

SERMON: BEYOND THE CLASSROOM (SNAKE SENSE AND A DOVE DEMEANOR)

Matthew 10:16

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Introduction

Anyone who has been around me for any length of time knows I am a staunch advocate of education. I believe in formal education as well as lifetime informal learning. However, I will be the first to say that everything is not found in books and many valuable lessons are not taught in a classroom. Jesus educated His disciples for nearly three years. His mentoring them was like a “twenty-four-seven” classroom. Now, He is sending them out to minister without His physical presence. The instructions He is giving them are words of wisdom for short-term mission work in their own country. Things have changed for the apostles; “Follow Me” has changed to “I am sending you out.” He tells them they must apply practical wisdom to be successful in their ministry. His words on the surface sound harsh or pessimistic. However, Jesus did not want them to be blindsided by the challenges of the real world. An optimist is a realist who has high ideals and a plan to achieve them. He told them they must use wisdom, sensitivity, and a balanced approach as they interact with those who are unsaved. Jesus was saying in essence, “You have graduated from my seminary; now it’s time to apply what you have learned to the real world.” While Jesus was instructing the twelve apostles, these principles have broad application and universal benefit.

We honor those who have done well academically, especially the high school and college graduates. Some of you will leave the classroom and will enter the real world of work. If you are not spiritually strong you can get a defeatist attitude, or even worse, start acting just like the world. The apostle Paul warns us in Romans 12:2 not to let the world mold us into its unchristian shape. Here are a few practical thoughts from the pulpit that will help us apply our academically acquired knowledge to its highest and best use. Most of you are already adhering to these ideas. Please continue in your meritorious efforts. “Keep on keeping on!”

Exposition

1. Acknowledge God in Everything You Do.
(Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 6:33)
2. Treat Life Like A Golf Game.
 - (A) Have More Than One Club In Your Bag.
 - (B) Get The Ball In The Hole With The Least Amount Of Strokes.
3. Treat Life Like A Basketball Game.
 - (A) There Are No Points For Dribbling-Only For Baskets.
 - (B) Everything Is Not A Slam Dunk.
4. Treat Life Like A Baseball Game.
 - (A) A Foul Ball Knocked Out Of The Stadium Is Not A Home Run.
 - (B) You Can’t Go Straight To 3rd Base. You Must Touch First And Second.
5. Treat Yourself As If You Were Your I-Phone or Your Android.
 - (A) There Is Always A Better Version On The Horizon. Get It.

(B) Keep It Charged At All Times.

Closing Thoughts

God is ready, willing, and able to give us the wisdom we need to be successful in this crooked and perverse world. This divine wisdom is ours for the asking. Go forth and fulfill your God-given destiny. Give God glory! Give God all the glory!

Theological Notes

1. The dove and the eagle are two of the most significant birds in the Bible. The dove symbolizes innocence, harmlessness and purity. Doves are ground dwellers. (Please read Genesis 8:8-12.) They build their nests on the ground-not in trees. Yet, they keep their feathers as white as snow. That was one of the intriguing things about them. They nest on the ground but keep themselves pure. They do not get dirty. This is a lesson for each Christian; we must interact with the world, but we must still maintain our integrity and our Biblical values.

2. The reference to the serpent reaches back to the 3rd chapter of Genesis. The serpent was so persuasive that he enticed Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Jesus wants us to be just as persuasive in influencing others to accept the saving grace of the gospel. We are to be “sacredly shrewd.” We are to be godly, but not gullible. We are to be “snake smart,” but not “snake sneaky.” Our goodness proclaims the love of Christ.

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