

## ASTONISHED

Matthew 5:21-26

MPS: **Holding onto kingdom relationships > holding on to destructive anger**

## PRAYER TIME

**Psalm 75:1–3 (ESV)** **1** *We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near. We recount your wondrous deeds.* **2** *“At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity.* **3** *When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars. Selah*

**1** *We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near. We recount your wondrous deeds*

Lord, I thank you for \_\_\_\_\_.

**2** *“At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity.*

Have you ever been hurt, abused, sinned against, abandoned, lied about, slandered, betrayed, stolen from, cheated on, taken advantage of by another person or people? The answer should be, ‘yes’ because we live in a world subjected to futility.

The good news is that the Lord has not allowed any of it to go unchecked or unnoticed. He knows and He will judge with equity.

This means you don’t have to take vengeance on those who sinned against you, you don’t have to harbor hate, bitterness, or unforgiveness to anyone who hurt you. You don’t have to judge them, pay them back, withhold forgiveness because that is God’s job and He will do it perfectly.

God will judge the wicked in one of two ways: He will pour out His wrath on the last day upon those who remain unrepentant, or, if they place their faith in Jesus, He will judge them through Christ, who bore their sins and granted them forgiveness. In both scenarios, justice is served, and you are liberated!

Take a moment to trust the perfect judgment of God on those who sinned against you; freeing you from the chains of bitterness as you forgive them and hand them over to the Lord.

Lord, because you are the good and perfect judge, I can hand \_\_\_\_\_ over to you; I forgive \_\_\_\_\_ for the harm/hurt they caused me/us.

**3** *When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars. Selah*

We can get rocked by circumstances from time to time and it might feel like the earth has tottered under your feet, yet God steadies our lives like pillars of the earth. In what ways have you been shaken by events in your life that you need God to steady you in?

Pray

Lord, steady me/us like pillars as we are going through \_\_\_\_\_

Death of a loved one

Health matters with you or your family

Financial crisis

Loss of a job

Relational turmoil

Issues with your children

Taking care of aging parents

Natural disaster

Legal troubles

A move or relocation

Being overwhelmed with a mental or emotional struggle

## SERMON NOTES:

### INTRO

- Last before last week Ryan did a great job with what sets up the rest of the chapter. Jesus is the fulfilment of the law; He gave the law... therefore He knows the intent of the law.

**Matthew 5:20 (ESV) 20** *For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

- The giver of the law is now giving the intent of the law. If anyone knows the intent of the law its Him. Refers not to the teaching of God's law itself, with its promises, but the teaching of the law by scribes and Pharisees.
- He is correcting what the scribes and pharisees of the day have been teaching about the law.
- 6 times Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said..." or at least a variation of it. (6 number of man). Some scholars have called this the six antitheses.
- You've heard that it was said... FROM MAN; now you get to hear from GOD – The author of the law astonishes His people with the intent of the law.

### OPEN

In my reading last week, Tim Keller used an illustration from In C.S. Lewis's Narnia chronicles.

Narnia's a new realm pointing to the Kingdom of God, a place you enter without leaving where you are. Narnia doesn't replace England—it's hidden within it,

Of all the children in the book, Susan is the spiritually weak one. She's unkind to Lucy. She never seems to get it, but Lucy is the one with the deepest spiritual sight. Lucy is the one with the best relationship with Aslan:

There's a place when Aslan, the great lion who's the Christ figure, has been resurrected, just like Jesus. Then he bends down to these two girls, Susan and Lucy, and he says, " 'And now,' said Aslan presently, 'to business.' [...] 'We have a long journey to go. You must ride on me.' And he crouched down and the children climbed on to his warm, golden back, and Susan sat first, holding on tightly to his mane and Lucy sat behind holding on tightly to Susan. And with a great heave he rose underneath them and then shot off, faster than any horse could go ..."

If you want to have a relationship with Jesus, if you want to be with Him, Abide in Him, go with Him, hold on to him... the only way he will let you hold onto him is if you're willing to hold onto Susan, to brothers and sisters you don't like.

if anybody deserves to be able to get on Aslan's back it would be Lucy. She gets up there. She holds onto the mane, personal contact. "I don't need anybody else."

"I want to have a personal experience of divine reality, but I don't want to have to deal with other people. I don't want to have to be part of a body."

The God of the Bible says, "I don't work like that. The only way you can hold onto me is if you hold onto Susan, to hold onto brothers, to hold onto sisters, people you wouldn't really have chosen to be friends.

### **Holding onto kingdom relationships > holding on to destructive anger**

**Vs 21** *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 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.*

**There is a progression here – anger, to insult, to murder.**

- Jesus Himself calls the religious of the day, 'fools' GK moros (Mat 23:17). But He was sinless.
- What is the difference? Motive. Jesus didn't want to murder his opposition, He wanted to save them.

**Anger is a secondary emotion**

- Meaning it's rarely the root feeling. Instead, it acts as a protective response or "mask" that covers up more vulnerable primary emotions—like fear, hurt, sadness, shame, disappointment, or feeling disrespected/powerless. Primary emotions arise directly from a situation (e.g., you feel hurt when someone betrays you). Anger then kicks in as a

defense: it feels stronger, safer to express, and helps regain control or push others away, avoiding the pain of vulnerability. Society often views anger as "tough" while seeing sadness or fear as "weak," so we default to it. This explains why unchecked anger escalates—it's fueled by unaddressed deeper pain. Recognizing the primary emotion underneath allows healthier processing, empathy, and reconciliation.

