



Matthew 5:21-26 – Anger, Relationships, and Reconciliation **By Pastor Mike Clark 11/17/24**

Matthew 5:21-26 - 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. 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. 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. ²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

All of us are familiar with optical illusions. Some of them happen in the course of daily life where we just make inferences about the size of something or the length of some distance or something like that.

Sometimes we’re distracted from reality by some unimportant event or unconscious of the inferences that we’re making or focusing on some obscurity rather than the reality that’s right in front of us.

But all the time we’re prone to make these assessments in the wrong way because we’re looking at the wrong things.

So many times it’s not until we’re given the right key, the right visual key, or the measuring standard that’s placed alongside of the object or the incident.

It’s not until we have the right key that we finally understand how we’ve been looking at something all wrong.

Well Jesus is helping us in this passage to see some illusions that we’re living under.

These aren’t optical illusions they’re spiritual illusions. He’s dealing with miscalculations that people make, wrong conclusions that they may draw about their spiritual life and about their spiritual state because they focus on the wrong realities.

They measure with the wrong tools or are overtaken by some ambiguity.

And Jesus is doing this in the context in the broader discussion of the law. Back in verse 17 he was telling the audience that he didn’t come to do away with the law or abolish the law.



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He didn't come to separate people from the law, he came to fulfill it.

And he says every jot and tittle, every stroke of the pen, every dot of the letter, every one of them are going to be fulfilled, none of it is going to pass away.

The problem at the time of Christ's teaching, what the people didn't understand was the law.

They still thought that somehow, he was against the law. And the reason is because they had layered on top of one another years and years and years of tradition, man-made tradition, oral tradition.

These were things that were passed down orally from generation to generation, they weren't written down for probably another 150 years or 200 years after the time of Christ.

But they were traditions reported to go all the way back even to the time of Moses himself.

They were supposedly things that were given along-side of the law and explained the law and ought to be taught with the law and in some places superseded the law in importance.

The typical Jew therefore only understood the law as they looked at it through the lens of these oral traditions.

They were heavily dependent on them so much so that Jesus had to try to help them set aside that optical illusion that was created when they looked at the law through their traditions.

And he does that here throughout this section with a series of contrasts.

And you can see in verse 21 all the way through the end of the chapter, that there are six sections of this text and they all form this sort of contrast.

Jesus says in one way or another you have heard that it was said, or you've heard that it was said to those of old, referring to those rabbinic traditions.

And he does that in part to contrast what he says, "But I say to you."

All of these contrasts are set up to help them understand the way they should read the law, the way they should view the law, the way they should think about the law.



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Because of their traditions, they had perverted all that, they had distorted all that.

They had not only distorted the law, but they had twisted ideas of righteousness, they had twisted ideas of sin and of themselves.

Ultimately it led all the scribes and Pharisees and all those who follow them, to believe that they were not as sinful as they thought they were, to believe that they were better than they really were.

They were like the Pharisee that Jesus describes in Luke 18 where he went in the temple to pray and he looks at the tax collector and he says God I thank you that I'm not like other men.

I'm not an extortionist. I'm not unjust. I'm not an adulterer or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, a give tithes of all that I get.

That's their view of themselves which was a direct corollary to their view of the law, which was a consequence of their rabbinic traditions in the way that they twisted the law.

So Jesus is unmasking all of this and he's doing it with these 6 contrasts and giving hard hitting convicting messages related to God's law, related to the scripture.

But the principles that he lays out here really help us to make sense out of the entire law and the entire OT.

They really help us to understand the way that Jesus uses the scripture, the way that Jesus understood and interpreted the scripture.

Now Jesus begins verse 21-26 with perhaps what is the most universally recognized, the most universally condemned behavior and was dealt with by the law, it was dealt with in rabbinic tradition.

It was the issue of murder. And he begins there because even the person with the most basic moral compass typically recognizes the seriousness and malicious nature of taking the life of someone else.

It's the one thing that nearly everyone, no matter what their persuasion, politically nationally, historically, almost everyone would condemn, the behavior which everyone believes they would never stoop to.

Jesus takes this issue up to teach us important lessons about the law itself.



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Jesus is expounding the law and focusing on this issue to make some critical points about the law.

It's not as if only the law of murder and anger are to be understood this way, the whole law can be unpacked and demonstrated in the way that Jesus looks at this one law.

