

Sermon Title: Are You A Murderer?

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 5:21-26 (Sermon on the Mount #13)

Date: 10-18-20

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We come back to the Sermon on the Mount after a couple of weeks away. We are entering a new section of the Sermon on the Mount, which is Matthew Chapters 5, 6, and 7, if you're not familiar with it. The introduction to the Sermon on the Mount is primarily the "Beatitudes," which are the "blessings" that Jesus describes, starting in Chapter 5, Verse 3. And then the introduction ends with Chapter 5, Verses 17 through 20, where Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished." (NASB-1995, and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

As you read this sermon, you have to keep in mind the time and the place and the circumstance. The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the Jews of Jesus's day, along with their scholarly wing, the scribes. They were the theological ultra-conservative, ultra-legalistic ones; they believed that they, from themselves, generated righteousness before God (Lk. 18:9; Rom. 9:31-33; 10:3). Jesus knew that they are in the audience. He knew that this huge crowd, which had come there during the height of His popularity in Galilee, were all under the influence of the Pharisees, who controlled the training of the rabbis, and therefore controlled what was taught in the Synagogues. He declared that the Pharisees' nitpicking, man-made spiritual rules and regulations completely missed the point of how to be righteous (Gal. 2:16, 21; 3:21).

The summary of the introduction to this sermon is also the theme-statement of the sermon; we saw that in Chapter 5, Verse 20, where Jesus said, "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." The Pharisees and the scribes held themselves out as the epitome of righteousness (Matt. 23:2, 5-7, 27-28; Jn. 9:34; Rom. 2:17-20), and Jesus says, "If you think they're righteous, I want you to know: You're not getting past *the front porch* of Heaven unless you have something that *radically surpasses anything* that they're capable of!" (see Matt. 5:48; cf. Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10) So that's the theme.

Now, for the rest of what we call Chapter 5—Verses 21 through 48—it's a series of six or seven examples, depending on how you count them. I think we're looking at one today; some people say "two," and you can probably get to Heaven if you disagree with me about how to punctuate the Sermon on the Mount.

All of these illustrate what Jesus meant in Verse 20. In each example, Jesus recites something from the Old Testament, and sometimes He includes an addition that was added by the scribes and Pharisees; and then, He explains the *true* meaning, which had been buried underneath the rigorous details and self-righteousness that they had added onto the Law of God (Mk. 7:8).

Today, the first subject that we're going to deal with is the subject of anger. In these next several paragraphs here in the Sermon on the Mount, prepare to be convicted; because Jesus is going for your spiritual jugular, which is called "the heart." This is the issue of anger.

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We're going to look at six verses today. In Verses 21 and 22, we have The Issue Of Anger. And then, in Verses 23 through 26, we have The Implications Of The Law.

You've probably heard the story of little Johnny, who kept always wanting to stand up from the dinner table instead of remaining seated until everyone else was finished. His parents were trying to teach him good manners, so Dad said, "Johnny, sit down." Johnny said, "No!" Dad said, "Johnny, I said *sit down!*" Johnny said, "I don't *want* to sit down!" Dad said, "You *will* sit down, or I'll go get the paddle!" Johnny sat down, and then he said, "I'm sitting on the outside; but in my heart, I'm standing up!"

My friends—we are Johnny. We know obeying on the outside while we're fuming on the inside, right? Anybody were a mask lately? Nothing more needs to be said. That little story captures what we've all felt at many times in our lives. It's the basic idea that Jesus is going to teach in all of this series of examples: You can obey externally while maintaining a rotten heart-attitude, being in rebellion.

These illustrations all have the same formula: Jesus introduces every one of them with: "You have heard that the ancients were told..." and then, in each case, He refers to a well-known quotation out of the Law—and as I said, sometimes He adds something that the Pharisees or scribes had said—and then He goes on to show that *surpassing* righteousness involves much more than mere outward observance of rules and regulations. He emphasized the true spirit of each of these precepts from the Law in order to offset the shallowness and the abuses that were the rule of the day in the spiritual life of Israel in the First Century.

It's important to emphasize that Jesus was *not* bringing some new idea out of the blue; He wasn't making up new stuff. Remember what He had just said about "fulfilling" every detail of the Law; He's not going to contradict Himself in the next paragraph after that!

