

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon January 10, 2021

Luke 20: 45 – 47 “The Crushing of the Wolves”

41 And He said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is the Son of David? 42 Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, 43 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." ' 44 "Therefore David calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?"

45 Then, in the hearing of all the people, He said to His disciples, 46 "Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, 47 who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

1 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, 2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. 3 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; 4 for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

I. Introduction

- a. David’s Lord, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, is God. He sees the hearts and minds of all. His gaze is not dim, nor can it be escaped. And, for those who meet Christ as Judge, for those who die in their sins, Christ shall bring them perfect justice and condemnation. His arm fails not, and His strength crushes as all resistance vanishes. What will happen when you meet Christ after you die?
- b. Matthew 7:15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” In today’s text, we meet more wolves, all dressed up in their hypocritical disguise, whom Christ our Lord sees and knows.
 - i. In this text, we have the crowd, the disciples, the scribes and Christ Himself, with the focus upon the evil pride and covetousness of the scribes.
 - ii. Please listen to the sermon today, convinced from the start that you are a wolf in sheep’s clothing, you are a prideful, covetous, devouring beast. Start there. Start with that sad truth about us all, and great profit can be yours through this message.
- c. Luke 20: 45 – 47 “The Crushing of the Wolves”
 - i. The setting: v45
 - ii. The warning: beware of the scribes v46
 - iii. The conceit of the scribes: v46b
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II. The setting: v45

- a. 45 “Then, in the hearing of all the people, He said to His disciples,”
- b. So, our Lord has left the scribes perplexed and unable to answer His question about Psalm 110:1. And, then, into that moment, Jesus gives a public warning about the scribes, within the hearing of His disciples, all the people, and even the

scribes. So, we see this is a scathing public rebuke and warning to the scribes, and a warning to Christ's disciples and the entire crowd.

- c. Bock "With the theological controversies behind him, Jesus changes his topic. The final confrontation with the leadership now causes him to warn his disciples, within earshot of his other listeners. Jesus is not shy about criticizing the leadership; ... What Jesus is about to say requires reflection."¹
 - d. Note, some evils are so dark as to require a public rebuke. Some offenses are so devilish that a public warning/rebuke is necessary. The key element: the great danger such vicious wolves pose to the vulnerable and unsuspecting.
- III. The warning: beware of the scribes v46
- a. 46 "Beware of the scribes,"
 - b. About the scribes
 - i. Scribes are mentioned in both the OT and the NT. The basic scribal function was to learn all the necessary written languages in order to record formal decisions and read out of the Word of God. This function also included organizing and taking care of the existing written records. Such scribal functions naturally led to these individuals also being trained as experts in the Law of God so they could serve as advisors to leaders. The OT speaks of good scribes (ie, Ezra) and bad scribes ("the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood" Jer. 8:8).
 - ii. In addition, the scribes could serve any leader or any Jewish school of thought. We see the scribes of the Pharisees in Acts 23:9 "And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested..."
 - iii. Finally, it appears the scribes attempted to be experts in the Law, avoiding joining in with theological debates. Yet, their frequent association with the Pharisees suggests the scribes gravitated toward the views of the Pharisees by the time of the NT.
 - c. Beware: to attend to one's self, i.e. to give heed to one's self, give attention to, take heed.
 - i. So, the first step here enjoined by Christ is to give close attention to the scribes, to take heed of who they really are, to spot reality. This brings their pride, covetousness, oppression and hypocrisy into focus. Having such a focus, seeing this reality, leads to the awareness that such actions are dangerous, and being like such a person, being blindly drawn into their behavior and motives brings much trouble. Wake up! See who they really are, and DO NOT FOLLOW THEM.
 - ii. Bock "the present tense προσέχετε (*prosechete*, beware constantly) calls for a vigilant effort not to follow the scribes' example."²
 1. A constant vigilance against the threats of the scribes and the threat of being drawn into their seductive ways.
 - d. Why does Christ our Lord warn His disciples about this danger?

¹ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1641). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

² Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1642). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

