

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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## *Wise as Serpents – A Practical Theology of Evil*

**(Part 6 – Broadway is Evil)**

**January 17, 2016**

**Sermon Text:** Matthew 7:13-23

**Scripture Reading:** Matthew 7

### **Introduction-**

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

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created

from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. (Gen 6:5-12)

One reason that evil flourishes unchallenged so often is because of another evil – *willful blindness*. Willful blindness *to evil*. You have heard it quite often I am sure. Someone is faced with undisputable facts about widespread evil, and their response?

***Well, I choose to believe that this world has lots of good people in it. I think that people are fundamentally good.***

I remember years ago reading some of Neil Anderson's books (The Bondage Breaker, Freedom in Christ ministries, etc) where he said "*I think that if I can really get to know anyone, I will like them. Really. I think I would.*" That kind of thing sounds so nice. So "Christian," yet it is anything but. Christ would never say such a thing. It is a willful blindness to evil.

Listen to Robert Hare describe the psychopath:

He will choose you, disarm you with his words, and control you with this presence. He will delight you with his wit and his plans. He will show you a good time, but you will always get the bill. He will smile and deceive you, and he will scare you with his eyes. And when he is through with you, and he will be through with you, he will desert you and take with him your innocence and your pride. You will be left much sadder but not a lot wiser, and for a long time you will wonder what happened and what you did wrong. And if another of his kind comes knocking at your door, will you open it? [Without Conscience, Kindle location 385]

The answer of course is, for most people, yes! They will open the door for the next evil person, as long as they

remain willfully blind to evil and insist that "most people are good."

Robert Hare deals specifically with psychopaths. But Scripture paints evil with a much broader brush, warning us that the majority of humanity, and indeed *the majority of people who profess religion*, and even more specifically, *the majority of people who claim to follow Christ*, are in fact of their father the devil.

Lest you think I am overstating the case, listen to the Lord Jesus Christ as He tells us what we can expect from the majority of the human race. Notice carefully that these words, taken from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) *are specifically addressed to the Jews, all of whom claimed to be the covenant people of God:*

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree

cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' (Mat 7:13-23)

See it? Many call Him "Lord," but few really belong to Him. Most choose the false prophets rather than the Word of God. Those who enter the way of destruction, Broadway, are *many*. FEW are those who find the Narrow way.

This morning I specifically want to call your attention to these two ways: Broadway and the Narrow Way. Two roads, two paths. Every human being who has ever lived, every person alive today, every person here at this moment, is on one of these two roads, headed for one of two destinations: Life or Destruction.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.(Pro 16:25)

I specifically want us to understand that *the road a person chooses to travel tells us about the heart and nature of that person*. That is to say, *Broadway is populated by evil people*. This is the nature of the majority, and specifically, the nature of the majority of *religious* people who claim to be followers of Christ.

Here then is one tell-tale sign that you will see if you find yourself talking to a Broadway traveler. *They refuse to see evil. They refuse to acknowledge evil*. Headed for destruction, they insist that Broadway and all who travel it are fine, upstanding, righteous folk who, unlike those judgmental, bigoted, religious nutcases over there on the Narrow way, truly love and accept one another. And remember, these people claim to be followers of Jesus.

Listen carefully once more to these words of Jesus that set these two ways in such shocking contrast:

*Enter by the narrow gate.*

*For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.*

*For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.*

Broad	Narrow
Easy	Hard
Many	Few
Destruction	Life

*“The time has come for every one of us to choose what is easy, or what is right.”* How do we know what is right? By the Word and by the Spirit in us:

And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. (Isa 30:20-21)

The very nature of Broadway tells us that it will be populated by the majority – by the majority of people who claim to be Christians. Because it is *easy*. Likewise, the nature of the Narrow way tells us that few will find it and walk it. It is *narrow*. It is *hard*.

And so the insanity-

*“I choose to believe that most people in this world are good. It’s all good. It will all work out in the end.”*

The fact is that Broadway is an evil road, and those who choose to travel it are evil. They are led there by *false prophets*. They say to Jesus, “Lord, Lord,” they do things in Jesus’ name, and yet Jesus does not know them and will reject them on that Day.

