

2023



Week Three Devotional

“FAMILY MATTERS”

“First Things First.” Series



“First Things First.” Series

Matthew 5:21-26

21 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder,^[a] and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister^{[b][c]} will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’^[d] is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. 23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there, remember that your brother or sister has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you; you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

We have begun the season of Lent as of February 22 and we will travel the road to resurrection all the way to Easter, Resurrection Sunday. Lent is an opportunity for reflection, repentance, and renewal. Please take full advantage of this time to devote, pray, read, fast, and draw closer to God. Please see the “Lenten Rhythm” we have shared for the days from February 22-April 8,2023.

“It is possible to speak with our heart directly. Most ancient cultures know this. We can actually converse with our heart as if it were a good friend. In modern life, we have become so busy with our daily affairs and thoughts that we have lost this essential art of taking time to converse with our heart.”

Jack Kornfield

The structure of the Sermon on the Mount is simply beautiful. From **verses 1-12** with the BEAttitudes, then **13-16** the Lord gives two brilliant metaphors on salt and light expressing the effects of such inner righteousness on humanity. In verses 17-20, Jesus gives a summary description of the radical righteousness of the kingdom, using 6 examples of how this righteousness is in continuity with the Old Testament.

Jesus did not come to “compete” with the Law he came to complete and fulfill the law.

Names to know: Martin Luther and John Wesley

Luther said: The Law must be laid upon those that are to be justified, that they may be shut up in the prison thereof, until the righteousness of faith comes-that when they are cast down and humbled by the Law, they should fly to Christ. The Law humbles them, not to their destruction, but to their salvation. For God woundeth that He may heal again. He killeth that he may quicken again.



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We are obsessed with the word “great.” We constantly ask or raise the issue of the “GOAT” the greatest of all time.

Relevant question: How does one become “great” in heaven?

By keeping and teaching!

Keeping God’s commandments and teaching them to others.

Read Romans 8:1-14

The opposite of this is” one who relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.”

Following Christ is not merely following some set of rules out of fear of Hell. Following Christ involves knowing what he desires.

Matthew 5:20 NIV

20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus does **NOT** come to compete with the Law, but to complete it!

What does following Christ mean to you?

Write below

This segues into our passage for the day for in this sermon on the Mount, also called a mountain of a sermon by Jesus, in **verses 21-26** Jesus gives one of six authoritative statements. In this 1st one, he clearly says that this is not an” outward action”, but an “inward attitude”, it’s a matter of the heart.

In this the 1st of 6 comparative statements that go like this...you have heard that it was said.... but I say to you...**vs21, 27, 31, 33, 38, and 43.**



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Family Matters....

List who it is in your family with whom you need to have better communication, and relationship.

How can **YOU** initiate the way to better?

In **Vs 21-26**, Jesus shows us how our relationships among the righteous family are to work and be governed. The need for a righteousness that surpasses human emotion and feeling. This text is one of the foundational passages on human relationships in scripture. Jesus begins with the prohibition against the ultimate fracture of human relationships which is murder. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes how a righteous person handles his or her relationships.

A. Principle

Matthew 5:20 NIV

²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus doesn't come to compete with the law but to complete it and make it portable for people to practice.

The Traditional Teaching of the Law Regarding Murder

Matthew 5:21 NIV

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder,^[a] and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’

Vs 21 is an exact duplicate of the 6th commandment.

Exodus 20:13

¹³ “You shall not murder.

B. Practice

The Superseding Teaching of Christ Regarding Murder

Matthew 5:22 NIV

²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister^{[b][c]} will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’^[d] is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.



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There is a place for” righteous anger.”

Read: John 2:13-22, Mark 3:5, Matthew 23:17, I Peter 2:23

Jesus is speaking here of” unrighteous anger.”

The Aramaic word” Raca” literally means to call someone empty-headed. It demotes a person to the level of nothing, a nobody.

