

It's A Jungle

The scriptures are full of word pictures drawn from all of nature. Let us look at the animals to portray various aspects of mankind.

Eph. 5:15-17 “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise,
16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.
17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

Be careful how you walk, “circumspectly” – KJV. With a view to what is around you.

When we take children on walks in the woods or on nature trails we try to get them to observe all the things around them. To their untrained eye it's all just trees and leaves, but there is a great variety of life, both plant and animal, if you just know where to look and are patient enough to observe.

I. Vicious Animals Abound

A. King Of The Jungle

Satan is a Lion

1 Pet. 5:8 “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Nothing strikes fear in the heart like the roar of a lion. So powerful, so primal, so unnerving.

But another terrible and primal figure is drawn on to picture this vicious beast to us.

Dragon

Rev. 12:9 “And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”

Rev. 9:11 “They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.”

He may be the ruler and king, but he has a lot of assistants.

B. Grievous Wolves

Acts 20:28-30 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”

They are wolves, but that is not always how they appear.

Matt. 7:15 “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”

Like dogs, they are cunning.

Eph. 4:14 “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming”

Matt. 10:16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves.”

C. Sly Foxes

Luke 13:31,32 “Just at that time some Pharisees came up, saying to Him, “Go away and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.”

32 And He said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.’”

Some are sly enough to do their work secretly, subtly, without revealing their capabilities, and thus as able to accomplish much more than would be expected of them.

Foxes do their work at night, and are seldom seen.

D. Dogs

These are wild and unrestrained in their behavior.

Matt. 7:6 “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”

Phil. 3:2 “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision”

We see in what low opinion Paul held the false teachers. This was a common figure that the Jews used to refer to Gentiles.

Matt. 15:26,27 “And He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.”

27 But she said, “Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.”

Dogs at this time were not house pets as they are now. They were filthy scavengers who were the worst of outcasts.

Rev. 22:15 “Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.”

Paul switches the figure and uses it to refer to Jews who would not accept the Gentiles coming into the church.

Some of their behavior is just plain gross.

2 Pet. 2:20 “For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.”

At other times it is simply disgusting to behold for its viciousness.

E. Swine

Matt. 7:6 “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”

They are just like those in Pisidian Antioch who proved themselves unworthy of eternal life.

Acts 13:44-46 “And the next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.”

Pigs are not known for their self-restraint, neither are lusty men.

1 Pet. 4:3,4 “For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

4 And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you”

F. Brute Beasts

Some are brutish and dangerous.

1 Cor.15:32 “If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE.”

Others are unreasoning, simply following their base instincts.

Jude 10 “But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.”

Unreasoning – horses and cows.

Jer. 5:8 “They were well-fed lusty horses, Each one neighing after his neighbor's wife.”

Amos 4:1 “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, Who say to your husbands, “Bring now, that we may drink!”

These are just following their basest instincts for sex and food. No self-control.

They have crept in – as sneaky often do.

Jude 4 “For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

So we must contend earnestly to defeat them with the gospel.

Jude 3 “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Peter warned us that these evil folks would come.

2 Pet. 2:1,2 “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned”

They are corrupt and self serving.

2 Thess. 3:2 “and that we may be delivered from perverse (unreasonable – KJV, ASV) and evil men; for not all have faith.

They serve only their own bellies.

Rom. 16:17,18 “Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.”

G. Snakes And Vipers

Matt. 3:7 “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

John was not the only one to use this figure.

David described his enemies this way.

Ps. 140:1-3 “Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men; Preserve me from violent men,

2 Who devise evil things in their hearts; They continually stir up wars.

3 They sharpen their tongues as a serpent; Poison of a viper is under their lips.”

Jesus spoke this way directly to the hypocritical Pharisees.

Matt. 12:34 “You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

Matt. 23:33 “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?”

II. Protecting The Flock

Having been saved from these beasts, and actually from even being one of these beasts, we are now the flock of God.

Acts 20:28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Jn. 21:15-18 “So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

16 He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.”

Matt. 25:32 “And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.”

A. Shepherds

1.) Christ

God is a Shepherd.

Gen. 48:15 “And he [Jacob] blessed Joseph, and said, “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day”

The Messiah was promised to be a shepherd.

Isa. 40:11 “Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs, And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.”

Jesus was a compassionate shepherd.

Mark 6:34 “And when He went ashore, He saw a great multitude, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.”

Mark 9:35, 36 “And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. **36** And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.”

He is a Good Shepherd.

Jn. 10:11-15 “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

12 He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them.

13 He flees because he is a hireling, and is not concerned about the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me,

15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”

He is the Chief Shepherd.

1 Pet. 2:25 “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

The Great Shepherd

Heb 13:20 “Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord”

2.) Elders

Speaking of the new covenant, Jeremiah predicted:

Jer. 3:15 “Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.”

Peter makes an exhortation for elders to do the work of shepherds.

1 Pet. 5:1-4 “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,

- 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;
- 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.
- 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

Why Shepherds? Why not armed security guards, policemen or armies, etc? Actually, shepherds were armed security, not armed in the modern sense, but they had the tools need (and knowledge) to protect the flock.

They are the guardians of the flock.

Acts 20:28-30 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”

To the sheep, the elder is a shepherd, but to the wolf that would come, he is the protector of the sheep.

1 Sam. 15:33-37 “Then Saul said to David, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth.”

34 But David said to Saul, “Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock,

35 I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him.

36 Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God.”

37 And David said, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and may the LORD be with you.”

The problem comes when the bear and wolf are treated like sheep instead of the danger that they are.

Isa. 56:9-11 “All you beasts of the field, All you beasts in the forest, Come to eat.

10 His watchmen are blind, All of them know nothing. All of them are dumb dogs unable to bark, dreamers lying down, who love to slumber;

11 And the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied. And they are shepherds who have no understanding; They have all turned to their own way, Each one to his unjust gain, to the last one.”

Or the shepherd feeds on the flock himself.

Prov. 28:15 “Like a roaring lion and a rushing bear Is a wicked ruler over a poor people.”

The gentle shepherd to the flock MUST be death on those wolves, for they are death to the sheep.

B. Be A Watchful Sheep

1.) Personal Knowledge

We all know the wiles of the devil, or at least we should.

We should not be as lost as a child in the forest.

2 Cor. 2:11 “in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.”

Eph. 5:17 “So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

Eph. 6:11 “Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”

2.) Personal Holiness

Matt. 10:16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves.”

Just because they are brutes doesn't give us the excuse to be.

Rom. 12:17-21 “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord.

20 BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD.”

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

1 Thess. 5:15 “See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men.”

C. Don't Revert To Beastliness

Don't bite and devour.

Gal. 5:15 “But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another.”

Such brutish behavior is to be left behind with all the evil of the world that we were redeemed from.

It is Satan and unfaithful men who devour.

1 Pet. 5:8 “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Luke 20:47 “who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.”

If we do this we are going to go extinct.

Gal. 5:15 “But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another.”

Let us remember the great prophecy of the kingdom.

Isa. 11:1-8 “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

2 And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

3 And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;

4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist.

6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the kid, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them.

7 Also the cow and the bear will graze; Their young will lie down together; And the lion will eat straw like the ox.

8 And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.”

Maybe we were malicious and carnivores – but we don't have to stay that way.

We have become meek, we have taken the bridle of God so that we can become useful.

As we tame the animals, God subdues, restrains and restrains us to make us useful for good works.

This is accomplished by His word as the gospel is preached “to every creature.” (Mark. 16:16)