He was calling people *back* to the place where their leaders *should* have taken them in the first place! The Law and the Prophets—the composite of what we call the "Old Testament," the Hebrew Scriptures; to them: the Scriptures—they spoke of the concept of a very vivid term: Circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; cf. Rom. 2:29). That's a picturesque way of describing an inner reality from which outward obedience flows. God demands an *inner reality* of "faith" (Jas. 2:22, 26; cf. Rom. 1:5; cf. Eph. 6:6). If the outward motions don't come from a heart of genuine faith, a heart of genuine repentance—if your obedience doesn't spring from that, it's just a show, and it doesn't do you any good (Heb. 11:6).

Let me show you a quick spew of Scriptures here. Jesus was not saying anything that wasn't in complete harmony with what they should have been taught already. Let's start with Leviticus 19:17. You're thinking, "Well, if there's any book in the Bible that is full of a whole bunch of details you have to keep..." Well, yeah, that would be Leviticus, if you lived under the Old Covenant; that's where all the details are. But, look what Leviticus 19:17 says: "You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him."

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Or, the famous words of Psalm 19, Verse 14—"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer." Not just what I say, but the heart form which it comes—both the words *and* the heart have to be right.

Other famous words from Psalm 139, Verses 23 and 24—"Search me, O God, and know my heart"—that's the statement of faith: "God, deal with me in *the real me*, the inside"—"try me and know my anxious thoughts"—that's where to go with you anxiety; it's to cry out to God: "God, look at me! Help me figure out these anxious thoughts, and bring them into conformity to Your plan!"—"and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way."

Isaiah 29:13. Isaiah said things like this a couple different places, and Jesus quoted one of them: "Then the Lord said, 'Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote.' " Now, Isaiah had never met a Pharisee, but God gave the words to Isaiah that fit *perfectly*—the idea of an external-based expression of religion (Matt. 23:25-28).

There's Ezekiel 33, a famous passage that deals with your own responsibility before the Lord; staring at Verse 30, God says to Ezekiel, "But as for you, son of man, your fellow citizens who talk about you by the walls and in the doorways of the houses, speak to one another, each to his brother, saying, 'Come now and hear what the message is which comes forth from the Lord.' They come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain. Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them."

Or again, words straight from the mouth of God through His prophet Amos: "I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies" (Am. 5:21). Well, who prescribed for Israel the "festivals," the feasts, and the "solemn assemblies" and the sacrifices? God did. So is He contradicting Himself? No. Here's the point: "Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (vss. 22-24; cf. Prov. 15:8; 21:27; Is. 1:11-17; Matt. 23:23). "If you are going to hear My words, if you're going to quote My words, but not let them change you from the inside out so that you legitimately act in a way that honors Me, *don't even bother* with your worship; it's obnoxious to Me."

So, Jesus will talk about the issue of anger. Let's dive in: Matthew Chapter 5, Verse 21—"You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' " The words that are in all caps in the New American Standard mean they're quotes from the Old Testament. That's the Sixth of the Ten Commandments.

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There's an interesting little insight here: "You have *heard* that the ancients were told..." The hearers in Jesus's audience did not yet have an iPhone app with the Hebrew Scriptures on it. Most of them had perhaps never read the Scriptures in person; there would be a scroll in the synagogue, but you had to be a certain person in the synagogue to even be allowed to read them. People didn't carry their own Bible around, so they "heard" it. Heard it from who? Well, their parents; and their teachers, who would be the rabbis that would teach them. What they knew of God's Word came through a combination of the oral teaching of the parents and the teachings in the synagogue. That's where they were told what "the ancients were told"—they were told what God had said; and in that generation, it was filtered through the Pharisees (Matt. 23:2).

So, He says: "You shall not commit murder." That part is really easy: the Sixth Commandment. You can read it in Exodus Chapter 20, Verse 15. It is reiterated in Deuteronomy Chapter 5, Verse 18. There was no debate that "murder" was wrong. That was never an issue in that society. They understood the sanctity of life. "God created" us "male and female" (Gen. 1:27); and then, starting with the law that was given after the Noahic Flood: "Whoever sheds human blood, by man his blood shall be shed" (Gen. 9:6)—you're striking at "the image of God" when you murder a human being. They understood that...Very much different than in our society, where that is under rather profound attack; and already, the sanctity of human life is being ignored in the womb; and then, at the other end of life as well, with euthanasia and assisted suicide. We're going down the tubes on that one! But *they* understood that.

