

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon November 29, 2020

Luke 20: 20 "Malicious Schemes of the Evil One"

9 Then He began to tell the people this parable: "A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time. 10 Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 Again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. 12 And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast him out. 13 Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Probably they will respect him when they see him.' 14 But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.' 15 So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others." And when they heard it they said, "Certainly not!" 17 Then He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone'? 18 "Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." 19 And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people--for they knew He had spoken this parable against them.

20 So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor. 21 Then they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth: 22 Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" 23 But He perceived their craftiness, and said to them, "Why do you test Me? 24 Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?" They answered and said, "Caesar's." 25 And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 26 But they could not catch Him in His words in the presence of the people. And they marveled at His answer and kept silent.

I. Introduction

- a. Ephesians 6:10-13 "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

- i. Our battle is against demonic beings who far, far outmatch our strength and experience. We are as simple playthings to them, to deceive and destroy and kill without much effort at all.

1. Calvin "The meaning is, that our difficulties are far greater than if we had to fight with men. There we resist human strength, sword is opposed to sword, man contends with man, force is met by force, and skill by skill; but here the case is widely different. All amounts to this, that our enemies are such as no human power can withstand. By *flesh and blood* the apostle denotes men, who

are so denominated in order to contrast them with spiritual assailants. This is no bodily struggle.”¹

- ii. In addition, these great beings, alive since the beginning of time, deceive and control the dark hearts of other human beings, using these fellow humans, our neighbors, to harm us the people of God. Two things, 1) we must not *primarily* fight with fleshly tools against fleshly enemies, and 2) we must understand the human enemies of God are controlled by the deceptions of these great and powerful evil beings.
 - 1. Calvin “Let us remember this when the injurious treatment of others provokes us to revenge. Our natural disposition would lead us to direct all our exertions against the men themselves; but this foolish desire will be restrained by the consideration that the men who annoy us are nothing more than darts thrown by the hand of Satan. While we are employed in destroying those darts, we lay ourselves open to be wounded on all sides. To *wrestle with flesh and blood* will not only be useless, but highly pernicious. We must go straight to the enemy, who attacks and wounds us from his concealment,—who slays before he appears.”²
- iii. My aim today is to re-clarify the schemes of the evil one, remind us how he deceives our lost neighbors to harm us, and call us more wisely and fiercely into spiritual battle with the invincible spiritual weapons of warfare the Lord God has granted to us.
- b. Luke 20:20 “Malicious Schemes of the Evil One”
 - i. The devil focuses on deceiving the leaders of God’s people
 - ii. Deceived Church leaders hatch a scheme of destruction
 - iii. Deceived Church leaders rely upon concealment
 - iv. Deceived Church leaders delegate others to carry out their attacks
 - v. Deceived Church leaders use spies to carry out their attacks
 - vi. These spying enemies will pretend to be friends
 - vii. These spying enemies seize on words, phrases
 - viii. Deceived Church leaders use political rulers to accomplish their evil
 - ix. Questions to know, love and obey God
- II. The devil focuses on deceiving the leaders of God’s people
 - a. “19 And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people--for they knew He had spoken this parable against them. 20 So they watched Him...”
 - b. Key members of the Jewish ecclesiastical ruling body, the Sanhedrin, are working to destroy Jesus. They have opposed Him continuously, and now they have made

¹ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [*Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*](#) (p. 335). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

² Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [*Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*](#) (pp. 335–336). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

their end-game plan to have Him killed. The devil is using them to carry out his scheme to kill Jesus.

