

Unrighteous Anger

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[0 : 0 0] Morning, everybody. As you take your seats, please do have your Bibles out or get them back out if you've closed them because it is God's Word. And it is important and it's good to have our heads in the Bible as we come to His Word this morning.

As we do, let me just pray for us once more. God and Father, just pray that you'll give each one of us ears to listen, to hear what you have to say to us.

Open hearts to receive your Word and so help us by your Spirit. In the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. Well, it's great to be with you.

It's great to be able to speak this morning from Matthew chapter 5. And it's been a great series so far. We've been in Matthew. We did it at the start of the year. We had a break over Easter time and we're back into it now.

And this is the third one since we've got back into Matthew chapter 5. We're in verse 21. But, you know, it's good to remind ourselves. I always enjoy it because I always forget.

[1 : 0 3] So where have we been? Well, Matthew is the first gospel, the first book, the story of Jesus's life written by Matthew. And his gospel, his story, it's all about the fact that the Messiah, the promised King, he has come.

He has arrived. Emmanuel, God with us. And so Jesus is setting up his kingdom. He is setting up and showing his disciples what kingdom citizenship looks like on earth.

The sermon on the mountain that we've got to here in chapter 5. Jesus, he has been tempted by the devil, but he did not sin.

He did not give in. He then goes, he picks his first disciples. And then he starts to teach them as well as do miracles, heal people.

And this is why there's such a great crowd of people following him, wanting to learn more. So he takes them up this mountain and he starts this sermon. That's why it's called the Sermon on the Mount.

[2 : 1 1] So that's where we're at. He's setting out his vision. And it's important. And Craig's already mentioned it, but it's not rules in order to be righteous. But it's how to live once we have been made righteous.

And that is a subtle difference. And we'll go into that a little bit as well. We've had the Beatitudes. We've had salt and light. We've had the fact that Jesus' followers, they need to live in obedience to how he wants them to live.

And last week, Graham took us through that Jesus, he came to fulfill the law. Why? Because no one is good enough to keep it. You know, the law is just a set of rules.

If you think about it, you have a big red button in front of you. What does that button say? Do not press. That's the number one way to get someone to press it.

You put a set of rules in front of someone. I say to my daughters, right, you cannot do X, Y, and Z. Well, that is the first things they're going to want to do. You know, the law, that's a silly example.

[3 : 1 3] But the law, it just, it points to the fact that we can't keep it. We're not good enough. We are not, you know, in the last bit it said that even the scribes and the Pharisees weren't good enough.

I think this is slightly Jesus saying, of course they aren't good enough. They are just people. But to these Jewish disciples listening to this, the scribes and the Pharisees, they were up here.

They certainly thought they were up here. But even they were not good enough by just following rules. Why am I telling you all this? Well, our passage this morning, Jesus is starting six case studies from the Torah, the Old Testament.

He's going to take us through six laws, six rules. And he's going to show the wisdom of these laws in his new kingdom, which he has set up.

The idea here is to consistently love God and to do right to our neighbor. Jesus is transforming the hearts of his disciples to love.

[4 : 20] And so we're going to see the law. We're going to see the wisdom of it. And we're going to see two practical lessons that Jesus takes us through. So let's get stuck in to the law.

So as I've said, this is the first of six case studies. Jesus quotes a command from the Torah. And then he explains how it reveals. He reveals God's wisdom in the law.

If you have your Bible there, if you follow down with me, you have the different phrases that shows the starts of these case studies. Your Bible might helpfully have headings, which people have put in to help us.

But you'll see them in verse 21. Verse 27, 31, 33, 38 and 43. It's a phrase, something along the lines of, you have heard that it was said.

Where have they heard that this was said? Well, these were the Jewish disciples. They would have heard this many times, these laws. This was common knowledge to them. Of course they have heard these laws before.

[5 : 26] They would have spent many hours sitting in the synagogue listening to these things. But the verse carries on. You shall not murder in verse 21.

And anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. This particular law, this one that we're going to study today, this is from Exodus chapter 20 and verse 13.

You might recognize it as one of the Ten Commandments. It is in fact the sixth of the Ten Commandments. This particular commandment, it covered murder in the traditional sense. But it would also have covered carelessness or negligence. So what we might call manslaughter. The punishment was severe. It was a serious, of course it was a serious law to follow.

And you know, Moses, he makes a point of repeating it in Deuteronomy 5, where he gives his impassioned speech to the people of Israel before they enter the promised land that they were about to go into.

[6 : 32] You know, in a sense, this is an obvious one. Murder is wrong. Well, we know that. You know, most people wouldn't argue against you on that one.

