

Jesus Addresses Anger, Adultery and Oaths

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[0 : 00] Please be seated. Lord God, give us the gift of faith today to hear your word, to believe it, to trust it, to stake our whole life on it, even when the world wars against us.

Help us to trust you and submit to your living word for our good and for your glorious sake we ask. In Jesus' name, Amen. Well, today's a really good example of why Holy Trinity does what it does in terms of grab a book of the Bible and go chapter by chapter by chapter.

If we just chose a different book and chapter each week, we'd probably avoid today's chapter. But here we are, it's Jesus' words. Jesus is God and we want to receive all his words.

There's much here, I think, that our society, basically every topic Jesus addresses, our society is doing the opposite today. And so it's very challenging for us as we seek to be salt and light in the world, to live out this teaching in a society that wants to do the opposite.

It's very, very, very challenging. And there's even some stuff here that Christians don't want Jesus to say. Christians don't want to hear. Well, I hope that's not you. I hope that you trust Jesus enough to sit under the Bible.

[1 : 26] We don't sit over the Bible, but here we are sitting under it and it beats us up sometimes. And today's probably one of those days for some of us. It certainly beats me up today. The topics are anger, lust, divorce and oath-taking.

So let's start with anger. Now, last week Jesus said he would fulfil, he would complete, he's the end goal of the Old Testament. And so now we see what he means by that.

He quotes the Old Testament and something of how it's used and then raises the stakes and then applies it himself. He adds to the Bible because he is God.

So, for example, he starts with murder. He quotes, you've heard it that it was said to those of ancient times, you shall not murder. That's quoted in the Ten Commandments. And whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.

Now, Jesus is alluding to a very clear teaching of the Bible that's starting to be ignored today about the seriousness of murder. I mean, murder is used by a lot of people, by the way, just as a benchmark of who's good and bad.

[2 : 31] If you're a murderer, you're bad. If you're not a murderer, you're good. And that happened in Jesus' day, which I think is why he does what he does with it in terms of raising the stakes. But it's worth just naming for a moment what is murder because I think our society is losing this.

You think it would be a hard thing to lose. I'm defining murder as the intentional taking of another human life without authority.

So, I'm not just defining it as any killing because there are some categories of taking of life that the Bible says are mandated. Not least Jesus himself quoting that the murderer is liable to judgment.

In the Old Covenant, that was a capital judgment. It was a capital punishment. A murderer's life would be taken from them and that was a valid thing. That the state doing that was not another act of murder.

It was a capital punishment. It was granted by God. Other categories might include things of accidental taking of life. If you accidentally kill someone, you can be culpable in terms of manslaughter.

[3 : 36] There might be some consequences, but it's not murder in the Bible. Also, the Bible has a place for legitimate theatres of war. And a soldier against another soldier is not a murder.

It's part of a war. So, there's a sense in which as long as the war is legitimate, it's mandated by Scripture. So, there are categories of killing that aren't murder.

Another category raised by our society today, which I think still is murder most of the time, is that of abortion. So, today we are in a country that has 80,000 to 100,000 abortions a year.

Does that fit into any of those categories of legitimate killing, legitimate taking away of another life? I don't think it does. In the majority of those cases, the mother's life is not at stake.

So, you could argue it if you know for sure scientifically that the mother's life is at stake. You may have a Christian kind of ethical case, but we know the majority of those 100,000 abortions are not that.

[4 : 40] And so, what we have therefore is our government, which ought to be the punisher of murderers, actually paying for it, actually funding it, approving it, decriminalising it.

That shows we're in a very sad state, that our society is really against Jesus' teaching. It's a very sad thing, that not only does our state not punish the murderer, but in this case, it endorses it. Now, we're just starting, because Jesus actually hasn't done his thing yet. Jesus quotes and says, that's right, you shall not murder. But, let me add my two cents, says Jesus, Son of God, I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement.

He quoted the Bible saying, whoever murders will be liable to judgement. Jesus says, well, whoever's angry will be liable to judgement. And if you insult a brother or sister, you'll be liable to the council.

If you say, you fool, whether to someone's face or behind their back, if you say, kind of, you idiot, or they're an idiot, they're a fool, you'll be liable to, verse 22, the hell of fire.

[5 : 57] So, what Jesus is doing here is expanding the categories, because the state can only deal with the civil kind of physical act of murder. But if Jesus is God, then he looks into the heart and he can judge the heart.