- **Anger Iceberg:** The visible tip above water is anger (what others see), but the massive part hidden below holds the real drivers—fear, hurt, shame, loneliness, etc. Another model is the iceberg diagram showing anger on top, with layers like "inadequate," "betrayed," "disrespected," "scared," "hurt," and "sad" submerged beneath.

## 1. Holding onto anger leads to a hard heart

**Hebrews 3:13 (ESV) 13** *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

- sin is like frigid air that hardens your heart.

ILLUSTRATION: filter freezing on our gravity filter.

- Water: drink, cook with, clean our utensils, etc.
- Without it we would be in trouble (destructive to ourselves)
- your heart is like that. It's automatically getting either hard through pride or hard through sadness...

**1 John 1:6–7 (ESV) 6** *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7* *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

**Ezekiel 36:25–27 (ESV) 25** *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26* *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27* *And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

- You need community with other kingdom people to avoid freezing and a hardened heart.

**Proverbs 29:22 (ESV) 22** *A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.*

## 2. Holding onto anger results in a hellish reality

*and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.*

- Hell here is “A reference to the Hinnom Valley, SW of Jerusalem. Ahaz and Manasseh permitted human sacrifices there during their reigns and therefore it was called “The Valley of Slaughter” (Jer. 19:6).
- In Jesus’ day, it was a garbage dump where fires burned continually and was thus an apt symbol of eternal fire.”
- This is Gehenna—hell itself. And if unchecked anger has led you to hurl insults, brother against brother, this is your fate: trapped in the flames of judgment, forever.
- This anger, bitterness, unforgiveness never diminishes on its own, left unchecked, it always grows. It’s a strange ironic place to be, wishing hell on another all the while hell is growing in you. Its worse than the saying, ‘unforgiveness is drinking poisoning waiting for the other to die’ its more like ‘standing in a growing hell waiting for the other to go to hell’

### **3. Holding onto anger hinders our prayers**

**1 Peter 3:7 (ESV) 7** *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

- I can maintain hatred toward my wife, bitterness toward my children, and jealousy toward my neighbor, all while technically never killing them or harming in them in any physical way

### **Holding onto kingdom relationships > holding on to destructive anger**

- Jesus drives home his point with two dramatic illustrations

#### Illustration 1

**23** *So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

- The importance of worship, sacrifice in Jesus day – the price paid to even give a sacrifice like travel, buying an animal, etc. It was RADICAL (left crowd astonished) to leave that there but that is what Jesus was teaching. Holding on to Susan is more important than 1 million church services – and btw church gathering are crucial to you spiritual life.

- Jesus' point is radical: even in the midst of this holy, carefully prepared ritual—standing ready to present your offering—human reconciliation takes priority over continuing the act of worship. Unresolved relational brokenness (especially when your brother has a grievance against you) hinders true communion with God. Leave the gift untouched at the altar, go reconcile, then return—showing that heart-righteousness matters more than ritual performance.
- Take ownership of your relationships
- You may say, “well, I haven’t said a word to them. I haven’t said a word about them. I’ve kept it to myself and its hurt NO ONE.” Ahh, but no. It has hurt someone. It’s hurt you. It’s caused friction between you and the Lord. Maybe you show up for gathered worship, for community group, but deep inside you hold bitterness, anger, unforgiveness... Jesus would say, ‘before you go to church today, there is something more important. Reconciliation”

### Illustration 2

**25** *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.*

- Jesus calls for reconciliation to be sought eagerly, aggressively, quickly—even if it involves self-sacrifice. It is better to be wronged than to allow a dispute between brethren to be a cause for dishonoring Christ (1 Cor. 6:7). **adversary**. This speaks of one’s opponent in a law case. **prison**. Debtor’s prison, where the person could work to earn back what he had defrauded.<sup>1</sup>
- Jesus’ second illustration of the urgency of reconciliation pictures an out-of-court settlement between fellow litigants
- But, its going to cost me... YES, reconciliation always costs. Forgiveness always costs.
- Gospel – Jesus forgiveness cost him and there is no forgiveness without a price. However, the reward is worth it... but if you choose to hold onto it, the opposite is more costly.

**26** *Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.*

**Matthew 18:15 (ESV) 15** *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, J., Jr., ed. (1997). [The MacArthur Study Bible](#) (electronic ed., p. 1401). Word Pub.

**Matthew 18:21–22 (ESV) 21** *Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” 22* **Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.**

Then He gives a parable to explain it.

## **CONCLUSION**

When you enter into a relationship with the Father through Jesus, the whole point of Christianity is he is not a boss. You're not working for a boss, so as long as you're producing, you have a job, but if you stop producing, you're fired. He's a Father. That means you have an enduring and unconditional and unmerited relationship.

**Holding onto kingdom relationships > holding on to destructive anger**

## QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS

1. Is there any anger toward another brother and sister that you need to confess?
2. How do you reconcile?
3. Pray for those who need to take steps toward reconciling with another brother or sister in Christ.