

## LAMBS AMONG WOLVES

WE ARE MADE FOR GOODNESS. WE ARE MADE FOR LOVE.  
WE ARE MADE FOR FRIENDLINESS.  
WE ARE MADE FOR TOGETHERNESS.  
WE ARE MADE FOR ALL OF THE  
BEAUTIFUL THINGS THAT YOU AND I KNOW.  
WE ARE MADE TO TELL THE WORLD THAT THERE  
ARE NO OUTSIDERS. ALL ARE WELCOME:  
BLACK, WHITE, RED, YELLOW, RICH, POOR,  
EDUCATED, NOT EDUCATED, MALE, FEMALE,  
GAY, STRAIGHT, ALL, ALL, ALL. WE ALL BELONG  
TO THIS FAMILY, THIS HUMAN FAMILY, GOD'S FAMILY.  
- DESMOND TUTU

### *Scripture:*

### **Psalm 30**

<sup>1</sup>I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me. <sup>2</sup>O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. <sup>3</sup>O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

<sup>4</sup>Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. <sup>5</sup>For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

<sup>6</sup>As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved." <sup>7</sup>By your favor, O LORD, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed.

<sup>8</sup>To you, O LORD, I cried, and to the LORD I made supplication: <sup>9</sup>"What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?" <sup>10</sup>Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me! O LORD, be my helper!"

<sup>11</sup>You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, <sup>12</sup>so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

### **Luke 10:1-11**

<sup>1</sup>After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup>He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup>Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup>Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup>Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' <sup>6</sup>And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. <sup>8</sup>Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup>cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' <sup>10</sup>But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup>'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.'

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



## LAMBS AMONG WOLVES

I chose this passage out of the four options from the lectionary readings for today because this is the passage our leadership cohort group studied every month this past year.

A leadership cohort is a group of pastors that gather once a month to pray for one another and our churches, do a bible study, discuss a book on leadership and help each other with ongoing concerns. The meetings begin with sharing about how we are doing and one or two of the group shares in more detail towards the end of the meeting about something they want help with or feedback on. So the cohort becomes a support group along with a leadership learning experience.

Although I have just participated in leadership cohort groups for two years, I found them very helpful. When given the opportunity to tap the brains of other pastors, I find it always interesting to hear their thoughts and insights on various topics.

This passage in Luke was analyzed in our group every month. We looked at what parts of this passage seemed to speak to our hearts and souls, what message for today we thought we could get out of this reading, and what part of it was challenging and difficult to understand. So let me read this again and as I do, think about what words or phrases have any of these effects on you: surprise you, speak to you, or help you with a situation you are currently going through.

### SENT OUT WITH ONLY FAITH AND TRUST

Does it surprise you that even though Jesus is aware he is sending out his disciples like “lambs in the midst of wolves” he doesn’t arm them with a shield or a weapon to defend themselves? Odd isn’t it? He just sends them out with nothing but their faith and trust in him, not even sandals on their feet. They are to be totally dependent on the generosity of others. They are to be humble and lean on God to provide for them through the generosity of others. Jesus makes sure they are not dependent upon anything else for comfort or security. If they were sent out today it would be like sending them out without their cell phones.

Could you do it? I left my cell phone home, so I guess I can.

### GOD IS THEIR GUIDE

The Holy Spirit is their GPS to guide them and they are to lean on God for their protection and bring peace as their only offering. Peace is their only protection; peace is their only shield from being harmed by the wolves in their midst. The seventy are told to heal the people, eat whatever they are given, and let those who will listen to them know about the Kingdom of God through being peace to them.

And if the peace they offer is not accepted, then they are to just move on, but leave the message that the Kingdom of God had come near. Jesus taught them to be respectful of all.

### TESTING THE WATERS

These seventy were testing the waters for Jesus, finding out where he should focus his time and energy before he died on the cross. At this point in his ministry he didn’t want to waste his time going to places that clearly were not open to the healing peace of Christ.

When we all read the part of the passage about being sent out like lambs among wolves, ready to be torn apart and eaten alive, that is a good way to describe the courage it takes to embark in ministry. You have to be ready to deal with just about anything.

### WHO ARE THE LAMBS? WHO ARE THE WOLVES?

However, this passage is also a reminder that it is hard to distinguish between the lambs and the wolves. Some wolves are dressed like sheep.

**All of us can be wolves at one time or another, when we feel fear, or feel rejected, have low self-esteem, or feel insecure about ourselves. Rather than being humble, many of us show our teeth or try to bring someone else down to make ourselves feel better.**

If you find yourself talking badly about someone else, if you criticize, or you are easily irritated, feel territorial, or feel the need to make someone else look worse than you, then the wolf inside of you is taking over the control of you.