And so, he can actually deal with the root because every act of physical murder, clearly, as Matt shared in the kids' talk, begins with anger in the heart that's unquelled, unkillled, and it grows and grows and grows and becomes murder.

Well, Jesus says it's the same act. I see it when it's in your heart. And by saying this, we are all judged, aren't we? We are all judged. Because, I mean, he hasn't been vindictive or nurtured animosity, nurtured an unrighteous anger, a bitter anger against who Jesus calls a brother or sister, that is, someone in the church.

And Jesus says, not only should you or will you be liable to earthly judgment, you'll be liable to eternal judgment, you'll be liable to the hell of fire. Literally, the word Jesus uses is the word Gehenna.

Jerusalem is on a hill and then there's a valley called Gehenna, which is basically a perpetually burning, rubbish dump full of crap and corpses. It's where people who, criminals would just be thrown.

[7 : 18] And Jesus is saying, well, that's your destiny if you nurture heart murder, unrighteous anger against a brother or sister in Christ.

It's very scary, isn't it? It's very, very scary. Jesus takes away that kind of parading that people do and they say, I'm a good person but I've never murdered anyone.

Well, Jesus says, you have. Have you been angry in your heart at someone? You have murdered. And he's God, he can see the heart. Now, we need a solution to this.

It's more than just, you know, don't be angry. We actually desperately need God's forgiveness at this point. I'm convicted by this and you ought to be as well for the way you've dismissed people behind their back or ridiculed them behind their back in anger, in unrighteous anger.

So often Christians think, oh, my anger's righteous but God knows, God knows. And his main solution here is not to sort of stop doing it.

[8 : 17] That's part of it. His main solution is the cross. The cross of Christ is the great act of murder. It's the great act of murder of humanity turning against their maker and Jesus allows this murder to happen.

It's not just kind of a homicide. It's deicide. He allows himself to die so that he can absorb the righteous anger of God.

So in the cross, all these themes of murder and anger come together. Jesus allows himself to be murdered by sinfully angry people to satisfy the righteous anger of God.

And so when you are convicted of your sin, as I hope you are in this message today, you must go to the cross and that's where your sin is wiped away, washed away by the blood of Christ.

That's the murder that changes everything. And where murderous people like us are forgiven. Now that's the heart of it, but practically you still need to repent of your anger.

[9 : 23] You still need to deal with it. And I suggest that peacemaking is the way forward here. This is the Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Blessed are the humble and meek. It takes a lot of meekness to go to someone and deal with the issue that's making you so angry. Do you know what I mean? It takes a lot of courage to do that. But Jesus says, seek peace at all costs in the family of God.

If you're about to offer your gift at the altar, if you're about to do some act of religion or of worship, Jesus says, pause it. Go and seek peace with your brother or sister in Christ and then go back to worship.

It's that important. If you don't, anger can just exponentially grow and grow and grow. The sin can grow. The offences grow. And so he has the analogy of going to court with someone.

Settle out of court. Settle quickly and settle peacefully as far as it depends on you. Live at peace with everyone. Don't let it go to court. There's a lot of Christians who cry day and night to God, deal with this person I'm so angry with.

[10 : 31] But I think embedded in Jesus' warning is this. If you cry out to God for justice, he may come and bring it and it may come on you first. And if it comes on you first, you may be judged first.

You see? So it's better to seek peace now. That's anger. It gets trickier and Jesus does the same kind of logic with lust.

So in verse 27, you've heard that it was said in the Bible, you shall not commit adultery. Now here, the background of the Old Testament is what we believe that God has designed sexuality, sexual intercourse as a great gift to be enjoyed within the confines of a marriage covenant between a man and a woman who publicly make an oath to stay together for life.

And so any sex outside those bounds is adulterous. It's against God's will and wishes. Now Jesus adds to it.

That is 101. Here's the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus adds to it, I say to you, but I say to you, that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has committed adultery with her in his heart.

[11 : 51] Now Jesus is addressing in particular men here, though I think also women, though I'll speak mainly to the men. Jesus is doing clearly what he did with murder. He looks at the root of murder, the anger in the heart.

Well, the foundation of adultery is lust in the heart. You know, you don't just sort of bump into an adulterous situation. It grows and grows after a long time with unkilld, lustful thoughts and unmodified thinking, uncontrolled thinking, you know, watching the wrong TV programs and looking at pornography.

