

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

Christ Judges the Heart: Anger **Matthew 5:21-26**

I. The curious statement of John Dillinger:

- ◆ December 28, 1933... Chicago Police published a list of most notorious criminals in their jurisdiction & bank robber and murderer John Dillinger was declared PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE... by that time he & his murderous gang had robbed countless banks and killed a number of people... his arrogant boldness was making a mockery of the police who were likened to the Keystone Cops!
 - ◆ Last week I went to the National Archives, where I saw a statement which John Dillinger had made at the time of one of his arrests:

“I guess my only bad habit is robbing banks. I smoke very little and don’t drink very much.”

No real difference between that & the Pharisee who said: “I thank you, God, that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers... I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”

II. Christ’s Application of the Law: Matthew 5:21-48

5:21-48 Case studies in the Old Testament: One major lesson... a righteousness that surpasses that of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law

Murder, Adultery, Divorce, Oaths, Retaliation, Enemies

A. Christ’s authority:

“You have heard that it was said by the people of long ago...; But I say to you...”

- a. surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law
- b. leads one to wonder exactly who this was

Matthew 7:28-29 “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one having authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”

- c. sums up the Law and the Prophets by His own commands

Matthew 28:18-20 “***All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.***”

B. Christ vs. Pharisaical false teaching

“Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

a. must sweep away false teaching of Pharisees

Some might say: isn't Jesus setting himself against the Law of Moses?

NO... in one case, it isn't even found in the Law:

Matthew 5:43 “***‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’***”

b. as exacting as they were, they focused on letter not spirit of law

c. ultimate effect was making the law accessible

d. people helpless: couldn't read, couldn't understand Hebrew

Illus. Very much like people in Roman Catholic churches before Reformation... couldn't understand Scriptures read in Latin... relied on the priests for explanation; priests handed them a system of legalistic religion; do this, do that, etc... underestimated the rigors of Judgment Day

C. Heart righteousness

a. Pharisees limited the Law to externals

Based on their system, a rich young ruler could say to Jesus, “I have kept the Law perfectly from my youth.”

b. Christ zeroes in on the heart

Committing murder is an external act... anger is a matter of the heart

Committing adultery is an external act... lust is a matter of the heart

Divorce and oath-breaking are not just external matters, but show the unrighteousness of the heart

c. ultimate goal is the breaking of self-righteousness

Christ uses the Law to make us spiritual beggars who mourn over sin and hunger and thirst for righteousness

D. Proper view of the Law

We must ask: "What is God intending by this command?" Not "How can I make this command attainable?"

Not just externals... just because we haven't murdered doesn't mean we'll stand on judgment day

Not merely against murder or even anger... it seeks to establish reconciled and peaceful relationships

4) Not a system of rules... heart righteousness

Matthew 11:30 "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

1 John 5:3 "His commands are not burdensome."

5) Law's principles are never an end to themselves... THE LAW MAKES NOTHING PERFECT

Must ask: "Do I really know God? Am I growing in heart righteousness? Do I love Him more today than I did last year?" Not "Have I perfectly obeyed all the injunctions?"

II. Case Study Number 1: Anger

A. Jesus' authoritative teaching: going to the heart of the matter

²¹ *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'* ²² *But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother,*

‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

1. Scribes and Pharisees reduced everything to externals
 - a. BUT didn’t Law of Moses command, “You shall not murder”?
 - b. YES, but the addition of the phrase, “Anyone who murders will be subject to the judgment” implies that, if you don’t do the external act, you’re okay
2. Jesus probes to the root issue: anger in the human heart
 - a. anger is the root of murder
 - b. ruptured relationships is the initial fruit of anger
 - c. escalation of hostilities could eventually lead to murder

B. Three stages of anger

1. Anger in the heart
2. Expressions of contempt

vs. 22 “Anyone who says to his brother ‘Raca’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin, but anyone who says ‘You fool’ is in danger of the fire of hell.”

3. Action: murder itself

C. The danger: eternal judgment

1. Three words for judgment:
 - a. “anyone who murders will be subject to the judgment”
 - b. “answerable to the Sanhedrin”
 - c. “danger of the fire of Gehenna”
2. The first two: some commentators say “human courts of judgment”
 - a. Sanhedrin = highest Jewish court in the land
 - b. BUT: anger is subject to the judgment... who can judge anger but God alone?