But you know, it's so important, this one. Because why? Because life is precious. Life is precious. And you know, perhaps we trivialize murder a little bit in our society.

We were in a bookshop last weekend. We were away last weekend at a wedding in St. Andrews. And there was an amazing bookshop there. I'd recommend going to it if you're ever there. But the amount of books in that place was unbelievable.

But we went to the crime section, the thriller section, and book after book after book about murders and murder mysteries and all that kind of thing. It's the same if you go onto your Netflix account or whatever it is, other streaming services are available.

But you know, it's because it's entertaining. We find it interesting, don't we?

[7 : 39] You know, perhaps we maybe get a wee bit dull to the seriousness of these things. But you know, life is God-given.

That is why these things are so serious. Genesis 1 verse 27 says this, Likewise, in chapter 2 of Genesis verse 7, the creation account again, it says, Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

And the man became a living creature. Life is precious because life is God-given. God gave us life in the first place.

He breathed life into man's nostrils. But God also sustains us and keeps us alive. And when we think about it in that way, imagine taking that from someone in the act of murder.

You know, despite the seriousness and just the amazingness that God gave us life, you know, it only took to the second generation of people for us to get that wrong.

[9 : 07] The second generation of humans, Adam and Eve's children, Cain and Abel. Cain murders Abel, his brother. Why? Because of anger.

He was angry. He was angry and he was jealous because his offering wasn't seen in such high regard by God as Abel's was.

And he was banished. You know, we can think of many other examples. There's lots to look at. There's Moses. He kills the Egyptian. There's David.

He gets Uriah killed for his own purposes. There's Jezebel. There's many different examples you could look up and see. So we can see examples of this.

You know, the other one that comes to mind when we think of this commandment, you shall not murder, came to mind for me in a way. Is in Matthew 19 and verse 18. Jesus quotes this to the rich young ruler.

[10:06] If you don't know the story, the rich young ruler, he comes to Jesus and he says, What must I do to have eternal life? What good must I do? And there's a bit of back and forth.

But essentially, Jesus says to him, keep the commands. Keep the commandments. And the young man, he goes, well, which ones? You know, the first one Jesus quotes is this one.

You shall not murder. And with the other ones that he quotes, the young man, he claims, he says, I have kept these. I have done that. The guy was probably thinking, oh, great.

That was an easy one. I kept it. Go me. But you know, has he? And that is the point. And that is where we are going here. Jesus goes on to explain that it is the heart of these things that matters. It is the heart, the wisdom behind the law. So let's get into that, the wisdom. Likewise, we'll see in these case studies that there is a change in the text.

[11:12] And in this one, in verse 22, we have, but I tell you. This phrase shows that the development of the teaching is taking place. You can imagine the disciples, they are sitting there.

They're listening to Jesus. They're starting to hear about some of the Ten Commandments. And they're sitting there and they're getting comfortable. And they're probably starting to snooze off a bit. Oh, I've heard the Ten Commandments loads of times.

I know, I know this one. That's fine. And Jesus says, but I tell you. And they sit up and they think, I've not heard this one before.

This was groundbreaking what we're about to go and see. This was radical teaching. This was something they hadn't heard before. Jesus is beginning to show that there is real wisdom to be found in these ancient laws when they are studied.

They are to learn the way of righteousness. This is why Jesus was called the new Moses. He is taking the law and expounding on them. The outward behavior of the law is compared to the inner attitude of the heart that God desires.

[12:25] It is all about the heart. So Jesus says, verse 22, But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.

What Jesus is doing here is putting anger on a par with murder. All is sin. You know, the disciples, they would be thinking about the scribes and Pharisees that had just been mentioned.

They were thinking about the laws they had been taught from their youth. This was radical teaching. So I suppose that makes us ask the question, well, what is anger?

If we went and asked people on the street, we'd probably get many different examples of what people think is anger. You might even get questions about whether anger is right or wrong. It may depend on the context.

It may depend on what is happening. This here is the Disney character. I think his name is just anger. And as you can see, he blows up at any situation.

[13:33] His character is just that no matter what, he is angry about the situation. And some of the other characters, they try and calm him down and negate his anger.

But you know, Jesus, he takes us through, in verse 22, three forms of unrighteous anger that he's going to go through.

I produce this table. This is how my brain works. If this is not helpful for you, then I apologize. You can just listen. So Jesus takes us through three forms of unrighteous anger.

We're going to briefly go through them. First of all, we have anger without cause. Anger without cause. That is unrighteous anger.

Now the cause, the cause of righteous anger. We see Jesus getting angry. So therefore, anger in itself cannot be wrong. But what this example is here, saying that I tell anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.

