"A MURDERER AT HEART"

(The Seriousness of Unrighteous Anger)
Matthew 5:21-26
4/2/2017

INTRODUCTION: V. 21a

***Are you a murderer in your heart?**

How do I conquer anger in my life? Two key steps:

I. See it for what it is -- Murder! (v. 21-22)

II. Settle differences now! (v. 23-26)

A. Solving differences is a prerequisite to <u>worship</u> and <u>service</u> to God (v. 23-24)

B. Solving differences now is the secret to avoiding bigger problems later (v. 25-26)

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Over 25,000 known murders are committed in the USA every year (not to mention abortion and suicide) (SEE MacArthur, p. 289-290).

Among the 7 things that God hates most are "hands that shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:16ff).

V. 21

"It was said by them of old time" - lit. It was said <u>to</u> the ancients (to the people who lived long ago).

"Thou shalt not kill" - future tense imperative. One of the 10 commandments (Ex. 20:13; Dt. 5:17).

The word "kill" means to commit <u>murder</u> (i.e. for someone to take the life of an innocent person).

The command does <u>not</u> apply to <u>capital punishment</u>, which was sanctioned by God in the Law (Gen. 9:6; Num. 35:33; cp. Rom. 13:1, 4; I Cor. 11:7; Acts 25:11; Ja. 3:9).

Examples of Murder:

--manslaughter (premeditated murder)
--abortion (pre-birth murder)
--euthanasia (old-age murder)
--suicide (self murder)

"In danger of" - liable to; murderers who don 't get saved will not inherit God's kingdom (Gal. 5:21; I Jn. 3:15).

"The judgment" - Judgment both by people (Dt. 16:18) and by God would be the fate of murderers.

"It is possible for a model, law-abiding citizen to be as guilty of murder as anyone on death row. It is possible for a person who has never been involved in so much as a fist fight to have more of a murderer's spirit than a multiple killer" (MacArthur, p. 292-3).

What causes people to become angry?

***Are you a murderer in your heart?**

How do I conquer unrighteous anger in my life? Two key steps:

I. See it for what it is -- Murder! (v. 211-22)

NOTE: Christ's repeated formula: "Ye have heard" (v. 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43) . . . "But I say unto you" (v. 22, 28, 32, 34, 38, 44) --

> Christ did not change the O.T. nor nullify it, but rather He showed the true intent and meaning of it. He is confronting the misinterpretation and misapplication of God's Word. He is showing the importance of attitudes as well as actions; internals as well as externals; motives as well as behavior. The Pharisees were notorious for subtracting internals (Mt. 23:233) and adding externals (Mk. 7:89).

God desires truth "in the inner man" (Ps. 51:6). He looks "at the heart" (I Sam. 16:7).

Jesus is confronting the self-righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were trusting in their own righteousness ("I never killed anyone!"). The Lord is saying, "You cannot justify yourselves because you have not committed the physical act of murder. Murder goes much deeper than that. It originates in the heart not the hands. It starts with evil thoughts, regardless of whether or not those thoughts are brought to consummation in action" (MacArthur, p. 292).

ILLUS: The self-righteousness of "Two-Gun Crowley." (MacArthur, p. 293)

"Whosoever" - anyone; no one excluded

"Angry" - in context, a deep-seated, stewing, brewing wrong attitude due to a growing hatred from a personal offense.

Angry - present participle -- The "anger" referred to here is more than a momentary feeling, but is a continuing bitterness and animosity sustained over a period of time. God warns us about allowing a “root of bitterness” to grow (Heb. 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled)

"Without a cause" - though this phrase is not in some manuscripts,s if authentic, it would refer to a cause that is just. To be angry, but not over a righteous cause.

There is an anger that is not sinful; if it is an anger toward sin and unrighteousness (Eph. 4:26).

--Jesus was righteously indignant when He drove out those who turned the Temple into a department store. (Jn. 2:12-17). He also was angry toward those who did not believe it was proper to do good on the Sabbath (Mk. 3:5).

"Murder" - anger is equated with murder because it is a root cause for murder. It is the hot emotion that triggers bloodshed.

1) Selfishness that is not satisfied turns into
2) Anger and anger leads to
3) Murder

Two extremes of sinful anger:

1. Some people bottle up (clam up, internalize it)

2. Some people blow up (cursing - ventilate it)

"Raca" - to call someone this is to call them an "Empty head" (modern expressions -- "Rockhead" "Air Brain" "Stupid")

ILLUS: Simon Ben Eleasar's arrogant ridicule (MacArthur, p. 295).

