

“Be Reconciled to One Another”
(Matthew 5:21-26)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning,
We heard Jesus say,
That unless our righteousness
Is greater than the scribes and Pharisees
We will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus fulfilled the Law –
As we also saw this morning –

The Civil Law –
Since it’s what held Israel together as a nation
Until He could come and complete His word –

The Ceremonial Law –
Which He fulfilled on the cross
And continues to fulfill
Through His intercession from heaven –

But particularly the Moral Law –
Which He fulfilled through His perfect obedience –

So that we could enter it –

That we might have our sins forgiven

And be given His perfect record of obedience

So that God can declare us just;

But also that we might have the power

To live the kind of life Jesus speaks of in this sermon

That surpasses that of the religious leaders:

This is the evidence we have been justified.

B. Preview.

We've seen the overall character

It produces in the Beatitudes,

But what does it look like

In terms of the Law?

The Jewish leaders fell short

In their teaching and example,

And so Jesus lifts the standard

Back to where God intended.

He's really answering the question

Of how our righteousness is to be greater

Than that of the scribes and Pharisees;

And at the same time
 He's telling us what He –
 Through the Gospel –
 Has actually given us the power to do.

II. Sermon.

A. He begins with the sixth commandment:

An area, where we'll see,
 We could all use some improvement.

Jesus says in verse 21, "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'"

1. The sixth commandment –

On the face of it –
 Seems only to forbid murder –
 Which is the unjust taking away of life.

It doesn't forbid killing –
 The just taking away of life,
 Such as what magistrates do:
 When they use the power of sword
 To execute those who have murdered;
 Or when they send their military forces
 Against those who are intending to murder their citizens (Rom. 13).

It doesn't forbid us
 From fighting in a just war;
 Nor from taking away someone's life
 To preserve our own
 Or the life of our neighbor
 If they are unjustly trying to kill us.

Those who unjustly take life
 Should be brought to court
 And held accountable for their actions.

The Lord says in Genesis 9:6, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man."

2. But notice,

Jesus isn't simply speaking here
 About what God said:
 If He was, He would have used
 His more familiar expression: It is written.

He's addressing what the Jewish leaders were teaching
 According to their long-standing Rabbinic tradition:

"You have heard that the ancients were told . . ."

Or perhaps more accurately,

"You have heard it said by the ancients . . ."

The Rabbis tended to take the commandments

More at face value –

They didn't seem to see

The true intent of the Law –

What God really required.

They believed that if they didn't murder,

They had kept this Law.

There's always the tendency

To lower the standard,

When you believe your salvation

Is based on that standard.

Jesus tells us this isn't enough.

B. He tells us this commandment can be broken in other ways.

Jesus points out the way

It is most often broken:

In our hearts.

He says in verse 22, "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell."

The sixth commandment not only forbids

The unjust taking away of life,

It also forbids sinful and unjust anger –

The desire to take away life.

Anger isn't always sinful,

Though much of our anger is.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:26-27, "*Be angry, and yet do not sin*; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity."

There is a righteous anger –

The kind that has regard for God and His glory,

The kind you feel when someone dishonors Him;

That motivates you to do something

Toward restoring His honor,

And at the same time

Has regard for the offender –

That seeks to restore him, if possible.

But Jesus is talking here

About the kind of anger that is wrong –

That wants revenge,

That seeks to hurt another,

That doesn't have God's honor

Or your neighbor's wellbeing in mind.

He tells us it can vary in degree:

It begins in the heart,

But can eventually make its way to our mouths –

To saying something hurtful and demeaning:

Such as *raca*: which means empty headed fool;

Or to something even worse:

Moros – from which we get the word moron –

Which means worthless fool.

Maybe we haven't actually murdered our neighbor,

But have we been angry with them in our hearts?

Have we wanted to hurt them?

Have we injured them with our tongues?

Jesus is saying something

About how we speak to each other –

We're not to tear each other down with our words,

But build each other up –

Paul writes in Ephesians 4:29, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear."

And Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:8-9, "To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing."

We are to do this even for our enemies:

Jesus says in Matthew 5:43-45, "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your

Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good,
and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.”