It's interesting—Jesus says nothing else about murder in this passage. He quotes the Sixth Commandment, and never says anything else about murder. Instead, He emphasizes dealing with the *essence* of murder, which is: anger in your heart. The rest of Verse 21 is not part of the Old Testament; it's simply the normal case of things that if you commit murder, you're going to be taken into the court and you're going to receive the consequences of it.

But notice the other part of the formula, beginning in Verse 22: "But *I* say to you..." That's the second half of the formula Jesus is going to use in all five of these illustrations. "But" indicates a contrast. Now, understand: He is *not* contrasting what *He* has to say with what *God* said in the Sixth Commandment. He is making a contrast between what *He* is saying and the way it was being *misrepresented* in the teaching of the Pharisees. And would you also notice: He claims *authority* to say this! "*I* say to you..." He was declaring that what He said was the absolute truth (see Matt. 24:35; cf. 1 Tim. 6:3-4). And by the way: That point came across *loud and clear*! Never mind all the details of the Sermon on the Mount—we'll get all of them in due time—but when He got to the end of it, everyone was *astounded* at how clearly Jesus spoke the truth! If you skip ahead to the end of the sermon, in Matthew Chapter 7, Verses 28 and 29, it says: "When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes." They just kept blathering on about this opinion and that opinion, and this rule, and this rule that we have to keep you from breaking that rule over there—it was so convoluted! And Jesus just came and said, "I say to you," and He was speaking as God—He *was* God (Titus 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1).

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So, Verse 22—the whole thing: "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be answerable to the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be answerable to the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell."

So, what's He saying? Well, you've heard the Sixth Commandment: "You shall not commit murder." But understand: "Everyone who is angry with his brother"—and He uses "brother" here in the sense of "fellow-citizen." "Everyone who is angry with his brother" is, ultimately, guilty of the very same sin as murder; it's only a matter of the extent of the expression of the sin. And He's going to illustrate what He means by exceeding "the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (vs. 20.) They would happily say, "Look how good we are! We don't murder! We don't commit adultery! We don't divorce! Look at all the things we don't do!" By that standard, the most spiritual thing you could do is have a coma induced! It's not a matter of what you don't do, it's *who you are* on the *inside* (Prov. 27:19)! Do you have the very life of Christ within you? (see Gal. 2:20) Are you wanting to express His life, His righteousness? (see Rom. 13:14)

Jesus's point is that the religious leaders *missed* the point almost entirely. The inner feeling of anger is the essence of the sin of murder (Matt. 15:19; cf. Gen. 4:5, 8). My friends: I am a murderer. I've never taken a life, but I'm a murderer! This is one of my weakest points. Coming to Christ, it took a long time for me to actually start to get a handle on even the outward expressions of anger, and it didn't come until I dealt with it on the inside.

A couple of weeks ago, a company with which we do business decided that they would improve something for my convenience...that was the first lie. I had to spend quite a bit of time online, and then I had to do one of those things that is completely misnamed: I had to call "Customer Service." And after choosing options 1, 3, 4, 9, and 7, I finally got on hold—and I would swear I heard the message: "Your call is very important to us. Please hold until it's no longer important to you." Then I had to call back the next day because they said, "We'll have everything changed over for you! Well, we'll have that available tomorrow." If you want to kidnap my goat, that's how to get him! That gets my goat! I really have to deal with my righteous anger! That really frustrates me. It does you, too—it's just that maybe your button of that kind doesn't stick out as far as mine.

So Jesus begins illustrating that. Some people think there's a progression here from the feeling of anger to calling someone an "empty-head" ("You good-for-nothing," NASB; "Raca," NKJV) to calling someone a "fool"—so it's a progression of seriousness from going to "the court," going to "the supreme court," and going to "the fiery hell." I'm not sure the progression is the issue. What He's trying to say is: "Do you understand that it's a continuum?" Pulling the trigger and taking a life maliciously is exactly the same sin as that *angry thought* in your mind, that *angry feeling* that you have. It's all on the same spectrum—it's only a matter of degree. And the point is: The morality behind the Sixth Commandment goes a whole lot deeper than merely refraining from killing someone. God deals with "the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7; cf. Ps. 51:6), and the heart is the center of your thinking—it's "the real you" (see Prov. 23:7).

