

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Wise as Serpents – A Practical Theology of Evil

(Part 26 – The End of All Evil)

June 26, 2016

Sermon Text: Genesis 11

Scripture Reading: Matthew 10

"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.... (Mat 10:16-17a)

This morning we come to the conclusion of our study of the nature and tactics of evil, though we could certainly continue for many more weeks. We will see the subject arising frequently in our future studies of Scripture because the warnings and teachings of God's Word concerning the kingdom of darkness are so prevalent. The Christian life in this present world is described by the Lord as sheep in the midst of wolves, and we have emphasized how He

commands and warns us to be wise as serpents yet innocent as doves to this truth. We must never again return to a mindset that willfully turns a blind, naïve eye to evil, resolving to only think about "the sunny side of life." A sunny, bright, beautiful life is coming in the New Heavens and New Earth, but this life in this world is not it. Beware of men, and expect the majority of human beings to hate Christ, oppose the gospel, and hate you when you stand for Christ. Do not be surprised.

This morning then as we conclude our current study, I want to speak to you about two subjects. We will spend most of our time today on the second point, but here is the first:

Wisdom about evil instructs us to be very cautious about revealing ourselves to people too quickly. Victims of evil often learn this truth the hard way after they open up to someone about the hidden evil that is oppressing them.

Here is Scripture that I conclude teaches us this very thing. First a bit of the background –

Now the main text we are considering:

In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan). He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. (2Ki 18:1-7)

This king is a godly king. He held fast to the Lord and the Lord blessed him.

At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent envoys **with letters and a present** to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick.

And Hezekiah welcomed them, and he showed them all his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his armory, all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them.

Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say? And from where did they come to you?" And Hezekiah said, "They have come from a far country, from Babylon."

He said, "What have they seen in your house?"

And Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them."

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: Behold, the days are coming, **when all that is in**

your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD. And some of your own sons, who shall be born to you, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?" The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah and all his might and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and Manasseh his son reigned in his place. (2Ki 20:12-21)

Hezekiah had paid tribute to Assyria in the past, though the Lord subsequently effected a great victory for Judah-

In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong; withdraw from me. Whatever you impose on me I will bear." And the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. And Hezekiah

gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD and from the doorposts that Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid and gave it to the king of Assyria. (2Ki 18:13-16)

Perhaps this gives us insight into Hezekiah's motive for showing his treasures to the Babylonians? Did he think that if they saw that he could pay them tribute that they would leave Judah alone? We don't know, but it does seem that Hezekiah, godly king that he was, still had his moments of weakness. And Isaiah's words to him afterward would indicate this.

Isaiah zero's right in on this matter of showing the treasure to the Babylonians. "What have they seen in your house?" he asks. "I showed them everything," the king answers. Isaiah does not rebuke him directly, but his subsequent prophecy would indicate that Hezekiah was not wise in showing these foreigners his treasure.

And so it remains true today. If we are wise as serpents about evil, we will be wise to its use of *flattery* to deceive us –

At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent

envoys **with letters and a present** to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick.

Such deceit! “We traveled all this way to see how you are doing, Hezekiah, because we heard you were sick. Here are some get well cards from our kind and some presents for you to cheer you up. We are your friends.”

Yeah, right.

Hezekiah apparently buys it. Falls for it. Shows them his whole place, including his savings account.

I can identify with Hezekiah. Over the years one of my foolish ways has been to be too quick to trust people. In police work I learned not to make that mistake, but when I became a pastor I must have concluded that “things were to be different” in the Christian church. The missions organization we were with, Village Missions, emphasized “getting people to come to church.” Welcome them all. That kind of thing. And I did. Way up there in the mountains of Montana there were some Sundays eventually when we would have 100 people or so in attendance.

But what a mess it turned out to be.

There are MANY people that the Lord does NOT want us to invite to church! They are not welcome in His house. Wolves are not welcome among the sheep.

How many times have you, perhaps, done something very similar to Hezekiah only to be burned later? You found out someone professed to be a Christian, so you opened up to them and trusted them. You showed them your treasures, you might say, and what happened? They used it against you later. So we must be wise.

Often I have people write to us at ACFJ and they ask “should I go to my pastor and tell him what is really going on in my marriage, about the abuse and all the evil?” And we have a tough time answering that question because many, many times those who have done this find out that the information they shared goes right back to the enemy and is used against them.

Let me repeat the fact that these envoys who came to Hezekiah came with flattery to deceive. Watch out for flattery –

They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose.... (Gal 4:17-18a)

A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet. (Pro 29:5)

There it is then. Wisdom dictates to us that if we are to be wise regarding evil, we must be cautious about sharing our lives with people too quickly, even if and perhaps especially if they “seem like” the most supportive, godly, wonderful Christian we have ever met.

Now to our second and final point, *the end of all evil*. We begin in what may seem a strange place, Genesis 11 and the account of the tower of Babel.

