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Matthew 5:23-26 | Reconciliation

October 23, 2022

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 5.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

We have spent the last several months studying the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount is the greatest sermon ever preached— by the greatest preacher ever!

Jesus doesn't only have one point to His sermon. He has many.

And that's one of the many reasons we study God's Word verse-by-verse.

As we've learned so far, there is a specific structure and flow that Jesus uses with this sermon.

Jesus begins preaching with the Beatitudes.

He tells people how to be blessed or happy.

Jesus then teaches about our newfound identity as His disciples.

And finally, Jesus teaches us about His own identity.

After revealing who He is and what He is doing in verses 17-20,

Jesus then starts to link the law to His sermon with verses 21-48.

Last week Jesus began an exposition on the Ten Commandments.

He starts with a command that most people—Christian or non-Christian—will agree on.

“Do not murder.” (Ex 20:13).

And we discussed how people refer to this commandment as if it’s the sole requirement for Heaven.

“I’m a good person. I have’t murdered anybody.”

Isn’t it convenient to compare ourselves to a bloodthirsty criminal or cold-blooded murderer?

This comparison makes us superior in our own minds.

Last week we saw how Jesus handled that type of comparison.

Jesus used a familiar phrase with His Disciples.

“You have heard that is was said.... But I say to you ...”

Jesus took this command of “Do Not Murder” that everybody is so familiar with and most people agree on—and taught it as it was meant to be taught.

He didn’t teach it like the scribes and Pharisees.

Because their interpretation of murder was superficial.

And if something is superficial, it means that it's attainable.

“You have heard that is was said.... But I say to you ...”

In using this phrase, Jesus was referencing the *halakha*.

The *halakha* means “the walk” and refers to the oral traditions of the Rabbis.

Everybody listening to Jesus’ sermon knew what Jesus is talking about.

Two thousand years later, we don’t. — *we don't know what the halakha is*

When we hear this phrase

“You have heard that it was said.... But I say to you ...”

immediately
We think that Jesus is contradicting the Old Testament law.

If Jesus contradicts the OT law, we all have a substantial problem on our hands.

But we know that He’s not contradicting anything because Jesus Himself said...

Matthew 5:17—*Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.*

Fulfill what?

Think of the law and the prophets as musicians playing in an unfinished symphony.

Or maybe actors in a play with no climax to the drama.

In other words, the OT is unfinished.

And Jesus came to finish the symphony with a crescendo —and to complete the play with the final dramatic scene.

Matthew 5:18—*For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.*

Part of the “all things” is correcting the misinterpretation of God’s law.

How is it possible that scribes and Pharisees were so wrong in their interpretation?

The scribes and Pharisees were the religious scholars of the day—

They were pastors, priests, and ministers.

They were also academics—they had Doctor of Ministry degrees and Ph.D.s. Some of these guys had both.

So how is it possible that they got it so wrong?

Have you ever noticed that the only time Jesus got mad was because of these guys?

That's a critical insight for us to understand today.

Because it serves as a warning for us.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is simple enough for a child to understand.

However, the Word of God in every generation eventually becomes distorted.

Every passing generation seems to get a watered down version of the Gospel.

And over time, it's so watery that there is no Gospel.

These distortions happen not because there is something wrong with God's Word but because there is something wrong with us.

Even though God has saved us, our minds are still clouded by sin.

And we place our clouded thoughts and our twenty-first-century Americanized worldview on Scripture.

Many times we read God's Word and force it to say something that it doesn't.

That's why we're so offended by the Bible at times.

~~It's also the reason we get mad at our Brothers and Sisters if they don't agree on every part of personal doctrine.~~

Last week may have been one of those times for you—if you chose not to believe what Jesus taught on anger.

Jesus demonstrated with crystal clarity how our anger will be judged as murder.

Jesus taught us that anger is the infancy stage of murder.

Who would have thought that calling somebody “stupid” or considering them a “fool” would be guilty of murder in God's court?

Where the consequences of those crimes lead to a very real place called hell without repentance and without Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Jesus' words shatter the illusion of our self-righteousness.

Self-righteousness: I am right within and by myself.