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In our culture, we tend to think of "heart" as the center of emotion, but both the Hebrew and the Greek words were mainly used to describe the center of your thinking and your understanding and your will and your decision-making. I say the best analogy in our world is that your heart is used like the "CPU"—the "Central Processing Unit." That's what makes your computer run. It's what makes your phone work the way it does. It's the thing that operates it all. *That's* the point.

God deals with the heart, and He has *always* wanted to deal with the heart. You probably know the familiar words of Deuteronomy Chapter 6—the famous "Shema." Every Jewish boy or girl learned how to recite this in Hebrew. Of course, they *spoke* Hebrew, so that was an advantage; but even in our world, they say it in Hebrew. We know it as Deuteronomy 6:4-6—"Hear, O Israel! The Lord"—that's the word "Yahweh," the name of God (Ex. 3:14-15)—"The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." What's the difference between "heart," "soul," and "strength"? They're three words to describe the same thing: The real you, from the inside. Moses continued, on behalf of God: "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart." It's great to memorize Scripture—if you let it seep into your *heart*; that's the whole point (Deut. 11:18; Jos. 1:8; Ps. 1:2).

This is not to say that those three examples that He gives about a feeling and one thing that you say and another thing that you say all have the same consequences. Certainly, if you feel angry, you know you make it worse when you pop off with your mouth. The damage is done; you've wounded a relationship in that way. And it gets worse the further you go. And if you don't just pop off, but you turn it into a rant, it gets worse. And then if you deal with your rant by three days of "the silent treatment," it gets worse and worse and worse. And if you eventually pull the trigger, you've gone *all the way* to the end of that spectrum. But understand: The essence of the sin is exactly the same, no matter where you are on that spectrum; and until you recognize that, you won't deal with sin in the right way (Gen. 4:7; Matt. 26:41; Gal. 5:16-17).

The problem with your anger is *not* that other person. The problem with your anger is *you*. You can't control what people do around you—even *stupid* people, even *mean* people, even *irresponsible* people, even *drunk* people, even *vicious* people! But you can, and you must, *always* control your *response* to those things (Rom. 12:17; cf. Prov. 19:11), because it's *your heart* where you have to deal with the Lord.

I should probably explain the phrase at the end of that verse: "guilty enough to go into the fiery hell." That's a translation of the Greek word *gehenna*, which is a translation of the Hebrew that means "Valley of Hinnom," or "The Land of Hinnom." The Valley of Hinnom was a valley outside the southwest wall of Jerusalem. It looks quite nice now, but it used to be a lot steeper valley. It's been filled up by a lot of stuff that was there for a long time. Tradition says that that was the place where the fire-worship of the false God "Molech" took place (2 Kings 23:10). You read in the Old Testament about offering children—sacrificing children to Molech; that's probably where it took place (2 Chr. 33:6). That practice was introduced by King Ahaz in Judah—not a good king, by any measure.

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After King Josiah came along and purged those things—you can read that good chapter: Second Kings 23—then, the Valley of Hinnom, or *gehenna*, became the garbage dump for Israel. It was the place where even the bodies of executed criminals were dumped, rather than buried. It was the place where the blood of all the sacrifices was drained. You can imagine what a disgusting place it was. Well, to make it worse—or, sort of make it better—there was a constant fire that burned there, to get rid of the waste. It was such a nasty place that that expression *gehenna* became a metaphor for eternal torment. It's used in the New Testament, and especially by Jesus here, as a synonym for the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10); we just generally use the word "hell."

So, what is Jesus saying? The sin of murder is nothing less than the continuation of the sin of anger; and if you commit that sin, what do you deserve? You have offended "the eternal God" (Deut. 33:27), so you therefore deserve "eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46; cf. Dan. 12:2; Mk. 9:43-48; 2 Thess. 1:9; Jude 7). The first example used by Jesus to explain what He means about "surpassing righteousness" makes one strong point: Anger is essentially the same sin as murder. Therefore, righteousness demands that you deal with anger *in your heart*, not just the outward expressions of it.

Alright, that's The Issue Of Anger. Now, Jesus talks about some Implications: Verses 23 through 26. These are some examples of how to apply Verses 21 and 22. In Verse 23, He says: "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you"—and we'll stop there; we'll finish the sentence in a moment. The word "therefore" means: "Here's the logical conclusion." That's why I don't take Verses 21 and 22 as one example, and then 23 through 26 as another one; they're very connected. If anger is a sin, therefore you must deal with the issues before they turn into an expression of anger. It's the only proper way for a child of God to act—to deal with it in the heart.