- i. Because our dear Savior knows the dark depths of depravity of every human soul. He knows that each of His disciples' sinful flesh strives to follow the way of the scribes. He knows this evil pride, covetousness, and malice can germinate and hatch foul oppression from any man, so He warns the disciples against this wolfish evil entering the Church.
 - ii. And, because the Lord knows such evil men will come against His disciples, so this is also a warning to beware of their evil schemes.
 - 1. Henry "1. "Take heed of being drawn *into sin* by them, of learning their way, and going into their measures; beware of such a spirit as they are governed by. Be not you such in the Christian church as they are in the Jewish church." 2. "Take heed of being *brought into trouble* by them," in the same sense that he had said (Mt. 10:17), "*Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils; beware of the scribes, for they will do so. Beware of them.*"³
 - e. Why does Christ warn in the hearing of all the people?
 - i. Because this evil is such a grave danger to the general people, Christ wants them to know the reality of the scribes' motives so they can avoid their abusive harm.
- IV. The conceit of the scribes: v46b
 - a. "who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts,"
 - b. Each of these 4 examples Christ uses to demonstrate the evil pride of the scribes. They truly believe they are superior to others. Entitled. Greatly elevated sense of self-importance while devaluing others. The devil's sin.
 - c. Henry "They are *proud* and *haughty*. They *desire* to walk about the streets in *long robes*, as those that are above business (for men of business went with their *loins girt up*), and as those that take state, and take place." ...They loved in their hearts to have people make their obeisance to them *in the markets*, that many might see what respect was paid them; and were very proud of the precedency that was given them in all places of concourse. They *loved the highest seats in the synagogues* and *the chief rooms at feasts*, and, when they were placed in them, looked upon themselves with great conceit and upon all about them with great contempt."⁴
 - i. This system of exaggerated public wardrobe developed along with the cultural expectation that good Jews who encountered a scribe would offer them outward signs of reverence to show their religious devotion.
 - 1. Bock "Extrabiblical material makes clear that rabbis and other religious authorities received special greetings in the marketplace.

³ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1898). Peabody: Hendrickson.

⁴ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1898). Peabody: Hendrickson.

In fact, in the Talmud such greetings were required for teachers of the law.”⁵

- ii. Unchecked positional pride will go on to create a systemic network of applied conceit, a club for the elite, who will stroke one another’s pride, protect one another’s corruptions, and justify one another’s abuse of their position. God’s design for the position of leadership to be filled with humble servants to the weak and needy has been inverted. The leaders are appointed by God to protect the weak from evil predators, but the evil predators have infiltrated and controlled so no one is safe.
- V. The covetous, oppressive, hypocritical scribes: v47a
- a. 47 “who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers.”
 - b. Going on, we see the foul fruits associated with pride. Self-elevating elitism grows the malicious belief that others are of lesser value, so their lives and families and possessions serve primarily to build up the elite. Hence, these wolves feel entirely justified to abuse their position, feign piety and rake in wealth from all, even the poor and needy. Here we see the depths of their covetousness and the heights of their hypocrisy. These evil men have no limit to their greed and theft, even abusing widows. Using their position of respect as a cloak for malice, they abuse religion for their own personal gain, even plunging so deep into darkness as to fake their extended prayers to impress.
 - c. Henry ““They are *covetous and oppressive*, and make their religion a cloak and cover for crime.” They *devour widows’ houses*, get their estates into their hands, and then by some trick or other make them their own, or they live upon them, and eat up what they have; and *widows* are an easy prey to them, because they are apt to be deluded by their specious pretences: *for a show they make long prayers*, perhaps long prayers with the widows when they are in sorrow, as if they had not only a *piteous* but a *pious* concern for them, and thus endeavour to ingratiate themselves with them, and get their money and effects into their hands.”⁶
 - d. Such evil men have been discussed before by Luke, and we also see the other Gospels presenting similar warnings and condemnations of the scribes and other Jewish religious leaders.
 - i. Matthew 7:15-19 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”

⁵ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1642). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁶ Henry, M. (1994). [Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume](#) (p. 1898). Peabody: Hendrickson.

VI. The wolves will be crushed: v47b

- a. "These will receive greater condemnation."
- b. Once the eyes are opened to the existence of such evil men, the shock of the moment can be almost overwhelming, especially when we are made aware of how widespread the corruption is. Such evil men protect one another, building a system of pride, greed, oppression and hypocrisy as their destructive powers expand. Such awareness can lead to despair apart from faith. What hope can there be? Our hope is in the Lord. Let us see the Lord in His majesty and glory again this morning.
- c. The beginning of Christ's reign, Revelation 5:
 - i. "And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. 2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. 4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. 5 But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." 6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." 11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" 14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever."
- d. The end of Christ's mediatorial reign, when all enemies are under His feet:
 - i. Rev 20: 7-15 "Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which

are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

- e. So, we have great consolation our great King will bring forth His perfect justice upon His and our enemies according to His perfect wisdom and timing.
- f. Now, this same promise of condemnation upon the scribes not only brings us comfort as stated above, but also should be received as a warning. Just like the disciples needed the warning not to follow the way of the scribes, the way of pride, covetousness, oppression, hypocrisy and malicious abuse of the weak, we today also need this warning just as much.

VII. Questions to know, love and obey God

- a. Rejoice in the victory of Christ over all His enemies.
- b. Apply this reality to today's world.
- c. Next, examine yourself for pride, covetousness and hypocrisy.
- d. Finally, rejoice in the Lord's mercy and forgiveness for all who call upon Him.