- c. God's judgment is behind all human judgment
- d. Judgment Day = revelation of the secrets of the heart

Hebrews 4:13 "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight; everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

3. "The fire of hell"

- a. Jesus used the word "Gehenna" to describe eternal judgment
- b. Gehenna refers to the valley of Hinnom, a ravine south of Jerusalem

Gehenna: Valley of Hinnom used for child sacrifice to God Molech; came to represent area under eternal judgment of God... some evidence that there was a pile of garbage from the city constantly burning there

- c. Christ's teaching on hell... a place of eternal torment, totally separated from God

1) separation from God: "outer darkness" (Matthew 22:13) where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth... darkness implies total absence of God

2) torment: Luke 16:23 "rich man, in hell, being in torment, lifted up his eyes..."; here in Sermon on the Mount, consistently likens hell to fire

3) eternal: vs. 26 "I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny"; 26:41 "eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels"; 26:46 "Then these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."; Mark 9:48 Jesus says "Their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched."

- d. Why did Christ speak so much of hell? Out of love, to warn us, so that we would flee the wrath to come and be saved... we do no favors to anyone to omit this clear warning from the preaching of the gospel

4. NOTE: eternal judgment threatened for HEART ANGER, not just for murder

D. Christ's application: get rid of anger IMMEDIATELY!!

(vs. 23-24) "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

- 1. The Priority: Even before worship

- a. God has no delight in offerings from angry hearts
- b. God takes it as higher worship to reconcile someone to yourself
- c. TOP PRIORITY: “Leave your gift there in front of the altar...”

2. The Urgency: Before judgment comes

***(vs. 25-26) “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he 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 I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.*”**

- a. image here is of an impending court case or lawsuit
- b. before you ever enter that court room, you better settle things

3. The Warning Repeated: “You will not get out until you have paid the last penny.” No way to repay the debt, you’re in there forever

- a. eternal nature of the punishment made clear
- b. impossible to repay the debt... you can’t get out

Conclusion: Heart sins put your soul in danger of eternal judgment from God!! Not just the act of murder but the sin of anger

IV. Application:

A. Get Rid of Anger?? But HOW???

1. Scripture’s consistent teaching TO CHRISTIANS

Ephesians 4:31-32 “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”

Colossians 3:8 “But now you must rid yourself of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander...”

James 1:21 “Get rid of all moral filth, and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”

TAKING OUT THE TRASH!!!

2. the source of human anger... and how different our anger is from God’s

A. God's anger versus ours

1. God's wrath is a reality... in fact hell itself is the final expression of God's wrath
2. Christ exemplified this in His ministry: a whip to clear out the temple
3. God's anger is always tied to His perfect holiness and hatred of evil
4. BUT our anger is not like God's

James 1:19-21 "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. For man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you which can save you."

- a. James says that human anger, unlike God's, does not lead to righteousness
- b. human anger is like "moral filth"... strong words!!
- c. we are to "get rid of it"
- d. human anger usually tied not to our holiness, but to our sin nature
 - pride: someone insults you or tramples your reputation
 - inconvenience: someone makes your life harder
 - covetousness: you want something and someone has it or is standing in the way of your acquiring it
 - pleasure: someone or something diminishes your enjoyment or causes you disappointment

B. Get rid of anger... replace it with forgiveness and compassion

1. Scripture implies that a Christian has power to get rid of anger any time
2. You say, "That's impossible... if I'm angry, I'm angry and there's nothing I can do to stop!"

Illus. In midst of some bitter conflict with a family member, the phone rings, and you say, "Hello..."

3. Replace anger with compassion and forgiveness
 - a. use Proverbs to avoid or end conflicts

Proverbs 15:1 “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Proverbs 15:18 “A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.”

Proverbs 17:14 “Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.”

Proverbs 16:32 “Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.”

Proverbs 18:19 “An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.”

b. return to the Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit... those who mourn... the meek... those who hunger and thirst for righteousness... the merciful... the pure in heart... the peacemakers... the persecuted... WHERE IS ANGER IN THIS LIST???

c. let Christ’s forgiveness of you constrain you to be gracious to others

Ephesians 4:31-32 “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God has forgiven you.”

4. Own your personal responsibility to keep the peace

Matthew 5:23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you...” [i.e. HE’S ANGRY AT YOU...]

Matthew 18:15 “if your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.” [i.e. YOU’RE OFFENDED AT HIM...]

According to Jesus, wither way it’s your responsibility to be the peace maker...
RECONCILIATION IS SWEET... DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO BRING IT ABOUT

Ultimately: Law brings you helpless to Christ!!

1. Anger is a heart issue
2. Only Christ can save us from sin

3. Come to Him for salvation
4. Come to Him for sanctification