

Sermon Notes

Sermon Hybrid Sheep: Serpent-Wise and Dove-Gentle

Scripture Matthew 10:16 NRSVue

Preaching Pastor John Tittle

Date September 13, 2026

1. Jesus says plainly, "I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves." Why do you think He is this blunt about what discipleship costs, rather than softening it? How does this honesty shape how we should talk about faith today?
2. MLK wrote that "the strong man holds in a living blend strongly marked opposites... life at its best is a creative synthesis of opposites in fruitful harmony." Why do you think it is so hard for us to actually live as both tough-minded and tender-hearted? Which one comes more naturally to you?
3. What does a person or community look like when they have serpent-like shrewdness without dove-like innocence? What about the reverse—dove-like innocence without any serpent-like wisdom? Can you think of examples from Church history or your own experience? Can you think of examples from church history or your own experience?
4. Sheep are famously vulnerable, and even a little "stupid." Why do you think God chose this animal image—rather than something stronger or more impressive—to describe His people?
5. Jesus warns about "wolves in sheep's clothing"—false prophets who look like us but are not. How do we, as a community, discern the difference between the Shepherd's voice and other voices dressed up to sound like it?
6. Blaise Pascal observed that humans hold both angel and beast within them. In other words, one moment we can be a harmless sheep, the next like a snarling wolf. Where have you seen the Church (or yourself) act more like a wolf than a sheep, even while claiming Christ's name?
7. What might "the wisdom of the serpent" look like in practice? What about "the innocence of the dove"?
8. What aspects of serpenthood and dovehood should we specifically avoid imitating?
9. MLK wrote, "God has two outstretched arms. One is strong enough to surround us with justice, and one is gentle enough to embrace us with grace." How does seeing God Himself as both tough-minded and tender-hearted change how we understand what He is asking of us in verse 16?