And so, as we look at it, we're going to take note of the general principles of the way Jesus handles the law, or three intentions and purposes of the law as illustrated by the law of the prohibition against murder.

POINT 1 – Beware of the danger and seriousness of an angry heart.

First of all, the law was intended to remove assumptions of innocence.

You hear this in Jesus' words in verse 21.

Matthew 5:21 - ²¹ *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'*

This is a reference to the sixth commandment found in the 10 Commandments in Exodus 13 and Deuteronomy 5.

This is a reference to the unlawful taking of someone's life. And it's clear throughout the OT, that this was prohibited. It said it over and over again.

Now it's not talking about all forms of killing. There are some forms of killing which are sanctioned in the OT, particularly capital punishment.

We're told soon after the flood of Noah that God gave Noah a few instructions through which he was to begin reestablishing civilization on the face of the earth.

And one of them in Genesis 9:6, the Lord declared that whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, establishing the principal of the law of capital punishment.

Throughout the OT this principle was established and then built on over and over again.

And as the law of Moses eventually came around hundreds of years later it also taught how you are to deal with this kind of murderous activity through judicial means.



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Deuteronomy 17:8 - 8 “If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the Lord your God will choose. ⁹ And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision.

So here if you have a homicide, you have a murder of some sort, then you deal with it at the local level.

But if it’s too difficult, if you can’t discern how best to handle the situation, then you take it to the central court, to the central temple and the Levitical priesthood and the high priest, whoever is serving at that point, and they would serve as the final analysis there.

But you deal with it judicially, you deal with it according to the laws of justice.

Exodus 21:12-14 - 12 “Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. ¹³ But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. ¹⁴ But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.

So you would bring him before the judicial system, which would’ve been centered in the temple and you deal with it.

Leviticus 24:17 – 17 “Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death.

So over and over again the principles taught throughout the law, and you multiply others on top of this, that a murderer faces judgment.

So Jesus begins with this basic universally condemned sin and behavior that was clearly taught in the OT and something that would’ve been affirmed by rabbinic tradition.

Through the years the Jews would have no doubt followed these laws, they would have condemned these cases, they would have probably enacted capital punishment a number of times.

It wouldn’t have been perfect, no legal system is, but they probably at least tried to follow this basic principle.



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But at the same time, as they followed it, they felt a smug security as they dealt with these kinds of criminals and society.

They felt a sense of superiority, thankful that they could deal with these heinous crimes, but thankful they didn't fall into that category.

Jesus however lets them know that that is not the final purpose of this law, it's not the basic reason for the law.

And he does this in a kind of threefold progression that talks about this judgment, this punishment, but progressively becomes more intense as Jesus goes along.

First of all, he says, I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother, with his sister, with his friend, with his neighbor, everyone who is angry with another person will be liable to the judgement.

Now at this point we need to make note of something. Jesus is talking about a certain kind of anger, he's talking about an anger of personal offense.

He's not talking about all forms of anger. God himself we're told is angry with the wicked every day in Psalm 7.

He's not dealing with anger that arises from God himself or in godly ways. That should be clear from the whole context.

Everything he's saying here is framed within the context of a system of justice, that enacts judicial judgments against murderers.

It's obvious that it's appropriate to be offended by heinous crimes. It's appropriate to want to see justice served when there are heinous crimes.

Jesus isn't condemning that kind of social offense that takes place in those situations.

When he gets down to verse 23 and following, when he begins to give illustrations of this, the illustrations are very much about personal offenses, personal anger, interpersonal conflict.

And we would even note that in Jesus's own life, there were times when he was angry.



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He was angry when he came into the temple and people had turned it into a marketplace for personal profit.

He was angry whenever he was healing people on the Sabbath and the Pharisees and scribes were hurling insults at them.

He was angry whenever he tried to debate with the Pharisees. He even called them blind fools.

He was angry in all of these ways for these kind of offenses that were taking place in the Jewish system, in the Jewish society, he was angered by all of that.

But none of it was ever a situation where his personal ego was wrapped up in the issue.

When Jesus was personally mistreated, when he was falsely accused, when he was arrested and beaten and crucified, Peter tells us that he didn't revile in return, when he suffered, he didn't threaten.

When he had every reason because of his own personal interest, when he had every reason for his own ego to be involved, he never showed personal animosity in return.

