**Calvary Fellowship 4.24.2022 Matthew 5:21-32 “Bold as Love”**

* **Once upon a time before we had kids we were on the flight back from ATL**
* We were excited to get home, the only downside is, we didn’t have seats that were together - We were separated by about five or six rows
* As it worked out it wasn’t too bad… At least for me anyway - I had an aisle seat
* Carey on the other hand have a tough situation - She got stuck in the middle seat & had two very large man on either side of her.
* Also, the guy behind her was about 7 feet tall and must’ve weighed 500 pounds because whenever she tried to recline the seat back it wouldn’t move because the guy was there blocking any possible level of comfort
* So anyway, we hit some turbulence on the way home and as Carey tells the story, the bug guy behind her grabs the top of her seat and starts pulling it towards him and saying, “uh oh. Uh oh.”
* So we land and people are getting the plane and I meet up with Carey and she tells me what I have just told you and she says, “How was the flight for you?”
* I said, “oh, it was great. The seat next to me was empty.” - “Wait. What?!”
* She says, “Why didn’t U tell me that before we took off & we could have sat together and I would have been spared the misery that I’ve just experienced.”
* I said, “hey, don’t try to blame this on me. That was your seat. It’s not my fault that it wasn’t a joy flying the friendly skies. Blame the rules.”
* I felt like I had explained very logically - do U think this conversation was over?
* No it wasn’t - b/c citing rules when you’re talking w/ your wife doesn’t end well
* **I learned several things that day - 1 is that U can’t have love when you’re quoting the rules - b/c love always does more than the rules require**
* That’s how U fell in love - U did things that weren’t required - U spent money U didn’t need to spend - U went out of your way & U didn’t have to do U
* And your wife responded by saying, “Oh, U shouldn’t have.”
* That’s b/c U didn’t have to - but love isn’t expressed when you’re doing the minimum - it’s expressed when you’re doing more than required
* **Now, here’s what I want U to remember - Jesus is giving the greatest sermon ever given - the Sermon on the Mount**
* And He has talked to us about how to be happy & what happy should be doing
* We should be light & salt I na world that dark & unsavory
* But that the end of that section Jesus said that He didn’t come to destroy (or annul) the law - He came to fulfill it & not 1 jot or tittle would pass away
* That He was going to fulfill the law down the dotting of I’s & crossing of the t’s
* Now Jesus is going to further explain what He means by that - He’s going to take OT laws that everyone in the audience agreed w/ & accepted as true
* And He’s going to take them to the next level - He’s going to elevate them
* The religious leaders would teach the law in such a way that was so specific, that U didn’t have to change at all & you’d be perfectly in line w/ the law
* And Jesus is going to show us that the law is much deeper than simply the outward action - it’s supposed to impact your heart & attitudes & intentions
* **So Jesus is going to tackle 2 laws that most people would say they’re doing well when it comes to relationships: murder & adultery**
* Have U noticed that most people when they’re asked if they’re a good person say, “Well, I’m not murderer, so yeah I’m a good person.”
* As if that’s where the line is - as long as you’re on the side of not having killed anyone, you’re a fantastic human being
* No - there’s lots of things U or I could do to destroy relationships long before a person gets to murder
* Same is true in marriage - something is deeply broken long before adultery becomes part of the equation - this is what Jesus is getting at for us
* Jesus is going to show us that murder & adultery start way before the action takes place & if we want healthy relationships, that’s where we need to focus
* We need to look at our own hearts & let God do a deep work there…

