

Sunday, June 28, 2020 am

**THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS (11)**  
**Sermon on the Mount (10)**  
**Murder and Anger**  
**Matthew 5:21-26**

Today, we continue our study of the teachings of Jesus, and in particular, the Sermon on the Mount. In this sermon Jesus is declaring His purpose and has issued directive concerning life in the kingdom of God. Last week noted the section are going to begin examining in more detail today. Recall how in vs. 20, Jesus challenged us to have a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. We discussed a little about how righteousness means being right – in this case, right with God. But how is our righteousness greater than that of the leaders of Judaism? Jesus presented a series of “You have heard...But I say” lessons. Each of these helps us understand how our righteousness will be pleasing to God. It will not be mere actions, but also the motives behind those actions. In essence, Jesus was saying, “Let me show you HOW your righteousness is to exceed theirs.

In those, “You have heard” expressions, we find not the full teaching of the LOM, but rather the oral traditions that had manipulated or perverted what the Law actually said. Jesus was clearly not speaking of what the LOM said (which when He did, He typically would say something like, “It is written”). Next, He said, “But I say to you...” – AGAIN, while used more frequently than the other, Jesus was probably doing 2 things: 1) Expressing the heart of the LOM and correcting their corruptions and 2) Looking toward life in the upcoming Kingdom. I believe what Jesus taught was BOTH of these in these expression. Typically, when Jesus said, “But I say to you...” He had additional information beyond what the LOM actually taught.

With this background, this morning we want to notice the FIRST observation Jesus made dealing with murder, anger and the heart of the matter.

**I. You have heard that it was said “You shall not murder”...**

- a. Very much a part of the LOM – Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 5:17; Numbers 35:30-34 – it was a capital crime.  
NOTE: It was MURDER that was condemned – the deliberate and unwarranted taking of the life of another human being.  
While time will not permit a discussion, this is different from capital punishment (the very penalty for murder), in cases of self-defense, and perhaps even in wartime. Its not the same a murder as defined in scripture. (Cf. Romans 13:3-4)
- b. But had they manipulated what the Law actually said?
  - i. By excusing some who were guilty, contrary to the Law? (Looking the other way, hire for murder, false witnesses that led to murder, etc.)
  - ii. By reasoning that you could mistreat your enemies as long as you didn’t murder them. You could destroy them, slander them, dream of murdering them, etc.
  - iii. By reasoning that while they might be guilty according the local courts (danger of judgment) and pay the penalty, it did not affect their spiritual standing before God (i.e. “once saved, always saved”; or “guaranteed salvation as a Jew”. Consider this in light of how Jesus responds!
- c. We find all of these today as well. While murder is “illegal”, 1) There are those who excuse the guilty for one reason or another - An example: Abortions, which fit the definition of murder if that fetus is a human being (and I believe he/she is); 2) By acting hatefully and destroying lives out of bitterness, spite, and hatefulness. Many feel justified in doing anything to hurt another short of actual murder; 3) By disregarding God’s laws concerning murder – legalizing abortion and other types of murder.

## II. But I say to you...

- a. Jesus goes on to say - Don't let it get to the point of murder.  
Murder is typically a crime of passion, and it is irreversible. In fact, it is something that MOST human beings are incapable of (they have too much conscience)
- b. **We are to control our anger** –
  - i. Anger is a subject misunderstood. It is a good emotion, when controlled.  
God is a God of anger and even wrath, but it is righteous anger – Psalm 7:11, *God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day.*
  - ii. Ephesians 4:26-27, *“Be angry, and do not sin”*: *do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.* NOTE: There is a time and place for anger. This is parallel to what Jesus is saying, especially when you consider His next point.
  - iii. From such texts, we learn that there is a place for anger – when it leads to resolution of problems in a godly manner.  
BUT anger is one of those raw emotions that can lead to murder. Control your anger, and it will never get that far.
  - iv. Jesus warns that getting angry (obviously sinful anger) can lead to consequences in court.  
Uncontrolled anger is NOT without consequences and is ungodly.
- c. **We are to control our tongues** –
  - i. James 3:2-12 which warns about the danger of the tongue. It is described in vivid terminology as a great destructive fire kindled by a small flame, or the poison of an adder. Consider also James 1:19, *So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;*
  - ii. Jesus gives 2 examples –
    1. Don't say, “Raca” – an insult such as “empty head” or idiot; This might be the equivalent of slander against someone. Calling names that do harm. If so, such are in danger of the “council”. The court here mentioned would be the “supreme court” of the Jews (Sanhedrin). Thus, this is a SERIOUS charge!  
Again, this is where sinful violence can begin.
    2. Don't say, “You fool” – such are in danger of hell fire. To call one a fool is to declare them morally corrupt or worthless. This is the attitude that demeans one as worth LESS than you are - think prejudice, elitism, etc. This is one PASSING JUDGMENT on another, often in anger.  
Can this lead to murder? Just think of Jesus as He was betrayed, slandered and wrongfully condemned and executed.  
The problem is that judgment belongs to God – Note Romans 12:19 – Do not avenge yourselves, leave it to God. Psalm 94:1, *“O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs; O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!”*  
The strong warning of “hell fire”, the first time this word is recorded in the gospels. Jesus used the word some 11 (of 12) times. This describes the judgment of God. Jesus is warning, that the heart filled with anger and hatred is noted by God – He will act against such.

## III. Seek reconciliation (23-26)

- a. **“Therefore”** - NOTE that this is a conclusion and something we can do to prevent what has been addressed. In the rest of this passage, Jesus gives a solution to murder, even in the heart!
- b. **If your brother has something against you** – TAKE CARE OF IT!  
Is there something standing between you and God? Is there bitterness against another? You better take care of it BEFORE you come to God. Jesus noted that he was to leave his gift before the altare and FIRST be reconciled to his brother.  
NOTE: Here we have your guilt – your brother has something against you. WHO is to take care of it? YOU! Note also Matthew 18:15, if your brother sins against you! He has done the wrong against you. WHO is to take care of it? YOU!

EITHER way, YOU take care of it! Why? Because you are striving to be a peacemaker – Matthew 5:9 (They shall be called sons of God). Romans 12:18, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”

You CANNOT control what someone else does, but you CAN control what you do and HOW you RESPOND to what others do! Christians ALWAYS take the high road.

- c. ***THEN come and offer your gift.*** God wants pure hearts, pure motives AND pure actions. The latter is to come from the former! Consider 1 John 4:20-21 – If any loves God and hates his brother...
- d. Finally, we note: ***Agree with your adversary quickly*** – work out your differences before they escalate to name calling, ungodly wrath and even murder (whether literally or in the heart – murdered friendships, irreparable damage, etc.)

AND work out your differences while you still have some control in it. Jesus is describing here a “debtor’s prison” where it used to be permitted to cast one in prison for failing to pay their debts. The point Jesus is making is, WORK IT OUT before it is out of your hands.

We must control our anger and emotions. May we never reach the point where we even think of murder where others are concerned. Take measures to not even get CLOSE to that. Such is the heart of the Christian in everything of this life.

Finally, consider who you do not want to be your adversary – God. You do not want to be at enmity with Him. Therefore, if you are not living as you ought to, take care of it. And as always, if there is some way we can help you with that we stand ready. Think about it!