

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

E. The Appointment of the Twelve Apostles And “Teaching on the Mount”

4. Teaching on the Mount, Part III:

Love Deals Righteously With Anger, And Broken Relationships

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #070

Base Text: MT 5. 21-26 (Parallel Text: None)

21 *“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MURDER (Ex. 20.13), and anyone who murders will be subject to judgement.’*

22 *“But I myself tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘You idiot!’ 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 in the process of offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister is holding something against you, 24 I command you to leave your gift right there in front of the altar. First, I command that you make the effort to go and try to be reconciled to them; then come and finish offering your gift.*

25 *“Think about it like this: 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. 26 Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This “superscript ID” is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are italicized in red*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	On a Mountain in Galilee
Timeline	May, 31 AD (Month Sixteen)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry
	E. The Appointment of the Twelve Apostles and “Teaching on the Mount”
Title	4. Teaching on the Mount, Part III: Love Deals Righteously With Anger, And Broken Relationships

COMMENT:

Having set forth the central principle that disciples must seek after Jesus' kind of love- righteousness formed in them (5.17), the Master Teacher gave six examples in a row that illustrated this principle in action. Five of them began with Jesus saying: *“You have heard that it was said to you...”* (MT 5.21, 27, 33, 38, 42) Jesus shortened the phrase once to *“it was said...”* (5.31) In each case, Jesus took a famous commandment in the Law, and showed how true obedience required an inner attitude of love, rather than mere outward physical actions.

The first example deals with the issue of how God's kind of love deals righteously with anger, and broken relationships. This is our reading for today.

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Jesus began with the 6th of the 10 commandments: **"You shall not murder."** (Ex. 20.13) The culturally common view of this command said that if a person had never physically murdered another person, they had obeyed it. 99% plus of the people who had heard this command throughout Jewish history had obeyed it in that kind of thinking. But Jesus came to **"fill the law full"** of God's kind of righteous love, which was the intent of the command prohibiting murder from the beginning. So Jesus looked at the heart-attitude from which murder springs, not just the outer action. Jesus knew that the physical act of murder begins with an inner heart of **anger**.

Criminologists tell us that the vast majority of murders are the result of anger. Murders occur among people who know each other, usually quite well. Something happens to make a person explode with rage, and in that moment they commit murder. When Jesus talked about anger, he was correctly identifying it as the heart-source of murder.

Anger is a common emotion for all of us. The problem with anger is that it so quickly causes us to by-pass our commitment to do what is in the best interests of others. We focus on what the other person has done to wrong us. The perceived injustice that has been done to us makes us feel the emotion of anger. Our motivation is to protect ourselves from the damage that has been done to us, by striking back. So when we are caught up in anger we do not usually act out of love for others.

The most common thing we do when we are angry is to attack other with our words. Jesus spoke of calling people **"idiots,"** or **"fools."** This desire to attack--expressed first in words--is murderous intent in the sight of God! Love simply does not do that. Love is the unconditional commitment to think, say and do what is in the best interests of others, regardless of what we feel--including intense anger.

Jesus got angry, but he did not attack people with his words--he pointed them in love to the truth of their actions. Even when Jesus was angry he acted in the interests of those he confronted. We have seen several instances of Jesus building up others with his words and actions when he was angry in the DAILY JESUS NEWS so far.

Here is the test of our words when we are angry. What will happen if people believe and heed what we say? Will they be built up, or destroyed? In Jesus' case, good would always come to those who heeded what he said in anger, because his anger was always motivated by love. What about your words when angry? Anger can lead so quickly to destructive words that tear down, rather than build up.

Love always acts to build up and heal. So Jesus took his explanation of the murderous roots of anger one more step. No one gets angry in a vacuum. We get angry with other people, who are usually just as angry with us. There are two sides to every fight, and both sides feel justified in the truth of their side. So, if we are angry at someone, the chances are very high that they are also angry with us, or have been hurt by our behavior. So Jesus showed us how love deals with the broken relationships caused by anger.

Jesus commanded that when we remember that someone else feels offended by our words or actions, we must stop right there and deal with it--even if we are doing something as important as worshipping God when we remember. True worship in that setting is to immediately go in love to the offended person, and apologize--seeking to restore fellowship and mutual care.

Jesus used a command to make it plain that love has no other option but to reach out to those we have offended. That is completely opposite to our typical response to anger. It is what love does. And until we do that, expressions of love and devotion toward God are empty and vain. We worship God by loving him and others in his own kind of love. Nothing else will do. This is true righteousness.

Jesus ends this section with an illustration from life. When we are in a legal battle we know we are going to lose, the wise thing to do is settle quickly out of court. If we continue the fight to the end, we will end up losing everything we own, and find ourselves in prison. That is what happens to us if we refuse to deal righteously with our sinful, broken relationships.

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If we refuse to acknowledge the self-centeredness that is usually the source of our anger, and we are not willing to live in God's kind of love with those who offend us, or we offend--it makes no difference--then we will become consumed with bitterness, and put ourselves into the worst kind of self-inflicted bondage. The stress and destructiveness of our own anger will end up killing us, not them!

Dealing with our anger, and our resulting broken relationships in God's kind of love is an extremely practical issue for each of us. It is a perfect example of how merely obeying the outer letter of the law, and not becoming a physical murderer completely misses the point of true heart-righteousness. Jesus came to turn us into lovers and givers like himself, in every relationship of life, not merely people who obey the letter of the law by not committing murder, but hurt and tear down others regularly in unrighteous expressions of our anger.

APPLICATION:

Do not forget that Jesus loves you in your struggle to love others. He knows it is not easy. It is radically different from what our culture tells us to do.

Poverty of spirit, mourning over our lack of love, hungering and thirsting to learn to love, meekness in obeying what Jesus is teaching us--these are the attitudes that lead to being filled with Jesus' love. He loves you enough to die for you. His love is your strength in learning to love as he does. He is delighted with each baby step you take toward allowing his love to fill your heart to the point of overflowing outward to other people--no matter how they treat you. Jesus loves you as you learn to turn your anger over to him, and live as a loving peacemaker.

Do you have issues with anger? Take courage...we ALL do in some way.

Have you reached out in love to try to apologize to every person you have offended or hurt--from their perspective, not yours?

Are there any broken relationships in your life you need to mend?

Jesus gives us direct commands in this passage that tell us what to do about these things. How will you do that? When?