In fact, all he did was pray that God would forgive. So, none of this that he's talking about has anything to do with any that category of offense or anger.

What he's talking about is personal anger. And the issue that is often our problem is that we're not usually offended at all with society injustices and its indecencies.

But when it comes to personal slights or offenses or attacks or deprivations or anything like that, when it comes to all that, we become very offended.

Jesus is talking about all of that here and he wants to make it clear that the intent of the law was a verdict against every expression of sin, from murder all the way down to anger.

And to do that Jesus gives a couple of expressions of the law. He goes beyond the issue of murder to the roots of the law.

And he wants to make it clear that the same laws that govern murder and call for judgment for murder, also govern hatred.



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Or another way to say that is the fundamental issues that are violated by murder, are also violated by hatred.

The fundamental issues that are violated in the law by murder are also violated by anger and hatred.

And it doesn't matter what the reason or what the circumstances are.

When you fall into the pattern of personal animosity towards someone because of some offense or because of some prejudice or because of some other reason you fall under the condemnation of God's law.

Now to get what Jesus is saying here it's important for us to understand not only that murder is wrong, but why it's wrong.

And to do that we can go all the way back to what I mentioned previously in Genesis 9 after the flood, when they were exiting the ark and getting ready to start repopulating the earth and reestablish civilization and society.

God gave just a couple of important laws that were to be followed at that point and one of the more fundamental laws there in Genesis 9:6 was whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, the law of capital punishment.

Why? He says in the second half of the verse that God made man in his own image. This is why murder is wrong. This is why murder is condemned.

This is why it's one of the most fundamental issues in society, this is why a society cannot allow murder, because life is sacred.

And life is sacred because it's created by God and not only is it created by God but it's created in God's own image.

And so therefore an attack on an individual is an attack against God himself.

And this doesn't apply to animals, it doesn't apply to other living things, but when it comes to other human beings, to attack them is to attack God's role as creator or to try to usurp his role as a judge.

The issue behind prohibitions of murder in other words are not simply the protection of people.



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The issue behind prohibitions against murder are not simply stemming tides of dangerous activity and society.

The prohibitions against murder are not simply so that you and I could be more safe in our neighborhoods, that's not the main reason.

The main reason that God gives for dealing with murder is because he's trying to protect his role as the maker and the judge of all humanity.

That's the reason he gives. The person whose life has been unlawfully taken was made in the image of God.

Now once you begin to understand that fundamental prohibition against murder in Genesis 9:6, you can begin to understand all the wider applications of God's law.

You understand that there are other ways that we attack God's role as creator and judge that include not just murder, but all kinds of attacks, all kinds of hatred, all kinds of anger.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, draws this out explicitly in his letter. In James chapter 3 he talks about the deadly power of the tongue.

James 3:9 - ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

Here's James principle against hatred and bitterness and cursing with your tongue, against speech that is critical and defiling.

And he draws it directly from creation theology, the same creation theology that stands behind the prohibition of murder.

All this coming straight out of the book of Genesis where God says let us make man in our own image, male and female let us make them.

At that point God not only created humanity, created mankind, but he endorses him or establishes him as an envoy on the face of the earth.

Men and women born at that point represent God's dominion and God's rule. They have delegated authority and rule on the face of the earth as God's image.



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And that wasn't true just for Adam and Eve because in Genesis 9:6, when Noah was reestablishing civilization, they were still bearing the image of God.

Even though sin had entered into the world, and even though men and women fell into sin, the image of God was retained, and it became the main reason for the prohibition against murder.

God laid all this out and spelled it out very clearly so that we can understand something fundamental about humanity functioning and existing as God's image that comes under direct assault when you murder another human being.

And what James is telling us is that this same principal also comes under attack when you verbally assault someone, when you verbally attack them.

When you allow your tongue to curse people, when you allow your tongue to criticize people, when you allow your tongue to denounce people and castigate people, when that happens, you are also attacking someone made in the image of God.

In fact, James says that your tongue is set on fire by the fires of hell.

When you curse another human being, you're violating the same fundamental order of creation, you are usurping God in his role as the maker of that person that you are attacking.

And you're usurping his role as the judge, you are expressing rebellion against God.

You may imagine that your verbal attack is against your human adversary, but James says no, it's against God.

Your anger, your malice, your hatred isn't against the other person. It's against God who made that person.

