

Jesus: Let me clarify this 'murder' thing...

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[0 : 00] And as they're leaving, I just thought we could all be honest about something this morning.

All of us get angry. All of us deal with anger. And so, you might be like Kilauea. You know what Kilauea is?

It's the volcano in Hawaii that is constantly erupting. You have an erupting kind of anger. People know it when you're anger.

Stuff gets spewed out. Lava flows. Things rumble. Maybe your anger is Kilauea-like. Volcanic. Obvious.

Or maybe your anger shows up more like Yellowstone. Yellowstone National Park.

[1 : 02] Beautiful, serene. Or so it appears until you start thinking about why is Old Faithful here? Why are there so many warm springs around here?

And then you start to realize underneath this very serene place is one of the biggest volcanoes on earth. Many of us simmer in our anger.

It's just below the surface. And it gets vented once in a while. So some of us are erupting volcanoes. Some of us are just kind of simmering under the surface.

But all of us have anger. Now this morning, I just want to make sure, as we turn to the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 5, He's going to say some things that are incredibly searching.

They're going to search your heart. He's going to expose something in us all. And what you need to know up front is, Jesus is not going to call anger a personality quirk.

[2 : 12] And Jesus isn't going to say, hey, all of us are human. All of us get angry. So it's just a common human emotion. So it's okay. Jesus is going to bring anger under the sixth commandment.

He's going to call it murderous. It's not okay. At the heart of murder is anger.

And anger is this ember that when aflamed can result in all sorts of destructive actions.

So would you turn with me now to Matthew chapter 5. We're going to look at verses 21-26. Jesus says, You've heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.

But I say to you that everyone who's angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council.

[3 : 25] And whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you're offering your brother at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go.

First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you're going with him to court. Lest your accuser hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard and you be put in prison.

Truly I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. This morning what Jesus does is he shines the floodlight of the sixth commandment on our hearts.

And what he exposes in our hearts is a murderous anger. A murderous anger that will erupt into hateful words.

Destructive words. And so this morning, what Jesus helps us to see is our anger in light of the sixth commandment. He has come not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.

[4 : 39] And so he helps us to understand the true meaning and scope of the sixth commandment. He helps us to see our anger for what it really is. What Jesus is going to do here is he's going to expose our murderous anger and then call us to be kingdom peacemakers.

It's amazing what he does. And so this morning, I want you to see three things. First is this. I want to remind you who the I is of the one who said, but I say to you.

We've got to remember who's actually speaking these words. And then the second thing is the true meaning of the sixth commandment. We'll camp out in verse 22 for that.

And then we're going to see the kingdom implications. This exceeding righteousness that Jesus calls us to. And that's laid out in verses 23 through 26 where Jesus calls us to be peacemakers. Let's look at this first step. The I. Who is this one speaking? Verse 22, if you'll notice.

[5 : 57] But I say to you, it's red ink. Jesus is speaking. Now, if you are familiar with the book of Matthew, up until this point, Matthew's been making a case about the one speaking.

If you just turn in your Bible to Matthew 1, chapter 1, verse 1, we see the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David. David. He is going to...

He's the king. The long-awaited king. Son of David. The son of Abraham. The one in whom God is going to bless all the nations of the earth.

He is Emmanuel. God with us. That's chapter 1, verse 23. He's the one that is worshipped by pagan kings in 2.11.

He's the one that withstood the temptations of the devil with the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. He did what none of us could do. And so what you need to know of this one speaking, this one who said, but I say, this is God incarnate speaking.

[7 : 13] And He's speaking to us this morning. And so when you step back and you start realizing, okay, the king has come. What we have here in the Sermon on the Mount is His inaugural address.

It's Him speaking to His citizens and declaring to them, this is how you live for me now. This is His manifesto of the kingdom.

And so the Sermon on the Mount, what we have in chapters 5, 6, and 7 is a sermon. Last week I tried to show you that the Beatitudes are the introduction and the close of the sermon starts in chapter 7, verse 13, where He calls us to two ways to live.

He calls us to decision. And in between the body of the text, Jesus says, open up your Bibles to the Old Testament and here's my point.

The Old Testament is fulfilled by Me. He preaches Himself from the Old Testament. And so Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets in His person.

[8 : 21] He's the Messiah. But He also fulfills it in His preaching. He brings the true meaning of the Old Testament.

What the Law and Prophets really meant to say. And that's what we see Him doing right here. In the next couple sections, if you just look at Matthew 5, starting in verse 21, you probably have a heading over it that says, Anger.

And then if you continue to look, there's another heading called Lust, Divorce, Oaths, Retaliation, Love Your Enemies. And in each one, there's this contrasting statement that leads that off.

Jesus says something to the extent of, you've heard that it was said about adultery, but I say, anyone who lusts in his heart.

