

## Matthew 7:15-20 Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

People of God, The Lord Jesus warned of false prophets who come dressed in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. The reason a wolf would put on sheep's clothing is obvious right? The wolf wants easy access to the flock, so he can devour them without being recognized as a wolf.

And the driving force behind why the false prophet does what he does, is the same reason that motivates the wolf - greed.

And lest we limit our understanding to thinking that false prophets are only religious hucksters, the prophet Ezekiel warned of the conspiracy of the prophets, the priests, *and the princes* in Israel, saying they are all like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. (22:27).

Jeremiah likewise condemns this conspiracy of greed saying, *"From the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from the prophet to the priest, everyone deals falsely."*

Now what is less clear is what is meant by the sheep's clothing that the false prophets wear. These are nothing less than the deceptive words they speak, the false teachings they promote in order to get people to believe them, so they can continue to plunder them. Thus Jeremiah continues saying,

*"They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."* (Jer. 6:13-14 cf. 8:10-11).

This is important to understanding the tactic of the wolf. The wolf will lie and deceive to get his way. Naturally. But it is the kind of lies that he tells which is so important to understand. The wolf will pluck at the heart strings of the people, and play off their desire for something good in order to deceive the sheep. The wolf will use

the weapons of guilt and pity and compassion in order to not just gain access to the sheep, but even to get the sheep to voluntarily commit suicide. Dinner is so much easier for the wolf when the sheep crawl right up onto the wolf's plate believing it is for the sake of the greater good.

Jesus then mixes his metaphors. And he now he says of the false prophets, *You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles, are they?* The answer, of course, is No. *“So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, and every diseased tree bears bad fruit.”*

If the wolf looks like a sheep, and if false prophets come with slick and deceptive words that sound like the truth, then how do we discern the truth or not? You will know them by their fruit. What does their teaching result in? They say, “peace, peace.” But if there is chaos and death and destruction in their wake, then there is no peace. And the reason why they cannot produce the grapes and figs of peace, is simple: it's because they are thornbushes and thistles. That is the point. And thorns and thistles do not produce grape and figs.

Jesus uses the symbols of grapes and figs for good fruit for a good reason. These are symbols of peace and rest in the kingdom of God. Perhaps you heard the saying, *“Every man under his own vine and fig tree”*? That is simply a short hand version of the promise of God from Deut. 8 to describe the blessings of the Promised Land that he would give to His people when they obeyed God's law.

<sup>6</sup>“Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. <sup>7</sup>For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; <sup>8</sup>a land of wheat and barley, **of vines and fig trees** and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; <sup>9</sup>a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. <sup>10</sup>When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

1 Kings 4:25 described fulfillment of these blessing of peace that exemplified the reign of King Solomon: “And Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan to Beersheba, every man under his own vine and fig tree, all the days of Solomon.”

Thus, the Lord Jesus is telling us that the false prophet and wolf will dress up his speech and cast his vision to make it sound like what he offers is nothing less than the blessings of the kingdom of God. They come presenting the best of intentions, they come in the name of the kingdom of God on earth, they come in the name of the universal brotherhood of man, they come in the name of utopia, in the name of the Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

They come in the name of justice, equity, compassion, mercy, love, world peace, tolerance, acceptance, affirmation, and life. They preach tolerance, freedom, progress. They will appeal to a better future, or in the name of righting some perceived social wrong. Or they appeal to the Gospel, or talk about being Gospel centered. They will try to be nuanced, and winsome.

Whatever the approach, whether it's from hardcore leftists, or from fake conservative Christians, they will always couch their

deceptions with the thing that sounds good, and which appeals to the people's desire for something better. They come in sheep's clothing always pretending to bring something that will benefit everyone else.

This is what all false prophets do. This is what all wolves do. They pluck on the heart strings, and use people's desire to be righteous, compassionate, or merciful as leverage for spreading their lies and deception. And this tactic is extremely effective.

Not only does it get gullible sheep to give free access to the wolf, so the wolf has plenty of food to eat; but if ever any of the Sheep wake up and begin to recognize patterns of behavior that are destructive to his fellow sheep and start to raise objections, other sheep will come to the defense of the wolf.