So cursing and bitterness and anger along with murder, all arise from the same impulse and its guilty on the same principle.

James learned that no doubt from Jesus' own teaching. He learned how to interpret the OT that way because he heard Jesus deal with the OT that way.

Interestingly the apostle John does the same thing.



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1 John 3:15 – “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

So, both James and John draw this connection between hatred and murder and they learned it all from Jesus.

Insults and cursing and hatred and anger and murder, they all have the same source.

And really the only difference between you and the murderer is not your attacks against God, it's simply your acts against other people.

You just are unwilling for whatever reason whether good or bad, you are just unwilling to act out what you feel in your heart.

That is to say, that you may not ever murder someone but you certainly wish that they were eliminated.

You wish that they were not in your life, if not on the face of the earth, and if something happened to them you wouldn't be sad.

The only difference between you and the murderer is the act because the attitude in the heart is the same.

And so, in God's eyes, hatred is liable to judgment. The same law that prohibits murder, judges murder, the same law that judges that, judges hatred.

And to be clear what he's talking about here, it's not just the anger that's behind murder and to make that clear he expands on this there in verse 22.

Matthew 5:22 - 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.*

He says whoever insults his brother, whoever insults his neighbor, whoever insults another human being, whoever insults a brother or sister is liable to the council.

Now the council here is the Sanhedrin, that is the 70 priests and elders who were the highest seat of government in Israel.

In those days they had no president, no king, no parliament or anything like that, this was the highest seat of government.



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They were the supreme court in Israel. They were the ones who were designated to deal among all the millions and millions of people who were in Israel.

They were the ones who were designated to deal with the biggest and most important cases in Israel.

So, this is a step up from saying simply that you face judgment, it's a step up from saying whenever you're angry that someone in your local community and someone around you needs to deal with it in some judicial fashion.

He's escalating this. He's actually saying that this is something that ought to go to the highest court in the land.

Those who went before the council were recognized as being some of the most important issues that faced the nation and faced the society at the time.

And so Jesus is saying when you're insulting someone, this is one of the most important issues that faces society.

Your insult against someone else is not any less important, it's not any less of a serious matter.

It's not any less significant, it needs to be dealt with by the highest court in the land.

Could you imagine if our Supreme Court in the United States had to take time to deal with every critical insulting word that was hurled back-and-forth between two people? We couldn't bear the burden.

But not only that, we aren't qualified because we couldn't get all the information we need and we couldn't approach it without our own biases and without our own prejudices.

There are laws on our books against things like defamation whenever you take some sort of accusation or insult and then put it into print.

But even those are rarely resolved because honestly they're just too difficult. They take too much time.

But Jesus is saying that's the standard, that's what God's law establishes because this is serious.



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That's the kind of attention you need to be giving to this issue. This ought to be taken up by the highest court available, it ought to be dealt with, it's that serious to society, it's that serious to the world around you.

It's obvious that we're not capable of meeting these demands. The standard is too high.

If every time I said some critical word about somebody, every time I said an insulting slight word and every time I then had to go to the Supreme Court I might as well move there.

It's beyond our capacity to deal with it. Our anger or insults toward other men and women are just beyond our capacity.

Which is why Jesus adds here thirdly, whoever says you fool is liable to hellfire. This is just another way of assaulting their character.

The first word insult is the word racca and basically means empty. In our day we might say its canceling somebody, saying you're nothing.

You're really attacking their competency, saying your unimportant.

This word is moros from which we get moron and basically means fool, but it's really talking about a person's character.

And in Matthew the word is used almost every time for somebody who is rejected by God.

So this is not someone who's just incompetent, this is someone who has a fundamental character flaw.

Racca expresses contempt for a man's head, moros expresses contempt for his heart.

But the point of all of this is not to say that one is more serious than the other in terms of those insults.

They're all serious because all of them are an attack against someone who is an image bearer of God.

All of them are an assault against God and his role as maker and judge.



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And so Jesus says you're not going to be just facing some high court, you are going to be facing liability to hell.

All of this is why the apostle Paul says in –

Romans 12:19 – Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

It's not your place. God hasn't given us that right, He hasn't given you that call, He hasn't delegated that to you.

Your cursing and your insult and your criticism and your anger, it's not your place.

And when you engage in that you're attacking God in his role as the judge and the maker, you're doing that as much as the physical murderer.

It's not your place to burn in your heart with personal offenses, it's not your place to hold onto that bitterness.

