

## **"Worshipping God"**

### **Matthew 5:23-26**

**Introduction:** As we approach our study of the Sermon on the Mount I need to remind you of something very important, the Sermon on the Mount does NOT show us the way of salvation. It instead tells us the way to live after we are saved. It describes the life of the believer controlled by the Holy Spirit. This will be very important to remember as we look at the passage that is before us tonight.

Last week we looked at Matthew 5:21-22 and in those verses we were made aware of the high standards of God. In those 2 verses Jesus made it very clear to those around Him as well as to us that God is concerned with what is in our hearts. When we think of murder we think of the very act of taking an innocent life. But Jesus went beyond the act and He addressed the attitude of the heart. In Matthew 5:21-22 He tells us that if we have been angry with someone without a cause, or if we have cursed someone, or if we have slandered someone we are guilty of murder in the eyes of God. You see murder comes from the heart and we are born with sinful hearts so therefore we are all guilty of murder in the eyes of God because we have all been angry, we have all cursed someone, and we have all slandered someone at one time or another. This is exactly why we needed a Savior. We are all guilty before God. The Law says, "Thou shalt not kill (murder)" and we have. We may not have carried out the act but we are still guilty just the same.

Now as we move on in our study Jesus is now going to deal with the subject of worship.

## I. The Offense (5:23-24)

### Notice 5:23

Now the first thing we need to notice here is the word "therefore". This is a connective to what Jesus had just spoken of in the preceding verses. In the preceding verses Jesus was pointing out that God is very concerned with our attitude toward other people and He is concerned with how we treat other people. We are not to be angry with our fellow man, we are not to curse or slander our fellow man. We are to do all we can to live peaceably with all people.

Therefore when we come to worship God we must be right with all people.

### Notice 5:23

Pay very close attention to this verse. He is not addressing a bitterness we have toward other people He is addressing a bitterness they have toward us. He says, "*If they have ought against thee.*"

### Notice 5:24

If this was the situation then the person bringing the offering to God was to leave the offering and go and make reconciliation with them.

Now before we get too far into this let me give you some background that will help you to grasp onto this.

Jesus was addressing people who were very familiar with the sacrificial system. They would come to the temple with their sacrifice and they would bring their sacrifice to the priest. They would then lay their hands on the sacrifice confessing their sin and the priest would then kill the animal.

Here Jesus is telling them that if they come with their sacrifice and before it is offered to God they remember there is someone that has something against them they were to stop the process and they were to go reconcile with that person and then come and worship. The idea behind this is that they had done something or said something that had offended someone and until that was addressed their worship was unacceptable to God. If they came to worship God and they remembered they had offended someone some way they were to immediately stop the sacrifice and go to that person, seek to reconcile, and then come back and worship God.

Let me put this in words that you can clearly understand.

**In order to be right with God they had to first be right with their fellow man.**

Now remember this is not the way of salvation it is the way of worship following salvation.

To those who stood there that day they would have understood what Jesus was saying because the very same subject was addressed by Isaiah.

**Isaiah 1:11-17**

*<sup>11</sup> To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.*

*<sup>12</sup> When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?*

*13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.*

*14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.*

*15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.*

*16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;*

*17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*

Isaiah later addressed the very same subject.

### **Isaiah 58:5-8**

*5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?*

*6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?*

*7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*

*<sup>8</sup> Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward.*

**Here is the point that we need to get; man cannot be right with God until he is first of all right with his fellow man.**

**Application:**

The application here is one that is sharp and pointed. We gather here 3 times a week to worship our God. We also worship Him through the week in our personal lives. We must understand that our worship of God is empty actions if we are not right with our fellow man. If there is someone in your life that you have offended (and it may have been years back) God is saying to you tonight you need to go and make it right with that person. Now please understand that you cannot control their heart so they may or they may not accept your apology. Our part is to do all we can to get the situation reconciled. If you come here and there is a person that God has brought to your mind that you have offended and you do not go and seek reconciliation then your worship means nothing to God. That is very sharp but that is exactly what Jesus was saying here. We cannot walk in fellowship with God until we walk in fellowship with our fellow man.