**———(v. 21-26)———**

**#1 - Relationships Should Reveal My Faith**

* **Listen - the way religious systems generally work is that as long as you’re ok w/ God & don’t offend God, then things are good**
* The problem w/ that thinking is that it has caused U & I over the years to meet people who said they were religious or had faith, but were jerks
* And they were completely ok w/ being jerks b/c they said the right prayers & believed the right things, so it didn’t matter how they treated people
* This was in ancient Judaism & those Jesus was speaking to & it is absolutely true in 2022 w/ those who talk about loving God
* I want U to understand what Jesus is saying here - He’s saying, “That’s not going to work. Loving God means we should be greater than the law.”
* The law simply says, “Don’t kill each other.” - Jesus says, “It’s way deeper than that. U don’t kill someone w/o having hate in your heart. Let’s deal w/ that.”
* **I want U to notice that Jesus isn’t saying that getting angry is wrong - there are moments when anger is the right emotion**
* “Be angry, and do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26)
* But here’s the thing w/ anger - we think anger is this uncontrollable beast that once it’s unleashed, we can’t be held responsible for what happens
* “I’m sorry. It’s my latin anger.” - You’re not even latin - “Yes, but my anger is”
* But that’s not true - so often we say things we wish we didn’t say & do things we wish we didn’t do & then we blame anger as the reason
* **How many of U are married? Have U ever been in an argument?**
* Here’s what I’m willing to bet: you’re been in an argument & been piping mad, but when the phone rings U answer & sound like Mr. Rogers
* We act as though we’re totally out of control when we’re mad - but that's just not a good excuse & Jesus is calling it out
* We can turn the anger button on or off, but we find it easier to leave it on
* **We know that’s the case b/c mentions the words that we use as His point**
* B/c we might say, “I’ve never killed anyone” - but we assassinated people w/ our words & that’s the thing that Jesus is calling out
* And let me say that this words in our culture don’t really mean anything
* If someone were to call me “raca” - I’d just assume U were from Boston & U thought I liked rock music b/c I play guitar
* “Oh yeah, Pastor Bob plays guitar. He’s a big time rocka.”
* But in Jesus’ day, If you say, “Raca” to someone – Raca was like saying something about somebody’s’ mom – these were fighting words
* But Raca wasn’t even a word - it was a sound
* The last time I taught this I made the sound & accidentally launched a projectile & it landed on someone in the front row - it was a perfect illustration, but gross
* Anyway, I apologized to the guy & the ushers threatened to put up 1 of those glass shields that they have at Subway if I didn’t get my act together
* Raca was the sound U made when you'd spit on them as a sign of disgust
* Means, 'Empty head' or 'worthless' - meant U thought their life had zero value
* **But to say, “You fool” – was an insult to their character**
* It’s way deeper than saying they simply lacked wisdom - it mean that U don’t believe this person has any value as a human being
* Jesus says that your anger is directly related to whether U think how U treat people matters to God - or if U can be ok w/ God & still be hostile to others
* So Jesus then says something incredibly difficult - even unheard of
* **To offer a sacrifice in that day was very expensive & very time consuming**
* Every Jewish male had to present himself 3 times a year before the Lord
* That means 100’s of thousands of people all driving in Jerusalem at the same time to offer sacrifices & make things right between them & God
* So there was currency exchanges happening - the buying & selling of animals
* U had to wait in line for hours to offer a sacrifice which was extremely costly
* And Jesus says, “If U bring your gift to the altar” - that means it’s finally your turn - you’ve waited for hours & spent all kinds of money to get here
* Basically, if you’ve been to Disney, U understand this situation
* When my daughter Mia was about 3 we went to the Magic Kingdom b/c she wanted to met Rapunzel - but the line to meet her was ridiculous - over 2 hours
* But we did what parents who love their kids do - we got in line to meet her
* And this line is taking forever & I feel like it’s not moving
* So Mia is sitting in the stroller & we’re trying to keep her entertained
* And we’re getting close tot he front of the line - there’s maybe 10 people ahead of us - and then I notice that Mia isn’t moving in the stroller
* And I look & she is totally asleep - now Mia has never been 1 for naps
* By the time she was a toddler she stopped napping
* But I’m beside myself b/c we’re almost there & my wife says, “Let her sleep b/c if we wake her up she’s going to be miserable. Let’s just get out of the line.”
* I said, “Oh no. I’ve waited in this miserable line for 2 hours. If I have to, I will take a picture w/ Rapunzel. But I’m not leaving w/o someone taking a picture.”
* So as we’re having this conversation, we get to the front of the line & she’s still asleep - even though I’d give the strolled a little jolt to try & wake her up
* So I let a couple of people behind go ahead & they’re like, “Wow. U are so nice. Thank you.” - I say, “Yes. I really am quite something. Go ahead.”
* B/c I don’t Carey, “We are going to meet Rapunzel even if it kills us.”
* Well, the good people who work at Disney World are trained to notice lunatic behavior - they can scan an audience & find the crazy person
* So they scanned this audience & zeroed in on me - And they walked up to me & said, “Sir, are U ok?” - I said, “Listen, we passed ok a few exits ago.”
* Then I explained my situation & said, “Listen, it’s fine. I’m just going to stand her & direct traffic until my daughter wakes up.”
* And they said, “Sir. We can’t have U directing traffic b/c U don’t work here & you’re acting like someone who’s unhinged. But here’s what we can do.”
* Then they gave me a card w/ the supervisor’s signature that I could come back any time & hand it to someone & I’d go straight to the front of the line
* I said, “Well, in that case I guess I could let U guys direct the traffic.”
* B/c getting out of a line at a theme park seems unreasonable to us & Jesus is saying that getting out of line to do something spiritual is the right thing when things aren’t between U & your brother
* Jesus says, if you’re about to do something sacred & someone has something against U – b/c of something you’ve done – fix it before it gets bigger
* B/c to offer a sacrifice asking for forgiveness or sit in a service & worship God rejoicing in God’s forgiveness, while outside you’re withholding forgiveness
* There’s a word for that - it’s hypocrisy - it’s not living in a congruent way
* And that’s been the plague of the church for years - and it’s not b/c the church are the only people who struggle with this - we’re not
* There’s lots of doctors who smoke, marriage counselors who get divorced, & vegetarians that sneak in the occasional pulled pork sandwich
* But it’s more serious for us b/c sometimes unbelievers understand things better then believers - that loving God & loving others are inextricably connected

