



## **Sermon on the Mount Series Week 4** - Matthew 5:17-30 Law, Anger, Lust

*June 16, 2024 - Pastor Jason Carter*

We are a family. Men, this Father's Day and every day, you do not have to walk alone. Statistics say that **only** 4% of people in America would actually be classified as devoted followers of Jesus, meaning they have a desire to emulate and become like Him- not just considered Christian by birth, with no spiritual pursuit or devotion to Jesus and His mission. We want to see that changed. We are here for you and with you. You have to want it.

### **Review:**

Last week P. Rafael spoke about salt and light- that we are in a covenant relationship with God and being transformed. We are to be His representatives of a new way to think and live. This new way results in the good life even when life is not good.

- How would you explain the reality of this statement in your own life or someone around you who is pursuing Jesus?

**Law: v17-20** What is the Torah (Law) and how does Jesus fulfill it?

V. 17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

In the day of Jesus, there were different sects of Jews arguing over which version/parts of the Torah are the ones Israel should follow. Different leaders held different interpretations. Israel is under Roman rule, not autonomous as a nation. Religious leaders are trying to interpret how to live the law of God in a world that has changed (Roman cultural/religious influence).

**Sound familiar?** We are trying to figure out how to live the gospel in a time where politics and secular thought are dominating our society. God wanted to make Israel His representatives on earth to represent His kingdom and His character on earth, just like He wants of us today.

- What are some examples of the secular thought dominating their society that were contrary to the upside-down kingdom Jesus speaks of? ("my truth", "shades of grey" are common terms today when it comes to Truth).

- What are some examples in our current culture?

- How do you stand firm in truth? How do you KNOW the Truth?

- How do you invite others into Truth, not judge and remove yourself completely from those who are not following it?

Jesus is about to explain how to actually live the law the way He calls us to. He will be and is the perfect example. Jesus came to fulfill what the law should look like.

V. 18 "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

Jesus is using natural elements one would see every day as a comparison pointing them/us to the eternal unshakeable truth of the word of God. He is also making a promise that it will happen. God is making a decree that just as He was intentional with creation, He is the same by giving the law and His intention to fulfill it.

V. 19,20 "Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> 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 is telling them not to follow those who change God's commands. Don't be swayed by politics and cultural change. He is reminding Israel about righteousness. Righteousness is simple to do what is right toward God and others.

- For some of us, it is easy for us to do right vertically (towards God) but not horizontally (towards others) and vice versa. Which one is easiest for you? Why do you think that is?

Jesus points to the hyper-vigilant Pharisees who added 600+ rules to God's rules to help "fence" people in from their natural tendency to wander. They believe if they could get everyone to obey the rules, the Messiah would come sooner and free them from Roman oppression. Often the Pharisees wanted to be seen. But the truth is that if people happen to see your right living it is secondary, not primary. Right living should not be a front, a humble brag, or a "flex." It must truly be the way you live.

- In what ways may you be guilty of the wrong motive for "right living"? In what area is Holy Spirit challenging you to change this?

Jesus uses hyperbolic language which are exaggerations that get your attention, like those headlines you read. Today we might call it "click bait" on social media.

Jesus is calling people to be more faithful to the commands of God (the Law) but how to do this and discerning the will of God is what Jesus will explain.

**Jesus says 6 times "You have heard it said"** as a way to point out what has been said and redefine what God actually meant. He is trying to explain the wisdom and power of the law in relation to human action AND human thinking. He is wanting us to be honest about our hearts (motives) and actually engage the true heart (motives) behind the law. Jesus is always explaining the type of life that deeply follows these commands.

- As Americans, we naturally interpret these as individuals because of our culture. But remember that this was spoken and written to a community. Imagine that Jesus's words were written to Good News and He is saying you have heard it said or you have been thinking of it as, but I say to you as a group, a family, this is the heart behind God's law. How might that change the way you interpret and apply His teachings?

Jesus moves on from this baseline about the law to start addressing some practical aspects of daily living. Today He focuses on anger, lust, adultery. Jesus is showing how they- and we- can live right with God and others, and that the law is actually good. The heart behind it is actually what sets us free from the things we can be trapped in (like lust, anger, etc). Jesus is committed to helping us find freedom and be transformed to be more like Him.

**Example of Michelangelo:** finding the marble that he can sculpt to release the hidden treasure inside. Just like the beauty and purpose that believing Jesus and living His principles (with His help) can release from inside of us.

**Example of living with roommates:** One is messy. One is lazy. One is broke and never pays his bills. We have to pay attention to the "roommates" that are hindering us. We need transformation. We can't let certain things have a place inside if us.

- Do these examples speak anything to you? Challenge you in any way?

v21,22 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'<sup>22</sup> But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca' (worthless) is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

Jesus says 6 times "You have heard it said" because He is *drawing us deeper*, wanting us to be *honest* about our heart (motives) and actually *engage the true heart* (motives) behind the law.

This anger Jesus is pointing to is pointing back to Cain and Abel in the book of Genesis. Cain was mad at Abel and murdered his own brother. This anger Jesus speaks of is rage and we will face judgment for it.