There is this wise Cherokee saying that goes:

**THERE IS A BATTLE OF TWO WOLVES INSIDE US ALL**



**ONE IS EVIL.  
IT IS ANGER, JEALOUSY, GREED RESENTMENT,  
LIES, INFERIORITY AND EGO.**

**THE OTHER IS GOOD.  
IT IS JOY, PEACE, LOVE, HOPE, HUMILITY,  
KINDNESS, EMPATHY AND TRUTH.**

**THE WOLF THAT WINS?  
THE ONE YOU FEED.**

**- CHEROKEE PROVERB**

**SHARE GOD'S LOVE AND PEACE**

Our job in this church is to harvest God's love and distribute it to all. We can do this by developing the garden bigger and better and making sure those in need of fresh food get some of it. We can share God's love and peace by being peace wherever we go, joining the Deacons and Stephen Ministers in ministering to those in need of a buddy or a care-giver. We can join a team of volunteers who feed the high school students in the school year.

You can volunteer in our front office and help our afternoon front office volunteers as they try to help all who walk in our door looking for assistance. You can join the Fellowship Committee and help provide the hospitality after church and special events, you can join the Membership Committee and help them find new creative ways to make our church visible and attractive to the community, you can join our Church and World Committee and support the many mission programs our church is involved with, and you can join our Building and Grounds Committee and help change light bulbs, eat

donuts, and do much, much more to keep our church standing! You can join the Choir as a way to promote peace by bringing to our church gorgeous music on Sundays and other special events. Just ask me; I'll find a way for you to harvest God's love and spread peace here and beyond.

The busier we are spreading peace, the less time we will have for our evil wolves that are inside all of us to rise up.

Jesus sends the seventy ahead to prepare the way, to find a meeting place, to do logistics, to plan and listen and share over food and drink. They go to make a way where it seems there is no way to bring hope, peace, stability, and a future for Christ's ministry to thrive.

**GEORGE WASHINGTON**

Jesus showed great leadership in the way he instructed the seventy to go out and prepare that region for his ministry. I have been reading about George Washington lately, too. There is so much to learn about his leadership style and how it shaped the founding of our country.

In an article about the *Genius in Leadership of George Washington*, Richard Stazesky says that respect for everyone was a key component to his leadership style. Stazesky said, "We can learn a great deal from studying the life of George Washington that could lead us all to personal and public renewal...." Here are some of George's leadership qualities that showed he was a genius:

One - He took responsibility for his own life by controlling his emotions. George Washington had a volcanic temper. But he was able to control himself externally because he learned to control himself internally.

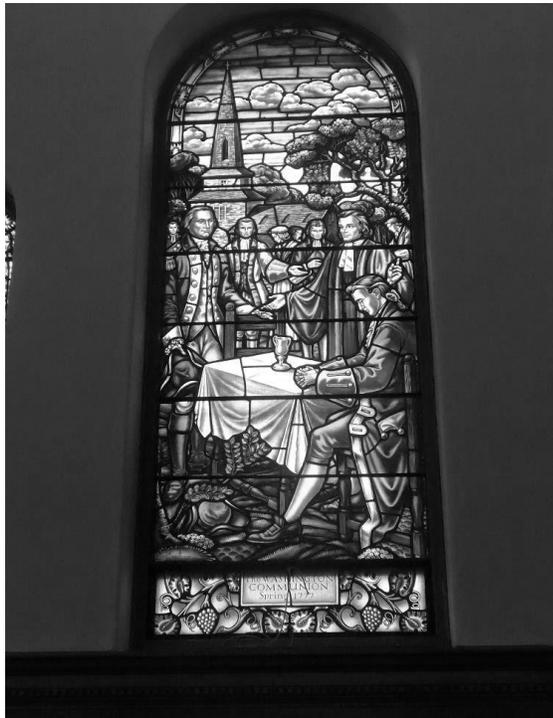
Two - He stressed the importance of constant learning by observing, listening, reading and reflecting; Washington spent time each day reading.

Three - He role modeled the importance of civility. As a child he was taught the *110 rules of Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation* which are founded on having a basic respect for everyone.

Four - Washington understood that morality, personal virtue and emotional maturity enhanced one's natural intelligence.

Five - He possessed all the ingredients of effective leadership; for example, he was a visionary and a delegator.

Today George Washington is still a great role model for our government's leaders to imitate. In the church where I was first ordained, George Washington attended worship and received the Lord's Supper. That day when he was our commander during the Revolutionary War is commemorated in this stained glass window:



When I lived nearby, I enjoyed showing our visitors to Morristown Washington's headquarters museum and park. He had a deep faith in God which he demonstrated in his bold but compassionate leadership.

## **JESUS – THE ULTIMATE LEADER**

But of all the leaders in our history, Jesus was the ultimate leader. He took twelve ordinary people and made them leaders and teachers of a faith, peace, hope and love movement that shaped the history of the world.

And Jesus is still leading and guiding like he led the seventy in the days of Luke. He is sending us out today with instructions to bring peace and healing. So do as Jesus instructed: travel light and carry God's peace so all the world around you will know God's healing love through you! Amen

### **Benediction:**

**Ben Franklin, who helped write our Declaration of Independence, said, "Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better person."**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



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