

The Standard of Righteousness Pt. 1

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[0 : 00] Thank you, choir. I'm going to spend time with worship, if you would.! I'm sure some of you were watching in 1995 when the O.J. Simpson verdict was going to be announced.

Is anybody watching that? Yeah, that was the year I was born. So, not to make you feel old or anything, but that actually was my intended purpose. Okay.

That was a huge event, actually. That was like one of the biggest trials ever, one of the most viewed trials in history. It's like, they estimated 150 million people were watching it, which was like half of the population in the U.S., which was crazy.

It was a huge event. It had everybody's attention. Right? There was a lot of entry. Since the 1970s, cameras have been allowed in for groups, and it's driven this, you know, this curiosity, this entry in these big trials.

I think that there's a handful of reasons why we're attracted to those things. One, it gives everybody something to talk about. Right? We all talk about the same thing. Two, we like to play the cop a little bit, try to solve the crime.

[1 : 32] Think about, if we were on the jury, how we would vote, you know, how we would land on this. You know, listen to the evidence, listen to the testimonies, all those things. But I think there's another reason that means we're watching trials on TV, and it's a little bit more internal than those external factors.

And I think it's because, at the end of the day, the judgment that comes down, not the judgment from the judge or the jury or anything like that, but the judgment that comes down in our minds and our hearts is that we are better than those people who are on trial.

Right? We are better. We would never, we would never find ourselves in a situation like that criminal. Right? That person who's on trial. And I think if we look at this text today, Matthew chapter 5, verses 21 through 26, Jesus calls attention to this perception that we draw out of a trial like that. This idea that we're better than that group. That they're way worse than we are. Jesus calls attention to that, and I think he makes it clear that God isn't interested only in what we do with our hands.

God is interested in our thoughts, our motives. At the end of the day, God is interested in your heart. It's not enough to not do some physical thing.

[3 : 00] God sees what's inside. He sees the heart. The reality is, as much as we'd like to deny it, we're as bad as anyone.

We're as bad as anyone else. In God's eyes, we're as guilty as that person who's on trial. That's the reality that we have to deal with.

We're unrighteous. We're unrighteous. So today we're looking here at this idea of murder beginning in the heart. And as I said, this is the beginning of six different expositions of the Old Testament that Jesus gives to us.

He interprets the Old Testament not only in light of his new covenant, not only in the light of his work, not only in the light of the kingdom to come, but also in the terms that God intended it to be delivered in the first place.

He starts here with murder. He moves to adultery. He goes to divorce and then lying and then revenge. And finally, he ends with this idea of loving your enemies and loving your neighbors and hating your enemies.

[4 : 08] Jesus works through these different Old Testament laws and gives us the proper interpretation that we should understand as kingdom citizens. So I'll read the text for us again, Matthew 5, 21 through 26.

It says, You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, do not murder. And whoever murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment.

Whoever insults his brother or sister will be subject to the court. Whoever says you fool will be subject to hellfire. So if you're offering your gift on the altar and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar.

First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister. Then come and offer your gift. Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you're on the way with him to the court. Or your adversary will hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer and you will be thrown into prison.

Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny. From this passage, I think that we have two clear lessons from Christ Jesus. First, we have a heart problem.

[5 : 12] We have a heart problem. And secondly, we need to treat it quickly. Let me pray for us and we'll look at this passage in more detail. Lord Jesus, guide us now as we study your truth.

Pray that you would show us the truth of your word and that you would apply it to our lives. Lord, search us deeply. Let us grow as we study your text. And it's in Jesus' name that we pray these things.

Amen. So first things first, we have a heart problem. We have a heart problem. You know, it's easy to walk around and give off the appearance that you don't have anything wrong with you at all.

Right? Like, for example, you can exercise, you can go to the church, you can go to gym, you can go out to dinner, you can do all of your life and never show anyone that there's something wrong. It never looks like there's something wrong.

But inside, you might have a physical heart problem. Right? You won't know if you have a blockage that could lead to a drastic large heart attack until one of two things happens.

[6 : 10] One, you have said heart attack. Or two, the doctor performs the right test and examines you and tells you, hey, there's a big problem inside.

