

Third Presbyterian Church
Bible Study
Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 11
“Unacceptable Worship”

Matthew 5:23-26 (NIV) ²³ "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your response to the fact that the southern church incorporated lynching of Africans as a part of their worship of God/fellowship?
2. Do you feel it's possible to offer acceptable worship to God with an unforgiving spirit toward someone else? Why or why not?
 - a. How would you minister to someone who believes it's possible?
3. If you forgive someone for the wrong they did to you, but chose not to restore the relationship with them going forward, would your worship then be acceptable to God? Why or why not?
4. How does unreconciled relationships affect our worship to God? Meaning how is our worship of God then compromised?
5. Why do you feel when the Holy Spirit convicts us to initiate reconciliation, we immediately try to justify why our answer is no? What is the blessing we miss when that happens?
6. Discuss the following: “God will never require us to do something and not give us the strength to do.....we have to come to the point where we get over ourselves and say “if I love God” then I will obey God, even when it's tough.”
7. We as Christians are called to be the initiators of reconciliation.
 - a. Jesus does not mention the responsibility of the other person to reconcile the relationship? Why?
 - b. How does that make you feel?
 - c. Why is this impossible without the Spirit of God?

8. When it comes to this issue of reconciliation, people will say “look, I’m not there yet, God is still working on me.”
 - a. After listening to the sermon and working through this lesson, what is your ministry to someone who says this, and what do you say to yourself if you still feel this way?
9. Share your major takeaways from the sermon/lesson this week.

Commentary

5. (5:23-24) Anger: the answer to anger is reconciliation. Christ had two surprising things to say about this point.

1. The urgency of reconciliation. Reconciliation is always to precede worship. Even when we are entering the church to worship, if there is a problem with a brother, we are to turn around from worship and go to our brother seeking reconciliation. There are four reasons why reconciliation is more important than worship.

a. Reconciliation with God is one of the major purposes for worship. A person worships in order to seek reconciliation and fellowship with God and His people. Therefore, God does not accept the worship of a person who holds malice against Him or against any of His people. Statements of the fact make the point perfectly clear.

- ⇒ A break with another person means a break with God.
- ⇒ Unforgiveness toward another person means unforgiveness by God.
- ⇒ Not being right with another person means not being right with God.
- ⇒ Broken fellowship with another person means broken fellowship with God.
- ⇒ Bad feelings toward another person mean unacceptance by God.
- ⇒ Anger against another person means rejection by God.

A person just cannot hope or expect to be right with God if he is not right with his brother (1 John 4:20-21). He must forgive and be reconciled if he expects to be forgiven and reconciled to God.

"Forgive us, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12; Luke 11:4).

"If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you...." (Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25-26).

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21).

- b. A person is to worship, for worship is essential to life and eternity. But worship is unacceptable to God unless a person is reconciled with all his brothers.

- c. Bad feelings between believers hinder worship. Worship is meaningless unless a person is right with his brother. Reconciliation must always precede worship.
- d. Worship is a time for a person to reflect and to examine his heart and life to see if there is "any wicked way" within him (Psalm 139:24). It is essential that he search his heart. Worship is not acceptable if bad or wicked feelings against others are within the human heart.

Thought 1. How deceitful the human heart is!

- 1) Some persons try to worship while there are bad feelings between themselves and other persons (Matthew 5:23-24).
- 2) Some persons try to pray with wrath in their heart (1 Tim. 2:8; Isaiah 1:15).
- 3) Some persons say, "I love God" while they hate their brother (1 John 4:20).

And each person thinks he is acceptable to God!

Thought 2. Some persons say they stay away from worship because they have something against a brother. The point of Christ is clear: get right with your brother and *get in worship*. One sin heaped upon another is twice as dangerous and shall bring forth double judgment.

2. The time for reconciliation is while some openness still exists between the two parties. Reconciliation should be attempted immediately...

- while a person is still in a brother's presence: "While thou art in the way with him" (Matthew 5:25).
- before the sun goes down on a person's wrath.

"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Ephes. 4:26).

- because a person cannot truly worship with barriers existing in the heart.
- because a person cannot offer acceptable prayers with barriers existing in his heart.
- because a person *could die* before reconciliation takes place and be forced to face judgment with some unconfessed sin.

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25).

"And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:4).

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephes. 4:31-32).

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13).

6. (5:25) Anger— Judgment: the danger or damage of holding anger. The danger is twofold.

1. There is an earthly danger. Barriers can lead to serious action ranging from legal suits to imprisonment. Such action is tragic to God and among God's people. It is even forbidden among true Christian brothers (see outline—' 1 Cor. 6:1-8 and notes—' 1 Cor. 6:1-8). The damage of anger is manifold:

- ⇒ It leads to increased barriers and bitterness.
- ⇒ It hurts families.
- ⇒ It is costly.
- ⇒ It damages the name of Christ and one's own testimony.
- ⇒ It says to unbelievers that Christianity is a sham—no better than any other belief.
- ⇒ It takes advantage of another person—always.
- ⇒ It can cause an injustice to be done. The law is not always right.
- ⇒ It can cause a weak brother to turn away—forever.
- ⇒ It can cause fights, wars, suffering, and death.

2. There is an eternal danger. Life does not last and the day of final judgment is coming. A person's judgment for holding a grudge against a brother will be severe (see note—'Matthew 5:22'; note—'Matthew 5:25).

7. (5:26) Anger— Judgment: the terrible end of anger—judgment is sure. Christ made three strong points.

1. Judgment is sure. "The uttermost farthing," the last cent must be paid.
2. There will be no escape. "Thou shall by no means come out." There will be nothing and no one to deliver a person from the judgment (2 Cor. 5:10).

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33).

"And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Romans 2:3).

3. Reconciliation should be sought *quickly*: right now—before judgment, for Christ has borne all punishment for every believer (Matthew 5:25).

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us....and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Ephes. 2:13-14, 16).