All those kind of things are flirting with people and being in the wrong place at the wrong time, intentionally looking for things to happen. These things start in the heart and therefore need to be killed in the heart.

Jesus judges us as adulterous if we have looked at a woman lustfully. Now, in my mind, that makes pretty much every bloke here an adulterer, doesn't it?

It's very challenging and it's very hard in our society because there's a lot of what people now call ambient pornography. There's basically pornography everywhere. It's hard to fill your car with petrol without going into pain and seeing pornography on the shelves.

[13 : 05] It takes a lot of discipline, a lot of accountability, a lot of transparency everywhere we go and from what I read, no one else wants to fight this fight.

You know, the feminists don't want to fight it even though the women in this stuff are so abused and manipulated and their backgrounds, terrible things have happened that drive women into this industry.

our educators don't want to do anything about it. From what I read, they're just saying, well, the kids are going to see it, they're going to see it, all we can do is sort of try and train them to be wise about it or something like that.

Only Jesus is saying, kill it. It's wrong. It's wrong to look at pornography. It's wrong to look at a woman lustfully. You should not do it. It's adultery of the heart.

It's adultery of the heart. You know, you don't have to look far to see the damage that's happening to our marriages and our relationships, our children because of pornography which reigns on people's lusts, which hooks people in to addictions.

[14 : 14] Pornography is full of lies to hijack weak men starring abused women. It's a very sick game. It's a very sick game.

It's one of those things that you ought not to think, I can handle a little bit of it. I can get up close to it. I can handle it. You need to kill it. You need to kill it. You know, there are some things that are just better blocked than ever seen.

You know, there's some things that our children and us, we should never, ever be exposed to and it's very hard for men because there's something about the male brain. There's a lot of work done on this that images kind of get burnt in and are very hard to clear out.

It takes a long time of kind of, you know, loving your wife to kind of get the bad images out. So the best thing is to kill it and to never entertain it and if you're trapped to this kind of thing, please speak to a Christian that you trust.

The best thing is to bring these things into the light. If they're in the light, it's much harder to be owned by them but if they're kind of a dark secret, don't just think, you know, me and God, we can handle it.

[15:20] You need the help of other Christians. You really do. Speak to myself, speak to Jono. If you're unsure about how serious it is, well, listen to God speak.

Jesus says, verse 29, if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out, throw it away. It's that serious. It's better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell. It's a, clearly he's speaking, it's a metaphor for killing sin.

You know, he doesn't literally want hands cut off, obviously, but he wants you to take this seriously. This is life and death. This is eternal life, eternal death. This is very, very, very serious.

And so, friends, just let me, the key practice and our world won't do this but it's really just confession. It's really just confessing to God, confessing to a trusted Christian friend, get it out into the light.

[16:27] Often it's more helpful for husbands to have other blokes to confess it to too, because often the wife just doesn't understand the stranglehold of this stuff.

Although we ought to be at some level accountable to our wives if you're a bloke, but it does help to have other Christian men around you. You need God's help, you need each other's help.

You cannot do this alone. Well, next one, divorce. It's going to get even harder I think actually. I think this is the most shocking paragraph of them all and one of the toughest things Jesus has to say to our society today about divorce and remarriage.

It's not the only thing he says. In fact, there's later in Matthew's Gospel, there's chapter 18 which I think is even more foundational than this chapter. You should read this with Matthew 18. That's where Jesus talks about what God has joined together.

Let no one tear asunder. That's a critical kind of basis for this but it's similar here. Jesus says, it was also said, whoever divorces his wife let him give her a certificate of divorce.

[17:38] But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife except on the ground of unchastity causes her to commit adultery and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Well, you could at least agree that we are in a society now that is full of divorce. Divorce is everywhere and it's very hard I think to put yourself in the shoes of someone who's under 40 if you're not under 40 who's grown up in this world of divorce and affairs and shifting parents and have it, you know, that's the world of the under 40 year old and the teaching of the Bible on marriage and faithfulness in marriage can feel like a dream, an impossible dream to someone under 40.

It's very hard to get your head around how kind of compromised their world is through no fault of their own. They've inherited this world of divorce and unfaithfulness.

I'm very encouraged whenever I hear about a great anniversary. I'm so encouraged that here our 40th or our 50th wedding anniversary I think oh, it can be done. It can be done.