Because sheep are stupid, and are easily led astray by their desire to be accepted and considered a good person, or because they is something to be gained by siding with the wolf. And the sheep who support the wolf and will use the tactics of guilt to silence you, and to get other sheep to defend him and oppose you.

They use whatever nice and warm and fuzzy slogans they can to use to get you to buy into the "peace" they are peddling. And when you object, they say,

"You don't accept our love? You must be filled hate."

"You don't think diversity is a strength? Then you must be a racist."

"You don't believe in open borders? You must be a white supremacist."

“You don’t support abortion, then you are anti-choice. No, worse – you want to prevent a woman’s reproductive rights. No worse – you want women to die.”

“You are against transgenderism? You literally support child abuse and genociding trans people.”

Which are now some really interesting accusations, because now they just come right out and accuse us of the very thing they are doing.

I’ve told you before people, and I tell you again, this is the tactic that is constantly used against us. And the moment we stop caring about whatever slanderous thing they say about us, the sooner we can get to fixing the problems these people have created.

But Jesus warned us ahead of time of this, because sheep are stupid, and the people will believe it. The wolf comes in sheep’s clothing. But you shall know them not by what they say, but by what their words and actions produce. You shall know them by their fruits.

Now if grapes and figs symbolize the blessings of the kingdom, what are thornbushes and thistles? The Bible frequently uses thorns to describe the curse. But it is not just the curse in abstraction, but rather, thorns are images of the curse specifically as it is manifested in evil people, and particularly evil leaders.

If the blessed man is like a tree who is planted by streams of water bearing fruit in its season, then the cursed man is the dried thorns and thistles. And the only thing that thorns and thistles and brambles produce, according to Scripture, is fire. Fire comes from thorns.

Ex. 22:6 is an interesting law. It says: *“If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that stacked grain, standing grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.”*

This is a very specific law. Note that it doesn't just say that fire breaks out and the field or grain is consumed. No. Fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that the thorns spread the fire.

James 3 says the tongue is a fire. And if the fire of the tongue spreads lies and false teaching, slander, gossip, deception, and wicked ideology, the result will be devastation. Fire breaks out from the thorny men, the wolves in sheep's clothing, and spreads to destroy the stacked and standing grain. Fire from the thorns will destroy the people of the land, and the all that makes for life and provision.

Judges 9 illustrates this principle perfectly.

Gideon's son Abimelech killed his 70 brothers in order to rule over Shechem. But the youngest brother Jotham hid himself and survived. And he came out to Mt. Gerazim, and cried aloud to the sons of Shechem who conspired with Abimelech to make him king over them instead of the other seventy sons:

*And he said to them:*

*“Listen to me, you men of Shechem,  
That God may listen to you!*

<sup>8</sup>*“The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them.*

*And they said to the olive tree,  
'Reign over us!'*

<sup>9</sup>*But the olive tree said to them,*

*'Should I cease giving my oil,  
With which they honor God and men,  
And go to sway over trees?'*

*<sup>10</sup> "Then the trees said to the fig tree,  
'You come and reign over us!'*

*<sup>11</sup> But the fig tree said to them,  
'Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit,  
And go to sway over trees?'*

*<sup>12</sup> "Then the trees said to the vine,  
'You come and reign over us!'*

*<sup>13</sup> But the vine said to them,  
'Should I cease my new wine,  
Which cheers both God and men,  
And go to sway over trees?'*

*<sup>14</sup> "Then all the trees said to the bramble,  
'You come and reign over us!'*

*<sup>15</sup> And the bramble said to the trees,  
'If in truth you anoint me as king over you,  
Then come and take shelter in my shade;  
But if not, let fire come out of the bramble  
And devour the cedars of Lebanon!'*

*<sup>16</sup> "Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and sincerity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as he deserves— <sup>17</sup>for my father fought for you, risked his life, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian; <sup>18</sup>but you have risen up against my father's house this day, and killed his seventy sons on one stone, and made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother— <sup>19</sup>if then you have acted in*

*truth and sincerity with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. <sup>20</sup>But if not, let fire come from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and Beth Millo; and let fire come from the men of Shechem and from Beth Millo and devour Abimelech!” <sup>21</sup>And Jotham ran away and fled; and he went to Beer and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.*

So evil leaders, like Abimelech, and like the leaders of Shechem, are thorns and brambles. And if you put your trust in bramble men don't be surprised when you get burned. For just as it is inevitable that chickens come home to roost, and trees bear fruit, so does fire break out from brambles and thorns. Thus, it was only a matter of time before God repaid Abimelech for killing his brothers, and repaid the leaders of Shechem for choosing Abimelech.

