

# As Quickly As Possible

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Preacher: Darrell Johnson

[ 0 : 00 ] May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable to you, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

I love the preacher on the mount. I love Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, and so do most of you in this room.

There simply is no one else like him. Emmanuel, God with us, Messiah, living Lord, healer, friend of sinners.

I love him for so many reasons. Chief among them, of course, is that he loves me. Long before I came to love him, he loved me.

And you, long before you came to know him, he loved you. We love because he first loved us. He loves me and he wants a relationship with me.

[ 1 : 11 ] Imagine that. The great preacher on the mount wants a relationship with me. And he loves you and he wants a relationship with you and thereby a relationship with his father and with his spirit.

He wants this relationship so much. That in his love, he does everything needed to make it possible.

He deals with all the obstacles in the way, especially the chief obstacle, my sin and your sin. On another mount, on the mount of Calvary.

He does everything that needs to be done in the cross. It is finished, is his cry. Everything that needs to be done about my sin. In order for him to have a relationship with me has been done.

This is the great fact that we joyfully celebrate at the Lord's table. This cup is the new covenant in my blood. He says it again and again because we need to hear it again.

[ 2 : 13 ] My shed blood takes care of everything that needs to be done in order to have a relationship with me. As we sang earlier in the service, he to rescue me from danger interposed his precious blood.

I love him. I love this preacher on the mount because he first loved me. And I love him because in this relationship he has established, he watches over my soul.

He pays attention to the movements of my soul. He's attentive to the deeper movements of my soul. He wants to heal my soul.

He wants to restore my soul. He wants my soul to thrive. And so he speaks to my soul. And to your soul. And to every soul in this city.

He speaks into my soul. You are to give him the name Jesus. The angel said to Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father.

[ 3 : 21 ] Why? For, says the angel, he himself will save his people from their sins. Jesus. He himself will save his people from their sins.

The name Jesus means he himself will save his people from their sins. On the cross. Yes. But also in his speaking. He speaks to save us from our sins.

He speaks to heal our souls from our sins. Which is what he is doing big time in his sermon on the mount. He loves me.

He loves you. And in his love he wastes no time. He gets right down to business and starts working on our souls. He grabs hold of our souls and he starts healing them.

That is, he starts to bring us into the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven. In him and because of him, the kingdom of heaven is breaking in upon the earth.

[ 4 : 29 ] And this kingdom, says Jesus, is all about righteousness. Which I tried to show last week is a relational word. Righteousness is about relationship. Righteousness is right relationship.

Right relatedness. In his sermon on the mount, Jesus is revealing one of the deepest passions of his life. He comes to make relationship happen.

As the apostle Paul declares in his letter to the Romans. The gospel is all about God's way of writing all our relationships. Relationship with God. Relationship with the earth.

Relationship with ourselves. And relationship with one another. Jesus' passion is to bring us into this full orb. Right relatedness. For which we were originally created.

And so he speaks. He speaks. He speaks to heal our souls. He speaks to restore our souls. You have heard it was said.

[ 5 : 27 ] But I say to you. Six times in his sermon. You have heard it was said. But I say to you. And each time what he then says stops us in our tracks. That's putting it mildly, isn't it?

Each time what he says unsettles us. It unnerves us. Indeed, it often undoes us. Why then does he speak this way?

Why does he speak so harshly? Or so hard? To heal us. He loves us. And he's going to go right to the heart of the matter.

He undoes us. In order to heal us. To move us into the relational wholeness of the kingdom of God. You have heard it was said.

You shall not murder. And whoever murders shall be liable to the court. But I say to you. Whoever is angry with their brother or sister.

[ 6 : 25 ] He says what he says. To save us from our sins. And to heal our souls. Now, before grappling with what Jesus goes on to say.

And the rest of the text before us. I want you to know that I'm aware. Of many of the challenges Jesus' words raise. In particular. I'm aware of the many.

But what if. Circumstances we could raise. In light of what Jesus says to us. But what if. I really ought to be angry.