- c. It's also worth noting the extra information provided in the other synoptic gospels. The Sanhedrin is working with the Herodians.
 - i. Mt 22:15 "Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. 16 And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying..."
 - ii. Mk 12:13 "Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words."
 - iii. Bock "The only additional detail that Matthew and Mark supply is the depth of the leadership's alliance. Matthew notes that the instigators were the Pharisees, who brought in the Herodians. Mark mentions these groups without specifying which were the instigators. These two groups disliked one another intensely (Plummer 1896: 464; Hoehner 1972: 331–42, who explains that Herodians are neither Sadducees nor Essenes, though they might have been allied to the Sadducees; see Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.16.6 §319; *Antiquities* 14.15.10 §450). The Herodians favored a solution that let Rome have a mediated presence through the house of Herod. Preferring that Rome not be present at all, the Pharisees would have opposed the tax. These groups, however, put their animosities behind them and combine efforts to get Jesus."³
 - iv. Herodians: "a group who, together with the Pharisees, are said to have opposed Jesus. The term is found only in the Gospels of Mark (3:6; 12:13; also 8:15 in some manuscripts) and Matthew (22:16). If the name refers to an actual party or faction, the Herodians may have been the supporters of the rule and policies of Herod Antipas. They are described as asking Jesus the difficult question regarding payment of taxes to Caesar (Matt. 22:15–22; Mark 12:13–17). The question is actually posed by both Herodians and Pharisees in order to place Jesus in a no-win situation: he will either offend Jewish religious leaders by supporting the tax or offend supporters of the Roman political regime by denouncing it. Thus, Jesus's clever response is presented as an answer with which neither Herodians nor Pharisees could find fault."⁴
 - v. So, here we see the deceived Church leaders engaging with Herod's regional political government partisans in order to work together to destroy Christ, whom they would both see as a common enemy. This local Herodian government existed at the pleasure of Rome as a vassal government in subjugation.

³ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 1609–1610). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁴ Powell, M. A. (Ed.). (2011). [Herodians](#). In *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary (Revised and Updated)* (Third Edition, p. 379). New York: HarperCollins.

1. Henry “Note, It has been the common artifice of persecuting church-rulers to make the secular powers the tools of their malice, and oblige the *kings of the earth to do* their drudgery, who, if they had not been instigated, would have let their neighbours live quietly by them, as Pilate did Christ till the chief priests and the scribes presented Christ to him.”⁵

III. Deceived Church leaders hatch a scheme of destruction

- a. “20 So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor.”
- b. Here we see their plan summarized. They would seek to ensnare Him in His words, using spies, and then seek to have Pilate kill Jesus. This plan would accomplish their goals without risking the displeasure of the people. All the blame could be laid at Pilate’s feet. Elements of the Sanhedrin are conspiring together to have Jesus killed.
 - i. Bock “The leaders want to use Jesus’ words so that (ὥστε, *hōste*; BDF §391.3) they can deliver him up to the authority (ἀρχή, *archē*, ruler) and jurisdiction (ἐξουσία, *exousia*) of the governor, an allusion to Pilate (Delling, *TDNT* 1:482). They hope that Jesus’ reply will get him in trouble with Rome so they can then take advantage of his slip and dispose of him (ἐπιλαμβάνομαι [*epilambanomai*, to seize upon]; Delling, *TDNT* 4:9; Nolland 1993b: 957–58; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 4.7.12). This brilliant plan would allow responsibility for Jesus’ death to be placed in enemy hands. Perhaps the leaders thought that Jesus’ messianic self-understanding would lead him easily into this political trap. Such efforts to watch or trap Jesus have failed before (6:7; 11:53–54; 14:1; 19:47). The leadership will later lie about Jesus’ response (23:2).”⁶
 - ii. Conspiracy: A combination of men for an evil purpose; an agreement between two or more persons, to commit some crime in concert
 1. Such is the typical method of satanically inspired attacks against God’s people. Acts 23:12-16 “And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13 Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. 14 They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, “We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul 15 Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him

⁵ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1897). Peabody: Hendrickson.

⁶ Bock, D. L. (1996). [*Luke: 9:51–24:53*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1609). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

before he comes near." 16 So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul."