He says, "If you are presenting your offering at the altar..." In that culture, that would refer to any kind of offering that a person might bring—any worshipper, any day, to any priest in the inner court of the temple. Now, you might say, "Oh, good, this passage doesn't apply to me; I didn't bring an animal to sacrifice today!" Well, no, it doesn't *directly* apply to you—we don't have an altar here; but the *principle* is there: He's teaching you about the morality behind the Sixth Commandment.

For us, that would be: If you're headed down the road to your Bible study, if you're headed down the road to church, or you arrive in one of those places and you begin to go about your business there, and you remember that someone "has something against you," you'd better do something about it.

Would you notice, He switches here. In Verse 22, He said: "everyone who is angry with his brother"—that's generic, that's third-person. Now He says: "Therefore...*you*—if *you* are presenting *your* offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against *you*," you need to deal with it! This applies to you, to me, to *all of us* who are murderers at heart.

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"Against you" means that you realize there's a breach; you realize somebody "has something against you"—you've done something wrong. Maybe you're harboring anger in your heart. But you realize there is something that is broken, and it isn't fixed.

"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you"—Verse 24—"leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering." He says, "Leave it there and go..." Those are commands.

If you continue to go through the outward motions of worship when you know you haven't dealt with a sin—especially, in this context, a breached relationship, a damaged relationship with someone—if you go through with worship, having that made aware to you in your heart, that's hypocrisy! To worship in that state is *worse* than a waste of time (Prov. 15:8; Is. 1:13).

But don't think you can just get away with something here because you say, "Oh! Ah... Somebody's mad at me, so I can't worship—for the next 19 weeks!" (Heb. 10:25; cf. Prov. 18:1) No, he says, "Leave," and then would you notice: "*First*, be reconciled to your brother." Of *first* priority, the *instant* you realize that there is something that somebody has against you, and you haven't done all you can to fix it—that's Romans 12:18: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men"—the *first* thing to do when you know that is: Drop your offering there, go and be reconciled, and then come back and bring your offering. You can apply that in your life. It's a statement of priority: Leave it there; go and be reconciled.

And then He reinforces it in Verses 25 and 26—"Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison" (vs. 25). He's talking about making "friends": Show goodwill to gain goodwill. The "opponent at law" here would be some kind of an injured party, similar to the "brother" in Verse 24; whoever it is, it doesn't matter; it's a very generic expression.

In this example, He's talking about a creditor. In that culture, if you were delinquent in payment, and the person you owed something to spotted you on the street, they could basically do a citizen's arrest, take you by the arm, and say, "We're going to see the judge!" And Jesus says, "My friend, *that's* the time to start dealing with it! "Make friends *quickly* with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way"—he could take you and demand immediate prosecution! He would take you to "the judge," and then if you hadn't settled it by the time you got before the judge, the judge would apply the law as *he* saw fit, and then he would deliver you "to the officer" of the court—that's the enforcer, that's the "jailer," if you will—and you are going to pay, according to the requirements of the law (see Matt. 18:28-30).

So, what He's teaching is that, when you find out something is wrong, *fix it!* Don't put it off (cf. Ps. 32:3-4; Prov. 28:13; Eph. 4:26b)—don't wait, don't ignore it, don't rationalize it! Don't be that person!

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Then, Verse 26—"Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there"—where? The "prison"—"until you have paid up the last cent." "Prison" here equals "fiery hell" of Verse 22; He's using this as an illustration of the eternal consequences of unforgiven sin, unresolved conflict. The idea is: If you don't resolve your problems on the *simplest* level—person to person—you could wind up with the *worst* punishment. I mean, if you have a problem with somebody, and you're a Christian, what should you do with it? You should ask that it be published in our weekly prayer guide, right? No! You first go and seek to be "reconciled."

Now, as we get into this part of the Sermon on the Mount, I've tried to warn you: Prepare yourself for conviction. It's all about dealing with *the heart*! And you may, if you haven't already today, need to face some issues that you don't really want to face. If you have been deluding yourself into thinking that you can avoid those things, you can be quite sure the Holy Spirit is going to be bringing them to your attention (Prov. 15:11).

