

PP The King and His Kingdom-The Conduct of a Disciple of Christ
Part 12-Matthew 5:21-26 Overcoming Murderous Anger 5/13-14/2017

Illus I was riding with my cycling friends when we passed a female jogger, and the men with me began to make some inappropriate, lustful comments about her
 I didn't say anything, and they noticed, and asked what I thought of her, and I said I saw her but I wasn't thinking what they were thinking
 They immediately asked, '*Are you saying it's wrong to talk about how good a woman looks?*'
 I said, '*Well, would you have said what you did if your wives were with you?*' ...silence... 'No'
 '*That wouldn't be loving your wives, and that's how you know it is wrong.*'

I wish I could tell you that I have overcome all kinds of sin in every circumstance, but I can't
 I struggle with a myriad of sins, just like you do, yet Jesus said in last week's sermon, ***"unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."*** **Matthew 5:20**

The scribes and Pharisees had taken God's Law, reduced it down to 1,000's of rules and taught that righteousness was for those who kept them religiously
 Jewish religion became all about behavior and not about the heart, yet God had always focused on the heart

PP ***"But the LORD said to Samuel..."the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."*** **1 Samuel 16:7**

PP *Right behavior comes from hearts made right with God*

Righteousness was always a work of God in the hearts of people
 You trust in Jesus with a yielded heart, He makes you right with Him giving you a new heart
 His Spirit makes His home in you, and only then, are you able to live in a way that pleases God, only then do you have the want to, to do what we ought to

That is the righteousness that exceeds the Pharisees hollow, external righteousness, and Jesus is about to show us what it looks like in 6 examples of everyday life, and here's the first:
"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder'" **Matthew 5:21**

PP 1-The Clarification to not murder

PP Remember that *The Law of God was given to reveal God's character and His will for people*
 His character is absolutely holy, eternally apart and beyond us, and His will is perfect in love
 So in what way, does the command to not murder reveal God's character and will?

The condition of Judaism at the time of Christ was almost identical to the 16th century church
 Then, the Scriptures were written in Latin which none of the common people knew and all authority was invested in the priests

In Jesus' day, the Scriptures were not accessible to the average Jew, for they had lost their understanding of Hebrew during their exile in Babylon, and now mostly spoke Aramaic
 The Septuagint-the Greek version of the Old Testament-had been translated 250 years earlier, but they were bulky, too expensive for most and not understood by the everyday Jew
 They didn't go to the synagogue with a Hebrew Bible under their arms
 They put great trust in the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees who had created thousands of traditions that eventually, and horribly became more authoritative than the Scriptures
 Jesus often shattered these traditions and returned the Scriptures to their rightful, clear place

He's doing that here: ***"You have heard that it was said to those of old...But I say to you"***

He's not referring to the Law of Moses, but the traditional teachings of famous scribes

PP ***"So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."*** **Matthew 15:6-9**

They took the Commandment to not murder that Moses gave to Israel, and reduced it to the point they could say, *I've never murdered anyone, therefore I am righteous*

"You shall not murder" is the 6th Commandment, the KJV translates it ***"Thou shalt not kill"*** but the Hebrew word here does not mean kill

PP ***'kill'*** is a specific word better translated *murder* or *unlawful killing*

It's never used for God-sanctioned war, or capital punishment, or lethal self-defense in the bible

It is always used of premeditated killing, various kinds of manslaughter or assassination

In short, *'Don't kill'* means *no unlawful killing*, which violates God's justice

'and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'

But this Command to not unlawfully take a life means that we should do nothing at all that will endanger our neighbor's life, in any way

The command in the positive means we should do everything we can to honor and preserve the life of another

Let me show you how that was seen in a Jewish case of capital punishment

God commanded that 6 cities of refuge be established, to protect one accused of killing another

The roads to these cities were maintained and the cities located so no one was more than 30 miles away from one in Israel

It was the victim's next of kin who had to do the executing, not a disconnected prison official

There had to be no less than two eye witnesses, circumstantial evidence was not accepted

The court was open all day in case fresh evidence of the innocence of the accused was obtained

On the day of execution, a man was sent through the city in advance of the condemned person inviting any who had evidence of his innocence to step forward

At the courthouse stood a man with a white cloth while at a distance, but in eye sight, was a man on a horse or mule

If last second evidence of innocence came into the court, the man would wave the white cloth and the rider would gallop to the execution site and stop the execution

There was no limit to the appeal process if someone could advance further pleas of innocence

Jewish law was determined to save life rather than to kill because life was regarded as precious

'You shall not murder' was a prohibition against unlawful killing and a command to preserve life

The Command to not murder was given so that life would be cherished as each human being is made in the image of God