Now, here's what's funny about this is that often when people go to the doctor and they get these tests done and they're like, hey, there's a blockage. Now, often, not every time, but often, especially if it's men, I've noticed, they're like, yeah, I've been having chest pain for the past three years, I just never said anything about it, you know?

Anybody guilty of that one? Or, okay, good. Way to not out yourself in front of your wife. Okay. But that's what we do, right? We try to cover up the problem, pretend like it's not there.

We try to mask the problem. And then when the doctor confronts us with this issue, we have to, we're faced with this reality that there's something wrong. And we need to fix it. I mean, that happens all the time.

I had an experience like this. I'm sure many of you have had experiences like this. When I was 17 years old, my heart started racing really, really fast, which used to happen from time to time, quite a bit when I was a kid. And I didn't think anything of it.

[7 : 16] I thought everyone's heart raced from time to time. I thought it was normal. I thought, that's what happens when you get nervous or run too hard or, you know, sit down too hard or anything. You know, it just, my heart would race.

It wasn't until I was 17 years old that I went to a doctor. I was at the hospital because it wouldn't stop racing. They fixed the problem. And then that hospital was going to release me. And then another doctor from Vanderbilt saw my EKG through some hospital system.

And he said, do not send that kid home. Send him to me. Turned out I had something called Wolf-Parkinson-White syndrome, which means basically I had extra electrical pathways in my heart, which means that if I, if my heart fluttered, my whole heart would start to race really, really fast.

So, I knew there was a problem. Every now and then I saw the symptoms of the problem, but I never knew what the problem was. It wasn't until the doctors ran the right tests, examined my heart, and then realized and told me what the problem was and how to fix it that I was able to stop feeling that experience of my heart racing.

And I'm sure many of you have had experiences like this. But we don't often realize how bad a problem is until we're confronted with it in a full-scale examination. And I think that's what happens when we look at this text.

[8 : 30] And not just this text, but all of the Sermon on the Mount. But especially here, Matthew 5, 21 through 26. This is some of the most introspective reading you'll do in all of Scripture.

I was listening to a sermon from the pastor of the church that I was at in Texas when he was preaching on this. And he made a point that I think is just completely true. And it's that Jesus, one of the things that proves the, you know, the nature of Jesus, who he is, is that Jesus understood and explained the human condition better than anybody in history.

Jesus understands the human heart better than anyone. And in this small story, in this small explanation of the Old Testament, Jesus reveals to us the true nature of our hearts.

And it's that we are guilty. We are not as good as we like to pretend that we are. There's a problem. We have a problem. Now, the thing is, we have to have the problem diagnosed, right?

I had that Wolf-Parkinson-White problem. I knew the symptoms, but I didn't have a diagnosis, so I couldn't treat it, couldn't fix it. I just lived with it. But once it was diagnosed, we were able to find a solution.

[9 : 39] In the same way, we need to diagnose our heart problem. We need to understand where we are. Because externally, often we look fine. In fact, externally, many of us look great, right?

You're very handsome people, you know? No, I'm just kidding. But you come to church. You do the right things. You know what the social decorum is. You know how to deal with people in a nice way, in a congenial way.

You don't show your anger too often. Sometimes people do, but most of the time, we keep things under wraps, right? We know how to look really good externally, when internally, there might be a problem.

So, let's diagnose the issue. To do that, Jesus begins with the law. And if you remember from last week, we talked about this, the law, the Old Testament law, and how it applies to the Christian. One of the ways that the law applies to the Christian is that it shows us how far we are from God's perfect standard. The law reveals our weakness. The law reveals our sin. And so, Jesus, as he is examining the human heart, he starts with the law of God.

[10 : 43] So, he quotes from Exodus chapter 20, the sixth of ten commandments. And he says, You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, do not murder. And whoever murders will be subject to judgment.

Okay, I want to remind you, this is Jesus explaining the standard of righteousness that he has already given in verse 20. Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom.

Again, that's what Jesus is doing here. And he begins with the Old Testament law, with the ten commandments. Do not murder. By the way, I just want to make a quick point.

When you look at your Bible, if the, if in Exodus chapter 20, if it says, you know, thou shalt not kill, or you shall not kill, or anything like that. The original meaning was murder.

