

"The Definition of a Murderer"

Mathew 5:21-26

Part 1

Introduction: Tonight in our study of the Sermon on the Mount we come to chapter 5:21-22. It is my desire to get right into the verses but before we do we need some very important back ground otherwise this passage will not be understood in the context it was given.

As Jesus preaches this sermon on the hillside we must keep in mind there were in His presence His disciples and the scribes and Pharisees. Let us also remember that the scribes and the Pharisees had poisoned the minds of the people with their diluted teaching of the law and the prophets. This thought makes me ask a question;

Why did the people of Jesus day not read the Scriptures for themselves?

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the people spoke Aramaic. The problem started during the Babylonian captivity. After the seventy years of captivity the people of Nehemiah's day had trouble with the Hebrew language. When the revival took place in Nehemiah chapter 8 and the Word of God was read the people could not understand the Word without someone to help them understand.

Nehemiah 8:7b-8

⁷ *...and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.*

⁸ *So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.*

The people had to have interpreters to understand the Hebrew writings. From this time forward the people struggled with the Hebrew language. Aramaic became the language of the people of Israel. Now you would think that when it came to the people of Jesus day that the scribes would have translated the Hebrew Bible into something that the people could understand but they didn't. The reason was because the religious leaders desired for the people to rely upon them for guidance. Therefore, the majority of the people were limited in their understanding of the Old Testament because they were dependent upon the rabbis for their instruction.

That brings us to our first point tonight.

I. The Teaching of the Rabbis

Notice Matthew 5:21

As we come to this verse the first thing we need to consider is the word "them". Who is Jesus referring to with this word?

He is not referring to the Old Testament writers but He is referring to the rabbis and their teaching. They rabbis taught this 6th Commandment.

Exodus 20:13

¹³ Thou shalt not kill.

The word "kill" in this verse means murder. It refers to the taking of innocent lives. Now just let me take a few moments and explain something that has been distorted in the teaching of the Word of God. This Commandment has nothing to do with capital punishment. The idea

behind the Commandment is murder or taking the life of innocent people.

Capital punishment is supported by the Bible regardless of what some people teach.

Genesis 9:5-6

⁵ And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

⁶ Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

Here are the words that God spoke to Noah when he stepped from the ark. But I know that some would say this was given before the Law in Exodus and so the Law in Exodus does away with this statement in the book of Genesis. I say in reply, "Read farther in Genesis 9."

Genesis 9:7-9

⁷ And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

⁸ And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

⁹ And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

The institution of capital punishment in verse 6 is part of the Noahic Covenant which God established with Noah.

Genesis 9:15-16

15 And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

Here in verse 16 we see that the covenant was an everlasting covenant meaning that it is still in effect. Romans 13 gives support capital punishment in the New Testament. But the point is that the 6th Commandment speaks only of taking innocent life. The Commandment is also supported in the book of Numbers.

Numbers 35:30-31

30 Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.

31 Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.

Let me also say that it has nothing to do with self defense when an innocent life is endangered by someone who is out to take the innocent life.

Proverbs 16:16-17

16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

Now let us get back to the text.

Those of old time had said that whoever is guilty of murder is in danger of judgment. Now the religious leaders would have agreed to this and maybe even said, "Amen" when Jesus made this statement. You see they had taught this and they had never murdered anyone and so this was one of the Commandments they held on to because it supported their self righteousness.

The religious leaders were correct with their teaching but there was one problem.

Notice Matthew 5:21 again.

The word "judgment" here is going to help us to see the weakness in their teaching. The "judgment" spoken of by the religious leaders was a reference to the civil court. Now that was a correct statement but the problem was there was a greater judgment that a murderer had to fear and that was the judgment of God. The religious leaders had left God out of the picture in their teachings. **Their teaching was correct but here was the problem, "They did not go far enough."**

Notice Matthew 5:20

Remember Jesus told them their righteousness had to exceed the righteousness of the religious leaders. The religious leaders were guilty of not teaching all of the Word of God and the reason they did this was because they were self righteous and to teach the entire Truth of God's Word would strip them of their self righteousness.