The term” fool” is a translation of the Greek word moros, from which we get” moron.”

Jesus warns us that just because we have not shed blood that doesn’t make us safe from the type of murder he is speaking of.

Living Out Christ’s Teaching

Matthew 5:23-26 NIV

²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there, remember that your brother or sister has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you; you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Jesus was so concerned that we believers do not harbor evil thoughts toward one another that he gives 2 examples of positive steps we should take.

Example#1.....Worship

Matthew 5:23-24 NIV

²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there, remember that your brother or sister has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.



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The order is clear.... go and then come...order matters.

See the picture?

You're in the sanctuary and you're ready to give and then you remember you have an issue, you've wronged someone in word or deed...so before you tap give on your phone you **GO** to them, text them, email them, and then **COME** to the altar. You must first make things right with your brother/sister/family. It's more important to get things right than all the other duties you carry out in Jesus' name, for his church.

Worship is merely pretense, a ritual when we have offense/offended that grudges are held. Most of the time they are not held but shared with others instead of the person the grudge is with. It's easy to try to make up for our integrity with ceremony(church).

Ceremony, regular attendance in church, giving will never produce a clear conscience. If we are at odds with others because of actions and are willingly unwilling to do anything about it, attendance at church is an exercise in hypocritical futility. Go make things right, our prayers are empty at times because we have offended or carried offense against a brother/sister and are just too stubborn to admit it.

Dr. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones said this:

“I think I can say again that we all know something about this tendency not to face directly the conviction which the Holy Spirit produces in our heart, but to say to ourselves: “Well, now; I am doing this and that; I am making great sacrifices at this point; I am being helpful in that matter; I am busily engaged in that piece of Christian work.” The whole time we are not facing the jealousy we may feel against another Christian worker, or something in our personal, private life. We are balancing one thing with another, thinking this good will make up for that evil.

Be honest here:

Is there anyone you're jealous of? Why?

What do you need to do to get this right...now?

If we are at odds with others because of our actions and are willingly unwilling to do anything about it, attendance at church is an exercise in hypocritical futility. Go make things right, our prayers are empty at times because we have offended or carried offense against a brother/sister and are just too stubborn to admit it.



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Psalm 66:18 NIV

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; would not have listened.

1 Peter 3:7 NIV

⁷Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

It's transferable too!

Example #2.....Warning

Matthew 5:25-26 NIV

²⁵“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you; you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

In Euclidean geometry, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.

Relevant question: How does that work in your family, church, or friendship?

We are all called to the ministry of reconciliation! Reconciliation is the end of estrangement!

How fast should this be done? Quickly!

Whom do you need to forgive, and make amends with? What's keeping you from doing it?

Ephesians 5:26 NIV

²⁶to make her holy, cleansing^[a] her by the washing with water through the word,

Paul suggests a 24-hour period.

Jesus says when we do not reconcile quickly an inevitable process will begin to catch up with us like the legal process and we will have to pay the maximum penalty.

Personal issues and conflict can many times be dealt with if we practice **Matthew 18:15**.

Matthew 18:15 NIV

¹⁵“If your brother or sister^[a] sins,^[b] go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.

When we put off dealing with personal issues, and conflicts everyone pays!

God places the highest priority on our relationships with our brothers/sisters in Christ. He says to leave worship alone until you get it right with those we have offended/have ought, issues with.

I hear you” I don't have anything against them, it's them.” Let me simplify...whether you did it or they did,”

IT” was done and it needs to be dealt with.

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I apologize.... for what? Whatever is causing us, me/you to not be reconciled with one another. So many people are "worship dry" because they are in "personal prison" to themselves due to offense, malice, and carrying other people's issues against people. Some are "worship dry" because they refuse to deal with the issues, they know that have caused offense, and distance among the Christian family.

Ephesians 4:1-7 NIV

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

Closing exercise..... write a prayer of repentance, of conviction as it relates to what you've learned, gleaned from this week's devotional.