And in the original Hebrew, it meant murder. And in the Greek, it means murder. So, the point is, do not murder. That means, illegally, take someone's life. Okay, so killing is something different.

[11 : 43] That might happen in war, or other situations. So, but Jesus' point here is very clear. It's about murder. It's about murder. So, again, he goes on here to do this six different times. But what he shows us is the proper interpretation of this command that God gave.

When God said to his people, do not murder, he did not mean do everything else that you would like to a person. You know, think however you want to think about a person.

Say whatever you want to say about a person. But as long as you don't physically take their life, you are doing great. That is not what God meant. So, Jesus explains this for us. He goes to the law to explain that we have a problem.

That we have a heart problem. And as we look at the law, I want to remind you that this is like looking into a mirror. As we look at the law, as we look at the Sermon on the Mount, it's like examining ourselves against the standard of God.

And if we look very long, we realize that we are not perfect. We realize that we have fallen. That we have problems that we need to work out. And so, Jesus uses the diagnostic tool of the law.

[12 : 51] And he explains that it is more than just the letter. It is the spirit of the law. Because so often what happens is we see things like those trials, those murder trials.

We read heinous stories of people doing evil, vile things. And we think to ourselves, man, I am so glad I am not like that person. Like that is just, that is what we do.

That is what we do. We like to feel a little bit superior to people. We like to feel like we are not as bad as they are. And Jesus is explaining to us, look, it is not just about you not doing those things.

It is about what goes on in your heart. So, he goes to the law to diagnose the problem. Now, the second step of the equation though is that we have to accept the diagnosis. So, sometimes you get a diagnosis from a doctor that you do not like.

Right? And you do not want to accept it. For me, it was a diagnosis. I am not sure if it was from a doctor, but it was from my friends that I was going to lose my hair. I did not want to accept that one. [13:51] All right? When I was in high school, man, I should have put up a picture. I used to like swoosh my hair. Like it was, I played bass in our youth praise band. I was like, yeah, you know.

Like just hair flying. I loved it. I loved my hair. And I was like, look, my dad may have lost his hair, but I am nothing like him. I am going to keep my hair, you know. And then my twenties hit. And I had to accept the diagnosis.

You know what I mean? I had to come to terms with the fact that I was going to lose my hair. And the way that I came to terms with it was I just shaved it off. But we have to come to terms with the diagnosis. We look at this from Jesus in Matthew 5, 21.

It says, do not murder. Whoever murders will be subject to judgment. And then we look at what he goes on to say in verse 22. But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister will be subject to the court.

Whoever says you fool will be subject to hellfire. I don't want you to think about this in terms of like three degrees of badness or anything like that. What Jesus is doing is he's giving, he's stacking examples to show how bad it is to harbor hatred or anger in your heart towards another human being.

[14:57] That's his point. And so this confronts us quite a bit. Because we know the law says do not murder. And we would never do that. But when Jesus comes into our heart and says, how do you think about that person?

What do you say about that person? Are you angry with him? Like do you hate that person? Do you think, you ever think to yourself, man, I would be better off if that person was dead.

That's the same thing. We're as guilty as someone who's actually taken the life. Like, yeah, so when we see the killer on TV or the adulterer at work and we think, man, I would never do something like that.

We have to pause and recognize we are guilty just the same. Because here's the deal. The physical act and the thoughts of the heart are one and the same in the sense that they separate us from a holy God.

Right? Jesus is showing us what his standard of righteousness is. It's not just that we don't do things. It's that we don't think things. It's that our motives are pure. That's what Jesus is exposing.

[16:05] That's why I said this passage is particularly exposing. The issue of the heart, especially anger in the heart, is something that goes, you know, comes up again and again throughout Scripture.

In James chapter 1, James says, my dear brothers and sisters, understand this. Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. For human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.

In Ephesians chapter 4, Paul says, be angry and do not sin. So you see, there are times where anger is appropriate. It's when we're angry at unrighteousness. It's when we're angry at sinful things taking place.

We're angry at injustice. There's examples of Jesus in the temple when he cleaned out the temple, right? He cleared out the temple. He wove a whip of braids and he drove people out of the temple. You're just reading that scene. First thing you think is, boy, Jesus was angry. And you'd be right. He was angry. But his anger wasn't coated in ego and pride like ours is.

