *"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, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles."* However, he says this: *"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. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."*

See, Jesus could send the sheep out among wolves for one reason, he knew we are the sheep who have the Spirit of the living God within

us. That's the greatest privilege you could ever have is to be one of the Shepherd's sheep. First because God himself has now taken up residence in our heart and second, because Christ is firmly within us, Satan has no opportunity to prey upon us. But thirdly and finally, we need to understand that his wolves are going to stop at nothing, and that's point number three. It's not as though Jesus didn't know this by experience. You see, the difference between Jesus and us is that Jesus had to radically lay down his superior strength. He had all the ability he needed to bind up the strong man and plunder his kingdom, and yet in order to pay the price that his own justice demanded of us, he had to give darkness its due. And again, going back to the garden, this is *Luke 22*. It says: *While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me."* And here's the key part. He says, *"But this*

is your hour, and the power of darkness." See, all the power that Jesus had, power that literally terrified the demons that he interacted with, all of that power now had to be laid aside, and Jesus clearly acknowledged that. *"But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."*

Now the wolves would have their day. They would mock him and beat him and dress him in purple and make fun of him. *Matthew 26* says: *Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"* They would crown him with thorns and flog him until they nearly stripped him of his flesh and then make him carry his cross, strip him and crucify him. Well, to the outside world or to any other observer, this is the ultimate in defeat and degradation. So the kingdom of light which is the only kingdom that really matters, it is an astounding victory. Jesus gave himself over to the wolves not because he had to but because his love was so great for us that he was willing to. Here on the cross Jesus would make the final payment for our sins. Here on the cross Jesus would literally flip the script according to *Colossians 2:14*: *By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* See, Jesus used the hatred and the animus of the wolves as

his primary weapon against them. He used their own hatred of him and his kingdom as the foil that would set the stage for his sacrifice that would set us free because he understood right from the beginning that Satan was an opportunist, a thief, a liar and a murderer, and he used that against him. See, Satan didn't realize that the opportunity that he seized was an opportunity that God had fed him, that Christ knew he could trust in the vicious hatred that this world had for him because this world belongs to Satan. I mean it's the one thing that still marks how we are to live in this world because the enemy still wants nothing more than what Jesus said of him in *John 10*. He says this: *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* So what does this all boil down to? What it boils down to is this, we have to realize that this world that we deal with is not our friend. It is ruled by an enemy that seeks to steal, to kill and destroy, and you don't make friends with that kind of an enemy. That's why James says in *James 4:4*: *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

So before we take the cup, I just want us to ask ourselves how friendly am I with this world? Do I see those who are outside that

door, who are outside the kingdom as desperately lost, in need of someone who will love them enough to seek after their well-being in spite of the fact that they're going to get nothing but bared fangs and deep growls? They're going to get them from folks who don't even know why they hate this God they don't know. God has indeed sent us out as sheep among wolves. And you know, if we were just sheep on our own, we'd be nothing but a quick meal for the wolves but we're not alone. We have the good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep now living inside us, and he asks us this morning and I ask us this morning as we spend some time contemplating before we take the cup, if you're willing to lay down your life for him.

1 Corinthians the 11th chapter, the 25th verse says: *In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."* So take, and drink.

This is the part of the service that we call heads, heart and feet where we try to arrive at some kind of practical application of what it means to remember Christ, and I want to start off by telling a story, it's a very familiar story, people have heard it many, many times. It's about a king in a far northeastern kingdom who was on a long, long journey by dogsled, him and his servant,