"The Council" - Lit. the Sanhedrin, which was the highest court of the Jews. This "council" refers to the heavenly Sanhedrin made up of the
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's verdict is final.

"Fool" - To call someone this is to call them a "worthless scoundrel" or an "idiotic reprobate." This word is a more severe term, a more serious reproach than "Raca."

"Raca" scorns a man's head (mind) and calls him "stupid"; whereas "Fool" scorns a man's heart and character and calls him a "worthless reprobate" (cp. Vine, p. 114).

"Hellfire" - Greek gehenna - the city dump of Jerusalem, used by Jesus as a picture of the final place of judgment for the wicked (Reinecker, p. 14).

1) "Judgment" . . . 2) "the council" . . . 3) "hellfire" = a similar way of saying:

1) court . . . 2) jury . . . and 3) prison OR

1) trial . . . 2) verdict & sentencing . . . 3) incarceration

1) The court judgment = the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11)

2) The Council = the Triune Godhead, who will comprise the "Supreme Supreme Court"

3) The Sentencing = the eternal punishment in fire

How could calling someone a name like "Empty head" or "Scoundrel" condemn a person?

1. Because usually those who point the finger at others fail to see their own need for forgiveness and salvation.

2. Those expressions externalize what is in the heart. They manifest "anger" which is the divinely established equivalent of "murder" No practicing murder has eternal life in him (I Jn. 3:15 - "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murder; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him")

II. Settle differences now! (v. 23-26)

"Therefore" - Jesus is now going to make a concluding application to what He has previously said.

Jesus in verses 23-26 is showing the importance of getting offended human relations reconciled so as to avoid the destructive build-up and effects of anger.

Our Lord gives 2 good reasons why differences must be resolved, and why anger must be removed.

1) Solving differences is a prerequisite to worship and service to God (v. 23-24)

2) Solving differences is a key to avoiding bigger problems (v. 25-26)

V. 23-24

Since anger builds when something comes between people, Jesus is teaching the importance of removing those things which come in between. Resolving problems (not ignoring them) is the key to appeasing anger.

NOTE: Verses 23-24 speak of solving differences with a "brother". V. 25-26 speak of solving differences with an "adversary"

A. Solving differences is a prerequisite to worship and service to God (v. 23-24)

"Gift to the altar" - refers to the sacrifice that would be brought to the altar at the Temple.

"Thy brother hath ought against thee" - NOTE: It does not say that you have something against your brother, but that He has something against you. This is an easy time to justify anger in your life. To say, "Well, he has the problem" I will not bother with him until he resolves it."

"First be reconciled" -

"First" - shows the priority of us being right with each other before we can worship God. You can't worship until your conscience is clear; and your conscience is not clear when you know that someone has a problem with you.

"Be reconciled" - shows God's desire that we be at peace with each other

The word "reconciled" (diallossomai) refers to a mutual hostility being replaced by a mutual concession (Lightfoot)

B. Solving differences now is the secret to avoiding bigger problems later (v. 25-26)

Verses 25-26 give an example of what retaliation is like and how important it is to resolve it.

"Agree with thine adversary quickly" - come to an agreeable settlement with your opponent without delay! Jesus is saying it is better to settle the difference on the way (road) to court privately, than in court publically.

It is better to settle a matter early than late, now rather than later.

Jesus is giving some wise advice: "Make friends quickly with the one who is angry with you and is taking you to court. The reason is simple: If you do not appease his wrath, he in anger will have you "tried and fried"!

V. 26

This passage has been misunderstood and misapplied by Roman Catholics, who in a desperate attempt to proved the existence of "Purgatory" use this passage to substantiate that people do come out of a temporary place of suffering when a sufficient payment has been made.

Jesus, however, in this example is not describing hell or a place of spiritual judgment, but is simply talking about a human "judge," a human "officer," and a earthly, literal, physical "prison" (v. 25).

CONCLUSION:

Steps to Overcome Anger (See: Problem Counselling notes)

1. You must clearly see your anger

2. You must call it what it is - sin (murder)

3. You must confess it to God

4.You must counter it with God's solution (SEE: Col. 3:8-13)