[17:03] His anger was at their disrespect and dishonor for the temple of the Lord. He was driven by a zeal for the house of God. Right? So there is a way to be angry and not be in sin.

The problem is, when we get angry, so often our pride comes into play. And then we can't really, you know, let things go. We can't move from anger, a righteous anger, to resolution.

Too often we can't move from righteous anger to resolution without also becoming sinfully angry.

So we have to be careful. We have to be careful. There are issues here in the heart.

And this is what the Pharisees of Jesus' day were doing. Right? They knew the letter of the law.

They knew that if they murdered, they would face judgment in the court system. They knew that it was a big deal.

And so they would never do that. But the contempt with which they viewed people, the way that they would look down on people. Right? The way that they would hold things over people's heads. [18:02] The way that they would disrespect their parents and dishonor their parents. The way that they would treat their fellow man was nothing short of murderous inside their hearts. That was the problem of the Pharisees.

That was the problem. They knew the letter of the law, but they had found ways around it. Right? So they had all these regulations, thousands of regulations that we talked about last week, as part of the tradition of the elders.

And those things did two things. Right? The tradition of the elders, the use of it was twofold. First, it allowed the Pharisees to appear very pious and hold things over the heads of just the common people who didn't know all of the regulations.

But two, if they knew the regulations super well, it allowed them to go around the law and break the law without feeling like they broke the law. So they lowered the standard that God had set by doing this.

And we're familiar with this thing because we do it all the time. And if you have kids and you've seen this happen, I'll give you an example of something that happened literally last week. Okay? With Jack. Jack's three years old and he's at the point where if I tell him something, he will do exactly what I say.

[19:11] Do you see a problem with that? Because I do now. If I'm not expressly clear on what he can and cannot do, he'll find his ways around it.

You know what I mean? So I'll give you an example. This is last week. Our front door, around the window of our front door, has some paint peeling. That didn't happen naturally. It happened at the hands of a toddler.

And so this has become a problem. I had never seen it until last week, but Audrey's been dealing with this for quite some time now. I had no idea. So Jack goes over to the front door and he loves to pick off the paint.

And it's like, dude, just stop that. You know what I mean? Well, Audrey's tried to tell him, stop, stop, stop peeling the paint, stop peeling the paint. Finally, last week, she tells him, Jack, if you peel the paint again, you're losing your bike.

Big punishment, right? You're going to lose your bike. He loves his bike. So Jack's like, okay, mommy, I will not peel the paint anymore. A few minutes later, I look back at the front door and Jack's over there rubbing his hands on it.

[20:10] I said, is this kid serious? I walked over there. I was like, Jack, what did your mommy tell you to do? Oh, no, no, no, no, daddy. I'm not peeling the paint.

What are you doing, Jack? I'm exercising. Then why is there a pile of paint scraps under your feet, son?

I'm telling you. He knows how to circumvent the command. He knows how to go around the law. Look, I'm a softie. I didn't take away his bike, but maybe I should have to prove a point.

The fact of the matter is we do the same thing that my three-year-old does. Because we know what we're not supposed to do, and then we look for ways to justify the behavior all around it, right?

We know, we all do this. This is part of the human experience, is we look for ways to justify breaking God's commands. And it's not just God's commands. We do this on a smaller scale, too.

[21:07] We look for ways to justify breaking the commands of, you know, your employers, you know? We try to find ways to justify our behavior that isn't ethical.

We do these types of things all the time. We have to be careful because what Jesus says is it's not about the physical act. It's about the heart behind the act. It's about the heart behind it. So the point that Jesus is making is relatively simple.

It's that we're guilty of the worst. Whether it be murder or adultery or anything else, we're guilty of the worst, even if we haven't physically committed the act.

Like, Jesus says, look, you have the heart of a murderer, even if you don't have the stomach for it, okay? That's what Jesus is telling us. We're guilty before God because we don't live up to His perfect standard.

And here's the thing, the law was always a matter of the heart. In Deuteronomy chapter 6, the Shema, it says, you know, Listen, O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one.