God is good to His enemies,

We are to be the same.

But He really has His finger

On what's in our hearts

That's making us want to say these things –

The source of our language;

The hatred we have against our neighbor.

This is what break the sixth commandment

And would bring us into judgment

But for God's grace.

Jesus isn't saying

There's really no difference

Between getting angry with someone

And *wanting* to kill them,

Versus *actually* killing them –

Murder takes away life,

And can at the same time

Take away the support

That person was providing to those under his care.

Ex: Puritan hunting.

Hating them, on the other hand,

Might not hurt them at all

If it stays in the heart.

But He is telling us

That this hatred still deserves judgment.

Remember what we saw during the Reformation Series:

That there are degrees of sin.

But contrary to what Rome believes –

That some sins deserve death

While others don't –

Every sin is a mortal sin –

Every sin would destroy us

But for God's grace toward us in Jesus.

But we must never forget:

The fact that Jesus paid for our sins,

Doesn't give us an excuse to sin -

Paul writes in Romans 6:1-2, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" –

It's the reason we should repent:

Our sins nailed Jesus to the cross.

He died for us.

We died with Him to sin.

His Spirit lives in us.

How can we continue to allow ourselves in sin?

C. And so what would Jesus have us to do?

Rather than hating others,

We are to be reconciled to them.

We are to apply this principle to everyone –

Paul writes in Romans 12:18, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”

We’ve already seen what Jesus had to say about loving our enemies.

But notice His specific application in verse 22,

“But I say to you that everyone who is angry *with his brother* shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says *to his brother*, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.”

He’s really speaking here

About our relationship to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

He wants us to be reconciled to each other –

To be at peace with one another.

Paul writes in Ephesians 4:1-3, “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Jesus wants us to keep short accounts with each other.

He goes on to say in verses 23-24, “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”

Paul told us earlier

That we’re not to let the sun go down

Even on our righteous anger.

Jesus tells us here,

That we shouldn’t let it go even for a week:

Before we come to worship,

We need to deal with our outstanding offenses.

If we know our brother or sister

Has something against us –

Maybe we got angry with them,

Said something to them or about them,

Or did something to them –

Or maybe we didn’t,

But they’re offended anyway –

We need to go to them first

And try to work it out,

Before we come and worship the Lord.

If we do this,

Will it always end in reconciliation?

No, but at least we tried.

We can't guarantee the result,

But the Lord wants us to make the effort.

If we had to be reconciled to everyone

Who might have something against us

Before we could come and worship,

We would never be able to come:

People are sometimes irreconcilable.

What if we're not willing to go

And ask forgiveness of those

We know we have offended?

Jesus has something to say about this as well:

He says, "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent" (vv. 25-26).

He's using the example of an earthly court,

But the same is true of the heavenly court:

If we refuse to go and be reconciled to our brother,

We will be handed over to the Judge

And thrown into His prison,

And will never come out

Until we have paid the last cent.

Jesus is saying the same is true here

As when we're *unwilling to forgive others*:

He tells us at the end of the Lord's Prayer:

“For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Matt. 6:14-15).

If we're not willing to go

And seek reconciliation with our brothers

When we know we have offended them,

The Lord will not be reconciled to us.

But let's not forget

What this really means:

Jesus gives us the power to forgive

Through the Gospel –

Through His Spirit who lives in us –

If we can forgive others,

It means we have His Spirit;

And it shows us that we are forgiven:

Our forgiving doesn't earn our forgiveness –

It's the evidence we have been forgiven –

This is at least part of what it means

To have a faith that is not alone.

In the same way,

Jesus gives us power by the same Spirit

To humble ourselves

And ask forgiveness from those we offend –

Our doing this doesn't earn our reconciliation,

But it is the evidence that we are reconciled to God.

Is that the kind of heart you have?

Then thank the Lord for His mercy.

Are you struggling in this department?

Then ask Him for His strength.

Are you unwilling to love your brother or sister?

Are you unwilling to humble yourself,

Go to them and ask their forgiveness?

Then pray that the Lord might have mercy on you,

And give you this kind of heart. Amen.

<http://www.gcmodesto.org>