Now, we don't want to leave it there, and just say, "Marvel at the words of Jesus! With what authority He spoke!" Let's include a little exhortation. He says this is about "*you*." Who is "*you*"? Well, it's all of you, and all of me—it's *us*. Is there any one that you have a conflict with, where any part of the fault lies with you? You say, "Well, yeah, I'm about 1.3 percent wrong, and the other person is about 98.7 percent wrong." Okay! Who is this addressed to? "You."

"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18). I love the wording of that verse. It's very strong, but it also says: "if *possible*." Sometimes, it's *impossible*. Sometimes you can do everything you possibly can. Sometimes you can go the *second* and *third* mile, and some people are just going to *hate you*—because they hated Jesus, and you represent Him (Jn. 15:18-19). That's going to happen, but ask the Holy Spirit to work in your heart to see what you can do about that (Ps. 119:36; cf. Heb. 13:21), to accurately reflect the character of your Savior.

Is everything alright in your home—between you and your spouse, you and your parents, you and your children? Is anyone at work, anyone at school, unhappy with you? Are you current with all your debts? Are there any ill feelings between you and a friend? Is your employer continually getting 60 quality minutes for every hour that you get paid? Have you lied to anyone? Are you carrying a grudge? Is there a feud that you are helping to perpetuate? This is addressed to people with those kinds of issues—in other words, people like us.

After the first service, one person said, "Well, in my family, there are some things that I don't think are quite right, and I can't really define them; so, does this apply to me?" And I said, "Well, Jesus said so." "So what do you do?" And since this isn't a flaming, dish-throwing argument going on right now, I suggested: "You could maybe do something like say, 'You know, I kind of feel like things aren't quite right between us. Is there anything that I can do to help?' " You see, you can humble *yourself* to be what Jesus wants you to be (see 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:15; Gal. 2:20).

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Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 5:21-26 (Sermon on the Mount #13)

Date: 10-18-20

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I'm not going to close by asking you to raise your hand and confess in public what needs to be done. But there's nothing more important to do than to make haste to deal with whatever *you* need to deal with. And Jesus is saying, "End the hypocrisy of worship, if you're not willing to let God deal with your heart."

So I asked: "Are you a murderer?" The answer is: "Well, yes." And why is this here? It's here to teach you: That fact means *you need a Savior* (Gal. 3:24)! That's the point of the passage! And if you're already a child of God, and you need help following through, and maybe some wisdom on how to obey this, let us know so that we can help you do it, faithfully and lovingly. That's what family is for, right? And that's what Shepherds are here for—to help sheep with dealing with these things (Acts 20:28; cf. Jer. 23:4; Ezek. 34:12). But if you're not dealing with the murder in your heart, the very best day to start with that is today (Ps. 119:60; cf. Deut. 6:17). *This* is the day.

And Jesus doesn't just look down His nose and say [haughtily], "*You*, go take care of that!" (see Matt. 12:20) No, He says: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden" (Matt. 11:28)—I believe He was speaking then of all the burden of all the "do's and don'ts" that they had been taught (Matt. 23:4). He says, "Come to Me...and I will give you rest...for your souls." Or, you might say that Jesus could put it this way: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).

Don't be *known* for your anger (Prov. 29:22), be known for your character as a child of God (1 Thess. 2:12), for "*they—and they alone—shall be called sons of God.*" That's the kind of person who is a true child of God (Jas. 3:18).

Let's pray:

*Father, we come to You today as a crew of murderers. We don't say it in that way, Father, but we thank You for clarifying in Your Word how important it is that we realize that our anger, our bitterness, our caustic words, our little complaints—those things really are the same as if we pulled the trigger and killed someone. We recognize the magnitude, therefore, of our sin—and the magnitude of Your glory and Your holiness and Your righteousness. And how we thank You for the Savior who bridges that gap! We thank You for Your grace in which we stand. We thank You for the Savior who died in our stead, taking upon Himself Your wrath for our sins, and granting to us His righteousness. Father, help us, by Your grace, prompted by Your Spirit—help us ruminant on those things, that we might rejoice at what You would do through us. Have Your way with us, to the end that our light would shine before men, and they would see our good works wrought by You, and glorify You, our Father in Heaven. We thank You for Your faithfulness to all of these things, in Jesus' name. Amen.*