And in Jesus' sermon, He strips away every trace and fragment of religiosity.

He dismantles our religious smugness and superiority in thinking that we've got Him all figured out.

Jesus also swept aside the self-justification that is common to all of us.

Having the self-control not to kill somebody is easy for most of humanity.

But what about our thought control?

But what about the fundamental dysfunction that scars and hardens our hearts?

What about our hateful attitude towards people or a certain group of people because they don't think like us, look like us, talk like us or act like us?

Jesus' indictment on "Do Not Murder" is comprehensive.

He readjusts and refocuses our misperception of reality.

We live in an era where we think we can make up our own truth.

Yet, God's truth goes straight to the heart of the matter.

So as we continue our study now of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, please know that Jesus is dealing not only with our sinful behavior but our sinful thoughts.

Quick review...

Matthew 5:21— *"You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment.*

As Jesus is preaching His message, people in the crowd are shaking their heads in agreement, saying, "Amen! Preach it Rabbi! Stick it to those no-good murderers!"

...and then Jesus says this...

Matthew 5:22— *But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment.*

Contrary to popular opinion, Jesus is not raising the standard of murder.

He's reiterating the standard of this law from the very beginning.

Key points from last week include:

LW: KEYPOINT #1:

The law against murder also prohibits potential murder.

LW: KEYPOINT #2:

Anger is sinful even if it never leads to action.

If keypoint #1 didn't phase you, keypoint #2 should have leveled you.

Last week I talked about the scrutiny of God.

Jesus doesn't grade on a curve.

In other words, we're all guilty.

Every single one of us harbors anger—right now at someone— at some level.

None of us love our neighbor as we should.

All of us are guilty before a holy God because of the anger in our hearts.

We're all on the same playing field.

That's the bad news.

Here's the good news.

LW: KEYPOINT #3:

Jesus is not only the Lawgiver but the Redeemer.

The same Jesus who gives these impossible and unattainable commands— is also the same Jesus who fulfills them on our behalf.

Jesus not only gave the law— but fulfilled the law—just like he said in verse seventeen.

What's that mean for us? Everything!

He has given us a gift.

The gift is Himself— through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

We talk a lot about how salvation is not by works—but it is.

It's just not your works—it's Christ's.

So what Christ has done with this gift is reconcile us back to God the Father.

Jesus is the mediator, and reconciliation was His mission.

And the topic of reconciliation is precisely where Jesus goes next in His Sermon on the Mount.

INTRODUCTION:

Reconciliation is the mending of a broken relationship.

It is to be at peace with one another.

But how ^{do you have peace} does it happen when some type of offense has been committed?

Well, the offense has to be removed.

How does that take place?

And not only that, but how does reconciliation fit into the conversation of murder and anger from last week?

Lastly, why do you care? Let's find out!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:21-26 CSB

Matthew 5:21— *"You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder,, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment.*

Matthew 5:22— *But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister, will be subject to the court. Whoever says, 'You fool!' will be subject to hellfire.,*

Matthew 5:23— *So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you,*

Matthew 5:24— *leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.*

Matthew 5:25— *Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you're on the way with him to the court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison.*

Matthew 5:26— *Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.*

***This is the Word of the Lord for River Bible Church.*

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 5:23— So if you are offering your gift on the altar,

So / Therefore— is a transition word that refers back to Jesus' main point on anger from last Sunday.

And the point is this—anger is sinful even if it never leads to action.

Our angry thoughts do enough harm without acting on them.

Matthew 5:23— So if you are offering your gift on the altar,

Jesus paints a familiar scene to the Disciples.

Jesus may be alluding to the Day of Atonement.

Atonement is the path in which reconciliation between God and people is possible.

Think of atonement as “at-one.” —play on words

And if we are united “as one,” reconciliation has taken place.

The Day of Atonement is the holiest day for the Jews.

Israel fasted on this day, cleansed the sanctuary of impurity, and dealt with their sin through blood rituals— because it’s only through blood that sin can be forgiven. (Heb. 9:22)

On the Day of Atonement, the Jews would individually bring a perfect animal to be the sacrifice for their sins.

