

## Matthew 5:21-26

### Anger, Un-forgiveness and the Way of Jesus

**Introduction:** If you're joining us for the first time - welcome. We're currently teaching through Jesus' most famous teaching known as the Sermon on the mount. Contrary to what some may think the Sermon on the Mount is not teaching us how to get into the kingdom of God- the Bible makes it clear that entrance to God's kingdom is only through grace - by the sacrificial work of Jesus. The sermon is also not teaching us how we stay in the kingdom. Rather it is a description of the character and conduct of those who already belong to God's kingdom. The Sermon is not a call to repentance, though that may be involved at times, it is a description of the expression and evidences of true repentance.

Though anyone can listen and learn from this sermon, and respond to it's offer of the fulness of life, it's primary audience and focus is the disciple of Jesus. - The life of the true disciple. It describes the life that necessarily results from genuine salvation. What God is doing in us and wants to do in us. What he is making us into by the work of his spirit and grace upon us. So the purpose of this sermon, I believe, is for God to work his kingdom characteristics, his virtues in us. So that we can achieve the human flourishing that God intends for us, and so that we properly represent him and his Kingdom.

Jesus Christ came from heaven on a rescue mission to invite all people into his Kingdom of righteousness and Peace. Here at RCF we teach and seek to practice the way of Jesus, having responded to his offer of salvation; and this sermon has been used for centuries to shape and form God's people into the way of Jesus and we are believing that this is what God will do with us as well.

We started with the beatitudes and worked our way through Jesus' vision for Human flourishing and now we have moved into Jesus' teaching on what a fulfilled or greater righteousness, than even the scribes and Pharisees looks like.

I know I've said it before, and Nicolai has said it as well, but it is so important to understand that Jesus is presenting us with a task we cannot fulfill on our own - he is in fact lifting the bar so high that no one can attain it. But simultaneously Jesus has invited us and is inviting us into his kingdom and he offers us his righteousness - imputed and infused. Imputed meaning he gives us a status we could never attain - Justification

and Adoption as children of God, but he also offers us an infused righteousness - (regeneration - new hearts, new minds, and a new spirit according to Jeremiah 24; 31) so that we become a new kind of people - his people, who do God's kingdom righteousness because that is the kind of people we have become through his grace and spirit at work in us. This is what Paul is talking about when He says, **“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:3-4)**

**Jesus is going to show us what greater righteousness looks like in regards to Murder, anger, and bitterness.**

## 1. The Teaching

1. Jesus brings up the Law of Moses, specifically the commandment about Murder.. But Jesus tells us it's not enough to simply not murder someone; the righteousness that he's talking about avoids all vengeful anger and any speech that is wrathful, condemning, degrading or dismissive. So what Jesus is doing is exactly what he said he came to do - to fill up the Law, to show what it really aimed at and pointed to, to show the true intent behind the teaching.
  1. Jesus is calling his kingdom people not simply to not be murderers but to not be a people of vengeance, anger, or wrath, to even avoid such condemning, insulting, and dismissive speech.
  2. Getting God's view of People - Of course the whole commandment about murder went back even further than the Law of Moses - the first place it is prohibited is in Genesis 9. God says, to Noah and his family -**“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” (Gen 9:6)**
  3. Though of course, this commandment, and Jesus interpretation of it, is about anger in the heart, I think it's even deeper than that - it's about a dismissive view of humanity. To take a lowly view of any human is totally demonic. Scriptures teaches that mankind, and mankind alone have been made in the image of the one true God! A low or dismissive view of humans can only be described

as coming from the true enemy of humanity - the Devil. And that's what we find again and again in scripture - Murder, hatred, envy, bitterness, resentment, are characteristics not of God but of the devil himself.

4. Remember when we talked about Mercy and Peacemaking and saw that these are intrinsically wrapped up in the character of God, and that is first and foremost why Jesus' followers are called to this way of life
  1. (A great example of how we do this is by what is going on down at the border - for us this is about our view of humanity - this isn't and shouldn't be about immigration for Jesus' people. This is about respecting human life and honoring families and protecting them first and foremost. - whatever side of the fence you are on politically I hope you see that)
  2. Is Jesus teaching against ever getting angry? Didn't Jesus get angry? I think Martin Luther had a good way of putting it when he talked about temptation. He said I cannot help a bird flying over my head but I can keep him from building a nest on my head...
  3. So also with anger. We cannot help but get angry - there are many angering situations in our world - sin, brokenness, broken promises, hypocrisy, extortion, kidnapping, sex trafficking, slavery, abuse, genocide, world hunger... to name a few. Not to mention aggravating people and situations that seem to be a necessity to daily life. The question I think is - What will we do with our Anger?
    1. Remember Jesus has already told us that his people are being called to a way of being that is meek, peacemaking, and merciful.. if we are to be those kind of people then of course we must be a people who deal properly with our anger or resentment...
    2. Another point is that Jesus is not satisfied with a righteousness that simply checks the box on the 6th commandment. Remember Jesus is calling his kingdom people to a greater righteousness. A fulfilled righteousness that goes beyond the law and the prophets. A law of love by the Spirit of God that will go far above and beyond the righteousness of the law of Moses....
2. **The Exhortation to us**
  1. **Deal with your anger quickly - Jesus gives two examples:**
    1. If you are going to offer a gift to God, make peace with your brother or sister first.