- iii. Henry "They could not themselves put him to death by course of law, nor otherwise than by a *popular tumult*, which they could not depend upon; and, since they could not be his judges, they would willingly condescend to be his prosecutors and accusers, and would themselves *inform* against him. They hoped to gain their point, if they could but incense the governor against him."⁷

IV. Deceived Church leaders rely upon concealment

- a. "So they watched Him"
- b. "Watched" = in a bad sense, to watch insidiously. Properly, lying in wait; hence, watching an opportunity to ensnare or entrap; deceitful; sly; treacherous; used of persons.
- c. The demonically deceived Sanhedrin pulls back, staying concealed from the up-close encounters. They lurk behind the scenes, pulling the strings on their evil scheme.
- d. Bock "The leadership moves to the background since they have just been exposed by their efforts to confront Jesus directly (Danker 1988: 319). They move to the sidelines, pull strings, and watch others do their dirty work. Παρατηρήσαντες (*paratērēsantes*, watching) has no named subject, but is clearly an allusion to the angered leadership of 20:19, which now commissions spies on their behalf."⁸
- e. So, the devil conceals himself and his minions beyond observation, hiding as they pull strings and control these evil men in the Sanhedrin. Similarly, when these men are moved by their demonic masters and their dark hearts, they also conceal themselves, assigning others to carry out their dirty work of destruction. There is an evil spiritual conspiracy of demons headed up by satan himself, governed by his arch-demons, aiming to steal, kill and destroy God's people and God's Kingdom. This secret demonic host has been made known to us believers by God's Word and Spirit, yet still is able to deceive fallen human beings who themselves will then come together, work together, conspire together, to destroy God's people and Kingdom.

V. Deceived Church leaders delegate others to carry out their attacks

- a. "and sent spies who pretended to be righteous"
- b. Concealed behind the scenes, these evil conspirators bring in other people to accomplish various aspects of their plan. The general category is delegation to other; the specific focus here is to send in spies who pretend to be friends. Yet, there are many different ways that leaders could delegate various tasks to others in order to carry out their evil scheme.
- c. Do such organizations exist and carry out evil today?

⁷ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1897). Peabody: Hendrickson.

⁸ Bock, D. L. (1996). [*Luke: 9:51–24:53*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1609). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

- i. FBI “The FBI defines a criminal enterprise as a group of individuals with an identified hierarchy, or comparable structure, engaged in significant criminal activity. These organizations often engage in multiple criminal activities and have extensive supporting networks. The terms Organized Crime and Criminal Enterprise are similar and often used synonymously.”
 - d. These evil leaders have conspired to commit *entrapment*, on the front end.
 - i. Entrap: Websters 1828 “to involve in any difficulties from which an escape is not easy or possible. We are entrapped by the devices of evil men.”
 - ii. Entrapment is usually illegal in our system today. It is wrong for investigators to set up trick questions in order to get quotes they can then use to initiate charges.
 - e. When their entrapment effort failed, they resorted to flat out lies. They conspired together to commit perjury. Subornation of perjury is a defined criminal act in America. To suborn is to bribe or otherwise induce (someone) to commit an unlawful act such as perjury.
- VI. Deceived Church leaders use spies to carry out their attacks
 - a. “and sent spies who pretended to be righteous”
 - b. In order to increase their chances of catching Jesus in His words, they have to try to put Him at ease, get Him to think He is amongst friends, so He might not be as careful with His words. They did not understand Who they were dealing with, not at all.
 - i. Spies: secretly to lie in wait, a spy; one who is bribed by others to entrap a man by crafty words
 - ii. Bock “Ἐγκαθέτους (*enkathetous*) literally means “hired to lie in wait,” picturing someone lurking about, waiting for a chance to destroy (BAGD 215; BAA 433; Job 31:9 [of a sinful man stalking an enticing woman]; 19:12 [of an army surrounding a city]). The leadership calls on others to carry out this task and so commissions (ἀπέστειλαν, *apesteilan*) them as spies.”⁹
- VII. These spying enemies will pretend to be friends
 - a. The spies’ first duty was to gain the trust of our Lord. To do this, they must “pretend to be righteous”. They would take up the proper lingo, the expected attire, and every attitude necessary to become trusted. These are the masters of deceit, laughing at just the right moment, carefully flattering as needed, subtly criticizing others, able to create a powerful false reality that they are true friends.
 - i. Bock “Luke makes their motives clear when he says they pretend to be righteous (δικαίους, *dikaious*), which in this context means “sincere” (16:15 is another such example of pretense; 10:29 and 18:9 are related; Nolland 1993b: 957). Their question in 20:22 looks honest, but it is not.”¹⁰