And notice in particular how Jesus describes them:

***“...you workers of lawlessness.”***

*Broadway is the law-less way.* Specifically, it is set directly against the good and perfect law of God. These Broadway people who look soooo “Christian” as they do “mighty works” in Jesus’ name, in fact hate Christ and are of their father the devil who is the ultimate *man of lawlessness*.

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. (1Jn 3:4)

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (2Th 2:3)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all

uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Mat 23:27-28)

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2Co 6:14)

Let's think this through again now very carefully. The people traveling Broadway are *workers of lawlessness*. Lawlessness is the essence of sin. Satan himself is called the man of lawlessness. The Pharisees are classic examples of this lawlessness disguised as righteousness. As Christians, we are commanded by Christ to separate from lawlessness and those traveling in its Way.

Broadway is the lawless way. Broadway is the way that hates God's law and therefore the way that hates God. The people who travel it, though so often disguised as "godly, good folk," are in fact lawless and evil.

***If we are going to be wise as serpents about evil, then we are going to have to acknowledge the evil of Broadway and stop clinging to the notion that everyone who says they are a Christian, is. We are going to have to admit Christ's warnings and teachings about evil and its***

***prevalence in that which claims to be serving Him, are true.***

The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one. (Psa 14:2-3)

If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah. (Isa 1:9)

What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." (Rom 3:9-12)

We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (1Jn 5:19)

Let me give you a typical, common, recurring example of Broadway in action.

**Life in Broadway – A Typical “Christian” Organization/Church**

Take careful note now:

***The response to evil being exposed and called out reveals whether a person is of Broadway or the Narrow way.***

Think of it. How do you suppose the hypocrites responded when Jesus told them they were whitewashed tombs and that, therefore, the very leadership of the “church” in that day was rotten to the core? They hated him!

How does a man after God’s own heart respond when evil is exposed, even if it is in himself? -

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. (Psa 32:3-5)

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you

teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. (Psa 51:2-10)

See it? *How a person responds when evil is pointed out reveals whether he is on Broadway or the Narrow way.*

First Church is a happening place. Their pastor, Pastor Jones, is a happening man. He has charisma and can hold the audience spellbound. There is a large pastoral staff at First Church and most every Sunday people are “saved” and the baptistery is always full, ready for use. Pastor Jones started the church from a small Bible study and since then it has grown amazingly. There is a beautiful new building, a campus actually. Pastor Jones is in demand as a speaker at some of the most well-known conferences and a leader in the denominational assemblies. First Church supports many missionaries all over the world. The youth ministry is vibrant. There is a counseling center. And the music ministry? Full orchestra and choir with every possible audio-visual gadget to be found.

Last Monday morning Teresa Johnson came to the counseling center asking for help. Teresa's husband, Mark, is one of the pastors at First Church. Mary Insley, the counseling center director, sensed trouble of an unusual magnitude in this case and nervously called Pastor Jones, asking him to come down to her office and sit in. He told the denominational chairman he had been speaking with that "something had come up" and went down to Mary's office.

Teresa had a huge knot in her gut, especially when Pastor Jones entered. Perhaps this was one big mistake, coming here. Maybe she was just over-reacting? Mark was very well thought of at First Church and in fact he did quite a lot of counseling and discipling himself. He sometimes had Teresa come and sit in while he did marriage counseling for church members.

But Teresa's world at home was radically different than her world at "church." The Mark people thought they knew was, a façade. In fact, noble Pastor Mark was, as Teresa had found out last year, a subscriber to online pornography. And there was more. Mark was a cruel husband and father. Mark was never wrong. Mark regularly put Teresa down and more than once had launched into a terrifying rage over some little, seemingly insignificant matter. Teresa

and the children had, while traveling with Mark in the car and thus were a captive audience, endured his raging rants coupled with threats to dump them off on the side of the road.

Some of these mobile rants took place on the way to church, where, upon arrival, Mark changed his mask and Teresa and the kids knew they had better do the same.

Teresa had come to First Church, to the counseling center, to Pastor Jones, for help.

She would receive none.

You see, First Church is Broadway. First Church is lawlessness. First Church is evil. How do we know? *By their response to a report of evil in their midst made by a genuine Christian who is a traveler of the Narrow way.* What was the response? Anger – not at the perpetrator, but at the victim. Denial. Willful blindness. A self-protecting posturing designed to protect First Church as an institution no matter what.

