

Third Presbyterian Church
Bible Study
Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 10
“My Life has to Matter”

Matthew 5:21-26 (NIV)

²¹“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder,^[a] and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister^{[b][c]} will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’^[d] is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵“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. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Discussion Questions:

1. When it comes to the 10 commandments why do we often think of the ones where we think we have not violated as if that makes us good with God? What is the problem with thinking this way (Refer to last week’s lesson)
2. Jesus says if you are angry with someone, it is just like being guilty of murder!?!?! Please explain what you feel Jesus is saying.
3. Why is it dangerous to be given over to a spirit of anger and being led by that emotion?
 - a. How is that a violation of the First Commandment?
4. What is the difference between revenge and defending one’s self?
5. How would you minister to someone who says there is no God?
6. Raca means worthless, having no value whatsoever. Why do you feel Jesus was so strong in his message about referring to one another as worthless?
 - a. What other ways can you think of that today’s society refers to people as “Raca?”

7. How does Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 regarding we are all a part of ONE BODY change how you view others in the body of Christ?
 - a. How does it make you feel about yourself as a part of the Body of Christ?
8. Share your major takeaways from the sermon/lesson this week.

Commentary

The Real Meaning of Murder, 5:21-26

(5:21-26) **Introduction— Murder— Anger— Contempt— Cursing:** civilized societies have always considered murder to be a serious crime worthy of judgment. But anger is a different matter. Few have ever thought of anger as being on the same level as murder and worthy of serious judgment. However, Christ says that anger "without a cause" is the same as murder and shall receive the same judgment from God.

Note the words "brother" and "whosoever" (Matthew 5:22-24). Christ is saying that every human being is a brother under God's creation. Therefore, His words applies universally to every human being.

DEEPER STUDY #1

(5:21-48) **"Ye have heard"— "It hath been said":** these words are found in every paragraph or subject of these verses. It is important to understand this: Christ is referring not only to the ten commandments, but also to the Scribal Law of the Jewish teachers. (See Deeper Study #1—Luke 6:2; Deeper Study #4—Luke 6:7 for discussion.) He is directing the listeners' attention to what they had heard from their teachers, that is, to their interpretation of the law. Very simply put, Christ is giving the real meaning of certain laws, just what God originally intended the law to say.

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1. (5:21) Murder: the law against murder is the sixth commandment (Exodus 20:13; Deut. 5:17). Note that God's law is given to protect life. Life is to be respected and cherished. No life is to be taken, neither one's own life nor the life of anyone else.

"Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13).

"For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Romans 13:9).

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters" (1 Peter 4:15).

2. (5:22) Anger: the real meaning of this law is anger. Note what Christ is saying: He is saying that man has a problem. Man misreads God's law. Man interprets God's law to say what he wishes it to say. He applies it only to the outward act, in this case to the act of murder. He fails to look inward—within himself—to the cause (see note—Matthew 5:17-18; notes—Mark 7:14-23).

Murder is deeper than just an outward act. It is an inward act: anger, bitterness, enmity. Murder is born from within, from an uncontrolled spirit, from an unregulated urge, from an inner anger. Anger itself is the real sin, the sin that breaks the law of God. Anger is...

- bitterness & enmity
- indignation & wrath
- striking out against a person
- a hatred of oneself
- slandering and destroying a person's image (who is created in God's image)
- rage & fury
- an uncontrolled spirit
- desiring a person's hurt
- envying & killing a person's happiness

Thought 1. Note three facts.

- 1) Jesus speaks to those who know the law. The person who *knows* the law (the Word) needs this message as much as anyone.
- 2) God's law (Word) existed from the beginning ("of old time"). It will never be annulled or done away with. It is always to govern man. Man is always to heed it.
- 3) Striking out at a person is clearly forbidden, but so are the bad *feelings* against a person. Anger—any bad feelings whatsoever against a person—is sin, serious sin.

3. (5:22) Anger: the growth of anger is dangerous. Unresolved anger will fester. It can become uncontrollable and give birth to murder. There are three steps in the growth of anger given here.

