

Lesson #2 – Hate – Matthew 5:21-26

Review of Last Week

- What are interpretive additions? The extrapolations and examples of how to best follow the law that God gave Moses. These were handed down through generations of rabbis.
 - What are some modern examples of interpretive additions?
- What does it mean for us that Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it?
 - Jesus obeys where we disobey.
 - Jesus bears the punishment for our breach of God's holy law.
- What are the four views of the Old Testament law in regard to the New Testament?
 - The Old Testament law has been abolished.
 - None of the Old Testament applies unless it is reaffirmed in the New Testament.
 - All of the Old Testament applies unless it is rebuked in the New Testament .
 - All of the Old Testament is relevant for Jesus' followers. (2 Timothy 3:16)

Opening

- In April of 2020, a tweet showing a video featuring Tracy Boettcher went viral.
 - The issue is that Miss Boettcher's parents are die-hard liberals and Miss Boettcher is engaged to be married in December to a conservative man.
 - Her parents have allegedly said they want nothing to do with a wedding with an ideological outsider.
 - "My parents hate my fiancé because he's a conservative and they're liberal," she claims in a video seen more than 800,000 times on Twitter.
 - "They refuse to go to our wedding, and they gave me an ultimatum of choosing between him or them. So, I chose myself and I chose what would make me happiest in the long run. And my mother told me I was incapable of being loved or being in a relationship because I was assaulted when I was 17. So, I chose my

fiancé, and I will be walking myself down the aisle in December. So, if anyone has a dad that would like to walk me down the aisle, let me know.”

- Even Donald Trump Jr. replied to her tweet: “Really sad and touching at the same time,” he tweeted, “Good for her for standing up to the nonsense. P.S. If she doesn’t find someone better count me in. I’ll walk her down the isle [sic]. [Let me know].”
- How sad is it that politics has become such a divisive issue that families are being divided?
 - How angry do you have to be to not attend your daughter’s wedding because of political viewpoints?
 - This sort of anger is wrong. It is not healthy. And, according to Jesus, it is just as egregious as murder.

Scripture

- Matthew 5:21-26 – “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.”
- Before we look at personal application of today’s Scripture, we are going to study the text first.
 - We will review Old Testament Law verses interpretive additions
 - “It is written” versus “You have heard it said”
 - We will look at the words “raca” and “fool”

- We will look at different interpretations of the sixth commandment.
 - You shall not kill. Or
 - You shall not murder.
- Personal application:
 - God desires more than external obedience – he wants your heart.
 - Ethics cannot be separated from worship.
 - Our relationship with God is affected by how we treat others.

Introduction – a brief review of interpretive additions

- The first section of the Sermon on the Mount that we will cover is called “the six antitheses.” It runs from Matthew 5:21-48.
 - The antitheses are when Jesus says, “You have heard it said . . . but I say to you.”
 - The topics of these antitheses are:
 - Hate
 - Lust
 - Divorce
 - Oaths
 - Retaliation
 - Loving your enemies
- “You have heard it said” vs. “It is written”
 - When Jesus says, “You have heard it said,” he is not referring to Old Testament law. He is referring to the oral teachings / traditions / interpretive additions of the Pharisees.
 - Oral teaching was an addition to the Old Testament law.
 - Jesus, then, wasn’t citing Old Testament law, he was citing the Pharisees’ teachings on it.
 - When Jesus says, “It is written,” he is referring to Old Testament law.
- Interpretive Additions

- They are the evidence that what is happening in the Sermon on the Mount is that Jesus is contrasting himself with the oral teachings of the day.
- I suspect that Jesus might contrast himself with many of the oral teachings of our day as well.
 - Perhaps a 21st century American interpretive addition might read something like, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, therefore do not consume alcohol at all.”
 - However, we don’t need to hypothesize on interpretive additions, so let’s look at the one found in Matthew 5:43.
- Matthew 5:43 – “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’”
 - The first step in understanding the six antitheses is dissecting the actual scripture from the interpretive addition.
 - In verse 43, “You shall love your neighbor” is the actual scripture. It is found in Leviticus 19:28.
 - Leviticus 19:28 – “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but *you shall love your neighbor as yourself*: I am the LORD.”
 - “Hate your enemy” is the interpretive addition.
 - This indicates the type of distortion going on in the New Testament.

