

A Word Concerning Murder #6

Matthew 5: 21-26

In our text passage this evening Jesus continues to emphasize the righteous standard that God expects and requires of humanity to have fellowship with Him. Here our Lord continues to point out man's misguided perception of righteousness and He again rebukes the self-righteous attitude that men possess, supposedly living lives that honor God.

We have come to the first of six illustrations that Jesus uses to address the misguided thoughts of men. In each of these illustrations He mentions what they had heard of old, in essence addressing their skewed perception of what God actually said. To each of these issues, Jesus offers a true interpretation, revealing how we ought to view and respond to them.

We have dealt with the portion of the Sermon on the Mount that deals with murder. We know that killing another is wrong, but Jesus expands the realm of accountability for murder beyond what most, even in our day, perceive as murderous. (I will have to admit that these were very troubling verses for me as a child. I have enjoyed looking at them in depth and I hope to help us obtain a better understanding of the truth contained in these verses.) I want to consider the [principles](#) revealed in the passage as we think about: [A Word Concerning Murder](#).

I. The Commandment Rehearsed (21) – Here Jesus speaks of the 6th commandment: [thou shalt not kill](#). Let's take a moment to consider the thoughts of Jesus. Notice:

A. The Precept (21a) – [Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill](#); Jesus offers a reminder of the Commandments of God. This was something that all of the Jews were aware of; they knew that God did not condone or approve of murder, the taking of an innocent life. Jesus does not question or detract from that great commandment; in fact, He emphasizes the importance and value of it. As we will discover in a moment, He even seeks to expand their perception of what constitutes murder.

- As I considered the words of our Lord I was reminded of the need for God's Word to be expounded and men need to see themselves accountable to His Word. We live in a society that has forgotten and even ignore this great command. I don't have hard numbers to share, but consider the countless thousands upon thousands that are murdered each year through genocide, vicious crime, and pure hatred or malice. Not to mention the thousands of innocent babies that are murdered within the supposed safety of the mother's womb right here in America. Our world has produced a society that has little value for human life. In fact, many are more concerned with the owls or the whales than they are human life.

- Regardless of the perception or appreciation that humanity has for human life, God has commanded that we are not to kill. He ordained and created life and no man has the right to take that life.

B. The Penalty (21b) – **and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:** The prophets of old warned of the dangers involved in murder. This was a serious crime in the eyes of God. Many times in Scripture the Lord declares that those who are guilty of murder shall be put to death. We discover that 6 times in [Num.35](#). Sinning against the Lord brings judgment and murder is no exception. This was a crime that was dealt with in the most serious manner. It has been a blight upon humanity since the first of God's creation as Cain killed his brother Able, both the sons of Adam.

- I think most of us would agree that murder is one of the most serious offenses that one could commit and should be dealt with swiftly and sternly. I know there is a lot of debate concerning capital punishment in our day. I have no way of knowing where each of you stand on that issue, but God has said in His Word that the murderer shall be put to death. [Gen.9:6 – Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.](#) We live in an age that affords the offender more rights than the victim in many cases, but one day justice will be served. God will judge sin in the lives of the unrepentant, including murder.

I. The Commandment Rehearsed (21)

II. The Caution Revealed (22) – Here Jesus reveals that He knows what the Bible teaches and He knows what they have been taught, but He takes it a step further. Murder as we know it is sinful and will face judgment, but Jesus reveals that other actions are in the same category as murder and will face judgment as well. He speaks of:

A. The Danger of the Temper (22a) – **But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:** The inability to control our temper and becoming angry with our brother also faces judgment. Surely we all agree that murder is wrong and worthy of judgment, but what about our temper? I am not saying that God will judge a man whose temper got the best of him the same way that He will a murderer, but Jesus speaks of the dangers of a quick and unrestrained temper.

- Typically this is the first stage in the process that leads to an action like murder. We must guard ourselves against anger and a quick temper.

- I need to mention that there are 3 different types of judgment spoken of in these verses. Here the word **judgment** speaks of standing before a lower court of 23 men in Jesus' day. Those who have difficulty with their temper are in danger of standing before the courts as a result of their anger. We have seen that truth proven time and again. People act out of anger and do things they later regret, but they must deal with the consequences of their actions.

