

SERMON ON THE MOUNT: ANGER & RECONCILIATION

The sermon on the mount contains some of Jesus' most influential teachings all in one place, it is like a FAQ section for the gospels. Where Jesus teaches about the true character of Christianity. Matthew 5:21-26.

21 You have heard... Jesus is talking about the law and the teachings of the Old Testament. As Darren called it last week, the status quo. You must not murder - murder is a bad idea. In fact, if you murder you will be the subject of judgment. Immediately before this passage in chapter 5 Jesus endorses the law and the teachings of the Old Testament.

The law is given in the first 5 books of the bible known as the torah, the 10 commandments were the first and most famous familiar rules of the law. And what is commandment number 6? Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder.

So, what was the purpose of the law? The Torah isn't just a list of laws. It is an epic story about how God is partnering with humans to bring his blessing to the world. The Law of God was meant to foster human flourishing at every level, including at the deepest levels of our hearts and minds. God wants us to respect each other, to love each other, to see God's own image residing deep within one another. Jesus even gave us a two-step executive summary of the law... to love the Lord your God with all your mind and your heart and your strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

Murder is wrong - Been like that for ages. Don't kill anyone. Check. Got it. The easiest commandment to keep right.

22 But I say... What happens inside of us is equally as important as our outward actions. The law applies not only to our outward actions, but also our heart, our attitudes and emotions. As a result of this new interpretation of the law it is without question that we all fall short of God's standard and glory.

If murder were a tree, anger would be the seed. Murder is a drastic outward action but Jesus peels it right back to the heart, to the motivations and

attitudes of anger, bitterness and grudge. Things that happen inside every one of us. Sure, our anger does not typically result in murder, but it does harm our relationships and those around us - our families and our church communities.

So, is anger all bad? Didn't Jesus get angry? Doesn't God get angry at injustice, abuse and exploitation? God has made us in his image and as we grow in our faith what angers Him should anger us. Anger for the right reasons is called righteous anger - it is an anger we feel with God, not at God. Righteous anger is quite different from sinful anger.

The root of righteous anger is inspired by God; it joins Him in His anger over evil. It is driven by a love for God and others. It is patient and slow to build. The root of sinful anger, also called unnecessary anger, is the flesh or our human nature. It is driven by selfishness, offence, hurt, pride and a desire to punish. It is quick to develop and tends to erupt and rage. The fruit of righteous anger is restoration and true justice. It builds, redeems and renews, it actively produces beneficial change. The fruit of sinful anger is destruction, harm and poison. It results in damage and consequences.

23 So if... someone has something against you...

Sacrifices were a way that people could show their dedication to God, they were also important, pleasing and valuable to God. Presenting a sacrifice to God would suggest Jesus is pitching this teaching to those who are genuine in their faith. Those who want to honour and please God, to seek restoration and blessing. Those who wanted to follow the law and to make things right with their creator. The sacrifices would typically be an animal or grain or money. Sacrifices were costly to those who bought them. When Jesus mentions the altar in the temple - there was only one temple that he was referring to, in Jerusalem. Presenting a sacrifice at the temple was a big deal - it required travel and preparation; it was likely a costly logistical challenge.

When I read 'suddenly remember', I think of the Holy Spirit. Our guide who pricks our conscience when we



need it. For followers of Jesus today, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us to fully love others and love God, fulfilling the law that God put in place at the very beginning of the biblical story. The someone referred to in this verse is someone you are in relationship with. Your family, your friend. A brother or sister in the faith.

Some signs that you have a relationship that needs restoration. Eye rolling, someone else's failure or problem gives you satisfaction. Awkwardness and avoidance. Someone who you are impatient with - who irritates you too easily. Someone you enjoy gossiping about. Someone who you have stopped talking to.

24 Go... and be reconciled ...

Priority - leave your sacrifice, your gift at the altar. Although it is important and valuable, leave it there. There is something more important to resolve first.

Go. Requires action. Jesus isn't concerned about who started the problem or who is to blame. It is always your move. Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

The two most important tools for reconciliation and relationship repair are repentance and forgiveness. We often talk about repentance in our relationship with God but seldom is it discussed in our relationships with one another. Repenting to one another means admitting our role and our wrongs. Taking full responsibility without excuse or condition. Asking for forgiveness and demonstrating a willingness to change.

When we forgive one another, it drains out our anger. When we accept the forgiveness that God offers us through Jesus Christ we are completely forgiven and redeemed. Jesus calls us to forgive others as He has forgiven each one of us. We need to understand how completely and thoroughly we have been forgiven - in our heads, and in our hearts. Then we are capable of letting our grudges go and forgiving others as He has forgiven us. Reconciliation repairs what anger destroys and follows the example of God. Once reconciliation has happened our sacrifice is then welcomed and right to bring.

Have you ever done it? Mix of emotions. Trepidation. Conviction that you need to do something.

V25/26 Settle your differences quickly...

What Jesus is getting at in verses 25 and 26 is that it is always better to work things out with someone without going before a judge, whether a human judge or God, the Holy Judge.

Bottom Line: We should deal with our anger, before God deals with our anger.

Jesus is comparing the spiritual stakes of unresolved conflict to the civil stakes of an unresolved lawsuit. In either case, if you've truly wronged another person, you are in danger of judgment. The proper response is to make things right quickly— both to have a pure heart and to avoid judgment for wrongdoing.

REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

How do you deal with anger?

Have you ever experienced righteous anger? How did it differ from sinful anger?

What does repentance look like in human relationships?

What emotions do you experience when asking for forgiveness?

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Would you consider reconciliation with others an act of evangelism and/or an act of worship?

Has anyone ever reconciled with you? How did it make you feel?

What is meekness and how is it relevant to our relationships?

Read James 1:19 and Ephesians 4:31-32: What do these verses teach about anger?

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