You know, God's word can be fulfilled. I'm so encouraged when I take a funeral and, you know, there's such the sadness of a widow or a widower that you think they made it.

[19:07] They were faithful in their marriage. They did it. That's job well done. That marriage finished then and there when their partner died. They're now free for whatever but they were faithful.

They stood the test of time. That is very encouraging I think to somebody who's grown up in the world we live in now. Now, in Jesus' day it was very similar to us.

It's very easy to get a divorce today. It literally costs five, six, seven hundred dollars until of course you start fighting over stuff and then it costs a couple billion dollars a year for us.

Our society makes it very easy to get into a divorce but let me warn you it's very hard to recover from a divorce. Very, very, very hard to recover from it.

To be torn apart from someone that God has joined you to. And in Jesus' day the man could write a certificate of divorce. There are examples of this in the first century literature of the wife burning dinner.

[20 : 09] Divorce, do you know what I mean? And it's that easy but it's really that easy today for man or a woman to get a divorce. You don't need to have any reason. Now, what is Jesus teaching about divorce?

Well, he's saying it should not be easy. It should be very, very hard. It should be the most extreme thing. I think the Bible does acknowledge in a fallen world marriages do fail but there's good and bad ways to fail.

There's good and bad ways to fail. And Jesus here says in the most extreme case unchastity.

That's the exception that he gives and I think even then it's a kind of a concessive exception.

It's a kind of a if you have to here's the reason. And some people actually think that when he says unchastity he's not referring to adultery in the marriage. He's only referring to finding out that they lied about being a virgin before married.

Unchastity before the marriage can annul the marriage. I think it's a bit broad on that myself but that's actually one interpretation. The bottom line is that God hates divorce and the example of God's marriage to Israel in the Old Testament God and his people was that he was faithful and he worked to restore his bride even when she was adulterous.

[21 : 32] And I think that would be my first challenge to someone caught in that would be to seek reconciliation. That is the way of the Sermon on the Mount of peacemaking of mourning and repenting over sin and resolving it.

And I've seen marriages they can be restored even in adultery. It's not Jesus allows it but he doesn't necessarily command that you must do it. I would say first work for reconciliation.

Plead with God to have mercy on you and here's the thing if you've been in this situation you need to own your sin. Now people say I had an affair well that's not good enough.

You need to say I committed adultery I'm an adulterer God have mercy on me wife have mercy on me. You need to plead your case and it takes a long time but it can be done.

Reconciliation can happen because basically that's what marriage is anyway. Marriage is two sinners bound by an oath to never give up to constantly seek to forgive and repent of their sin till death do them part.

[22 : 40] No one here can never sin in marriage you see so forgiveness and confession ought to be a constant part of any healthy marriage and it can be used to save even the most broken relationship.

Well let me just go on a little bit about divorce because Jesus has these hard words about if you divorce someone you cause them to commit adultery and if someone marries them then they commit adultery.

What is that talking about? Well I'm going to connect that to my experience of counselling couples in this situation. What I see happening is this sometimes couples separate and that has to happen sometimes sometimes for their own safety or one of their safety.

In my mind the purpose of a separation is to give you space to work on reconciliation. A separation is not a trial divorce. It's actually to help you work on redeeming the marriage to give you space to do that.

But sometimes when couples separate and this is very very very common even amongst Christians in order to numb the pain of being torn apart from their one flesh they begin a new relationship.

[23 : 58] One that is in fact adulterous because they're still married. And so divorce tends to multiply acts of adultery. That's what it does.

And so so often I think guys prey on vulnerable Christian women and they say poor me I had a horrible first wife and it was all her fault and da da da but she's my ex-wife and they start going out and then she finds out oh the divorce hasn't come through yet, the paperwork hasn't come through yet.

Well that's an adulterous relationship isn't it? You're going out with someone who's still married, he still has a wife. So that happens again and again and again and then when someone does get divorced but don't actually own their failure in the marriage that failed then I think they're not qualified to be remarried or not to remarry until they've actually repented of all their baggage from the first marriage.

I think divorce is a reality in a fallen world and second marriages are talked about in the New Testament. They are there as an option but you've got to be godly and wise about how you do it. You've got to go about it in a sermon on the mount kind of way. You've got to be meek. You've got to be poor in spirit. So many divorced people will tell you everything their partner did wrong and not own anything they did wrong.