Raca (means worthless) is a term of contempt toward another.

### Jesus is saying:

1. "Someone being held in contempt of court" means to willfully or openly disrespect the law and the person upholding it. In a relational sense, it mean to despise or strongly disapprove of someone. It is like the Local Court.
2. To actually call someone "raca" (publicly humiliate/use words against them) is so strong that one would face legal ramifications for it. Consider it as responsible to the Supreme Court.
3. Jesus says that to consider someone so disapprovingly as to consider them a "fool" can put us in danger of hell fire... God's Court.

Many of us have anger, rage, contempt, dislike in us; it has a hold on us. Our families and culture may say "So what?" but God says: **Ephesians 4:25-27 NLT 25 "So stop telling lies. Let us**

tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. 26 And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil."

Jesus is saying to watch out. Anger is real in all of us. And it can be destructive. Don't let our anger/rage get a foothold and if it has, deal with it now. What you say about another will come back to you in the same manner. It is God's justice at work. What we permit God does not permit because he knows where it goes.

- This is serious! Jesus flips the script on how we categorize right and wrong. What court would you be found in? Ouch!

V. 23-26 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> "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. <sup>26</sup> Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."

Here Jesus is telling us how to deal with our anger. He is saying to humble ourselves and own our part. He is also pointing out that there is a cost associated with anger, and the longer it rules, the more expensive it becomes.

- What does this mean? How have you seen this to be true?

- What has a place in you that makes you rage, hold people or races or nationalities in contempt? There may be justifiable reasons: abuse, mistreated, slandered etc. Jesus does not dismiss that but He does still required us to forgive it and let Him handle it. To do this, we must honestly go to Him with it and invite Him and His wisdom and our brothers and sisters in the faith to help us walk it out safely and honestly.

- What steps can you take to address the anger/rage/contempt you are experiencing?

**Lust: v 27, 28** Jesus is speaking just to men in the audience of this passage, but it applies to all of us, male or female.

V. 27, 28 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'<sup>28</sup> But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

**This is a cultural mindset and theological shift because Jesus is pointing out that the act of adultery begins with thinking in your heart.**

**Jesus is bringing reform and make a new culture, the culture of HIS KINGDOM.** He is giving a deep explanation of the wisdom of the law. God is the giver of sex; the Bible has a high view of sex; and the Bible is clear that sex is to be expressed in marriage between a male and female. It is supposed to be sacred. We are to honor each other.

“Do not commit adultery” is #7 of the 10 Commandments and Jesus is teaching them that the way sexual desire manifests itself matters to God. He wants us to consider how we steward the gift and how we handle the temptation.

V. 28 “Looks” means present ongoing action; sustained; to stare in order to...

V. 29 “If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Jesus is saying **metaphorically** (hyperbole again) to gouge out the looking eye or cut off your hand. Simply meaning to take drastic measures to deal with this heart issue. **Lust is something that like anger grows over time.** Whatever you have to do to deal with this is worth it!

**Don't degrade women. Don't demean women. Do whatever is necessary so that you do right by the women in your midst and do right by the God you serve. Remember who God's Word says they are.**

In our culture, so many deride Christianity as limiting and demeaning to women, **yet Jesus** is on the **forefront** of revealing value and honor and the expectation of how men were/are to treat women. His greater vision is a world that was created by God, together with His law, with His intent of a new way to live: fulfilling, god honoring, and enriching to us as humans too.

**Be careful who or what is allowed to shape you. Be careful who controls your narratives and what philosophies of life you are buying into. Be careful who gives you your interpretations of life. They may not lead where you think. It only takes a small place in your life to lead you astray.**

Again, we have to go back to that fact that the enemy and sin want to have a place in us that will ultimately destroy. Again, Jesus is presenting a righteous expectation to help define the righteous culture of His Kingdom come.

- What is shaping our culture in this area of lust and adultery?

- What are you looking at? Reading? Singing? Does it need to change? Lust is not just a man's world. Women, too, need to remember who God says men are and treat them with the same dignity they have been given by God.

- Through what principles are you interpreting the way you live your life?

- Maybe you were taught wrong ways of treating/interacting with the opposite gender. How can you change those to line up with the upside-down kingdom of Jesus?

- James tells us to confess our sins to each other that we may be healed. Our minds, thoughts, and actions need healing. Who do we need to confess to and bring into this journey that we may find freedom, wholeness, and transformation?

Anger and lust are like hurricanes, like fire. They feed of a source and it will continue to grow. We **MUST** have practices in place to counter these human tendencies in order to be transformed and become more like Jesus day after day, moment by moment.

### **Developing the Habit of Transformation:**

- What is God saying through the Bible (the message or your Bible reading)?
- What is going on in your heart and mind as you listen/read?
- Engage God in prayer. Talk to Him about what is coming to mind.
- What mature believer in your Christian community can you talk to about this, whether to be discipled or help disciple someone else in this area God is speaking to you about?
- Identify what action steps to implement in order to change thinking and produce new actions? Put feet to your belief system.

**This is about pursuit not perfection. We call people out in order to call people up. You don't have to do it alone. You have a family, you have men in your corner. We are for you.**