And here then Jesus concludes with some words of comfort: <sup>19</sup>*Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* There will be an inevitable judgment and reckoning on the thorns and false prophets. Their own evil deeds will come back on their own heads.

And this is actually the moral of the story of the original telling of the story of the wolf in sheep's clothing, told in Aesop's fables, which our Lord Jesus undoubtedly knew.

A certain Wolf could not get enough to eat because of the watchfulness of the Shepherds. But one night he found a sheep skin that had been cast aside and forgotten. The next day, dressed in the skin, the Wolf strolled into the pasture with the Sheep. Soon a little Lamb was following him about and was quickly led away to slaughter.

That evening the Wolf entered the fold with the flock. But it happened that the Shepherd took a fancy for mutton broth that very evening, and, picking up a knife, went to the fold. There the first he laid hands on the fattest sheep, the one he killed was the Wolf.

What then is the moral of the story? The evil that evil men do will come back on their own head. The fate of the wolf is that he will get caught by the Shepherd and he will be killed. The thornbushes which spread the fire that burned down the standing and stacked grain, will be cut down and thrown into the same fire and destroyed. This is God's divine justice.

Well, people of God, I think it is no surprise to you that fire has spread forth from the thorns of these false prophets, priests, and princes, and the field of Christendom and the fruits of her standing grain are burning down around us. The bramble men promised to bring forth the fruits of the blessings of the kingdom, saying peace, peace.

And many people foolishly believed them and went along with it because they it would be advantageous to do so. But, true to nature, they did not deliver on the promises. There was no peace. And now the fires of cultural revolution are burning Christendom and all of civilization down around us.

There is the ancient tale of a man named Aeneas, who fought in the battle of Troy. And as Troy was being burned down around him, he came to realize that it was the gods who had decreed that

Troy would be destroyed. In fact, it was the gods themselves who were fighting against the city. And so, in an act of piety, and filled with a mission to establish a new city, Aeneas threw his father on his back, grabbed his wife and son by the hand, and fled burning Troy, duty bound to establish Rome.

In a similar story, God fought against the Old Jerusalem, which you can read about in the book of Revelation. And just like Troy, God set fire to it leaving not one stone upon another. But Jesus prophesied to his disciples that when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies they were to flee to the mountains for safety. And the Christians fled to place called Pella, where God preserved them so that they could start over again and rebuild the New Jerusalem, the City of God, in themselves

So should we understand our role today in the new Pella. Like Aeneas, like the early Christians, we are duty bound to take the traditions of our fathers on our back, to perform this labor of love, and to take our wives and children and build a New Christendom from out of us.

Now what are the greatest fruits of the old Christendom? Not the statues, nor the architecture, it's not the music and cathedrals that Christendom came to be known for. The greatest thing that Christendom produced, is the people who built the cathedrals, and who wrote beautiful music, and who explored the world, and founded nations, and built civilizations.

Here in Pella, we desire to see civilization revived. We desire to see Christendom 2.0 here. But it needs to start inside of each one of us. We need to revive the spirit of our people. We need to have a vision for the glory of God in us, and in all things, and learn to live

in harmony with the way God created the world and us. And eventually the fruits of that will inspire us to produce great works of art, and beautiful buildings and soul stirring music and new schools. We need to become, Trees of Life whose fruit is for healing. But those things don't happen apart from the people who are dedicated to seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

But beware, people of God, there are the false prophets out there, the wolves of Wall Street who want to reduce our people to nothing more than consumers. Who have a vested interest in keeping us isolated, barren, sick, weak, and stupid. There ways are the ways of death. And many of our fellow Christians have bought into these lies. The reason why so many churches are dying is because they embraced this view of life. The reason we are growing is because we reject it.

And so, as God sets about to destroy the wolves in sheep's clothing, as God throws the thorn bushes into the fires, let us build for the future, beware of their lives, and build for the future, for Christ himself has saved us to bear good fruit so that our people could one day sit under their own vine fig tree.

*<sup>20</sup>Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, <sup>21</sup>make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*