

LAMBS AMONG WOLVES

The Nonviolence of Jesus

Luke 10:3—Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

Matthew 5:38-44—You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not [retaliate in response to] an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if any one wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles . . . You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, LOVE your enemies . . .

Mark 8:27-31—Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

Mark 9:30-32—They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.”

Mark 10:32-34—They were on their way up to Jerusalem . . . Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. “We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

Mark 8:32-34—He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

Mark 9:33-35—But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

“That the world may be healed.” — John 3.17

All Texts Quoted from the NRSV Unless Otherwise Noted

Luke 22.35,36—Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?” “Nothing,” they answered. He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.

Luke 22.37-38—It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.” The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.” “That is enough,” he replied.

Luke 22.49-53—When Jesus’ followers saw what was going to happen, they said, “Lord, should we strike with our swords?” And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, “No more of this!” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him.

Matthew 26.52—“Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.”

Matthew 10.34—Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Matthew 10.35-38— For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—your enemies will be the members of your own household.’ Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

John 18.36—Jesus said, “My kingdom is not from this world. If it were, my servants would fight to PREVENT my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

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Mark 10:35-45—Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.” When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (cf. Matthew 20.28)

It is extremely important to underline Mark’s theology at this point. For him, Jesus knows in precise detail what is going to happen, but he does not speak of suffering vicariously to atone for the sins of the world. Instead, Peter, the other members of the Twelve, and the “crowd” are all expected to walk with Jesus toward death and resurrection. To follow Jesus means to accept the cross, to walk with him against imperial violence and religious collaboration, and to pass through death to resurrection . . . Notice, above all, how repeatedly Mark has Jesus insist that Peter, James and John, the Twelve, and all his followers on the way from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem must pass with him through death to a resurrected life whose content and style was spelled out relentlessly against their refusals to accept it. For Mark, it is about participation with Jesus and not substitution by Jesus. Mark has those followers recognize enough of that challenge that they change the subject and avoid the issue every time.—Borg, Marcus J.; Crossan, John Dominic; The Last Week

Clarifications

Mark 4:30-32—Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

Not “Inverted,” but “Shared”

