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Jesus warns us of false teachers in the Gospel lesson -
He calls them wolves in sheep's clothing. //

Then, in the epistles lesson, the wolves seem a bit more obvious to identify.
What do the wolves do?

Whether knowingly or unknowingly,
They seek to devour your life, your faith, and your soul.

During Jesus' ministry, the Pharisees were the wolves -
They are Jesus' intended subject here in the Gospel lesson.
The Pharisees wanted to be a part of God's chosen people,
But their strict adherence to the Mosaic Law,
Left little room to look to God for their salvation.

That led to their demise.

They didn't know their Heavenly Father,
because they didn't know His Son - Matthew 11:27.

So the harsh words "**I never knew you**" isn't so much a threat to us,
But to the Pharisees.

Because they didn't want to have Jesus to know their Heavenly Father,
They only wanted their works.

The wolves don't stop there -

When the church was expanding in the book of Acts,
There are several examples of wolves - some more obvious than others.

In Acts 13:4-12,

there is a story of two false prophets/magicians who perform miracles,
not the way Jesus does -
to love, cure, and bring about a new creation absent of evil, sickness, and
disease -
but their miracles tricked their followers with satanic dark magic.

Then they would teach falsely about Jesus.

They successfully tricked a Roman pro-counsel,
But Paul and Barnabas exposed these magicians as false prophets,
Leading the Roman Pro-counsel away from their snares,

And He was converted to Christianity.

Then, there's an example of a wolf seated within the Acts Church - the Judaizers in Acts 15.

They taught that Gentile Christians must observe Jewish laws and customs to be saved - specifically the custom of circumcision.

But the apostles pointed out that the Holy Spirit was coming to the Gentiles upon hearing the Gospel and were being given faith!

So the church saw God's work for what it is -

that God saves Gentiles based on grace, not circumcision and other Jewish customs.

But these Judaizers remained wolves in sheep's clothing,

Seeking to teach that salvation came from God's grace plus a mandatory strict obedience to Mosaic Law.

In each instance, the false prophet was identified,

and the false teaching exposed and corrected,

While at the same time inviting repentance and then forgiveness -

Inviting the wolves to become sheep.

Then there are the wolves of today -

Who redefine Godly terms according to their own standards.

For example, the terms "justice" and "love" have been hijacked and redefined by the world and used against biblical teaching.

The postmodern world no longer defines justice by what's morally right or wrong, but now justice has become about power - if you don't have it, then you're being treated unjustly.

Same with love - the postmodern world wants a painless love, a love that isn't confronted with harsh truths. But biblical love looks like the cross.

The first false teaching, and perhaps most gruesome self-justification of all, is abortion.

Instead of justice being for an unborn person, justice has been given to an individual's choice.

Here, justice is not being defined by right or wrong -

By killing life or nurturing life,

But rather, that an individual's power to choose life or death is taken away,

Regardless of any benefit for a fellow human being.

That's not God's idea of justice -
 God calls us to help people who are taken advantage of,
 even changing social structure if necessary.

There's much work for Christians to do here -
 Adoptions, supporting foster homes, donating supplies to pregnancy crisis
 centers -
 Because the moment we cry pro-life and do nothing,
 Are we actually supporting life?

The second example is the Black Lives Matter organization.
 I'd hope that we could all agree to the statement "Black Lives Matter",
 Recognizing that police haven't always gotten it right.
 We should all pray and ensure that justice is given in those situations,
 But also that the need for justice would be prevented into the future.

But in the organization's cry for justice,
 which is a Godly thing to ask for,
 Lies a wolf dressed up in sheep's clothing.
 The BLM organization seeks to destroy the concept of the family -
 Their creed, which you can find online, denies God's design and gift to
Adam and Eve -
 a family marriage characterized by man and woman,
 with the purpose of multiplying and filling the earth.
 With their newfound justice, the organization wants to use that power to
 damage God's teaching about family.