[22 : 05] Love the Lord your God with all your heart. You can't love the Lord your God with all your heart and hate your brothers and sisters who are made in the image of God.

They don't go together. Right? So Jesus calls attention to the fact that following the commands of God has always been a matter of the heart. It's been a matter of righteousness, pursuing His righteousness and His holiness.

So instead of looking, you know, to get around the law and do what we want to do anyways, Jesus says, look to my righteousness and pursue that instead of looking for ways to get around my righteousness.

That's what Jesus tells us to do, to look to Him and to pursue Him. Because as good as we can appear and as externally clean as we can appear, we may fool the people in the room, we may fool the people around us, but we will never fool a holy and righteous God.

He knows the thoughts of our minds. He knows the intentions of our hearts. So that brings us to our second point that Jesus makes for us, which is we need to treat this problem and we need to treat it quickly.

[23 : 11] We have a heart problem. We've seen the diagnosis. Right? We've, I think we're coming to terms with the diagnosis that we are guilty of anger towards others. I mean, would anybody in this room be willing to raise their hand and say they've never been angry at someone?

How about this? Would anybody in this room be willing to raise their hand and say that you're not angry with someone right now? Okay, some of us, yeah, that's good. That's good. But I think that if we examine our hearts, we'll see that there is some anger built up inside that is unholy, that does not line up with what God desires for us.

So we know the problem. We know we have a problem. Now, we've got to go about fixing the problem. Jesus goes on in verses 23 and 24. It says, so if you are offering your gift on the altar and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar.

First go and be reconciled to your brother or sister and then come and offer your gift. And then he follows that up with another illustration in verses 25 and 26. It says, reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you're on the way with him to court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge and the judge the officer and you will be thrown into prison.

Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny. Look, the point that Jesus is making in the last two illustrations here is fairly simple. First, don't come to worship when your heart is unclean.

[24 : 34] Don't bring gifts to God, worship or sacrifice in the case of the offering that he was referring to there in today's Jews. Don't come to worship with anger in your heart towards a brother or sister.

Right? And the anger that's evil, that is hatred. Because here's the thing, those thoughts, our angry thoughts, our hatred is what leads to murder.

Right? Jesus says this is what comes out of a person is what defiles them, not what goes into a person. Because from within the heart comes these evil thoughts, murderous thoughts, all these different types of things.

So the first point that Jesus makes is don't come to worship with anger in your heart. And then secondly, reconcile quickly. Reconcile quickly. That's verses 25 and 26.

Make amends quickly when something has been broken. So how do we treat our heart problem? I think there's a few ways. First, we look to Jesus. At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, Blessed are the poor in the spirit.

[25 : 40] We talked about this before, but the point that Jesus is making there is those who recognize their spiritual poverty before a holy God, those who have come to grips with the fact that they can't save themselves, they're broken, those who humble themselves, humble their hearts before the Lord, those are the ones who are poor in spirit.

And so Jesus makes this point from the very beginning, that if you want to fix the human problem, the only way to do that is to look to him. Right? If you want to pursue the righteous standard that God has given, then you have to have, you have to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

So look to Jesus first. Come to terms with the fact that you have a sin problem. Confess your sin.

Repent of your sin. Trust in Jesus for salvation. If you want to fix this problem, this heart problem of always being angry, then look first to Jesus.

I can promise you this. Jesus has fixed the most viable offenders. Jesus has fixed the angriest hearts. Because Jesus doesn't take what's broken and just repair it. Jesus gives us a new heart. He gives us his righteousness. So, just so you know, in the Bible, there was one guy who was like the greatest missionary of all time. His name's Paul.

[26 : 51] Before he was known as Paul, he was known as Saul. He was an angry dude. Do you know this? Saul was an angry fellow. He stood over while people were being killed.

Stephen, a Christian, an early Christian of the church, was stoned to death. And Saul stood there in approval. He went from town to town arresting Christians.

He was killing Christians. He was carrying families apart. This dude was messed up. He was angry. But when he encountered Jesus, everything changed. Jesus gave him a new heart.

Jesus completely transformed Saul. We know it was Paul. He's the greatest missionary. He wrote a happy new testament. God used him in miraculous ways. Look, if you are an angry person, God can transform your heart.