What would Teresa receive? Blame. Criticism. Ultimately a threat of ex-communication. And what would Mark receive? Pity. Hugs. Widespread acceptance.

Evil hates the light of truth. Unrighteousness hates righteousness. You can know if a person or a group of people are on Broadway or the Narrow way *according to how they respond to a report of evil in their midst.* The Narrow way is broken and repents. If necessary, it casts out the wicked one and embraces and sustains the victim of evil. But Broadway? Broadway hates the one who blows the whistle about evil.

You will see the very same thing is so-called “Christian” organizations and “ministries.” Missions agencies. Christian orphanages. Christian medical agencies and hospitals. It is just as Jesus said:

*'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'*

Janet works as a nurse in St. Augustine hospital. That hospital was founded many years ago by church leaders in the community who saw a need to help sick and suffering people. Millions of dollars were raised, buildings put up, staff hired, and a motto embraced that was to guide the entire ministry:

When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a

long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." (Joh 5:6-8)

Those verses are on a very prominent plaque in the hospital entryway and appear on all the printed materials put out by the organization. What St. Augustine’s Hospital does, it does in the name of Jesus.

But Jesus departed that hospital long ago, if in fact, He was ever there at all. Christ is there in name only. But He does not know these people. They are, for all the façade of godliness, whitewashed tombs, workers of lawlessness. How can that be!?!? Just look at all the good that is being done there! I can’t believe it!

Well, examine what happens when evil is uncovered at St. Augustine and you will see things as they really are. Compromise after compromise was made over time with the world in order to receive contributions and grants. Staff was hired but their Christian character and testimony gradually became a non-issue. Every day, 8AM sharp, the chaplain prays a prayer over the hospital audio system for all to hear. Scripture verses are posted



everywhere. And yet Jesus is nowhere present in those halls.

If you worked at St. Augustine, and if you were a true Christian, and if you were naïve about evil, you might think that some evils that you are seeing could be reported to the administration and they would thank you for it. You would be wrong. Because Broadway does not want to hear about evil in its midst.

Here is another real life true example of Broadway denying evil. This is exceedingly common and shows how Broadway is revealed by its response to evil uncovered in its midst:

We are trained to blindly forgive everyone of every wrong and to shut up about their past sins else WE are guilty This is so dangerous and so anti-Biblical! It's another one of those childish interpretations of the Bible that people without the capacity to empathize with others, ends up pontificating.

The more God shows me the more I see how this is what's kept those of us who belong to him from growing in Him, All these ways we've been forced to behave based on supposed "Biblical" principles. Blindly serve, blindly give, blindly forgive, blindly obey all men and authority. But the Bible tells us that we were once blind but that now, when he shows us the

truth, we can SEE!. We are NOT to do things BLINDLY but to look and see and test and taste and stay away from evil and those who endorse it and to be offended by it as well! We are not to pretend evil didn't happen or that an offense wasn't committed against us. Opposite. Part of the process of forgiveness is to first trot out the offense itself and then forgive (after one has shown true repentance). And our testimony is to be ALL of it. When we use our life stories to testify for Christ it is not supposed to be some watered down, church-ed-up version of reality but THE TRUTH of it. This would mean that we would have to disclose the offense committed against us, thus revealing evil.

Having others keep their secrets is one of the four hallmarks of a sociopath, according to Martha Stout. When we are told not to disclose the offense committed against us, we keep evil ones secrets. It's funny how once we all start sharing on this website, many secret tactics of the evil one are revealed. Just goes to show you just how EVIL it is to force God's genuine children to forgive evil ones and then to shut up about it. Evil indeed!

And if you are going to be wise as serpents in regard to evil, you must understand these things.

Thank you so much, Pastor. I'm married to a senior pastor. When we went for counseling last month, the counselor/pastor did not believe me because of my narcissist husband's lies. I was made to feel like the abuser and he the victim. The undertone of his advice was *not to jeopardize our ministry*. I feel stuck, but I'm praying.

### Conclusion

The Narrow Way is Jesus Christ. Traveling that Way means to honor, follow, love and obey Christ. It is narrow, it is hard. But we have this certain promise given by Him to all who turn away from Broadway and come after Him:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psa 23:1-6)

The Narrow way leads, you see, to life.