Murder destroys that image in another, but we harm and destroy that image by more means than actually ending another's physical life

PP 2-The Character of a murderer

Murder begins with unrighteous anger and hatred, evidenced by insults, slander and separation
 And Jesus is about to illustrate each one and it would have been shocking!!
 God is looking at our hearts, and the roots of murder lurk down there

PP a) Anger

‘But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment’

PP “the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” James 1:20

In the Greek, there are two words for anger:

PP One is anger that quickly blazes up and just as quickly dies down, like straw burning

PP The other is the word Jesus used here which is deep, long-lived, brooding, undying anger
 This anger refuses to forgive, refuses reconciliation, defends personal rights and honor
 It stews, and nurses wrath and will not be pacified and seeks revenge...this is heart murder
 The angry person would be deserving ***‘judgment’*** meaning the death penalty would be justice

PP b) Contempt

‘whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council.’

Some of your bibles may have the word ***‘Raca’*** here, an Aramaic word very familiar at that time, but it doesn’t have an exact equivalent word in our language

PP It is a word of arrogant contempt that reduces someone to the level of a nothing, a nobody, an insignificant idiot who is a waste of life

It is an attack on the image of God in another person

The guilty one deserved to come before a ruling ***‘council’***, which in a small town of less than 150 people was 3 elders; in larger towns 7 elders, and in cities, 23 elders

And the right ruling would be a guilty sentence of a murderer

PP c) Slander

‘and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.’

We see a progression of seriousness beginning with anger toward another, then arrogantly demeaning the image of God in a person, but now the most slanderous

Contemptuously calling someone a ***‘fool’*** is an attack on a person’s character & moral condition

It literally means ‘empty-headed’, somewhat similar to brainless idiot, or jerk

This word gives us our word *moron* and since the Jewish people put such weight to a person’s name, this is a serious, public slander that stripped a person of significance

It aimed to destroy another person’s reputation and name, an act of terrible hatred

PP “Everyone who hates [has active ill will] his brother is a murderer” 1 John 3:15

The one who hates is a murderer, and is ***‘liable [deserving of] the hell of fire’***

The scribes and Pharisees taught that the physical act of murder is wrong

Jesus taught, and gave 3 examples of murder that begins in the heart though it is never acted out

Friends, it is urgent that we deal with this anger and Jesus underscores that with two examples of how righteous conduct demonstrates itself in a disciple of Christ

PP 3-The Conduct of a Disciple of Jesus

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

This anger, contempt and slander affects our relationship with God, polluting our worship, and this is the point that Jesus pressed to His disciples

The Jews believed and practiced that the breach between a person and God could not be healed until human beings could reconcile their differences

If a person was offering a sacrifice for a theft, it was ineffective until that thing was returned

If it was discovered that it hadn't, then that sacrifice had to be destroyed as unclean and burned outside the Temple

A Jew brought his sacrifice to the Temple, passing through the concentric courts to stand outside the Court of Priests, into which he could not go

He stood at the rail, his hand on the animal to confess his sins, the priest's knife poised at the animal's throat, but then remembered there was a breach with another

If the sacrifice was to close the breach with God, he must leave and close the breach with the person, even if it was the person who had the issue against him

PP “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” Romans 12:18

This had always been the point of the 6th Command, the scribes made it only about literal murder

But Jesus taught there is to be an undivided solidarity between loving God and loving neighbor

Many have a dry, distant relationship with God because they are bringing their gift of worship to

God with an ongoing breach with someone else and He is not accepting it

But there is one more example of the conduct that a disciple of Christ must have

“Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.” 5:21-26

This is a case of debt, which would be settled by the council of elders, which would appoint a time when both defendant and plaintiff appeared together and in small towns, it was not unusual they would themselves walking there together

They could settle the matter then, but by the time of court, the verdict would stand

If found guilty, the court officer had the authority to imprison him until every bit was repaid

The point Jesus makes is again, be urgent to settle accounts with others, for the longer that anger continues the more difficult to find peace, and the greater the cost to yourself

It will eventually create a prison for the one who holds onto anger

And even worse, is that Jesus was impressing upon His audience not the fear of an earthly judge, but the fact that each must appear before the Almighty Judge, God

And oftentimes, that judgment in the believer is occurring now as anger and broken relationships has been clearly linked to all sorts of physical, spiritual and mental problems

Jesus begins with the first of 6 examples, showing us what true righteousness looks like in life Those who belong to His kingdom must be different than those in the world, the scribes and Pharisee

And murder is much more and more deep than merely ending someone's physical life unlawfully Our anger, our contempt, our slander are murder weapons, and every time, it breaks the

Command of God and makes us murderers

Be urgent, settle matters quickly, for our worship is polluted and in vain until we do