[14:37] The cause of righteous anger could be when God's honor is at stake. It could be when we see injustice in the world. We are rightly to be angry about that.

God is angry at injustice in the world. It could be when we see that someone is wronged. That can provoke righteous anger within us.

But here it is talking about unrighteous anger. Anger that we are not controlling when we should. And it is attacking a person.

We see that there is someone who is angry towards a brother or sister. Each one here has something that is attacking. It has a worldly consequence that is mentioned.

And there is a relation to the original murder. So the first one, anger without cause. It is attacking the person, the brother or sister, as it says. The worldly consequence was judgment.

[15:39] I know it is the seed of murder. Anger is the seed of murder. Anger. The second one it mentions. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, raka, is answerable to the court.

This word raka, we don't know it. It is not a word that we use. But it is an Aramaic abuse term. And it is meaning empty one. It is attacking someone's character.

It is attacking who they are and what they are all about. And the consequence in this time was that they would be taken to court. They would be taken to the Sanhedrin, the highest court of the land. And they would be brought to justice. You know, insulting someone's character. Well, that is the spirit of murder. And the final one Jesus mentions, he says, And anyone who says you fool will be in danger of the fire of hell.

You know, you fool, we maybe use fool in more flippant terms nowadays, I would presume. Or even see it as maybe being funny. You're kind of Laurel and Hardy type fool. But here it was meaning it's the same word that we have for moron.

[16:49] It's moros. It's a serious word. It's something that you wouldn't say to someone lightly. It is attacking someone's identity. It is attacking who someone is.

And you know, cursing is a desire to murder. It is wishing that someone was dead. Or saying you may as well be because of who you are. And the consequence was Gehenna or the hell of fire, the burning dump outside of Jerusalem, where things were burnt, but also criminals' bodies once they had been killed for their crimes.

We might be thinking here, you know, is this not all just a bit extreme? These are just words. These are just our emotions. Sticks and stones and all that, right?

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. But we all know that that is nowhere near the truth. Our words are extremely powerful.

Our words can be extremely hurtful. Our words can be life-changing to people. Yes, potentially in good ways, but so often in bad ways.

[17:59] Our words that we say to people, they betray the thoughts that we have inside. They betray the motivations of our hearts.

Our words betray what we're really thinking. We cannot keep it bottled inside. The wisdom of the law here that Jesus is getting at with these examples, where he is going with this, is that it is about how much we value other people.

That is where he is going with this. Murdering, it doesn't value the life that is given by God. It is taking that away from someone. And in the same sense, these outpourings of anger towards people, it shows the heart issues that we have of not valuing others.

Not valuing others as we do ourselves. Never mind not valuing others as much as God values each and every person. We read it at the beginning in Genesis, that all are created in the image of God. Every single person that we bump into, the person that cuts us off when we're driving and we get annoyed at, those in our family, those in our friends, those that we get along with, those who we don't get along with, each and every one is created in the image of God.

[19:30] I truly believe that if we kept that at the forefront of our mind in our daily lives, then we would live differently. That is what Jesus was saying to his disciples, that if you want to live differently, you need to view people differently.

And he carries on by taking us through a couple of practical lessons to finish, making his point. Potentially there's a bit of a strange section in this.

We might read it and think they're very specific examples. They're specific things that we may just think, it's a bit random thrown in there. But you know, there's two lessons to learn as we look at them.

Read verse 23 with me. Therefore, if you're offering your gift at the altar, and they remember that your brother or sister has something against you, then leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them, then come and offer your gift. The lesson here is that God receives no worship from one who is not on speaking terms with a brother.

[20:39] Someone is trying to offer a gift to God, but they have wronged someone. And in order not to be hypocritical, they are called to be right before others, not just try and be right before God.

How can we try and be right before God, and do his will, and do what he wants us to do, if we are neglecting our brothers and sisters in Christ? If we are not right with them, if we have wronged them, and have not gone back to make things right.

There's a real lesson here that we see again in 1 Corinthians 11. It talks about taking communion, or the Lord's Supper. And it talks about examining yourself before bringing your worship to God. We need to be right before God before we can bring our worship. And I'm not talking about being made right in terms of becoming a Christian, being saved. Of course we need that. But in terms of just humbling ourselves before God, admitting our weaknesses before we walk into a church on a Sunday morning, just bringing him our failings so that we can bring him our worship.

Only when reconciliation has taken place can God be approached properly. We are not demanded perfection. We cannot keep the rules. We cannot keep the laws.

[22 : 05] But what we are called to do is admission. Unity and harmony in the church is so important. There's passages and passages talking about unity in the church.

