

DANCES WITH WOLVES

Matthew 10:16-33

November 16, 2008 Sunday am.

INTRODUCTION

- A. Over 30,000 gay rights protesters picked churches in California last week following the passage of Proposition 8, which amended California's constitution banning same sex marriages. Tensions mounted in Palm Springs when a supporter of the gay marriage ban entered a crowd of gay activists carrying a foam plastic cross. The cross was ripped from her hands and trampled on by the protesters.
- B. This is a reminder that we Christians are a minority living in the midst of a hostile culture to our faith.
 - 1. Although few, if any of us, have ever been persecuted for our faith, you may have felt pressured to keep your faith to yourself.
 - 2. Jesus told his disciples that he was sending them out into a world filled with wolves (v.16a). He also told them how to handle themselves in such a hostile environment. What did he say Christians should do?

I. FIRST, WE SHOULD BE SOFT-HEARTED, NOT SOFT HEADED.

- A. This is what he means in v.16b.
 - 1. Serpents were biblical symbols of wisdom or shrewdness.
 - 2. Doves were biblical symbols of peace or simplicity.
- B. Jesus illustrated being soft-hearted, but not soft-headed in his own dealings with wolves—Matthew 22:15-22.
 - 1. They wanted to trick Jesus into incriminating himself.
 - 2. Jesus was gentle, but also shrewd in his answer.
 - 3. Jesus' message then to us is to be harmless, but not naïve.

II. SECOND, WE SHOULDN'T UNDERESTIMATE WHAT OTHERS ARE CAPABLE OF DOING.

- A. We learned this the hard way on 9-11. Before then no one would have guessed what our enemies were willing to do.
- B. Did you read this week about the banners to be placed on buses in Washington D.C. ? A group called the American Humanist Association, an atheist organization, paid \$40,000 dollars to place signs on buses asking: "Why believe in a god? Be good for goodness' sake".
- C. Jesus warns us to be on our guard because many in our world can't tolerate us—v. 17 & 21.
- D. We need to be aware of the capacity of people, even those close to us, to be disloyal or antagonistic.

III. THIRD, WE SHOULD AVOID CONFLICT WHEN WE CAN.

- A. This is what Jesus says—v.23.
- B. This doesn't mean we should never take a stand for what is right or what we believe.
 - 1. It does mean, though, to carefully pick our fights.
 - 2. Remember Kenny Rogers song, "Know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em."
 - 3. Why? Because we can't win some conflicts. There are issues like abortion and politics that we will never be able to change people's minds on, so we shouldn't escalate the situation just to have our say.

IV. FINALLY, WE SHOULD FOLLOW OUR LEADER. HOW?

- A. First, follow in Jesus' footsteps—v.24-25 & John 15:18-20.
- B. Second, strive to please God not men—v.28.
 - 1. Bill Cosby once said, "I don't know the secret of success, but I know the secret of failure is trying to please everybody."
 - 2. The Apostle Paul knew this too—Galatians 1:10.
- C. Third, speak up for Jesus every chance you get—v.32-33.

CONCLUSION

- A. Expect opposition, because Jesus expected it and got it.
- B. Also, expect God to be with you.