Definitions

- Raca versus fool
 - Background on Raca
 - Matthew 5:22 in the King James Version, reads “But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (italics added)”

- Where the KJV says “whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,” the ESV says, “whoever insults his brother.”
- The word Raca is original to the Greek manuscript; however, it is not a Greek word.
 - The most common view is that it is a reference to the Aramaic word *reka*, which is a quasi-swear word which literally means "empty-one or blockhead", but probably means something closer to "empty headed," or "foolish."
 - Regardless, the utterance of this word would have you dragged before the city council.
 - Scholars seem divided on how grievous an insult it was.
 - The word translated as *fool* is the Greek *moros*, which has a similar meaning to the Aramaic *reka*. However, *moros* also was used to refer to someone who has left the faith (apostate) or someone who simply does not believe in God, and thus could be much more severe a term than *reka*. The reading of *apostate* can explain why the punishment is more severe. Jesus uses the term himself in Matthew 23:17 when he is deriding the Pharisees.
- The question still remains, why does Jesus react so strongly to “fool” instead of “raca?”
 - The difference between raca and fool
 - The word “raca” is insulting to a man’s head; his intelligence. It is the equivalent of calling someone stupid.
 - The word “fool” or “*moros*” insults a man’s heart and character. It is the equivalent of calling someone a reprobate.
 - Both words indicate a level of hatred in the heart.
 - Both words metaphorically refer to the danger of eternal judgement.
 - If such a word is worthy of hell, how much more is murder?

- Jesus' point in this was that if anger and insult are so serious and dangerous, then we must avoid them and take action to rectify them as quickly as possible. We will look at this in greater detail in a moment.
 - According to John Murray, "Murder has its fountain in the malice of the heart and has its judicial issue in the blackness of darkness forever."¹⁷
- You Shall Not Kill versus You Shall Not Murder
 - The sixth commandment has been translated into English in two ways:
 - You shall not kill. (KJV, RSV)
 - You shall not murder. (CEV, ESV, NASB, NIV)
 - What is the difference between kill and murder?
 - Both words are based on the Hebrew word *ratsach*, which is often translated as murder, but occasionally as kill.
 - Murder does not include
 - Killing someone in self-defense
 - Wars ordered by God
 - Capital punishment following the full process of the law
 - Accidental manslaughter
 - Definitions
 - Murder is defined as the unlawful premeditated killing of one human being by another.
 - Murder is accompanied by guilt.
 - Killing is defined as causing the death of someone.
 - Killing can include murder, but murdering cannot include all instances of killing.
 - Murder is the correct rendering of *ratsach*, so the best translation of the sixth commandment is "You shall not murder."

¹⁷ John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 162.

God Desires More than External Obedience – He Wants Your Heart

- This point is not one that only pertains to Matthew 5:21-26.
 - We will repeat this point almost every week during our study of the Sermon on the Mount.
 - It can also be applied to other places within the gospels.
 - God's desire is for man's heart, not for mere external obedience.
 - This concept is found in 1 Samuel 15:22-23
 - 1 Samuel 15:22-23 - "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king."
 - Samuel told King Saul that God wants more than only external obedience (in the form of sacrifice.). God desires true obedience that springs from the heart.
- Jesus starts out today's Scripture by citing the sixth commandment from Exodus 20:13, for which, according to Deuteronomy 21:1-9, the punishment of execution was to be administered by a Jewish court.
 - However, Jesus goes beyond the behavior that merited the death penalty to the heart that generates the sinful behavior.
 - While we may be innocent of murder, we may still be guilty of violating the sixth commandment.
 - Jesus is saying that God, in judgement, evaluates our hearts' motivation.
 - According to Jesus' statement here, hatred that goes unchecked to the point of murder receives the same punishment as murder.
 - 1 John 3:15 – "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

- God has never wanted his people to merely obey his rules. Instead, he calls them to be holy as he is holy.
 - Leviticus 11:45 – “For I am Yahweh, who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God, so *you must be holy because I am holy.*” (italics added)
- Let’s dissect today’s Old Testament law from the Oral Torah / interpretive addition.
 - “You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.”
 - The Old Testament law is found in Exodus 20:13, which literally says, “You shall not murder.”
 - The interpretive addition is “whoever murders will be liable to judgment.”
 - This is designed to indicate that in Jesus’ day, rabbinic tradition taught that the only ones liable to the judgment of God were those who had committed the premeditated physical act of murder.
 - The scribes and the Pharisees were evidently seeking to restrict the application of the sixth commandment to the deed of murder alone, to the act of spilling human blood in homicide.¹⁸
 - The Pharisees had focused on the external act of murder, but not on the hateful intent leading up to the act.
 - Jesus was communicating that the essence of murder is a hateful anger, and that anger, in principle, is murder.
 - Simply refraining from homicide does not guarantee the righteousness necessary to enter the Kingdom of God.¹⁹
 - Jesus, in our passage, focuses on the feelings of the heart and the words of the lips.
 - Jesus says that everyone who is angry with his brother is liable to judgment of God.