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the LORD said,

"Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.

Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth. (Gen 11:1-9)

The subject of unity among nations and a “new world order” has often been in the news, as it is right now in regard to Britain’s withdrawal from the European Union. That subject seems to be generating just about as much heat as the current presidential campaign.

The United States of course has been part of the United Nations since the days of Woodrow Wilson and what was originally called the League of Nations, formed with the supposed intent to end all wars once and for all. If an aggressor like Germany for example started to invade another country, the rest of the League

members would stand together against the guilty party and put an end to it. Supposedly. As we all know, this union did not end world war.

United Nations is a subject that comes up as we study the nature and tactics of

Evil always works to gain allies, and it does so in order to further its enlargement of the kingdom of darkness. This kingdom of evil has as its goal the destruction of God's kingdom. In a fallen world of sinful men, the unification of nations or of other individual entities is not necessarily a good thing nor can it be assumed that such unions are the will of God. In fact, the normal course of such unions will be to establish a kingdom that is opposed to the kingdom of God. Wisdom understands these things.

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." I will tell of the decree: The

LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Psa 2:1-12)

History certainly has proven this out.

Notice these points from our text:

- The Lord had commanded man to fill the earth, multiply, and subdue the creation. These Babelites were acting in full rebellion against the Lord's command. "*Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed...* ".
- The purpose of Babel is "*to make a name for ourselves*" rather than to obey and give glory to God.
- "*Nothing that they propose to do will be impossible for them*" is not describing a good thing! Rather, the Lord announces that the union of evil men and nations

will give undue and horrible power to them. Therefore the Lord intervened, confused them by establishing different languages, and they were dispersed *into their own nations and language groups*.

You may not like Michael Savage (a real character!) but his motto “borders, language, and culture” is indeed a biblical one. *All have been established by the Lord and it began at Babel.*

As long as this fallen world remains, it is the Lord’s decree that nations remain dispersed into their own borders, languages, and cultures. This is a safeguard against the centralizing of evil. Those who are wise understand this.

Now, it is the purpose of God in Christ to bring man back into a creation without borders, a creation that has people of all nations and races living in perfect peace. We see this in the church here in this world –

Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." (Rev 15:4)

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty

and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. (Rev 21:22-26)

Remember Peter and the lesson he had to learn?

So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. (Act 10:34-35)

So what we see in the gospel of Christ is a movement *to reverse Babel*. Largely that is what tongues at Pentecost was all about –

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? (Act 2:5-8)

One kingdom. One King. One citizenship. This is the body of Christ, the Church, the kingdom of God.

But the unification of nations NOW apart from Christ is a tactic of the kingdom of darkness. Just think how much evil has been caused down through history when conquerors went out to conquer and to establish themselves as world ruler. Alexander the Great. The Roman Empire. All of these and more were set completely against the kingdom of God. To even find ONE king or ruler of ONE nation who is godly is almost an impossibility, let alone a league of nations.

It has been our experience that the very same danger lies in church unions. Over time what perhaps was once the body of Christ morphs into the kingdom of darkness as a result of the quest for size and power. For example, the PC USA 2016 General Assembly:

Declining a proposal to admit to and apologize for harming the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning community, commissioners to the 222nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) instead opted to express deep regret for ways that those minorities of “God’s beloved

children” have been led to feel that they stand outside the grace of God and are unwelcome in the denomination.

At the same time, the resolution expresses the deep sorrow of all in the PC(USA) who have left the fellowship of the church, and expresses appreciation to those who have maintained relationships despite profound disagreement. <http://www.pcusa.org/news/2016/6/24/ga-expresses-regret-harm-lgbtqq-members-sorrow-tho/>

Christian church denominations must therefore be on constant guard against wolves creeping in who would pervert the gospel of Christ and the Word of God. Another example from the recent GA of the PC USA in Portland, Oregon -

Prayers To Allah-Offered At PCUSA’s General Assembly Plenary Session

Written by Dominic Aquila | Friday, June 24, 2016

“Allah bless us and bless our families and bless our Lord. Lead us on the straight path – the path of all the prophets: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad,” and so went the

prayer offered up by Wajidi Said, from the Portland Muslim Community, as part of the “first order of business” during the opening plenary session of the 222nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Wajidi was taking part in the assembly’s scheduled time of remembrance for those killed in the recent Orlando terrorist attack and those killed last year in the shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston, S.C.

“In the days leading up to this assembly we all know that our nation’s peace has once again been ripped apart by an act of mass violence,” said Heath Rada, moderator of the 221st General Assembly, when introducing it.

Evil unions, you see. The same spirit as at Babel. Working for the glory of man to replace the glory of God.

The End of Evil & Under One True King

We end then with this wonderful promise of what is to come. WE will be there! We are going to see the end of all evil once and for all. The kingdoms of this world will become

the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever!

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place." "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (Rev 22:1-7)