**———(v. 27-30)———**

**#2 - Relationships Should Reflect My Devotion**

* **This is where the guys in the audience were like, “Wait. Hold up. How did I just become guilty of something that I didn’t even do?”**
* This reminds me of 1 time when Carey was pregnant she had a bad dream & in it I was so mean to her - to the point where she woke up & she was mad at me
* I said, “Why are U upset w/ me?” - She says, “In this dream I had, U were so mean to me & I as crying & U didn’t care.”
* I tried to explain that I didn’t actually do any of those things & she said, “That’s not the point Bob. The point is that U could have done it & that’s why I’m mad.”
* **To understand what Jesus is saying here, we have to back up & talk about what adultery does to a relationship**
* Adultery destroys intimacy in a marriage b/c trust is broken, b/c commitment is devalued, & b/c love is violated
* So Jesus says, “We’re all in agreement that adultery is a bad thing. But here’s the thing - lust is doing the same thing in your heart.”
* B/c let’s be honest, in some cases, lust - wanting another person - is adultery minus the opportunity
* Jesus is saying, “If U see a woman & are w/ her physically or U see her & just wish U were w/ her physically, you’re still damaging intimacy in your marriage”
* Why? B/c your heart is still moving in that direction
* “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.” (Matthew 6:24)
* **Being happily married is more than just not cheating - so let’s get really practical & talk about how to affair proof your marriage**
* **#1 - Keep Pursuing Your Spouse**
* **Think about the things U did to get your spouse - U surprised her w/ flowers - U took her to dinner - U went out of your way to win her love**
* It’s easy to do that in the beginning - U just can’t stop doing that
* **I remember taking my wife out on our 1st Valentine’s day date**
* In fact, I even have a picture of it (pic)
* I was so nervous - we had been dating for about 2 months & I took her a restaurant called “Yesterdays” on the Intracoastal of Fort Lauderdale
* I’ll never forget that we walked in & it was the fanciest place I’d ever been in
* They have us warm washcloths when we sat down - so I grabbed it & preceded to wash my hands & then I washed my face - my wife was mortified
* I spent more on that meal than I spent on the car I drove in to get there
* And they only allowed valet - so I had to valet my White 1981 Toyota Corolla
* It wasn’t my favorite moment when all of these BMW’s & Mercedes showed up & the valet guy shows up w/ my car & says, “Who’s car is this?”
* I just stood there & said, “What loser brought that piece of junk?” - then I waited for it to clear out a little & then we jumped int othe car & got out of there
* Listen, going all out is easy when you’re trying to win her love - but if U want to be happily married, U need to keep pursing her
* And that changes over time - it could be that the thing she really wants is help w/ the kids or help w/ dinner or just time where U can both talk
* If there was 1 thing I’m most grateful for about my marriage, it’s that Carey & I do everything together - food shopping, getting the mail, cooking dinner
* It is 1 of the things that has kept us so close in our marriage - we just like being around each other
* **It reminds me of this couple we saw years ago at a McDonald’s of all places - they were in their 80’s & they split a cheeseburger & fries**
* The husband cut the burger in 1/2 & split the fries & then she started eating
* He just watched her & they talked, but he didn’t eat a thing
* So I walked up to them & said, “Sir, U two are the cutest couple. You’re sharing everything. But I’ve noticed that you’re not eating. Are U ok?”
* He said, “Son, I’m just fine. And we do share everything. But right now it’s her turn w/ the teeth.”
* So keep pursuing each other & make sure that you’re doing things together
* **#2 - Make Intimacy a Priority**
* **Couples argue over 3 things: Money, communication, & sex**
* Most of the guys the room heard, “something, something, sex”
* Listen, more than 65% of couples where there was infidelity say their marriage was lacking physical intimacy
* That doesn’t make it right, but if we want to affair proof our marriages we need to have honest conversations w/ our spouse about our desires & theirs
* God wants every married person to enjoy sex b/c sex is the vehicle God has created for a man & woman to express intimacy to each other
* “Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. She is a loving deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love.” (Proverbs 5:18-19)
* I don’t know if U want to quote that verse to your wife - I have some friends who have tried & the results are mixed - but U definitely should believe it
* We live in a culture that is losing its mind about sex & lust - the way we insulate ourselves from it is by making sure things are good at home
* “Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well.” (Proverbs 5:15)
* Are U thirty? Drink from you own well - how much water can a married couple drink? As much water as they want - Can we flavor the water & mix things up?
* Do what ever U want as long as it’s U & your spouse & it’s not ungodly, illegal, or makes either of U uncomfortable - this is intense talk about water
* So if your kids as U what U learned in church, U can say, “We learned about how important it is for married couple to stay hydrated.”
* **#3 - Take Radical Action**
* **Jesus says if your right eye causes U to sin, pluck it out - obviously, Jesus isn’t speaking literally b/c U don’t need both of your eyes to lust**
* What Jesus is saying is we need to take radical action when it comes to sin
* If there’s something that’s causing U to sin, U need to cut it
* If there’s a friendship at work that U think is dangerous - then here’s Jesus’ word for U - find a new job - “But how can I do that?”
* Well, it’s that or find a new family after everything explodes
* Once again, U already know if that work relationship is dangerous - I’m not saying U can’t work w/ anyone that U think it attractive
* I wouldn’t apply for a new job & tell the interviewer that this is the perfect place for U to work b/c everyone who works here is ugly
* But U know if you’re in a tempting situation & Jesus is saying, “Run”
* If the internet is causing U to sin - then guess what? U can’t be online
* I have a friend who had a struggle online years ago & now he has a service called Covenant Eyes that sends me & another friend a report that logs every single website he visits on all his devices - is that extreme? No, it’s wise
* B/c U should talk to someone who’s had an affair - they would do anything to undo what they did b/c after the thrill is gone - all that’s left is pain
* So instead of waiting for the pain to enter your life - take the radical action now to keep yourself from that - Do U know what the Bible c alls that? Wisdom

