

Radiant Church, January 3, 2016
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A Disciple's Heart...Forgives Quickly
Matthew 5:21-26

At this point in the SOTM Jesus teaches "how" his disciples will be radically different from regular "religious" folks. In this section he teaches six familiar Old Testament commands and blows his audience away with his interpretation.

The religious leaders of the day had been teaching the command "You shall not murder" narrowly. They believed that as long as you hadn't killed someone in cold blood, you had obeyed the command perfectly. But the command had a much wider scope; they had completely missed the spirit behind the law.

The Pharisees wanted to interpret the Law of Moses narrowly
They were more interested in superiority than in authenticity
They were more interested in the boundaries than the purposes

Hypocrisy - the contradiction between the condition of one's heart and the outward professions or acts of religious piety

Matthew 5:21-22 *You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.*

Jesus is talking about preserving human life, but he's really talking about preserving human relationships.

In effect, Jesus is saying this: the Old Testament Law condemns murder, but I say that contemptuous anger will get you a fiery hell just as surely.

Now most of us understand that there are two kinds of anger:
Righteous anger - anger toward rebellion against God and injustice toward less powerful people

Unrighteous anger - anger in reaction to personal insult or affront.

This is anytime we take on any thought of superiority, when we become smug toward other people, when we become judge and jury

1 Peter 2:23 *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly*

Our anger can seem to us like a warm embrace. We can convince ourselves we are most alive when we're angry

Some people are not happy unless they're angry

Most of us are angry when we do not feel honored or respected

In both cases, we feel justified in our anger

Anger is evidence of two things:

We are afraid of losing something (losing an idol)

Something that is not cooperating with our plans

Something that is not delivering or meeting our felt needs

Someone who is not agreeing with our own chosen self image

We see our world and our experiences through the eyes of a victim

Our sins against others are justified reactions

Others' sins against us are unjustified sins

We think about feelings, while Jesus is talking about relationships
Jesus gives two examples of what preserving relationships involves:

Worship:

Matthew 5:23-24 *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.*

His point is clear; it is far more important to be reconciled to your brother than it is to fulfill the external duties of worship

It is so easy to try to make up for our integrity with ceremony

Ceremony, regular attendance at worship, serving and even giving never produce a clear conscience

A good in one area of our lives does not negate a bad in another area

We are more inclined to duck someone, avoid someone who's hurt us, or we've hurt them, than it is to confess our sins to one another

And with that, we are more inclined to gather allies who will agree with us, and thus justify us in our anger

Because we care more about our feelings than we do our relationships

Let's try to be honest about something:

Our unrighteous anger...the angry response to the wrongs, the sins, the hurts we experience is really rooted in something else...

Our anger is not a response to circumstances or people
It is a heart issue.

Our anger, the anger we cultivate and don't want to give up is really a deep-rooted dissatisfaction with God

We don't like what he brings into our lives if it doesn't feel good

We don't like to be held accountable for our own actions, our own sins

We don't think other people are as worthy as recipients of God's grace and forgiveness as we are

Psalm 66:18 *if I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*

The reason our prayers are hollow is because we have offended another brother or sister and are not willing to do anything about it.

We cannot have a growing, vibrant life with Christ if we are angry at other people, or when we don't deal with our own sins against other people.

Legal situation:

Matthew 5:25-26 *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.*

Jesus says here that we are real disciples of Him when we do what we can to make amends with others we have knowingly hurt, and to do it quickly.

Otherwise, the inevitable process (like a legal process) will catch up with you, and you will have to pay the maximum penalty.

Personal conflicts can often be resolved if dealt with quickly. However, when we put that off, you and everyone else will have to pay.

In **Matthew 18:23-35** we see an example of man's heart that did not forgive quickly. *"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when the same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.'" So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him. 'Have patience with me and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to*

him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Who has reason to be angry? God does
Aren't you glad He's chosen to take out His anger on His own Son, Jesus?

We will each choose to live our lives in one of two ways:
Satisfied in Jesus, and thankful for His grace to us
Or, we will be dissatisfied with Jesus, and angry with everyone else

Being a disciple, a follower of Jesus calls for a radical righteousness

And we can't be that radically righteous without the Holy Spirit doing radical restoration in our hearts

May we learn to confess our sins
When we know we've hurt someone else
When we know we are choosing to be hurt by someone else

It takes faith to believe God can truly release us from our anger.

But when we do, other people will see the radical righteousness of Christ and be drawn to Him.