What if it is right for me to be really angry. But what if. The other person will not acknowledge that there is a problem. What if the other will not respond to my emails or phone calls.

What if the other has moved far away. What if the other has already died. I sadly. Have a number of. Strained and broken relationships.

[ 7 : 24 ] About which. I have tried to do what Jesus tells us to do. I sadly have a number of such relationships. About which. I have not yet.

Tried hard enough. To do what Jesus tells us to do. Because. I'm afraid. Of an explosion of anger. In the other. Or in me.

But I do not want to miss out. On the reason why Jesus speaks the way he does in this text. I do not want to let any of the.

But what if. Issues get in the way. I do not want to miss out. On my soul. Being healed. So let us follow.

The preacher on the mount. More deeply. Into his sermon on the mount. And to help us do so. Let me just begin by making some observations. The first has to do with the word translated angry.

- [ 8 : 25 ] Verse 22. Whoever is angry with their brother or sister. In the Greek New Testament. There are at least two different words. Used that we translate. Anger or angry. The first is the word.

Thumos. T-H-U-M-O-S. Thumos. William Barclay says. That the Greek said. Thumos. Is like the flame. Which comes from dried straw.

Easily ignited. But just as easily. And quickly. Extinguished. The other word is. Orge. O-R-G-E. And of this word.

William Barclay says. It is the anger that has become inveterate. Long lived anger. The anger of the man. Who nurses his wrath to keep it warm.

Yuck. It is the second word. Orge. That Jesus uses in his sermon. Actually. He uses the verb form.

- [ 9 : 23 ] It's in the present tense participial form. Meaning. That he's not referring to a moment of anger. Anger. Rather. He's referring to living in a state of anger. Caring anger.

Nursing anger. Which is to say. That Jesus is not saying. That anger is always wrong. There are often good reasons.

To be angry. And we see this in Jesus himself. And many times in the gospel record. He gets really angry. I mean. Really angry. The issue is.

What we do with the anger. And Jesus is speaking about this anger. That we allow to stew. He's talking about the anger. That morphs into holding grudges.

He's talking about the anger. That soon and suddenly. Wants to see the other person hurt. In some sort of way. Now the apostle Paul. Understands this distinction.

- [ 10 : 19 ] In his letter to the Ephesians. He says. Be angry. But do not sin. How? Do not let the sun. Go down. On your anger. The person. Jesus says.

Is subject to judgment. Is the person. Who is allowing their anger. To linger. Past the setting. Of the sun. He's speaking. About this inner decision. To let the anger.

Fest. And stew. The second observation. Has to do with this word. Translated. Raka. Verse 22. Whoever says to their brother.

Or sister. Raka. Now the word. Is likely related. To the Aramaic. Which means. Empty. And so. Many people. Translate this word. Raka. As empty headed.

Or stupid. Or idiot. To use the word. Raka. Of another human being. Is to call into question. That other human being. Mental competency.

- [ 11 : 16 ] To use their word. Raka. Is to insult. The person's. Intellect. With the implication. Of course. Being that. We are. Intelligent.

And that. Unlike the other. We are. Mentally competent. The third observation. Has to do with the word. You fool. Verse 22. Whoever says.

You fool. Now. This is a Greek word. More. From which we get. The English word. Moron. And it has both. Religious and moral. Connotations. It's used of those.

Who denied. The existence of God. And live an immoral life. Scholars also suggest. The word is related. To the word. That means. Rebel. Or outcast. To use the word.

More. Of another human being. Is to call into question. Their moral. Competency. To use the word. More. More. Is to insult. The person's.

- [ 12 : 09 ] Character. The implication being. Of course. That we are. Morally competent. And that. Unlike them. We have our. Moral character. Together. Now. The 19th century.

Scholar. A.B. Bruce. Summarizes. These linguistic. Facts. Raka. Expresses. Contempt. For a man's. Head. You stupid. Where.

Moray. Expresses. Contempt. For the man's. Heart. You scoundrel. Okay. So. What's the big deal? So.

