

CITY CHURCH-EASTSIDE WEEKLY WORSHIP GUIDE

October 4, 2009

Reconciliation
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Sermon on the Mount: The Killer Within

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder..."

In describing the world in which Jesus lived, the sermon began this week with this description, "Jesus lived in a violent world. Romans hated the Jews they oppressed. Jews hated their Roman overlords. Jews hated Samaritans, whom the considered ethnic half-breeds and the Samaritans were contemptuous in return. And different Jewish factions held each other in contempt. It was very much an "eye for an eye" hate-your-enemy society, that still abounds today in the Middle East." The issue of anger both then and now is not one of theory or conjecture, but a universal struggle of humanity. By anger were not talking about righteous anger, but contemptuous unrighteous anger. God wants us to be angry about issues such as human trafficking because he too is angry about such stigmas. Additionally, if anger is a universal issue, then it is also a very personal issue for us all. The text of Matthew 5:21-26 reveals several key points about anger, namely the gravity of anger, the priority of anger, and freedom

from anger. Remember the religious leaders from last week who sought to lower the holy standard of God in order to justify themselves? When Jesus begins to speak of the gravity of anger, he is again lowering the boom on the religious who have certainly never murdered someone. But the rabbit hole goes much deeper. Our emotions can be very deceptive and as a result our hearts can become very callous to the damaging effects of our contemptuous anger. As we speak "raca" (you idiot!) to someone, we are not just offending another, but ultimately offending the character of God himself. Being made in the image of God, our anger mocks the great value of humanity and fundamentally God as creator.

Feeling the gravity of anger leads us secondly to recognize the priority of anger (23-24). The priority of addressing our anger is understood through the illustration Jesus gives. Without mentioning any specific situation, Jesus exhorts those who have travelled a great distance to Jerusalem for worship, to turn around and go back

to their hometown if they were unreconciled to another. This could mean an additional 6 days for one's journey! In Jewish culture temple worship was the most sacrosanct fixture of society and yet Jesus is saying that reconciliation to one another is paramount to temple worship. This calls us to examine ourselves. Are there relationships in our own life that need reconciliation? Do you feel weighed down by guilt associated with anger? Ultimately though, how do we find freedom from anger? The Intersect column on page two will get into the nuts and bolts of this, but in verse 25-26 Jesus is not simply giving legal advice, but essentially states that we're the ones on trial. We are all guilty of injustice towards one another. How will this be made right in this world and the world to come? As Romans 5:1-10 states, the work of Christ atones for our relational guilt and empowers us for reconciliation. Knowing that our debts have been paid before the Greater Court enables us to experience the freedom of life in His Kingdom. *Amen*

Sermon Application

The questions and thoughts below can be used for further reflection this week. Seek to use a journal or discuss with a friend. Most of all use this to consider how the gospel of Christ can be transforming. Enjoy!

Application Questions: Matthew 5:21-26

1. Discuss the cultural features that led to unrighteous anger in Jesus' day. What are such features in our world today?
2. How were the religious leaders in Jesus' day interpreting the commandment "you should not kill" and what was the spiritual impact? How do we interpret sin along the same lines? What is the personal impact for ourselves?
3. Growing up, what were you taught concerning anger either through word or deed? Was a distinction made between righteous and unrighteous anger? How did all of this shape your current perspective and perhaps struggle with anger?
4. Theologically speaking what is really going on when we are contemptuously angry? (clue: read Genesis 1:26). How does this change our perspective on anger towards others?
5. Verses 23-24 focus on the priority of anger. Have you felt led in the past several days/weeks to reconcile yourself to someone else? Share with a friend or with your group appropriate details of this experience. Did your attempts at reconciliation lead to greater freedom? How so?
6. Joe is a person that, like many of us, struggles with anger. Growing up his home-life was very rule based and performance oriented. He now lives in Atlanta where he finds himself in traffic and a job that is demanding and hectic. At the end of the day Joe finds himself weary from frustration and anger. How could the death and resurrection of Christ set Joe free and thus glorify God?

Intersect: How Do I Read My Bible?

Most of us to some degree struggle with contemptuous anger. Remember, contemptuous anger is unlike righteous anger. Righteous anger is the anger of God, being displeased by injustice. But so often our anger is not a righteous anger and thus brings about destruction in our life and the lives of others. Moreover the unfortunate thing is that sometimes this unrighteous anger is dealt to those closest to us.

How do we move away from unrighteous anger? This is a very challenging question, but one that we'll tackle here.

- **Your Past:** Several questions to consider. How was anger modeled for you by parents/guardians? Did you see more unrighteous anger or passivity towards the injustices of life? Was your home-life growing up a controlled & strict or a free-spirited, roll-with-the-punches environment? The main question to consider is how does your own story shape the way you think about anger, control, and power today?
- **Your Present:** Think about times in the past month when you become significantly angry. With that in mind ask yourself, "why was I angry?" Attempt to get at the root of what was going on. Most of the time our unrighteous anger is rooted in worshipping an idol of control, power, and acceptance. Whose agenda will win the day, God's or yours? For example, anger about traffic is not rooted in the fact that God's angry about traffic. Anger towards traffic is rooted in the reality that we have an agenda and traffic wasn't apart of it. It's in those moments where we need to realize that our anger is rising up out of a desire to be in control of a situation that's out of control and to be in power in a situation where we feel powerless. Be aware of how your past combines with your present as your approach various situations on a daily basis. How does this affect your work life, your home life, and ultimately your life with God?
- **Your Future:** Because of the work of Christ how could things be different? Often our past (how we grew up) creates certain standards of how life really "should be". In the final calculation many times this adds to the gospel of Christ. If Christ, in his death and resurrection, has accomplished the one true standard on our behalf, this sets us free from the standards of our past. Additionally, Christ's humiliation and exaltation have enabled him alone to be the one in control, in power, and the ultimate judge (Eph 1:22). If this is the case, why do we wear ourselves out trying to be gods? The wonderful promise of the gospel is that he alone has established our justification and he alone is the one in control, power, and authority. Resting in Christ enables us to move out in freedom instead of fear. How could life turn into an epic adventure as a result of believing this truth?

There has been much talk since Freud of "depth psychology;" the concern of Jesus was a "depth morality." Pharisees were content with an external and formal obedience, a rigid conformity to the letter of the law; Jesus teaches us that God's demands are far more radical than this. The righteousness, which is pleasing to him, is an inward righteousness of mind and motive. For "the Lord looks on the heart."

John Stott