Now let me make something very clear. If they are offended because you spoke the Truth of God's Word or you stood for the Truth of God's Word then don't you dare apologize. That is not what is meant here. The idea is that we have offended them by a sharp remark or by certain actions that were directed toward them that were intentional. It was said or done out of anger or frustration or really out of our sinful heart.

## **Jeremiah 17:9-15**

*<sup>9</sup> Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;*

*<sup>10</sup> And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?*

*<sup>11</sup> Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.*

*<sup>12</sup> But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.*

*<sup>13</sup> And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not;*

*<sup>14</sup> Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.*

*<sup>15</sup> And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.*

Here in Jeremiah God is saying to these people, "You commit all this sin against your fellow man and then you come here thinking that your religious actions will cancel out your sin. You are wrong and there will be severe consequences for your actions!"

If we come here knowing there is someone that is offended by our actions or words and we think this "gathering together" will cancel out our offence we are dead wrong.

## II. The Danger (5:25-26)

### Notice 5:25

Here Jesus uses an illustration from His day that shows us how certain offences were dealt with. If you lived back then and you did something that caused harm to another person or if your actions required you to pay for something that you destroyed the person who was the victim was able to take you and the situation before the court system. There you would be brought before a judge and then you would be told to pay for the damages. They would do all they could to get the money from you for the damage you caused.

### Notice 5:25 again.

Jesus tells those around Him to settle the account before it gets to court. The words "in the way" refer to "on the way to see the judge". In other words He is telling them to deal with it now and don't allow it to continue. Remember the picture is that they have left their offering and went to reconcile the matter.

### Notice 5:26

If the officer could not get the money you would be thrown in prison until the entire account was settled. But if you were thrown into prison you would be unable to pay and so you would be there until you died.

So what does all of this mean for us?

### Application:

I believe there are several lessons that we can see within these 2 verses.

**1. If there is an offence that you have caused and you are aware of it you must deal with it before it causes you to be imprisoned.**

Now let me explain what I mean by this. If there is an offence between you and someone in your family, or someone at work, or someone at school or someone at church and you refuse to deal with the matter it will "imprison" you in the sense that it will limit your spiritual growth. You may think that it has no effect upon you but the truth is it will cause within you a bitterness that will continue to eat away at you like a cancer. Even above that it will keep you from fellowship with the Lord.

**Psalm 66:18**

*<sup>18</sup> If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:*

There are many people within the body of Christ today that are prisoners to bitterness because their pride keeps them from dealing with an offence they have caused in someone's life. They go through life with that root of bitterness lying just under the surface and every time someone does something or says something that offends them that bitterness raises its ugly head. They are prisoners to the bitterness and it is pride that keeps them from admitting it.

Jesus in this text tells us to deal with the matter before the imprisonment takes place. You know if there is someone that you have offended and if you have then and address the matter. If the bitterness has imprisoned you then when you deal with the situation you will then be set free.

**2. Deal with it before it costs you more than you care to pay.**

In Jesus' day those who would not pay what they owed were thrown in prison and stayed there years or even for life. The offence that could have been settled out of court cost them far more than they desired to pay. In the same way you can chose to ignore the offence that you have caused but you need to know that not only will it hinder your spiritual growth but it will one day be in the hands of the Judge to deal with.

## **2 Corinthians 5:10**

*<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

## **1 Corinthians 3:13-15**

*<sup>13</sup> **Every man's work shall be made manifest:** for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.*

*<sup>14</sup> If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*

*<sup>15</sup> If any man's work shall be burned, **he shall suffer loss:** but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

If you refuse to deal with the offence then you will suffer the loss of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God will not accept the sacrifices you offer while you refuse to deal with the offence.

## **Conclusion:**

If there is someone who has been offended by you then push the pride aside and go seek reconciliation with that person.