B. The Danger of the Tongue (22b) – Here Jesus continues to expand His discourse on murder. He reveals two aspects in regard to the danger of the tongue. He speaks of:

1. A Word of Slander – **and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council:** We really don't have a good English translation for this word so it was transliterated as the original Hebrew word. Some believe that it means "*empty*." Whatever the case, it was often used to show contempt or disdain for another. It was used in a slanderous way. Many times a man's anger would well up and he would begin to insult or slander a brother. Jesus warns of this type of behavior. It is just another step toward committing the act of murder. In essence, when one committed either of the acts that we have discussed, he was as guilty in the eyes of God as one who had committed the actual deed. **Jam.2:10 – For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.**

- Jesus declared that these were in danger of the **council**, the Sanhedrin, the council which held the highest authority. It would be likened to our Supreme Court. Do you see the progression that Jesus reveals? An unrestrained temper causes grievances that call for judgment in the courts, and as it progresses the behavior reaches a level that calls for action from the highest courts. Sin and rebellion always travel a path leading downward.

2. A Word of Scorn – **but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.** Here things get serious in the message. Jesus has addressed their understanding of what constitutes murder, and here He reveals that those who call a brother a fool is in danger of hell fire. Now, we must understand the context of what Jesus has said. The word **fool** in the text means "*stupid or dull*." It is where we get our word moron. To call someone a fool was actually accusing them of being stupid and godless.

- So on the surface that doesn't seem all that bad, but you must consider the attitude of the heart from which it was said. If such is said from a heart of anger and contempt, with no concern for the well being of that person, it is sin. Jesus is addressing those who have no compassion for others and no desire to help them. These are in danger of hell fire, the same judgment reserved for the rebellious and unrepentant.

- As God's people we must possess a heart of love for all humanity. It is not sinful to see others actions as foolish. I have no other explanation for those who see the hand of God in their lives, experience His drawing power, and yet refuse to respond to Him. They are foolish, but if one simply declares them a fool with no compassion or desire to reach them, they have committed sin and stand in danger of judgment.

I. The Commandment Rehearsed (21)

II. The Caution Revealed (22)

III. The Conduct Required (23-26) – After Jesus explained the principles regarding murder and the seriousness of the actions of men associated with such behavior, He reveals how we are to conduct ourselves in order to avoid such behavior. He offers a simple illustration for our benefit. We find that we are expected to behave with:

A. Sensitivity (23-24a) – *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; [24] Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way;* Jesus is speaking of one's sensitivity to the leading and direction of the Spirit. He is dealing with an act of worship. He says nothing of another mentioning a need to the one who had brought the gift in an act of worship. The Spirit will speak to us as we seek to worship. He will guide and convict us in our everyday lives. We must seek the leading of the Spirit and be willing to submit ourselves unto His guidance.

- This is likely one of the greatest needs in our lives today. We need to learn sensitivity toward the Lord. The only way that we can effectively be sensitive to His leading is to have lives free of sin. We will never sense the direction of God if sin has caused separation.

B. Purity (24) – *Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Here He addresses the priority of purity. One who is sensitive to the Spirit's leading will know that having a right relationship with our brother is essential to genuine worship. He speaks of making things right with one whom there is controversy rather than seeking to worship in hypocrisy.

- What a profound lesson for us as well. How many times have we pretended to worship the Lord knowing that there were unresolved issues with a brother? Jesus says we are to

forsake pretentious worship and seek reconciliation with our brother. When we have achieved that, then we are fit for worship and should return to offer our gifts of praise!

C. Humility (25-26) – Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. [26] Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. Finally Jesus speaks of the futile efforts of arguing and division. It always ends up costing more than we wanted to pay. He reveals that we are to seek harmony with our adversary rather than contention and strife. Anger and pride often stand in the way of godly living, but we are expected to seek a resolution rather than extended conflict.

- I know it is often hard to humble ourselves and extend a hand of reconciliation to a brother that has offended us, but that is what the Lord commands. Bitterness will always end in tragedy. If it is left unattended and unresolved, it will bring ruin to your life. We must deal with the sin of bitterness and anger and seek the righteousness of the Lord.

These have not been the easiest verses to consider, but they do reveal great truth. Many times we harbor anger and bitterness in our hearts against those we ought to love. God is never pleased with that.

We consider murder one of the most heinous acts one could commit, and it is, but we need to realize the dangers and potential of the emotions that often lead to that dreadful act. Even the most mature believer has to deal with these emotions. The difference is how we handle them individually.

I don't believe that any of us here tonight is guilty of murder, but what about envy and strife; what about anger and bitterness; what about a cold heart toward the genuine needs of others? If we have offended in one, we are guilty of all.