And so each time, each of these six examples, Jesus is bringing, fulfilling the true meaning of God's Law.

[9 : 27] He is saying, what the Pharisees and scribes are teaching you, disregard. Listen to what I have to say. I am the Incarnate Word with all authority to clarify this written Word of God.

And so, this morning, we're looking at the first of these six examples. You've heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment, but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

Remember the one speaking here. This is God incarnate, and He's speaking with all authority on what murder really means.

And to that end, let's move to the true meaning of you shall not murder. Jesus is essentially saying, let me clarify this murder thing for you.

Would you flip back in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 20? I'm guessing that you approach the command, you shall not murder, kind of like the way I approach, you shall not murder.

[10 : 42] And it's the way the Jews of the time approached, you shall not murder. So let's go to Exodus chapter 20, the Ten Commandments, and let's do a little diagnostic test. Okay?

How are you guys doing? How are you guys doing? Are you worshiping other gods? Do you have any other gods before you? And you might say, by and large, no. I'm a follower of Jesus.

I'm a worship of the triune God of the Bible. I have my moments, but generally speaking, I'm living for the one true God. Check. So the second question is, are you making any carved images of your God?

Are you building anything in your house to worship at? And you say, no. Check. And the next one, you shall not take the name of the Lord in your vein.

Are you using Jesus' name as a cuss word? No. Check. Next one. Remember the Sabbath. Are you taking one day of rest?

[11 : 43] Rest every week. Are you resting? You're like, most of the time. Check. Then we go to the next one. Honor your father and your mother. And you're like, well, when I was young, not really, but now I'm doing everything I can to help them.

Doing everything I can to honor them. And then we get to verse 13. It says, you shall not murder. And in our minds, we think, I haven't killed anybody. Check.

And what Jesus is saying here is like, no. Slow down. Because this command has more to do with just shedding blood.

This makes a claim on the anger in your heart. But, at the time of Jesus teaching this, the current teaching of the day was putting some restrictions on the sixth commandment.

The Jews of the day were limiting the sixth commandment to just the physical act of murder. Of homicide. Jesus is not addressing here death and war.

[12 : 56] He's not talking about capital punishment. What he's getting at is intentional homicide. And so the Jews of the day were saying, well, hey, it's just limited to the physical act of shedding blood.

That's the first restriction they were doing. And the second restriction they were doing is the kind of judgment. The consequence of shedding blood.

And you see that showing up back in Matthew. Matthew 5 where Jesus says, you've heard that it said you shall not murder and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.

The judgment there is what was being taught. It was kind of an expansion of Numbers 35 verses 30 and 31 where the focus was if you're a murderer, you go before a human court and there needs to be two witnesses to prove your guilt.

And so the thought was limited to human judgment. Human court. So the restrictions taking place at the time were a physical act and the consequence was focused on a human counsel, a human judgment.

[14 : 12] We all do that. We all tend to think about murder that way, don't we? We all tend to think about it as the shedding of blood and if we do, then we've got to stand before a judge and jury someday.

In walks Jesus. In walks the fulfiller of the law and the prophets. And what He's about to say is going to extend the reach of the sixth commandment.

Look what He says. You have heard that it was said to those of old you shall not murder and whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

What Jesus is doing here is extending the reach of the sixth commandment past the physical act and into our hearts. And He's addressing anger in our hearts.

That destructive impulse in us that reacts to when we are personally offended. It's like right there. That's murder.

[15 : 22] That's murder at heart. That's murderous intent. You're looking to destroy. He's getting at anger as something that is a destructive attitude within us.

Anger is at the heart of murder. That's what Jesus is getting at. And so He's putting this on a continuum. And so if murder is the culmination of something, anger is the seed of it.

It's the starting point. It's when we're personally offended. Where our hearts go. And it can result in divisions and disunity.

Anger can be dangerous. Anger can be deadly. Not only does Jesus extend the reach of murder to include this thing in our hearts called anger which we've all experienced.

Jesus extends the reach of this prohibition to murder to include your speech. Look back at verse 22.

[16 : 37] But I say to you that everyone who's angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council. You see that word insults?

There's actually a word underneath there. The word is raka. And what it is is it's a word that basically if we use it today would be like blockhead.

Doofus. And what it is is it's a word that is used to attack someone's intellect. And so essentially this insult is a particular insult.

It's calling someone stupid. stupid. And so what we see here is anger in our hearts progressing to our speech.

Out of the heart the mouth speaks. And so when he calls someone stupid it's murderous. You're looking to injure them.

[17 : 39] Harm them. Reduce their worth. Continuing on verse 22 we read this. Whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire.

So we've looked at that word raka which means stupid. This word fool is getting at a different aspect of someone. Their character. You're calling someone a scoundrel.

It's literally character assassination. So Jesus is saying when you call someone raka stupid. When you call someone a scoundrel those words are murderous words.

