

Read Matthew 5: 21-26

What happened before this passage?

From verses 13-16 of Matthew 5 we see that:

- Jesus tells us we are the salt and light of this world
- Salt was used in those times as a preservative; we are therefore to preserve the truth of God's word.
- Light is used to show the good works we do and to give glory to our Father who is in heaven

We then read from verses 17-20:

- Jesus came to fulfill the law that was written and not a thing less than that

Verses 21-26:

- What is this law that Jesus came to fulfill?
- He tells us that back long ago there was a law that said "You shall not murder" but Jesus tells us that even being angry with your brother is the same as committing murder; answering to the same judgement
- If someone calls his brother "Raca" (Hebrew for empty) or the ESV translates it as "insults/abuse" then they are answerable to the Sanhedrin/council
- Whoever says "you fool" (The Greek says stupid) will be liable to the hell of fire
- This is so important that Jesus tells us that if we have a gift to offer at the altar that you should leave it there and first reconcile with your brother and then go back and offer the gift. This should be done quickly or else we may be handed to the judge and then to the guard who will put you into prison.
- Verse 23 even tells us that if we simply REMEMBER that your brother has something against you that you should first reconcile before giving your gift at the altar
- The point is this: when you know of something wrong that has happened between you and someone else, go and make it a priority to reconcile.
 - Why is anger classified with murder?
 - Murder is to kill someone and take them out of your life; in the same way, if you are angry with someone then they are out of your life because you have committed murder in your heart. 1 Samuel 16:7 tells us that man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.
- Why did Jesus have to tell them this?
- The Pharisees at this time focussed so much on the letter of the law and did not see the spirit of the law. Jesus here was showing us that it was not just the physical murder that kills people, but the murder of the heart from your anger can do the same thing.

- Jesus is the only one who could fulfill this law just as He said He would. He never committed murder, never demonstrated unrighteous anger to anyone, and never uttered hurtful words to other people
- Jesus got angry when he turned over the tables in the temple courts (Mark 11:15-19), but the anger that Jesus warns us about here is an anger that causes destruction. That is why I said He never demonstrated unrighteous anger to anyone.

So what?

- We now know that Jesus told us murder can also be committed in our hearts through the anger we show to other people. Jesus has never shown this kind of anger nor has he ever uttered hurtful word and thus has never broken this law. I can say that for myself, I know I've said hurtful words in rage to other people in the past and thus I HAVE broken this law; in God's eyes I have sinned. Romans 3:23 makes it very clear that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- Secondly, Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death; so in other words, because of our sin we deserve to die
- Thirdly, Romans 10:13 says: For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." This tells us that only through the gift of Jesus Christ can we be reconciled to God

What do I do now?

- If Jesus is your Lord then what is your heart attitude towards those who have wronged you? Do you make it a priority to reconcile with those who you've wronged?
- For those who are believers we need to think of real situations where we're easily provoked into anger. For example, driving or a certain classmate or a colleague or your parents. And think of how you can be obedient to this teaching in Matthew the next time you encounter this situation/person
- Is there a situation where you've either wronged someone or someone has wronged you and there's an unreconciled relationship? We know from this passage that we must go and reconcile before the next time you come before God in worship; we need to reconcile with a sincerity that is from the heart and not just going through the motions like an act.
- If Jesus is not your Lord, then the real focus I wanted to share with you today is that Jesus has paid the penalty for sin, which is death. He died in our place because if we tried to stand before God based on our own merits we will never get into heaven. No matter what kind of wrong we've done, Jesus has paid for that. 1 John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- For those who are not believers, I further want to share that it is impossible to live up to this standard of righteousness that Christ is asking of us. And because of this fact, the grace that Christ demonstrated at the cross is all the more important – by His blood, He has washed over and forgiven every harsh word and condemning thought that you've ever said/thought or ever will say/think
- It is out of the freedom from being condemned that we can and should obey what Christ is asking of us
 - We obey in response to the freedom that He has already purchased for us and not because we want to get a good standing before God