

Title: Kingdom Response

Scripture: Matt 5:38-42

Main Idea: Righteousness that exceeds does not seek personal vengeance but rather goes the extra mile.

Intro:

- Movies – westerns, hint at this principle
- Children
- To err is human and to forgive is divine—neither is marine corps policy.
- Justice – we all have an understanding of it and want it, at least for others!
- Our problem is our consistently double standard when it comes to justice – justice for thee but not for me. When we have been wronged, we want justice. When we wrong, we want mercy.
- Jesus' sermon deals with this issue in our text this morning

Sermon on the Mount – Review thus far

- The longer Jesus' sermon goes on, the greater the demands placed on his followers. The further we go, the harder it gets!
- “There are few commands in the Bible that clash more with our natural inclination to protect our person and our honor than the commands found in Matthew 5:38–42.” Doriani
- This passage has been misunderstood and misapplied in too many ways to deal with. Partially because it is so challenging.
- Re Matt 5:29 “But Jesus did not expect literal obedience there, as if he wanted to see battalions of one-eyed Christians. Jesus was using hyperbole; he often used hyperbole to get our attention, to make a point. It is our task to discover his true intent. We must neither take a false burden on ourselves by interpreting Jesus in a hyperliteral way, nor explain away the rigorous demands of discipleship.” Doriani

Ex 21:24 *eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot*, broader context 23-25: ²³*If there is an injury, then you must give life for life,* ²⁴*eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,* ²⁵*burn for burn, bruise for bruise, wound for wound.*

Lev 24:20 *fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Whatever injury he inflicted on the person, the same is to be inflicted on him.* Broader context 17-21: ¹⁷ “If a man kills anyone, he must be put to death. ¹⁸ Whoever kills an animal is to make restitution for it, life for life. ¹⁹ If any man inflicts a permanent injury on his neighbor, whatever he has done is to be done to him: ²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Whatever injury he inflicted on the person, the same is to be inflicted on him. ²¹ Whoever kills an animal is to make restitution for it, but whoever kills a person is to be put to death.

Dt 19:21 *Do not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, and foot for foot.*

- Just as we have seen with other standards, what was meant in the OT to keep sin and the results of sin in check have been twisted into license to sin while giving the illusion of keeping the law. In this case what was meant to establish fair punishment and limit retaliation was being used to justify vindictive behavior.
- John Piper – God gives by concession a legal regulation as **a dam against the river of violence** that flows from man’s evil heart” [Piper, John. Love Your Enemies, 90. Quoted by Carson in EBC, 155.]

Misunderstandings/misapplications of this text

Not ‘don’t resist evil –

- Eph 6:13 – take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to resist.
- James 4:7 – resist the devil and he will flee from you.
- 1 Peter 5:9 – resist him (the devil) firm in the faith.

Not a prohibition against defensive or evasive action necessary to protect oneself or others from serious harm

- Jesus’ own examples – Jesus protested the abuse and injustice when slapped in Jn 18:22-3; Jesus often withdrew to avoid being a victim of violent mob (Mark 9:30-1; Luke 4:30; Jn 7:1, 10; 10:39).
- Calvin commented that evasive actions and nonretaliatory acts of self-defense were consistent with Jesus’ teaching.

Not a call to pacifism or abandoning the state's responsibility to seek and administer justice and prosecute war in defense of what is morally right

- The context is personal in every way here
- Blomberg NAC notes this text has no bearing on the pacifism-just war debate

Not a prohibition against legal action/prosecuting for crimes IOW not doing away with God's standards of justice

- Justice has been assigned by God to governments and vengeance has been kept by God as his
- Matt 18 and 1 Cor 5 show that the most loving response to sinful behavior is to hold a person accountable for that behavior
- Those who perpetrate violent acts against others need to be prosecuted for the sake of the public good and the protection of others
- To have no laws or to refuse to enforce laws leads to chaos – we need look no further than the news

Not give everything to everyone who asks

- Luke 12:13-15 - ¹³Someone from the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴"Friend," he said to him, "who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵He then told them, "Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one's life is not in the abundance of his possessions." (followed by the parable of the rich man building bigger barns)

Not a requirement to support the lazy, slothful, or those who waste their resources irresponsibly

- 1 Thess 5:14 – "warn those who are idle (undisciplined?)"
- 1 Thess 5:15 Paul evidences knowledge of this teaching, but also writes 2 Thess 3:10 – "if anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat."

2x points of application this morning

1) Kingdom citizens do not retaliate – they do not seek personal vengeance

- Our behavior must be motivated not by a desire for retaliation (the negative)
- Kingdom citizens are not permitted to have personal enemies – Jesus' words prohibit his disciples from viewing any person as a personal enemy

2) Kingdom citizens respond with shocking

- Our behavior must be motivated not by a desire for retaliation (the negative) but for the good of those with whom we would otherwise be at odds (the positive).
- We ensure we are not retaliating not by doing the bare minimum but by responding with exaggerated acts of sacrificial mercy

Conclusion:

Whitefield – “I AM CONTENT TO WAIT TILL THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT FOR THE CLEARING UP OF MY CHARACTER: AND AFTER I AM DEAD I DESIRE NO OTHER EPITAPH THAN THIS, 'HERE LIES G.W. WHAT SORT OF A MAN HE WAS THE GREAT DAY WILL DISCOVER.’”

Mr Ed Stanford