They are aimed to destroy. They're aimed to hurt. To reduce somebody. Jesus is getting at a progression of sin.

Out of the heart the mouth speaks. Have you ever said something in your mind or heard someone said I wish him good as dead. Have you ever heard anybody say that?

[18 : 47] Maybe that's come out of your mouth before. You see the murderous intent behind that? I wish this person off the face of the earth. See what's going on there through this grid Jesus is giving us?

Jesus doesn't just extend the reach of the sixth commandment to our hearts and to our speech he extends the consequence of it. He moves beyond human eyes.

Look at that last piece he says in verse 22 whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire. Literally the fire of Gehenna.

Gehenna was a dump outside of Jerusalem and it was horrific. The worst stuff was put there. There were smoldering fires. Corpses of criminals were put in Gehenna.

It was a nasty, nasty place. And so it became synonymous with outcasts, destruction, punishment. And what Jesus has in mind here is divine judgment.

[20 : 00] He's talking about hell. anger. The consequence of angry hearts moving towards angry speech that are aimed to destroy people, it's murderous.

And it bears not only a human consequence, but a divine consequence. You're offending God. Your sinful anger is provoking God's righteous anger.

You might be sitting in your seat right now and you're like, oh Jesus, come on, let up. Seriously. Isn't there this thing called righteous indignation?

How many have gone there so far? But what about that? is Jesus absolutizing all anger right here?

Is He saying that all anger for all time that comes out of every human heart is murderous? Is He saying that? He's not saying that. Because elsewhere in our Bibles, like Ephesians chapter 4, 26 and 27, we're told to be angry and do not sin.

[21 : 16] Quoting a psalm. I mean, we even see in Jesus' very life, the God-man, He never, in His anger and He got angry, He never sinned.

God the Father, His wrath is a righteous, holy wrath so that we know that there is this thing called righteous indignation. And so Jesus isn't absolutizing here, but He is generalizing.

He's saying by and large, our anger, we flare up against personal offense. We take things personally.

And we go raka. We go you fool. We have murderous intent as a result. It's that incendiary reaction when we perceive a wrong done to us.

And Jesus, so Jesus is saying here, you know, there are exceptions, but by and large, all of us know that our anger is an anger that is unrighteous.

[22 : 27] So Jesus isn't absolutizing, but He is generalizing. Just a word of caution.

If you find yourself in a situation where you've got a cause, it's a righteous cause, and it makes you angry, and you know that this anger is close to God's heart, like God is angry over this, be careful. Even your righteous indignation can be unstable. It can result in thinking of people as villains. Be careful.

all anger is dangerous. So what I want to show you here is this. In Jesus expanding the sixth commandment, this is what He's done.

He's brought His ten pound messianic sledgehammer to the sixth commandment, and He has just smashed down these walls that have been built up around it that were never supposed to be there.

[23 : 35] And He's saying, no, don't limit the sixth commandment to just the physical slaying of blood. Don't limit it just to the consequences with man.

No, no, no. Let me smash these down so that you can see this commandment and feel the claim it makes on you. So murder is not just an outward physical act.

It has to do with your heart. What goes on the inside. Your attitude towards others. Murder is not just the shedding of blood. It includes this wounding speech that diminishes the worth of people. It's the literal character assassination in which we kill people with our words. And it's just not the consequence of a human court. Our unrighteous anger provokes God's righteous wrath.

And so the Pharisees had restricted the full impact of the sixth commandment. And here Jesus is the fulfiller of all the Old Testament saying this is what it really means. Jesus is fulfilling the true purpose of the law.

[24 : 51] The law exposes the sinfulness of our sin. salvation. It reveals our hearts for what they truly are.

It shows us that we may do an initial glance through the Ten Commandments and think we're okay, we've never murdered anybody. But as we hear Jesus speaking here, we need to realize actually we have transgressed the sixth commandment.

Why is anger wrong? It's murderous in its intent. It's destructive in its intent. But as David read earlier, what the law also does, it just not exposes our sin, it leads us to Jesus.

It exposes our need for our Savior. So listen to this. This is what's so amazing about the one speaking. Not only did He come to fulfill in His person, in His preaching, He came to fulfill, He lived a perfect life.

He never sinned in His anger. And He went to the cross and died and bore the righteous wrath of God for the murderous hearts of those who would one day come and believe in Him.

[26 : 23] You and me. Jesus died for murderers. Whether that's a physical act or it's the attitude of your heart or it's the words that you say.

Jesus bore the fire of hell for the anger of our hearts. peace. Do you know what the result of that was?

Peace. Peace. No more wrath. No more hostility. Jesus brought peace.