Then, not a part of the BLM organization,
 But there have been recent ideas floating around about justifying
 pedophilic relationships.
 What's their reasoning? Well, "love is love"!
 That just echoes the same reasoning which has already destroyed God's
design for marriage.
 And now, love has been redefined.
 Love is love means nothing substantial.

Love is love serves the human flesh.

“Love is love” has hijacked God’s definition of love,

And has placed them as the authors of love.

But we have to realize,

love guides people away from sin, and sometimes it’s painful,

but love never guides towards sin – and that doesn’t just apply to the sixth commandment.

But in regards to marriage and the sixth commandment,

We aren’t much better.

Divorce in the church is the highest it has ever been,

And we can’t say we’ve upheld Christian love in family or marriage.

Jesus teaches, even if you look at another lustfully,

you’ve committed adultery in your heart.

So, none of us have gotten this right.

We’re all guilty in the eyes of God needing forgiveness.

When looking at the state of the world today,

and what our position should be in it,

Remember Isaiah 5:20 –

“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil.”

Because that’s what false prophets want you to do.

With the mask of religion,

False teachers deny the incarnation –

that God was made flesh to die for the sins of the world.

Examples include Gnosticism, Islam, Mormonism, and Judaism.

These beliefs aren’t far off from the Pharisee’s religion of Jesus day –

That is, a religion of strict obedience to God’s law with little room for grace.

Speaking of the lack of grace,

There are false teachers within the realm of “Christianity”

that teach the Bible void of God’s grace.

Because they’ve got the story all wrong –

They treat the Bible as a reference book to a successful life.

But they read Scripture all wrong

Scripture is a story about God, who came to earth humbled as a man to bring about true justice and righteousness

By showing what true love is

by dying on the cross for the sins of the world!

For, **“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”** (John 15:13)

Having been baptized, fed, and nourished by this love,

We can join Paul in saying – **“Since I have been crucified with Christ, It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me** (Galatians 2:20).

And through God’s act of self-sacrificial love,

We can bring a love which takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices in truth (1

Cor. 13:6) to a confused world –

a world which calls good evil and evil good.

So, now that we’ve identified false prophets and teachings of today,

And now that God has transformed us and shaped us into the image of His

Son to work love and justice,

What do we do?

Here are some things to think about –

Some things not to do –

Don’t ignore those who disagree with you –

Engage them gently,

love them because they bear the image of God,

and show them that the way of truth is the way of life.

Don’t have an “us” vs “them” attitude –

Jesus certainly never did, and that attitude only causes resentment and sin.

Don’t fall prey to deceitful lies when engaging false teachers –

Wolves in sheep’s clothing can make you look like a heretic,

That’s what the Pharisees tried to do to Jesus.

Finally, don’t be downtrodden because you are persecuted,

Accept persecutions with patience and grace,

Never anger and revenge –

By doing so, you bear the wounds of Christ,

And you bear the promise **“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God” (Matthew 5:10)**

Some things to do -

Do the will of God,

Which is the next verse In Matthew 7 after our text.

It says **“Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”**

You build your house on the rock that is Christ - His Gospel, His forgiveness, His love, His example.

Pray for your enemies,

Our Lord tells us to,

and its an exercise through which any anger, resentment, and ill feelings melt away.

Because you can't hold up someone to God, who is divine love,

And not be transformed by divine love yourself.

Serve the needs of those who are lost and confused.

Overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

Their needs may not be apparent at first,

but you need to engage them to find out what they are.

And eventually, you can invite the wolves to become sheep.

Finally, and the most important thing to do -

Smother yourself in God's gifts -

Let the gracious word of God build you up in a way which cannot be torn down because you are built up by God, who is an impenetrable fortress, our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble from false teachers, From the wolves in sheep's clothing who seek to devour Christ from us.

And when you fall into the snares of the false prophets - repent,

And be forgiven through the cross,

And receive the Christ who heals you, strengthens you, and leads you to be His arms and feet to the world.