[25 : 25] The best second marriages I have seen are where the couple say we stuffed up first time around. Here's what we did wrong. Here's what we repent of. They're open about it.

They're transparent about it. They are the good second marriages but the ones where they actually haven't repented of their mistakes the first time around then I think they're in this category of Jesus actually just multiplying the sin and it is a kind of form of adultery.

Well friends this is hard teaching but I want you to take Jesus' words seriously because divorce is so horrible.

it's very hard to think about this when you're in a horrible marriage the grass looks greener and our society all our friends all our Christians say give up but I would say don't give up don't give up do everything in your power to save the marriage.

The closest Jesus talks a lot about hell in this chapter the closest place to hell I have been to on earth and maybe I haven't been around enough at least in Australia is the family court.

[26 : 39] I mean they have metal detectors when you walk in there because people have attacked people in the family court fighting over their marriages you know fighting over children fighting over stuff.

You know people leave you know so many people leave the family court and commit suicide. It's a horrible place it's a horrible world to be in. I mean many of you have been through it so you know better than me.

I just challenge you take Jesus word seriously about lust, about adultery, about the importance of marriage and not divorcing lightly.

Jesus' medicine I think is hard medicine but we need it and only he can save us. Our government is so committed to individual fulfilment that the more money they put into saving marriages the more they make it worse because they're so committed to individualism that they hold a poisoned chalice. Only Jesus can save marriage, only Jesus can save your marriage and our society. We must trust him with our marriages. Well finally and I'll just deal with this very quickly Jesus addresses oaths and this does relate I think to what we've talked about and he says that you've heard it was said you shall not swear falsely verse 33 but carry your vows you may to the Lord but I say to you do not swear at all and I think he means in this way either by heaven for it is the throne of God or by earth it is his footstool or by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great king do not swear by your head for you cannot make one hair on your head white or black let your word be yes yes or no no anything more than this comes from the evil one now Jesus the impossible application here is what some Christians have done and that is they don't they go to a courtroom and they don't swear on oath in court that's not what

[28 : 37] Jesus is talking about in fact Jesus himself was in court on his own trial and he swore on oath are you the son of the living God and he said yes I am so Jesus swore on oath what he's talking about is people who don't speak the truth all the time and therefore you don't believe them and then when they want to convince you they say well I swear by my mother's grave and then when they get caught lying again they say oh this time I swear by Jerusalem I swear by heaven do you know what I mean you ought not have to be such a liar that people can't believe you that you need to prop it up with a hierarchy of kind of oaths does that make sense let your yes be yes and your no be no there's something profoundly sick in our words if we lie so much that we have to make oaths just so people will believe us and of course there are critical oaths that the Christian makes not least oaths of allegiance to God and to our marriage covenant well let me conclude with some more questions about Jesus and you what we're really forced with today is this am

I going to trust Jesus as God with my anger with my lust with my marriage with my words of truthfulness is he God or not and people often say where did Jesus claim to be God here by quoting

the scriptures the word of God and then saying but I add I add onto it this that's a divine claim to be able to add to the Bible only Jesus can add to the Bible and he does add today and adds in a challenging way challenging the heart if Jesus has spoken to us then God has spoken to us so will you follow your own standards or Jesus standards because you're going to do one or the other now don't worry if you want to follow Jesus standards and you've failed them he's gracious he's merciful he shed his blood to forgive you he's kinder than our world is but if you want to follow your own standards and really what you're saying is that you're making a claim to be God you are saying I can legislate better than the Bible and friends that's a dangerous place to be because you are not God you are not God what we need is Jesus to be our king that we trust with all our relationships as broken as they are with all our temptations as sinful as we are with all our struggling marriages with all our anger with all our speech we need to trust it to the king and trust it to the king because friends he was murdered so that we could be forgiven and transformed to live in his way so very hard topics today please I encourage you come and talk to me or Jono if you want to follow any of them up or you disagree I'm more than happy to talk to you about your situation but now just let me pray for us dear God how desperately we need your help how desperately we need your mercy so please come now father in the name of your son we plead your mercy and healing and forgiving blood Lord God please transform us to stand as salt and light on all these issues against the streams of our society help us to stand firm and to know your blessing in it please save especially our marriages and bless our relationships with each other in the church in Jesus name amen thank you for are you signing of the years a warm graceful example

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