⁹ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1609). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

¹⁰ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1609). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

- b. This pattern has been repeating itself ever since the devil fell and took down our first parents with him, and it will continue in this world until Christ's final return.
 - i. Henry "Note, It is no new thing for *bad men* to feign themselves *just men*, and to cover the most wicked projects with the most specious and plausible pretences. The devil can *transform himself into an angel of light*, and a Pharisee appear in the garb, and speak the language, of a disciple of Christ. A spy must go in disguise. These spies must take on them to have a value for Christ's judgment, and to depend upon it as an oracle, and therefore must desire his advice in a case of conscience. Note, Ministers are concerned to stand upon their guard against some that feign themselves to be *just men*, and to be *wise as serpents* when they are in the midst of a *generation of vipers and scorpions*."¹¹
- VIII. These spying enemies seize on words, phrases
- a. The specific initial plan is to entrap Jesus by getting Him to say something they can use against Him with the Romans. So, by implication, they expected He would say aloud that it was wrong to pay the tribute to the Romans, or at least equivocate in a way they could use against Him with the Romans.
 - i. Bock "They hope that Jesus' reply will get him in trouble with Rome so they can then take advantage of his slip and dispose of him"¹²
 - b. As we will see, they fail in this plan and must resort to outright lies.
 - i. Lk 23:1,2 "Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."
- IX. Deceived Church leaders use political rulers to accomplish their evil
- a. "...in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor."
 - b. We have already covered this truth extensively today. Let us bring forth a few Biblical and historical examples, lest we miss the magnitude and persistence of this devilish scheme.
 - c. Revelation 17 ""Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." 3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. **And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast** which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. 5 And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6 I saw the woman, drunk

¹¹ Henry, M. (1994). [Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume](#) (p. 1897). Peabody: Hendrickson.

¹² Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1609). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.”

- i. Through close study of the book of Revelation, we know the great Harlot is apostate Israel and the beast is Rome, both under the control of powerful demonic overlords.
 - d. This teamwork between apostate church leaders and beastly civil governments has occurred numerous times throughout history. It’s not always clear who initiated these demonic duos, but it is clear they have worked together to steal, kill and destroy, in numerous historical situations.
 - i. The Spanish Inquisition – “In 1545, the Spanish Index was created, a list of European books considered heretical and forbidden in Spain, based on the Roman Inquisition’s own Index Librorum Prohibitorum. In other words to Rome’s concerns, the Spanish Inquisition focused on the rising population of Spanish Protestants in the 1550s. In 1556, Philip II ascended the Spanish throne. He had previously brought the Roman Inquisition to the Netherlands, where Lutherans were hunted down and burned at the stake.”
 - ii. St Bartholomew’s Day massacre “massacre of French Huguenots (Protestants) in Paris on August 24/25, 1572, plotted by Catherine de’ Medici and carried out by Roman Catholic nobles and other citizens. It was one event in the series of civil wars between Roman Catholics and Huguenots that beset France in the late 16th century.”
 - e. But, the enemies of Christ would ultimately fail, since our Lord was always safe in the power and authority of His Father. Lk 23:46 “And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'”
- X. Questions to know, love and obey God