¹⁸ John Stott. Christian Counter Culture – the Message of the Sermon on the Mount. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1978.) 83.

¹⁹ Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. EBC: Matthew and Mark. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010) 181.

- Jesus says *you can murder people in ways that aren't physical*.
- In the next four verses, Jesus provides two examples of what it looks like to be reconciled with your brother.
 - The first example involves a believer at worship leaving and reconciling with his brother.
 - The second example involves a believer reconciling with his brother before they meet in court.
- The issue at hand is that Jesus wants our hearts more than he wants external obedience.
 - “The heart of the problem is a heart problem.”²⁰
 - Our heart is what defines us and directs us.
 - Solomon, in Proverbs 4:23 exonerates us to “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”
 - “The heart drives all we do. It is who we are.”²¹

Ethics Cannot Be Separated from Worship

- The first example that Jesus provides for is reconciliation during worship.
 - Worship that is acceptable to God must be paired with ethical integrity.
 - The altar that Jesus referred to is the altar in the inner court of the temple.
 - Therefore, those that were worshiping at the temple were in the most solemn part of the temple.
 - This emphasizes the urgency and importance of leaving solemn worship to reconcile with a brother.
- The act of worship, in and of itself, is not wrong.
 - Worship is to be done regularly.
 - However, as we just discussed, God is concerned with man's heart.
 - Therefore, God desires a pure and peaceful heart to worship him.
 - A heart that has discord with a brother (or sister) cannot truly worship God.

²⁰ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=1906433282960942&story_fbid=2730752337195695

²¹ Dane Ortland, *Gentle and Lowly*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 18-19.

- In the New Testament, when the author is not referring to a male biological sibling, the word brother means “a fellow member of the religious community, and typically refers to Jesus’ disciples.” (Matthew 5:44; 7:3-5; 12:49-50; 18:15, 21, 35; 23:8; 25:40; 28:10)²²
- The act of worship is to be interrupted and relationships are to be restored.
 - Worship is to be interrupted for remedying a broken relationship.
 - In Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus was asked “‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’” ³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’” ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”
 - The command is twofold: Worship God and love our neighbors
 - Which one is more important? Yes. Both are important.
 - Obviously, we are to worship the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind.
 - However, we are to interrupt that worship to remedy any discord we have with those in our lives.
 - This ethic is enforced by the sixth commandment, “You shall not murder.”
 - In regard to the sixth commandment, John Calvin writes, “The purpose of this commandment is: The Lord has bound mankind together by a certain unity; hence, each man ought to concern himself with the safety of all. To sum up, the, all violence, injury, and any harmful thing at all that may injure our neighbor’s body are forbidden to us. We are accordingly commanded, if we find anything of use to us in saving our neighbors’ lives, faithfully to employ it; if there is anything that makes for their peace, to see to it; if anything harmful, to ward it off; if they are in any danger, to lend a helping hand.”²³

²² Craig L. Blomberg. NAC: Matthew. (Nashville: Broadman, 1992.). 107.

²³ John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion Vol. 1*, 2.8.39. Edited by John T. McNeill. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.). 404.

- Therefore, according to Calvin, we are to promote peace with our neighbors as well as protect them from harm.²⁴
 - Calvin's comments, since they are in line with other Scripture, are not interpretive additions, but are applicative in nature, because they help us apply other Scripture to this scenario.
- The worshipper is to go and reconcile with his brother.
 - The end goal of reconciliation is peace and understanding between brothers.
 - The worshipper must do what is necessary to reconcile with his brother.
 - This does not depend on the severity of the wrong between them.
 - Nor does this matter depend upon who is at fault. Worshipers are to reconcile.
 - Isaac Adams puts it this way, "No one else's sin towards you ever justifies your sin towards them."²⁵
 - We cannot always ensure that a brother will reconcile with us, but as Romans 12:18 implores us, we need to make every effort "as far as it depends on us."
 - Romans 12:8 – "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."
 - All disharmony is to be resolved.
 - Disharmony often leads to estrangement.
 - Estrangement is the fountain from which murder springs.
 - If the relationship is not restored, the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves will be violated.
- Craig Blomberg, in his commentary on Matthew, ponders the question, "How many of our churches would or should be temporarily emptied if these commands were taken seriously?"²⁶

²⁴ John Calvin. Harmony of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Vol II. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 21.