It's not your place to go out on your social media feed and start hurling all your comments against this person or that person. Leave all that up to the Lord.

He may do it on the day of final judgment, he might do it through his own established governmental systems who bear the sword in his name, he might do it, but it's his job to do it.

Jesus is ripping away all the false measurements, he's correcting all the aberrations that have led to your illusion, your spiritual illusion about who you are and where you stand before God and what God thinks about you.

He's ripping all that away. You've been measuring by the wrong standards.

It's just an illusion and he wants to remove all that so that you can see, so that you can measure where you really stand with God.

In light of that he draws out a second point which has to do with your insincere worship.

POINT 2 – We're called to cultivate a heart of reconciliation so that our worship is sincere.



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You think that you're OK with God so you go on worshiping God week in and week out like nothing's wrong.

We've already seen the seriousness of anger and these personal conflicts that you have and you can understand what Jesus says here in verses 23-24.

Matthew 5:23-24 - 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.

This is the same thing James was saying, that we would bless our Lord and Father and with our tongue curse people who are made in the likeness and image of God.

That's inconsistent. There's something fundamentally in conflict when you sing praises to God and worship God and offer a gift to God as if you are honoring him....

.....while at the same time you're dishonoring him by the way that you are attacking and criticizing and undermining the people who are around you.

How can you worship God when you're cursing his work, his creation, questioning his wisdom in making or judging and dealing with other people, all that's disingenuous.

Now if you're paying attention, you may have picked up that Jesus has subtly reversed the roles here for us.

He's extended this principle because now he's not expressly talking about being angry against someone else, he's talking about an offense that has been taken by somebody else and maybe anger that might have risen in their heart because of something that you did.

The picture is of a scene that would be familiar for most Jews. A Jew would go into the temple, perhaps offering a gift, maybe he's there because he already feels guilty about something and he wants to offer an offering for sin in order to deal it.

The Scriptures are clear in Leviticus and other places that when that happens, that you are actually supposed to go and first make retribution.

If you have oppressed someone, if you've cheated someone, if you'd lied about somebody, before you come and make your offering you're actually supposed to go first and deal with that.



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So maybe that's what's going on here, but this really could be any offering. As a matter of fact Jesus pictures it here as if you're going in and it's not even on your mind.

You're actually there before the altar and then you're placing your gift on the altar and at that moment you remember that your brother has something against you.

It wasn't even in your mind when you came in. At that point you recognize that your life has in some way violated, it has assaulted in some way or defrauded someone else.

Now I don't think Jesus has some sort of twisted form of people pleasing.

In other words, he's not suggesting that you can't worship if someone has some sort of unreasonable complaint against you that would prevent you from ever offering true worship.

He's not suggesting that you have to keep everybody happy before you can worship the Lord.

Jesus himself, you may remember was the object of many, many complaints.

Jesus endured unending complaints and accusations. He's not suggesting that his own prayers or his own offerings of thanksgiving were somehow rendered unfit because people were upset with him.

But if you're there and you realize that someone has a legitimate grievance against you, then you need to stop your worship right there.

Literally leave your gift on the altar. You don't even wait for the worship service to end. You don't grab your gift off the altar, you leave your gift on the altar.

You immediately make your way for the exit so that you can go and make things right.

Now this obviously expands the verdict of the law. Now you're responsible not only for your own anger but now you are responsible when you stir anger in others.

Or we might say it this way, you're responsible not only for the anger that is in your heart, but you're responsible as well for the inconsideration or the indifference that you might have toward the grievances and hurts of other people, which you've had a hand in creating.



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Why? The same reason. Because you are demeaning one of God's creations, one of God's handiwork, and a sin against one of God's image bearers is a sin against God.

So this was the law and it was intended to remove your assumptions of innocence and was intended to reject your insincere worship, expose all that.

And finally it was intended to require urgent action. It was intended to lead you to respond to all of this.

When you understand the law, you begin to deal with it, it begins to impact you.

You can't do that until you accept what it says and you understand what it says and you accept what it says and then you act.

And when you act, Jesus says if you understand everything that the law says about you, if you understand the real seriousness of all of it, it will cause urgent action.

Matthew 5:25-26 - 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. ²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Some people believe this is actually the carryover from verse 23 and 24 so the person left their gift on the altar.