Look to Jesus. That's first. Number two, reconcile broken relationships. I shared a couple weeks ago the number of people who have broken relationships in their life. It's like 25, 26% of all Americans are estranged from a family member.

[27 : 55] Like there's anger there. There's a broken relationship there. There's like 80% of employees have strife or conflict in the workplace. Broken relationships. We've all experienced broken relationships.

Some of us might be living in broken relationships even right now. The call for the Christian, the call for the kingdom citizen is to reconcile quickly. What Jesus says is that if you're coming to church, let's modernize this.

If you're coming to church and you're going to raise your hands and sing. We're bad as we may actually have our hands in our pockets and sing. But if you're going to come to church and sing and put on a show for the world, he says that's not good enough.

Reconcile broken relationships before you come and stand before God in a place of worship. Let's go back to 1 Samuel chapter 15. 1 Samuel chapter 15.

King Saul was told by Samuel. Told by God. Commanded by God. Samuel was a prophet. King Saul was told to go and wipe out all of the Amalekites. Destroy them all. Leave no one alive.

[28 : 59] Leave no animal alive. Wipe them out. So Saul went and he wiped out everyone except for the king and Samanels. He left Samanels a lot.

For the best animals though. Only the good stuff. So Samuel shows up and Saul comes out and he greets him. He's like, blessings in the name of the Lord. Hey, Samuel, how are you? Samuel looks at him and says, why haven't you disobeyed the command of God?

Saul's like, what are you talking about? I did everything I was told to do. I wiped out the Amalekites. Samuel says one of my favorite lines in the Old Bible. He says, then what is the sound of sheep, some goats, and cattle I hear?

In other words, no you didn't. I can hear the proof. You disobeyed the Lord. And Saul's like, no, no, no. I only left them alive because some of the men wanted to make a sacrifice to God.

I thought that was good. We would leave the good stuff and make a sacrifice to God. Samuel says in verse 22, does the Lord take pleasure in her offerings and sacrifices as much as he can? And he can't obey the Lord.

[30 : 02] Look, to obey is better than sacrifice. To pay attention is better than the fat of rams. And in this case, what we see from Jesus, the call to obedience is a call for reconciliation.

To apologize for the angering our hearts towards brothers and sisters. To forgive when people have wronged us. That's the call to obedience that God has given us here today.

Now the third thing here is to treat the problems. We have to treat it immediately. There's an urgency to it. The second point that Jesus makes here in verses 25 and 26. Reach a seven quickly with your adversary and all of those things.

The picture that he's painting for us is that we don't know how much longer we have on earth. We don't know how long we'll be here. And kingdom citizens should be people who are able to go to the presence of the Lord.

In other words, we're able to pass away. And leave behind not a trail of brokenness, not a trail of fractured relationships, but leave behind people who we are friends with.

[31 : 08] That we're close with. We don't know how much longer we have. We don't know when we'll stand before the Lord and give an account for the things that we've done, receive rewards for the good things, and lose out on rewards for the bad things.

We don't know when that day will come. How many times has it happened? You've probably known some of them. Maybe you've even experienced it. Where you say, or they've said, I'm going to fix this relationship with my dad.

I'm going to fix this relationship with my sibling. I'm going to fix this relationship with my brother. Whatever it is. And before they get to that point where they're, quote unquote, ready to do it, whatever that means, that person has passed away.

And then now, you're left with this feeling of like, it's not settled. It's not fixed. We weren't able to reconcile. Right? How often does that happen? We don't know how much longer we have.

And the call for the kingdom citizen is to be the agent of peace, to be the peacemaker, to be the one who pursues reconciliation. That's what God has called you to do. Right?

[32 : 09] So if someone has wronged you, then you be the one to pursue reconciliation. Don't wait for them. If you've wronged someone, swallow your pride and be the one to pursue reconciliation and apologize.

That's the call of the Christ follower. So first, we need to seek Jesus because he's the only one who can fix us. Second, we need to reconcile broken relationships. And third, we need to do it quickly. There's an urgency here in the command of Christ. So look, I don't know where you're at today. I don't know what you've come in here with. I'd venture to say that everybody in this room has a history of perfect relationships.