1. The anger that broods, that is selfish. It harbors malice; it will not forget; it lingers; it broods; it wills revenge and sometimes seeks revenge.
2. The anger that holds contempt (*hraka* ^{PWS: 3151}). It despises; it ridicules; it arrogantly exalts self and calls another person empty and useless. This is an anger that is full of malice. It despises and scorns (*hraka* ^{PWS: 3151}). It arises from pride—a proud wrath (Proverbs 21:24). Such feelings or anger walk over and trample a person. It says that whatever ill comes upon a person is deserved.
3. The anger that curses. It seeks to destroy a man and his reputation morally, intellectually, and spiritually.

There is a justified anger. In fact, the believer must be an angry person—angry with those who sin and do wrong, and are unjust and selfish in their behavior. However, a justified anger is always disciplined and controlled; it is always limited to those who do wrong either against God or against others. The distinguishing mark between justified and unjustified anger is that a justified anger is never selfish; it is never shown because of what has happened to oneself. It is an anger that is purposeful. The believer knows that he is angry for a legitimate reason, and he seeks to correct the situation in the most peaceful way possible

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

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (**Romans 12:18**).

"And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changer's money, and overthrew the tables" (**John 2:13-16**).

Thought 1. Anger is cast against many. Too often hurt feelings exist between those who are supposed to be the closest: husband and wife, parent and child, neighbor and friend, employer and employee. The Lord is clear about the matter: we must never allow anger to take hold of us without just cause.

"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (**Col. 3:8**).

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (**James 1:19**).

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (**1 John 3:15**).

Thought 2. There are reasons why people get angry and develop feelings against others:

- ⇒ To seek revenge and to hurt.
- ⇒ To show ego or authority.
- ⇒ To reveal passion or secure some end.
- ⇒ To show hurt, resentment, and bitterness.
- ⇒ To express disagreement and displeasure.
- ⇒ To correct a wrong (a justified anger).
- ⇒ To give warning.

4. (5:22) Anger: the judgment of anger. It is a serious matter to hold feelings against another person—a very, very serious matter. There is (1) the *danger of judgment* (2) the *danger of having to come before earthly courts*, and (3) the *danger of hell fire*.

Thought 1. Violence is to be judged—not only before the councils of the world, but before the councils of God.

DEEPER STUDY #2

(5:22) Hell Fire or Gehenna (*geenna* ^{PWS: 1921}): the word is used eleven or twelve times in the New Testament, and in every case it is spoken by Jesus except in the Epistle of James. It illustrates the terrible truth of the second death, of man's final separation from God. Jesus pointed to the burning, repulsive rubbish dump outside

the city limits of Jerusalem and said that it was exactly what hell was like. The dump was called Gehenna. It was in the Valley of Hinnom which served as a public incinerator. Hanging over it was a layer of thick, smoldering smoke arising from what seemed to be an eternal flame. The smell and filth became a breeding cesspool for a loathsome worm that was difficult to kill (Mark 9:44). Thus, Jesus found in Gehenna a description of just what it means to be separated from God eternally and to die the second death. Note several facts about Hell or Geheena.

- ⇒ It is the same as the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10, 14-15).
- ⇒ It has to do with the second death (Rev. 21:8; John 8:24).
- ⇒ It is Hell (Matthew 5:29-30; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 23:15, 33; Luke 12:5).
- ⇒ It is everlasting fire (Matthew 18:8).
- ⇒ It is hell fire (Matthew 18:9; James 3:6).
- ⇒ It is unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43-49).

The teaching of Jesus should always be remembered. Remembrance is critical in determining a person's fate. Hell is a definite place, a real place that is specifically located. It was originally prepared for the devil and his angels. But all men who choose to follow self and evil and to reject God shall also be sent to hell eternally.

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matthew 3:10).

"And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:29-30).

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matthew 7:19).

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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 (Psalms 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).

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).

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Hebrews 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).

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:20).

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17; cp. 2 Cor. 5:18-21).

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

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