What's the big deal. About. Using. Those kinds of words. The fourth observation. There is an escalation. In what Jesus. Is developing. There's an escalation.

From serious. To more serious. Many people. Have observed. That there's this escalation. From serious. Attitude. To more serious.

[ 13 : 05 ] Attitude. From serious. Act. To more serious. Act. And from serious. Consequence. To more serious. Consequence. Jesus.

Starts. With this. Decision. To nurse. The anger. And then. He moves on. To this. The casual. Remark. Raka. You empty headed. And then. Moves on.

To the deliberate. Public insult. You fool. Is that not the way. It goes. In our souls. Am I the only one.

That's going to admit. To this. Isn't that the way. It goes in our souls. Jesus knows us. Knows us really well. And he loves us.

He knows us really well. He begins with nursing our anger. And then moves on to those. Offhand. Sarcastic remarks. And then moves on. To the desire to insult the person publicly.

[ 14 : 05 ] Now what arrests us. And what Jesus is developing in this text. Is that he moves from the serious act. Or attitude. To a more serious consequence.

There's this escalation. To be more blunt. Jesus says there's an escalation. In the degree of judgment. Nursing anger. Says Jesus.

Makes one subject. To judgment. Before the city council. Uttering casual. Sarcastic remarks. Makes one. Open to judgment. Before the supreme court.

And speaking the overt. Public insult. Makes one subject. To the judgment. Of hell. And aside. You probably know. That. Jesus.

More than anyone else. In the bible. Speaks about hell. He who loves us. Speaks about hell. And we'll. We'll tackle that. Subject in another context.

[ 15 : 03 ] Now. Now we can better. Understand. What Jesus. Said. Why Jesus. Says. What he says. In this text. He's drawing out. The original intent.

Of the six. Of the ten commandments. Last Sunday. I suggested. That Earl Palmer. Is right. That he looks. At Jesus. Use of the law. And says. That Jesus. Sees the law.

The ten commandments. As an arc. And that what Jesus. Is doing. In the sermon. On the mount. In his six. You have heard it was said. But I say to you. He's drawing. Out this arc. Into the circle.

For which it's intended. The sixth commandment. You shall not murder. Many people. Have called. The sixth commandment. God's. Protest.

Against. Inhumanity. Jesus. Picks up the protest. He deepens the protest. He heightens the protest. He widens the protest.

[ 15 : 58 ] You have heard it was said. You shall not murder. But I say to you. Whoever is angry. Now here we need to be careful. Jesus is not saying.

That nursing anger. And sarcasm. And insult. Are murder. Anger is anger. Anger. Sarcasm is sarcasm. Insult is insult. Anger is not murder.

Sarcasm is not murder. Insult is not murder. Yes. As John Stott pointed out. Anger and insult. Are ugly symptoms. Of the desire. To get rid of another person.

And. Sarcasm. And insult. Are forms. Of character. Assassination. And. The Jewish Talmud. Reminds us. That when someone.

Is shamed. In public. The color. Of their face. Recedes. And like a dying. Person. They become very pale. You've seen it happen. We.

[ 16 : 57 ] If you watch. The news a lot. If you're a news junkie. Like me. You saw it happen. In the Republican debate. When one of the Republican. Candidates. Took on. One of the CNN. Broadcast. Persons.

You might have remembered that. Maybe did it for the right reason. Maybe not. But that poor CNN person. Just became pale. But Jesus is not making.

A one-to-one correspondence. Between anger. Sarcasm. Insult. And murder. Rather. He's drawing out. The arc. Of the commandment.

He's drawing the arc. Into the circle. He's drawing out. The fullness. Of God's protest. Against. Inhumanity. And in the process.

He is healing our souls. He's telling us. That behind. And beneath. And prior. To the act of murder. Is the decision. To nurse. Anger. Which leaks.

[ 17 : 53 ] Out. In sarcastic. Remarks. And public insult. He's telling us. That homicide. The ultimate act. Of dishumanity. Comes out.

