

5. Jesus often acts shrewdly in dealing with opponents (Matthew 22:15-22 and John 8:1-11). In one of his parables, he affirms the shrewdness of a dishonest manager (Luke 16:1-13). What do you learn about being as shrewd as a serpent from these passages?

6. Can you provide examples - from your own experiences or from history - that illustrate the challenges and dangers that Christians have faced when living out or sharing their faith?

7. Imagine your employer or your family members are pressuring you to go against your convictions as a Christian. What could you do to be both "wise as serpents" and "innocent as doves" in that context?

8. How can the church better equip and support believers to withstand persecution and opposition while sharing the gospel?

SERMON APPLICATION GUIDE

The Mission

"Being the Bad Guys" (Part 1)

Matthew 10:16-23

Our mission is to declare with words and demonstrate with works the good news of God's grace in Christ in our everyday lives.

"Blessed are..."

Matthew 5:10-15

Matthew 5:10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Why the warning?

Why Christians are Sometimes Hated Just for Being Christians

1. If you take Jesus seriously, he makes _____ that push many to extremes.

Very few people today are arguing for _____ anymore.

What kinds of claims did Jesus make that got his followers in trouble?

Where is God leading you with your BLESS list this week?



2. If you pay attention to what Jesus says, you'll see that what he says about you and me could be seen as very _____.

"Every other founder of religion comes and says, 'Here's what you have to do in order to be saved. Here's what you have to do to connect to God.' Jesus says, 'You can't do it. You're awful. You're terrible. You're a sinner. You're weak. You have nothing with which you can merit salvation. I have to do it all for you. I'm not a teacher come to tell you how to save yourself; I'm a savior come to save you.'" (Tim Keller)

3. What Jesus says and calls people to is considered to be _____ by many.

Be My Witnesses

Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Matthew 10: 8 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.

Personal Reflection & Small Group Questions

Please complete this study on your own, then bring it to your small group for discussion.

1. Looking back over your notes from this week's sermon, what particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?
2. Read Matthew 10:16-23. What are some of the challenges and risks that Jesus tells his disciples to expect as he sends them out as "sheep among wolves"?
3. Based on this passage, what do you think it means to be "shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves" in the context of spreading the gospel?
4. Read the following passages and note the ways Jesus is "shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves": Matthew 22:15-22; John 8:1-11; Luke 16:1-13.