They've gone out into the street to find the person who's upset with them and they find them literally going to the court, headed to the judge.

And all this builds on a judicial system that was common in the ancient world up until the last couple hundred years.

It was common to have debtors in prisons, and in other words when someone failed to pay a debt they were appointed some sort of officer, some sort of custodian who would begin to try to extract from them the money that they owed.

And if they couldn't do it by threats and brutality, they would do it by liquidation and if they couldn't get everything that was owed by liquidation they would finally hand them over to the prison guard and the prison guard would throw them into debtors prison.

And there they couldn't work and they couldn't earn income. They couldn't pay anything. They were stuck, the situation could never be resolved.



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In many ways that was the fatal flaw because eventually they got rid of it because it never actually led to resolution. There were just unending liabilities.

Jesus says you need to understand the seriousness of this. This is what the law wanted you to understand.

The seriousness of what you think of passing, idle words that you toss out there, that you post to entertain yourself with, you're going to reach a point where reconciliation is not possible.

And you may end up suffering the consequences of broken relationships with brothers and sisters, with friends, with parents, with children because you've taken it beyond the point where repair can happen.

You're cast in prison and there's no escape he says. The consequences are there.

That's the reality, that's part of the optical illusion, part of what you don't see but God sees and understands the seriousness of it.

The Scripture says the power of life and death are in the tongue. That's why God looks on this with such scorn.

That's why James talks about the tongue with such powerful language, why it says it's set on fire by hell.

All that is what the law wanted to convey because all that is what you need to realize in terms of your guilt.

When you understand it, when you see it, when you recognize its seriousness, the next step is to take urgent action and as much as possible to live at peace with all men.

Now if you're like me you probably think wow, this is impossible.

I recognize my sin and I see the fault of my tongue but if every little idle word that I said like that has to be drug before the Supreme Court and if everything like that needs to be escalated to the highest level, if that's how serious this is, I am guilty.

That is exactly what Jesus is after. He said if you want enter the kingdom of God then your righteousness needs to be above the scribes and Pharisees.



Matthew 5:21-26 - Anger, Relationships, and Reconciliation

By Pastor Mike Clark 11/17/24

You need to have a righteousness that exceeds even the meticulous religious standards.

What he's calling for here is a righteousness you could never ever live out on your own.

You're guilty. Don't congratulate yourself that you're not the murderer, don't congratulate yourself that you're not the one running around in sexual immorality.

Don't congratulate yourself that you're not the one who is the known thief. You're guilty and you're going face the hellfire if you don't do something about it.

And he says in verse 25 you need to work quickly. You need to make things right with your accuser.

Listen that isn't just people that you've dealt wrongly with. That is most importantly God.

There's a point he says where you can't make it right anymore. You'll be thrown into the prison and you'll be there and you'll have no way of ever making things right.

The judgment is going to be severe. Reconciliation is going to be off the table. No one is going to be innocent. Your guilt is way greater than you realize.

You may have tried to excuse it, but the law was given and God is there and it's not going to be wiped away.

So who deserves hell? Who's guilty of murder? Who deserves to be punished by God?

Scripture says we've all sinned and fallen short of God's glory and the wages of sin is death.

What do you do? How do you escape that? Thankfully God has made a way.

We're all under the condemnation. We've all said malicious things, we've all let loose our tongue, we've all harbored anger and bitterness in our heart.

We've all lashed out at other people. We all stand condemned. Our load of guilt is more than we can bear.



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But there was someone who had no sinful anger, who never said an inappropriate word.

Jesus Christ lived on this earth and every word he said was wholesome, every act of worship that he offered to God, every gift of thanksgiving, every word of praise, everything that he did was in accordance with righteousness.

And yet he went to the cross to be slaughtered, died the death of a murderer so that he could take the punishment of all of us who deserve that.

He did that so that all your sins, no matter how heinous they are, can be forgiven, so that your sins are laid on him and you are clothed in the righteousness of God.

All of his perfect works, all of his pure thoughts, you are clothed in that. You are presented before God as righteous.

This is the message of the law and the message of Christ and it's what he wanted his listeners to understand then and this is what he wants you to understand today.

God has a high standard. You can't meet it. You may as well give up thinking that you will.

The idea is not somehow to try to overcome the standards, the idea is to surrender before God as the filthy sinners that we are and plead for his grace and mercy.

Amen. PRAYER.