Of this. Deep. Reservoir. Of unresolved. Anger. Actually. He's saying. Even more than that. He's saying. That just.

As murder. Is displeasing. To God. And damaging. Of relationship. And deserving. Of judgment. So is nursing. Of anger. He's saying.

That just. As murder. Is displeasing. To God. Damaging. To relationship. And deserving. Of judgment. So too. Is the uttering. Of sarcastic. Remarks. He's saying.

That just. As murder. Is displeasing. To God. Damaging. Of relationship. And deserving. Of judgment. So too. Is publicly. Insulting. A brother. Or sister. Sticks.

[ 18 : 48 ] And stones. Will break. My bones. But names. Will never. Hurt me. Totally. Untrue. And we knew. That as kids. Names.

Will hurt you. They hurt badly. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Puts it best. The ancient law. You shall not murder.

Tells us. That the other person's. Is life. The other person's. Life. Is a boundary. We dare not cross. Isn't that good? You shall not murder. It says.

That the other person's. Life. Is a boundary. You dare not cross. Bonhoeffer. Goes on to say. That Jesus. The law giver. Then says. Even anger. Is enough. To cross the border.

The boundary. Still more. The casual. Angry word. Raka. And most of all. The deliberate. Public insult. Of your brother. You're fool. You cross. Over the boundary. Of a person's life.

[ 19 : 48 ] Righteousness. Right. Relationship. Right. Relatedness. Jesus. Speaks. The way. He does. To bring us. Into. Righteousness. Into.

Relational. Wholeness. Therefore. He says. Verse. 23. Therefore. And he goes on. To give us. Two examples.

From real life. By which. He shows us. How to deal. With this. Anger. How to. Deal. With the deep. Stuff. That we don't. Want to face.

How. And how is that. What. What is that way of dealing with it. Deal with it. That's what he says.

Just deal with it. As quickly as possible. Don't let it fester. Deal with the anger. As quickly as possible. Because. You do not want.

- [ 20 : 44 ] The sun. To go down. On your anger. And thereby. Let your anger. Start messing. With your soul. More accurately.
- He says. Deal. With the person. As quickly as possible. More accurately. Yet. Will. To deal. With the person. As quickly.
- As possible. The first example. He gives. Comes from the religious realm. The second. From the secular realm. And both of them. Are saying the same thing. Do whatever it takes.
- To get right. And do it. As quickly. As you can. So listen again. To the first example. It's in verses. Twenty three. And twenty four. Therefore. If you are offering.
- Your gifts. At the altar. And then remember. That your brother. Or sister. Has something. Against you. Leave your gift. In front of the altar. First go. Be reconciled. Your brother. And sister.
- [ 21 : 38 ] And then come. And offer the gift. Leave worship. Note the phrase. Your brother. Or sister. Has something.
- Against you. The word. Something. In the Greek. Is this little word. T. T. I. If there is something. However little. Between you.
- And the other. Go. Be reconciled. Why? Because. It is the little. Something.
- That eats away. And slowly. Causes the break. In relationship. But Jesus. We say. What if I hadn't done. Anything wrong?
- But Jesus. What if it's not my fault? But Jesus. We say. They. They do not get it. They ought to come.
- [ 22 : 35 ] That person. Ought to come. And apologize to me. To which Jesus says. I know. I know. But something. Is wrong.
- And I want you. To act. And to try. To get it right. If you are at the altar. And there you remember. Leave.
- Leave. Leave the worship service. Is not worship. The greatest of human acts. Is not the chief end of humanity. To glorify God. And enjoy him. Forever.
- What. Possible. Thing. However noble. Can take precedence. Over worshiping God. Leave. Leave your gift. First go. Be reconciled.
- And then come back. There may be times in our lives. When he will tell us. Literally. To do so. But I think he speaks this way. To get our attention. Leave. First go.
- [ 23 : 31 ] Be reconciled. Then come back. Why? Because. As long as we are not willing. That's. That's a key word. As long as we are not.
- Willing. To go. And reconcile. We are hampering. Authentic worship. You know what I mean. You sit there.
- And you can't even sing the song. Because the stuff is there. Jesus is unfolding. The mystery of righteousness.
- All our relationships. Are profoundly intertwined. Our relationship with God. Is profoundly intertwined. With others. Forgive us our deaths. As we forgive them. Jesus will teach us to pray.
- If I. Will not. Seek peace. With you. I am injuring. Not only the relationship. Between me. And you. I am injuring. The relationship. Between me. And God.
- [ 24 : 28 ] Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Again. If I am not willing. To seek peace. With you. I am not only. Erecting a barrier. Between you. And me. I am. Erecting a barrier. Between me.
- And God. My friend. Dale Bruner. Puts it this way. The Lord. Does not want to talk. To a disciple. Who does not want to talk. To a brother or sister. Walter Luthi.