The last move I want to show you in this passage is in verses 23-26. I'm going to focus mainly on 23-24. But Jesus here calls us to a righteousness that exceeds the Pharisees and the scribes. Jesus calls us to be peacemakers. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God. The two examples He brings up are a worship service and on your way to small claims court.

[27 : 44] So in verses 23 and 24 we read this. So if you are offering your gift at the altar, notice where this is taking place? This is taking place in the temple.

People bringing their gift to the altar to worship God. And then what Jesus points out is, so if you're coming to a church service, if you're about to put your money into the plate, if you're bringing your gift, and then He says, if you remember that your brother has something against you.

So you've come to the church service and you remember that there's a brother or sister that has something against you. Now, that something against you is somewhat vague.

Jesus isn't being clear and He's intentionally being vague because that leaves open the door for this. if I'm coming to the service and I'm remembering someone who I have gotten angry with and offended, or if I remember someone who's gotten angry with me and given me offense, it can be either.

Someone with something against me. What am I to do? What are you to do? You're to go to them. You're to put down your gift and you are to go to them.

[29 : 13] Go to them for what purpose? To make peace with them. Now, I'm not sure if you picked up on this, but there's an urgency with what Jesus is talking about.

I mean, seriously, worshiping God in His sanctuary is like wonderful. Big priority, right? Why is God saying, don't give me your gift.

Go to your brother. Why would God tell us to do that? Here's why. God values the unity of His people. God puts a huge premium on the unity of His people.

God wants us to be united with each other in our worship of Him. And if there's something out of sorts between any of us, He says, go fix that first and then come worship Me.

God is very concerned about the effects of anger in our midst. Christ. It can bring discord and that discord is like a disease to the body of God.

[30 : 42] So the Lord Jesus is saying, be quick, make this a priority. If you become aware of someone with something against you, you go to them. Go to them to reconcile with them.

Go to them saying things like, I know I got angry with you last week and I know that hurt you. Would you please forgive me? Or, it's, did I do something to provoke you to anger?

And if so, I am so sorry. I want to be at peace with you. So this morning, let me ask you, as you're here, together, gathered in the worship of God, is there someone God is bringing to your mind that has something against you?

Have you offended them or have they offended you? In Jesus' economy, it doesn't matter. Go to them. Make peace with them. Seek peace with them.

There's another group of people in here. You may have already gone to someone. You already remembered someone who has something against you. And you've already gone to them.

[31 : 54] But they're not interested in pursuing peace with you. They're not reciprocating that. What does that mean for you now? Does that mean you cannot worship God with God's people?

No, it doesn't. Come into the house of the Lord. You've done what you can do. Now, cry out to the Lord to bring a fullness of peace to that relationship.

Wait on the Lord. Wait on the Lord. And worship Him as you wait. Ask Him to soften hearts.

So the first example Jesus gives of, hey, you're not a murderer, you're a peacemaker in God's house, with God's family, and it shows up in how you prioritize it on coming on Sunday morning.

The other area that He points to is small claims court. He says, come to terms quickly with your accuser while you're going with him.

[33 : 00] And then in verse 26, He reveals the nature of it. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. Money, lending money, borrowing money between people can cause all sorts of issues.

And what Jesus is saying here is, hey, if you owe somebody money or someone owes you money and it's getting in the way of your relationship, if it's going to go to court, go to them.

You initiate. You initiate. And you bring peace to that. Come to terms quickly with your accuser.

In both of these cases, what we see here is Jesus calling us to a righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees. He calls us to make peace with people who we may have offended somehow.

Or they have offended us. And what Jesus is showing us in both of these instances, be quick to peace. It affects your worship.

[34 : 11] It affects your witness. Be quick to peace. This morning, I try to remind you who's speaking that this is Jesus the King.

He has all authority to clarify what the Sixth Commandment really means. And He did for us. He showed us the true meaning and scope of the Sixth Commandment.

It extends into our hearts. It extends into our words. It extends the consequence to being an offense to God Himself. An offense that only Jesus can pay on our behalf.

He bore God's righteous wrath for your sinful anger. peace. And finally, He calls us to be peacemakers.

This exceeding righteousness to make peace with those whom we've offended. To initiate peace just as God in Christ initiated peace with us.

[35 : 19] peace peace peace These words of Jesus show us how Jesus fulfills the law and the prophets and they show us what a righteousness that exceeds the Pharisees looks like.

And if you're like me, you hear Jesus speak this and your response is Lord help me. Help me walk in Your ways. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, these are searching words You speak from the sixth commandment. And they reveal our hearts for what they are.

And we're amazed that God, You love us despite the murderous ways of our hearts. Thank You for coming for us. Thank You for becoming, taking God's wrath for our sin.

God, would You make us peacemakers? Would You use Your Word here to spur us on to be at peace with brothers and sisters and even with debtors?

[36 : 39] God, make us light. God, make us salt in a decaying and dark world. In Jesus' name, Amen.