I'd venture to say that everybody in this room has a perfect relationship with everyone else in this room. There might be strife. There might be conflict. There might be some contempt towards a brother or sister here in this room.

Here's what I'm going to urge you to do. I'm going to urge you to seek reconciliation. First, repent. Repent of your angry heart towards brother or sister.

[33 : 06] Recognize that someone is a human being just like you and is capable of mistakes just like you. We're not perfect. We shouldn't hold people to a standard of perfection. We should be quick to forgive.

We should also be quick to apologize. Right? Sometimes things are said, they're taken out of context. Sometimes things are said, they're taken the wrong way. The fact of the matter is, we have our responsibility as Christ followers to pursue reconciliation.

So, if you're here today and there's strife in your heart towards a brother or sister here in this room or outside of this room, I'm going to encourage you to repent of that and seek reconciliation.

So, I understand that you come in here week after week and you want to give the appearance that you have everything together. But I want to remind you that God is not interested in appearing like you have it all together.

He's interested in your obedience. He's interested in your heart. Lying that up with His heart. So, the core issue again with murder is that it begins in the heart. The point that Jesus makes here is that when we are angry towards people or when we take someone's life physically, what we've done is we've devalued their humanity.

[34 : 15] Genesis 1, 27 and 28 says that God created man in His own image. Which means that you are an image bearer of the Most High God. I'm an image bearer of the Most High God.

We are image bearers. And when we deny someone their status as image bearer, that's an affront to the character of God. And we deny someone their status.

We devalue their status. We devalue them. We humanize them. We do that not only through physically hurting them, but also through the things that we say. The gossip we spread.

The slanderous things that we say and do. Right? The anger in our hearts. In those ways, we do as much damage to their personhood as taking their life in God's eyes.

So repent. Repent of that and seek reconciliation. Jesus says, don't be like the Pharisees who know the law and live to keep the letter of it.

[35 : 12] They live to not act physically, but their hearts are far from God. Don't be like them. Don't be like one whose heart is far from God. Pursue Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

Righteousness. So first, if you have a problem, a broken relationship, strife, contempt, anger, seek reconciliation. If you're angry with me, come up here and tell me.

You're crying out loud. Let's talk it out. Let me ask for forgiveness. Let me apologize. Right? If I've wronged you, I mean that sincerely. If you're angry at someone else, when we've seen this song, stand up and walk to them.

You know what? People are not going to think. You're not going to think, oh, wow. Like, that person's an angry person. No, they're going to think, wow, what a beautiful sign of repentance that they would go and fix when it's broken.

So reconcile. And then secondly, if you don't know Jesus and you're angry, whether you're angry at people or you're angry at God, I want you to understand that God can change the most angry hearts.

[36 : 19] It doesn't matter if you physically committed murder. I shouldn't say that. If you haven't physically committed murder, if you're angry in your heart towards people, then come and repent and trust in Jesus.

Because the point is that you are fallen and broken. You have a heart problem. And the only one who can fix it is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, who sets the righteous standard. And if you believe in him today, he will give you his righteousness so that you can pursue his ways. So if you haven't trusted in Jesus, if the call for you today is come, pray to receive Christ, trust Jesus as Lord, and then live your life obediently. That might mean that you have to fix the broken relationships too.

Whatever God needs you to do during this time, I'm going to ask that you stand. I want you to ask the Lord like we did last week. Ask the Lord to seek your heart and show you any error within you, any broken way within you.

And to lead you into the paths of righteousness. If you need to reconcile, reconcile now. Don't delay. There's an urgency to it. If you need to believe in Jesus and trust in a savior, do that today.

[37 : 28] Let me pray for us. Lord Jesus, you are kind and good. Thank you that you are the great physician who can diagnose our problems, our sin. Thank you that we can trust you to forgive us and make us clean.

Lord, I pray for every person in this room who has a strained or broken relationship. Lord, I pray that they would seek you first in repentance and then seek out the brother or sister in reconciliation.

And God, I pray that you would bless those conversations. That they would be fruitful. And then that we would be able to live in light of that reconciliation. Lord, you are good and you're kind and you've shown us your standard.

I pray that we would seek to live it each day. That our hearts and motives would line up with your heart. And it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.