Of Germany. Puts it even stronger. God protects the others. So categorically. That he will only be reconciled. With you. When you have sought. Reconciliation. With the other human being.

Who has. Something. Against you. Go. Be reconciled. Listen. To the second. Example. From the real life.

That Jesus gives us. It's verse 25. And 26. Settle matters quickly. With your adversary. Who is taking you to court. Do it. While you are with him. On the way.

[ 25 : 22 ] Or. Now. The key word here. Is the word. Quickly. Settle matters quickly. While you are still on the way. You see. In the kingdom of God. We are to seek.

Reconciliation. Before having. Go to the court. We are to go to great lengths. To find settlement. Before having to go. Before a judge. I think Jesus is also saying.

That if we want his help. In the courtroom. We have to do everything we can. Before the courtroom. He's saying to us. I think. It's better. To humble yourself. Outside the courtroom.

Than to be humiliated. Inside. Quickly. Do it quickly. I like how Eugene Peterson. Renders. Jesus. Second example.

In the message. Say you're out on the street. And an old enemy. Accost you. Don't lose the minute. Make the first move. Make things right with him. After all.

[ 26 : 19 ] If you leave the first move. To him. Knowing his track record. You're likely going to end up in court. Maybe even jail. Isn't that good? Don't leave the first move. To the other person.

You. Make the first move. Quickly. I think you can see here. That Jesus is revealing.

His strategy. For redeeming the world. His strategy. For blessing. A city. He wants to raise up. A community. Of people. Who are first movers.

Those who make the first move. Quickly. Says Jesus.

Before the sun goes down on your anger. Says Paul. As far as it is possible for you. Do it quickly. Or. Our hearts.

[ 27 : 12 ] Our hearts. Become a poisoned pool. Of orge. Unresolved anger. Out of which leaks. Sarcasm. And insults. Which. Are just as displeasing to God. And just as damaging. Of relationship. And just as deserving of judgment. As murder. Jesus says what he says. Because he loves us. He says what he says. Because he wants to heal our souls. He says what he says.

To save us. From our sins. Let us pray. I probably do not need to.

[ 28 : 26 ] Do this. Because it's probably already happening. But I invite you. I invite you. To ask the Lord. To put his finger.

On any relationship. He wants you to deal with. On the one relationship. And then.

I invite you. To tell him. You are afraid. To make the first move. Tell him.

What you fear. Lord. I'm afraid. They're going to be more angry with me. I'm afraid. I'm afraid. I'm afraid of being. Rejected more deeply.

I'm afraid. That I'm going to feel even worse. And then I invite you. To say to the Lord.

[ 29 : 33 ] But as an act of my will. An act of my will. I will do it. Or.

You can't say that. Lord is an act of my will. I will. To will. To will.

To do it. And then say. And then say. Preacher. On the mount. Please help me.

To do what you want me to do. If you will help me. If you will help me. I will do it. I will do it.  
I will do it. I will do it. I will do it.

I will. Just when you love me. I will. I will. I will do it. I will.

[ 30 : 32 ] To do it. I will do it. To do it. I will.