**———(v. 31-32)———**

**#3 - Relationships Should Raise My Commitment**

* **In this culture, it was a prevalent rabbinic teaching that a man could divorce his wife for just about any reason**
* If he didn’t like her anymore – If she cooked his eggs wrong – even if he found someone that was more attractive – he’d say, “I divorce you” 3X & it was done
* Then he would write a certificate of divorce to keep it legal & it was done
* The certificate is important b/c that’s what would make them feel righteous & that they were law abiding citizens who obeyed God
* But once again they had missed the point of marriage & they didn’t like Jesus’ answer which is why they ask Jesus about it in a later chapter in Matthew
* What’s Jesus’ response? Love demands more than a certificate
* “And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.’” (Matthew 19:4-6)
* Jesus is saying, “If U think U can walk away from your wife & our kids & just b/c U gave her a receipt U think you’re ok w/ God, you’re gravely mistaken.”
* And He’s saying that & the spouse they divorced are committing adultery b/c it wasn’t a valid reason for divorce
* Listen, if we want to have a voice in the culture, we have to do better than the culture when it comes to marriage & relationships
* But if Christians get divorced as much as everyone else & they live w/ their girlfriend or boyfriend just like everyone else - no 1 will listen to us
* This is why the church has no voice when ti comes to issues of sexuality & homosexuality & transgender issues - no 1 believes us anymore
* And this is what Jesus was saying - U can’t give up on your relationships & hand your former spouse a receipt & then think everything is ok w/ U & God
* It’s not & it’s not ok w/ the culture around us who is watching as well
* **Listen, marriage is hard - and you’re going to have every opportunity to find a reason to walk away b/c everyone’s got their reasons as to why**
* But what shows the kind of relationship U have w/ God is not your certificate skills when things get difficult - it’s your commitment when things aren’t easy
* This is why couples struggle, this is why friendships suffer, this is why we keep repeating the same relational mistakes over & over again
* B/c everyone is holding on to the law - “But I wrote a certificate” - thinking that’s how U get the results that only love can bring - and it’s leaving people empty
* **If U want the results of love, U need to operate based on love**
* We hit people w/ the law whenever they fail us & then we don’t understand why our relationships are tense & on edge
* Jesus is saying, “If U really want to live, we have to operate on a new plane”
* If we know God & have experienced the love of God in our lives, it’s time to embrace the reality that we can’t right w/ God & harsh w/ people
* We can’t hide behind a prayer we’ve prayed or right theology all the while our attitudes & actions aren’t influenced by the love we’ve experienced from God
* **So what do I do? Starting loving people & stop keeping score**
* Start loving people in a way that reflects the love we have for God
* Start giving the people in your life the benefit of the doubt in the same way we want to get the benefit of the doubt - and something amazing will happen
* Your world will change - the people in your life are going to change
* But here’s the reality - even if they stay exactly the same, it won’t feel that way b/c you’ve changed & your life is rightly reflecting God’s love to U & through U
* And no 1 can stay the same when they’re being loved unconditionally
* B/c love demands more - but love also causes us to become more…