Well, it's the result of valuing others above ourselves. Humbling ourselves to be able to go and make things right with someone.

In verse 25 and 26, it continues with a different but similar example. It says, Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court.

Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

The lesson here is that we should be quick to admit guilt and make things right. It says, doesn't it, that the law will take its course.

[23 : 11] I've recently been called up for jury duty. Never done it before. Can't say I particularly want to, but then we get into the whole argument of citizenship responsibilities and roles.

But, you know, that is the law taking its course. Of course, I don't know the details, but someone has done something that the law of the land says isn't right, and that a jury is called to decide whether they have done it or not.

That is the laws of the land. The laws will take their course. That is the way that society is meant to be. But the call here is to admit a wrong before someone and seek forgiveness.

This would have been a slightly different situation where it is one person versus another, but it is the same concept. But, you know, human consequences are serious.

Of course they are. It can affect our freedoms that we have with one another, ourselves. But it also affects our relationships with one another. If we wrong people, then we will fall out with people.

[24 : 16] We will lose family. We will lose friends over things that our actions and our words do. But, you know, not being reconciled to God is disastrous.

You know, some of the wrong, some of the secret anger in our heart, we'll get away with it. People will never know. I might get angry about something in particular.

I might have the secret sin of my heart that no one will ever know. That's fine. No one will know. I'll keep it buried inside. But, you know, God knows. God knows.

He made us. So He knows all about us. There is no hiding from Him. Adam and Eve, the first sin, they tried to hide.

They tried to hide from God. We can sometimes read that little story and we can laugh. How silly. How silly that they thought they could hide from God. You know, we do the same thing. Don't we?

[25 : 18] If we are not right before God, if we have not had our sin forgiven, we need to do that. That is the start of all of this.

We are naturally not right before God because of our sin. We need that situation fixed. The law, it could never be kept.

Likewise, we as individuals are not good enough. But thankfully, Jesus came and He was good enough. Jesus, He lived perfectly.

He died sacrificially and He rose spectacularly for us. As we finish up, the final lesson and we'll get to in a few weeks time that Jesus will take from the Torah is to love your neighbor.

Something I'm sure we've heard many times before. But the source of all right conduct comes from the wisdom behind that law. If we have the right attitude towards everyone, then our lives will look different.

[26 : 31] We will be worthy citizens of the kingdom of Jesus. We're warned about this elsewhere. James chapter 4 says this.

It's talking about fights and quarrels within the church family between brothers and sisters in Christ. It says, what causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

You desire but do not have so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.

There's real warnings in there. But you know, Jesus, He is transforming hearts to love. teaching His disciples how to live in God's kingdom in the way that He wants them to.

And these are not just empty words. Jesus, He will do this sermon but then He will go on to live it out. Jesus didn't just say empty words.

[27 : 33] He showed exactly what He was teaching about. Jesus would go to spend time with the least of society. He wouldn't get angry with those who did Him injustice.

But He would be angry at the injustices. He would cry when His friends died. Jesus lived this out as our ultimate example.

But if our hearts are right and that's the challenge this morning, if our hearts are right then our actions will be too. You know, our culture is one of self-centeredness.

It is one of thinking all about ourselves, isn't it? And I don't know if you leave church on a Sunday morning and your thoughts are straight away for Monday morning. What's happening next?

I'm really busy. I've got loads going on. And we start just thinking again about ourselves. And as we go through the week we just start thinking more and more about all that we're doing and all that we've got going on.

[28 : 34] And we're just thinking about ourselves. It's difficult. It is difficult. It's not easy. But let me just encourage you that God promises to help us in these things.

God promises to help us. He left us the Holy Spirit, the helper, to help us in these things, to live differently in the world because it does matter. It's what we're called to do.

It is our witness and it is how we show others the love that Jesus has for them. Let me just pray as we finish and we're going to respond with a couple of hymns.

And so as the band comes up let me just pray for us. God and Father we just thank you for your word.

We thank you for the truth that we can find in it. we thank you that despite the wrong motivations of our hearts at times we thank you for the truth of the Lord Jesus.

[29 : 37] We thank you for his work on earth. That despite our failings but because of his love he was willing to go all the way to the cross for us.

That he was lived that perfect life. He died that sacrificial death and that he rose again defeating death defeating the grave.

And he did so that we can be forgiven. We can be welcomed into his kingdom. And we do just pray that as we try to live our lives faithfully to how he would want us to live he will give us a help to do so.

And that in doing so we will live differently. We will be shining lights in the world and whatever we do. And so we just seek your blessing and help as we think on these things and go before us and we ask in his precious name.

Amen. his precious name. Amen.