200-mile journey. And as they are some 20 miles from their destination they realized that they're being tracked by a pack of wolves and it's a lengthy pack of wolves and they're very, very fresh and the dogs are very, very tired and they can see and it's becoming very obvious that the wolves are getting closer and closer and the dogs are getting more and more tired. And at some point the servant and the king both realize they're not going to make it home. And so at some point as they're driving along, the servant just flings himself from the sled and obviously becomes the focal point and the end point of the wolves. And we're led to say well, greater love hath no man that he laid down his life for his fellow man, for his friend. And I was reading about, Paul Washer made a comment about the story, he said the story is a wonderful illustration of the gospel but he's got the characters wrong. It's not the servant who throws himself to the wolves, it's the king. It's the king who literally threw himself to the wolves. That was the cross. But you know, the king says to us that we are to take up our cross and follow after him. And I think for most of us, for a lot of us, our response is, but you don't get it, these wolves are vicious. Yeah, they are. And if you don't know that -- you know that, I mean, you know you can go out to any mixed group of people, you can say it with a sneer, you can say "Jesus" with a sneer, you can say "Christ" with a sneer but if you put these three words "Lord Jesus Christ" together, you're going to start seeing

fangs, you're going to start hearing growls. People are not going to be happy with what you said.

You know, I have a neighbor who's a wonderful, wonderful guy, very, very helpful and I've known him for 40 years, and I see him all of the time and there's only one time that he got really angry with me, that's when I pressed him about the gospel. "I don't want to hear it." Very clear. The fangs you started to see drawn, the growling you started to hear. And so I think a lot of times we say, well, you know, I don't want to mess with these people. I don't want to see their fangs, I don't want to hear their growls. And here's why their viciousness is no excuse for any of us. It's because every one of us who are sheep at one time were a wolf. We all came from wolves. And if we're unwilling as sheep to go to the wolves, what does that say for them and what does that say for us? So we say how in the world am I supposed to give the gospel not just to some neutral kind of people but to wolves, people who want to literally bare their fangs and rip my throat just because I give them the gospel? Well, God tells us how we are to do that in 2 *Corinthians 2:15*, he says this, he says: *We are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.* You know what he's saying there? What God is saying is, look, you just present the good news. It's

up to me to determine whether that news is going to be received as a fragrance of death to those who are dying or the fragrance of life to those who will live, and then he adds at the end of that scripture, *Who is sufficient for these things?* What God's saying is it's not your job to figure that out. That's my job. It's your job to recognize that you have the Spirit of Christ within you, and your task is to present Christ to people who will often become wolves. That requires an enormous amount of wisdom. But first and foremost it requires a willingness to do it.

And so my prayer and my final request for us and I say this each and every month, I think I sound like a broken record, it is us who are bringing the gospel. We are the sheep sent out among the wolves and the task is to identify those wolves that God has given you to share the good news because you know what? Those wolves are going to a place where nobody wants to go and the vast majority of this world is made up of wolves. God has said you have this unbelievable privilege, you're one of my sheep and I send you out among those wolves and in going among those wolves, you're going to make some of those wolves into other sheep.

And so this morning I would just ask again as we go to prayer that you would call out to God, say God, who is the wolf that you would have me be praying for? Who is the wolf that you would have me

engage in conversation? Who is the wolf that you would have me take the risk of seeing bared fangs and hearing those growls and yet loving those people enough to recognize that as a former wolf, the only way I'm ever going to become a sheep is by hearing that gospel. Let's pray.

Father, I just now pray for each of us as we're sitting here. I pray that we could think on whether it's friends or neighbors or associates or relatives, whoever it is, Lord, there's not a person in this room that cannot be sharing the gospel with somebody else, with multiple other people. If you've been saved a day, then you can be sharing the gospel with somebody who's been saved less than a day. If you've been saved for your entire life, you've been sharing the gospel with the entire neighborhood, the world, all of those who are around, all of those, if you're willing to be the servant that God would have you be. That doesn't mean that you have to go shoving tracts down people's throats. What it means is you have to be willing, you have to care, you have to see this world as full of wolves who are on their way to an eternity without Christ. And as a former wolf, recognize that the grace that we have been given is the grace we are expected to pass on. And so Father, this morning I pray that you would give each and every one of us an individual, a person, maybe a neighborhood, maybe -- just whatever it is, that you would give us the understanding that we

*are here to pass that blessing on by your power and by your grace,
and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*