When a ^{blood} sacrifice is made, forgiveness is granted. —OT Law

Matthew 5:23— So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you,

Matthew 5:24— leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

Oh no...time out!

Christians sometimes say, “I know that if I have a problem with my brother, I must go to him and work it out.”

friend, neighbor

And that's true.

But that's not what Jesus is saying here in this text.

Look at the text again...

Matthew 5:23— ...and there you remember that your brother has something against you,

And we say...

"I don't like that at all!"

If my brother has something against me, he should come to me! And then we can work it out. Why do I have to go to him?"

I'm pretty sure that's what the disciples thought as well.

However, ^{this command of reconciliation} it was a lot more costly to the disciples than it is to us today.

Why?

Because in the first century, usually, a person offering the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement would walk up to the priest, stop and present the animal to him.

The person offering the sacrifice would then lay his hands on the animal to identify with it and present it to the priest as a covering for his sin.

And it's right here in the middle of the church service—where Jesus is saying,

STOP! Do not give that sacrifice to the priest—if your brother has something against you.

Now, in the first century, this was unheard of.

Because Jesus' original audience lived in Galilee, which is way north of Jerusalem.

It would be like walking from here to Phoenix.

So, Jesus asks them to travel for a week to seek reconciliation.

Then, when reconciliation has been made, walk back to Jerusalem to complete the sacrifice and then turn around and go home again.

Once again, Jesus is pointing us back to the OT—this is nothing new.

Jesus is teaching the true intent of the Law.

Reconciliation has always been a priority for and from God.

We see an example of ~~God the Father saying the same thing God the Son says~~ through the prophet Isaiah.

+ **Isaiah 1:11 NLT**—What makes you think I want all your sacrifices?"
says the Lord.

"I am sick of your burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of fattened cattle.

I get no pleasure from the blood
of bulls and lambs and goats.

+ **Isaiah 1:12 NLT**— When you come to worship me,
who asked you to parade through my courts with all your ceremony?

+ **Isaiah 1:13 NLT**— Stop bringing me your meaningless gifts;
the incense of your offerings disgusts me!
As for your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath
and your special days for fasting—
they are all sinful and false.
I want no more of your pious meetings.

KEYPOINT:

Jesus prioritizes reconciliation over church attendance.

We are to settle conflicts before we try to fix things between God and us.

How do we know?

Matthew 5:24—First go and be reconciled.

Notice the order of importance—first “go” and then “be.”

First, be reconciled - go make peace with your brother.

Obviously, this is difficult to do—nearly impossible at times.

We cannot change another person’s heart or mind.

We will never make anyone do anything they don’t want to do

Even God doesn’t make people do things they don’t want to do.

But our desire should be to reconcile the relationship as much as possible.

reconcile / make things right / strive for peace

How do you do that when the other person refuses to speak to you?

Romans 12:18— If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Romans 14:19—let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another.

In other words,

Make an effort. Make the phone call. Send the email.

Say you're sorry. Ask for forgiveness.

We think—*what if they don't say their sorry? What if they don't ask for forgiveness from me? It takes two to tango ya know!*

So what?

Jesus is not focused on them is He? He's focused on you.

You are not responsible for their behavior.

You are only responsible for yours.

You are not responsible for their response. That's on them.

Their reaction to you trying to make peace is between them and God.

KEYPOINT: #2
Reconciliation precede worship.
comes before

What do I mean by worship?

Personal Prayer. Devotional time. Read the Bible. Coming to church. Singing songs. Attending Bible studies—anything you do to build your relationship with Him.

Jesus teaches that reconciliation precedes all of that.

In other words, true worship is not magnified by longer prayers, more music, or better preaching.

True worship is enhanced by better relationships.

The American church spends way too much time focusing on the exterior.

God wants your heart.

Matthew 5:25— Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary (plaintiff) while you're on the way with him to the court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison.

Two Things:

1. Verse 25 and 26 are a commentary on the previous two.

Jesus now speaks of the consequences of our anger and refusal to reconcile.