²⁵ <https://twitter.com/isickadams/status/1300092902467657728>

²⁶ Craig L. Blomberg. NAC: Matthew. (Nashville: Broadman, 1992.). 108.

Our Relationship with God is Affected by How We Treat Others

- The second example that Jesus gives us regarding reconciliation is that of two brothers who are going to meet in court to settle a dispute.
 - The essence of the sixth commandment tells us that human life is to be protected and promoted.
 - Scriptural Support
 - Romans 12:18-19 – “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”
 - Hebrews 12:14-15 – “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.”
 - James 1:19-21 – “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”
 - *When we damage our relationship with others, we damage our relationship with God.*²⁷
 - We are to be gracious to each other, careful to never seek revenge upon others.
 - In doing so, we will reconcile ourselves with our brothers with whom we have broken relationships.

²⁷ Craig Keener, IVPNTC: Matthew. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1997), 115.

- If we fail to reconcile, ultimately, our worship will not be accepted by God and we will be subject to judgment, where we will be required to pay the last penny.
 - The “last penny” is a *kodrantes*, which was 1/64 of the standard daily minimum wage. It also is the second smallest Roman coin in the Ancient Near East.
 - Failure to reconcile with our brother will ultimately lead to our failing to be reconciled to our creator.
- Jesus’ use of the word “against” in verse 23
 - “Against” captures the essence of sin. It best epitomizes a broken relationship.
 - “Against” places us in conflict with another.
 - Man sinned *against* God in the Garden of Eden
 - Man sinned *against* his brother when Cain killed Abel
 - We are to strive to remedy this “against.”
 - The opposite of “against” is peace, harmony, love, kindness, *hesed*.
 - *Hesed* is a central theological concept in the Old Testament.
 - It is the primary attribute in the Lord’s self-description in Exodus 34:6–7, as well as an obligation that is placed on all of His people in Micah 6:8.
 - Micah 6:8 – “He has told you, O man, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness (*hesed*), and to walk humbly with your God?
 - Because there is no exact English equivalent, it has been difficult for Bible translators to accurately translate it.
 - In the different translations, it appears as “kindness,” “faithfulness,” “mercy,” “goodness,” “loyalty,” and “steadfast love.”
 - In order to eliminate “against,” we must live out those attributes.

- We are to love those who are “against” us.
- The sanctity of life is the thrust of the sixth commandment.
 - The Heidelberg Catechism question and answers #105 and #106 sum up the sixth commandment quite well.
 - The first part of the answer reads, “I am not to dishonor, hate, injure, or kill my neighbor by thoughts, words or gestures, and much less by deeds; whether personally or through another; rather I am to put away all desire of revenge.”
 - The answer to question #106 sums up the teaching of Christ quite well, “By forbidding murder God teaches us that he hates the root of murder, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge, and that he regards all these as murder.”

Summary

- Jesus calls for us to immediately reconcile damaged relationships, regardless of whether or not we are at fault.
 - The key word is “immediately.”
 - This is so important, that he commands us to leave worship and make our relationships right and then return to worship.
 - As soon as we are aware of a grievance with another, we are to take the initiative to repair that grievance, apologize for it, pay what we have left unpaid, and make amends.
 - Likewise, we are to be careful about every deed, word, look or thought we use towards others.
- We are to be sensitive about the evils of damaging relationships with others.
 - We must never allow disunity to remain, let alone, grow.
 - For out of this disunity grows the seeds of hatred and murder.

- “If we are to avoid committing murder in God’s sight, we must take every possible positive step to live in peace and love with all men.”²⁸
- Malicious anger and hatred are so evil – and God’s judgment of it is so certain, that we must do all we can to end it.²⁹

Discussion Questions

- What is the difference between killing and murdering?
- How do we know that our relationship with God is affected by our relationship with others?
- Do you have broken relationships in your life? Is there someone that you are angry with? Have you made every effort to reconcile with them?

²⁸ John Stott. Christian Counter Culture – the Message of the Sermon on the Mount. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1978.) 86.

²⁹ Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. EBC: Matthew and Mark. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010) 183.