1. Think of the level of importance that Jesus puts on this teaching - we often associate church attendance, tithing/giving, public worship, Eucharist, or charity with deep religious commitment. Jesus tells us more important than these is make reconciliation and living at peace with people, especially his people...
2. Come to terms quickly with your accuser...Don't give time for anger or resentment to build on either side - Jesus says, go make peace!
3. Early Christians were so intent on keeping Jesus' teaching on dealing with anger and resentment that they would make space each gathering asking - "Is there anyone that is keeping anything against their neighbor?"
  1. What a convicting word. How many times have we "offered our gift at the alter - praised, worshipped, study diligently all the while holding anger and bitterness against another Christian?? Jesus is basically saying that all that worship and prayer and whatever other religious work does not matter - You cannot have peace with God while living in bitterness and hatred toward another person - **"If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen."**
  2. I think at times it's easy for us to look at reconciliation or peacemaking on the global, national, or cultural plain and think and be concerned only on that level. But Jesus won't let us off that easy -it's like what Lewis says, loving people in general is often times a way of loving no one in particular. Are we living at peace with the people we are connected to? Are we for reconciliation in our personal relationships? Jesus vision for his people is that reconciliation and peacemaking would flow first from within, out to neighbor, enemy, then to nations, cultural issues, etc. Jesus vision of flourishing and greater righteousness is holistic but it begins with me, my wife, my kids, my roommate, my parents, my siblings, my christian brothers and sisters, my co-workers, friends, enemies, nations, peoples....

3. We must be intentional about reconciliation with those in front of us if it is going to become our way of being
4. Even this morning - are you harboring anger, bitterness, or resentment against a brother or sister... have you gone to that person and tried to work things out?
5. Jesus takes this even further - Does anyone have something against you? You might feel as though you're good, you're okay with everyone.. but do you know of someone that has a problem or grievance with you? Jesus says to make it right before you do anything else...
6. I know we can probably think of a hundred things we would rather do than hash out things with someone who is mad at us, or expose old wounds. But here's the deal - Jesus moved heaven and earth to make peace with a rebellious sinful world, can we not cross the room, or our small city to make peace in a broken relationship???
1. But what about my anger? What about the injustice of the whole thing??

### 3. **The Power to do it**

1. We forgive. We make reconciliation. We put it to Jesus' account. This is where we have to remember that following Jesus means that we are people of the cross. Everything we do is shaped by the cross, our humility, our self sacrifice..everything. It's in the moments maybe more than another that the work of Jesus cross can become so real to us - what do I mean? It is not only my sin that was paid for and dealt with at the cross, but also the sin that was done to me.. Sin done by me, sin done to me, and sin done in my presence that defiles me - all of these were and are dealt with on Jesus' cross. I must therefore hand my anger over to God, and allow the cross to be the final judgment not only on my sin but on sin done to me... (The parable of the unforgiving servant)
2. But maybe for some of you, you feel that you have forgiven someone, you are trying to move on but you just can't. St. Peter asked Jesus this question - **“How many times shall I forgive someone who sins against me; Seven times? Jesus replied, not seven times but seventy times seven.”** Jesus' point with Peter, and with us, is that we are to keep on forgiving; every time the desire to retaliate comes, every time a thought of bitterness or resentment

comes, an ill word or insult. When we are tempted toward back biting, dismissing people and writing them off as worthless we take it to the cross of Jesus Christ. We remember that twisted, bloody tortured man, drowning in his own blood - paying and rescuing us from our sin, rescuing us from the bitterness and resentment of sin done to us, from the shame and disgrace that sin has caused for us. And as we do this we become a cruciform people a people shaped by the cross.

1. *“Those who would conform their lives to the way of life described in the Sermon on the Mount will find themselves transformed into peacemakers as a consequence of God’s work among them. It is not a matter of obeying a command to become a peacemaker or striving after an abstract virtue called “peacemaking.” Rather, it is a matter of our participation in the life of the risen Christ, who is our peace and who is our virtue. Peacemakers are who we become when we conform our lives to the Sermon on the Mount, which is the form of Jesus’ life with us.” - Unknown*
2. May it be so with us. May we be known as a community that loves one another well. That confront one another with mercy, grace and truth when we sin against each other. May we show our city what it looks like when Jesus reigns over his people.
  1. This morning as we take the bread and the cup we have an opportunity to practice Jesus’ words. Please don’t pass this up. If you have something against someone, or if someone has something against you; go and make reconciliation that you may experience a fresh an anew the peace of Christ in your own heart and life, and that you might experience the flourishing life that Jesus purchased for you. Amen