Jesus uses an illustration from the common practice of throwing someone in prison for an unpaid debt in the first century.

Nobody filed bankruptcy back then—they threw you in prison.

2. Jesus illustrates the importance of reconciliation through the judicial process.

Jesus says that while you still have time, do everything you can to make peace.

Otherwise, you will lose not only the court case— but your life.

Being thrown into prison and unable to get out illustrates God's punishment.

Jesus is speaking not about an earthly judge but the heavenly judge; → himself.

He's not only talking about an earthly jail but God's wrath in hell.

KEYPOINT: #3

The time for reconciliation is always *right now*. Tomorrow may be too late.

Matthew 5:26— Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.

Question: How do you pay a debt while serving time in prison?

Somebody else has to pay your debt for you.

You need a bail bondsmen.

But how do you pay a sin debt?

A bail bondsman doesn't have the ~~en~~ capacity to pay that.

You need a Savior who is both God and man who has offered his own blood on your behalf.

And that's exactly what Jesus did.

+ **Isaiah 53:5**—But he ^{Jesus} was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds.

+ **Colossians 2:14**—He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.

+ **PREACH**
Why is reconciliation such a priority to Jesus?

Because reconciliation is a crucial ingredient of the Gospel.

Think about this—God made it the priority to come from Heaven to reconcile us back to Himself through Jesus.

Romans 5:10— For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.



PREACH

Why is reconciliation such a priority to God?

Because reconciliation is a crucial ingredient of the Gospel.

Within the narrative's of the OT, we see the theme of reconciliation throughout.

One of the more famous stories would be the reconciliation that took place between Joseph and his brothers.

This story is not about any ordinary family—

It's the story of a super ^{Hyper}dysfunctional family who just happens to be the twelve tribes of Israel.

Today's reality TV shows or soap operas have nothing on these guys.

Joseph is daddy's boy—and Joseph's eleven brothers resent him for that.

His brothers are so—*get this now*—they are so angry at him that they come up with this extensive plan to murder him.

We're talking about pre-mediated murder.

Rather than murdering him like they planned— they end up selling Joseph as a slave in Egypt.

And over the next several decades Joseph works his way up to Vice President of Egypt—He became a politician.

By God's providence, God sends Joseph's brothers to Joseph in Egypt.

And after several meetings between the two...Here's where we pick up the story.

Genesis 45:1—Joseph could no longer keep his composure in front of all his attendants, so he called out, "Send everyone away from me!" No one was with him when he revealed his identity to his brothers.

Genesis 45:2—But he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and also Pharaoh's household heard it.

Genesis 45:3—Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But they could not answer him because they were terrified in his presence.

In other words, their sin of anger and murder caught up with them.

And now they're terrified because they know they have been judged as guilty.

Just as God promises— *Your sin will find you out.* (Numbers 32:23)

Genesis 45:4—Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please, come near me," and they came near. "I am Joseph, your brother," he said, "the one you sold into Egypt.

Genesis 45:5—And now don't be grieved or angry with yourselves for selling me here, because God sent me ahead of you to preserve life.

Genesis 45:9—Return quickly to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: "God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me without delay.

Genesis 45:14— Then Joseph threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept on his shoulder.

Genesis 45:15— Joseph kissed each of his brothers as he wept, and afterward his brothers talked with him.

It's quite the story of reconciliation.

But that's not near the story as God's story.

Think about this—God made it the priority to come from Heaven to reconcile us back to Himself through Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:18— Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

Jesus did the same thing, He's telling us to do — "Go & be reconciled."
When we are reconciled, we are being transformed into the likeness of Christ

If God finds it necessary to reconcile with us, who are vile sinners, how much more must we reconcile with our brothers?

How much more is it a priority for us to pick up the phone to reconcile with our friend, colleague, or neighbor?

no matter how long it's been or small the offense

We tend to hear a sermon like this and think, "Yeah, still not going to do it. This person needs to come to me."

I've got one more Scripture passage for us to look at.

1 John 4:20— If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

1 John 4:21— And we have this command from him: The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

PRAYER

—that are person

Benediction Gen 15:5-6 →

How can we love the God of

and grace

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