So because they had never murdered anyone they saw themselves as people that were above those who did carry out the act of murder. But according to God's standards they were guilty of murder.

II. The Teaching of Jesus

Notice Matthew 5:22

The first word in the verse tells us that there is a contrast which about to be revealed. In this verse Jesus is going to use 3 statements to completely strip the religious leaders of their self righteousness and at the same time He will strip everyone who has ever lived of any self righteousness they maybe be holding onto.

In this verse Jesus is going to go much farther than the rabbis went. They were far short of God's standards with their teaching. They focused on outward conduct but Jesus is about to get into the heart. The religious leaders seemed to forget the Truth that was taught elsewhere in the Bible. Let me show you.

Psalm 51:6a

⁶ Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:

Deuteronomy 6:4-6

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

⁵ And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

⁶ And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

Now Jesus addresses the sinfulness of the heart.

1. Anger is murder.

"Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment"

This is a convicting statement. We tend to think that if we have never carry out the act of murder we are much more upright than the person who does. That is exactly the way the religious leaders thought also. Jesus completely stripped them and all others of their self righteousness with this statement. Anger toward a "brother" is murder. The word brother here would have referred to any other Jewish person. The application for us is that it refers to anyone within the human race.

Anger comes from the heart and it rises up when someone offends us in some way. That very anger in God's eyes is the same as murder.

1 John 3:15

¹⁵ Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

In Matthew 5:22 Jesus is talking about an anger that you have when someone offends you and you are furious with them. You walk around with a great bitterness within you and you are boiling inside because of what they have done. You carry with you a grudge for weeks, months, or years. Jesus is saying that is the same as murder. If we think we are better than the one who has actually carried out the act we better look closely at what Jesus is saying here.

It is interesting here that the word "judgment" also refers to the civil court. The rabbis taught anyone guilty of carrying out the act of

murder was in danger of capital punishment. Jesus then tells them in God's eyes even the man or woman that has anger toward another person is worthy of the death penalty.

2. Cursing is murder.

Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council:

We do not know the meaning of the word "Raca" but I can assure you that the people of Jesus day knew what it meant. It seems to have been a term that was used as an insult to someone if you were frustrated with them. I personally believe it was the same as cursing someone out today. You have seen people get frustrated and make certain hand jesters and then throw out a statement that is meant to cut someone to the heart or meant to make them angry. It is a statement used by someone who despises another person. By the way every one of us is guilty of this because we all have at one time called someone a moron, idiot, or blockhead and I am being gracious with these examples. That is the same as looking at someone and saying, "Raca".

The idea behind what Jesus is saying here is if anyone ever makes a statement that is designed to cause hurt to someone it is the same as murder. Jesus said they are in danger of the council and the "council" here is the same as the civil court. In God's eyes and according to God's standards they too are worthy of capital punishment.

3. Slander is murder.

...but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

The idea here is that if out of hatred and anger you call someone a name that is designed to cause harm to them or their reputation it is the same as murder according to the standards of God.

Now the Bible tells us that some people are fools.

Psalm 14:1

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

There is nothing wrong with confronting a person like this and telling them they are foolish for what they believe. You are actually helping that individual. There is nothing wrong with a pastor telling people from the pulpit they are fools if they reject God and His Word.

The point Jesus is making is that when it is done out of anger or hatred and is designed to cause harm to a person's reputation then it is sin and it is even the same as murder in God's eyes.

The words "hell fire" here refer to eternal damnation in hell. You see Jesus did what the religious leaders would not do He went beyond the civil court judgment and the actual act of murder and addressed the heart of man to show the true condition of man.

You see murder comes from the heart.

Matthew 15:19

¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

Conclusion:

When Jesus spoke the words of these 2 verses He completely destroyed the self righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. And the destruction goes beyond them right into our lives. There is not one person here that is not guilty of murder. Let me remind you that no murderer can enter into God Kingdom.

Revelation 21:8

⁸ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Revelation 22:14-15

¹⁴ Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

¹⁵ For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

You may say you are not guilty of murder because you have never carried out the act but God says you are guilty because you have slandered, cursed, and hated therefore you have a murderer's heart within you. That is why we all need a Savior because we are all guilty.