



Connect Discussion Guide
Sunday Message - 11/1/20 | Keith Ehresman | Matthew 5:23-24

Greater gifts are given & received when gospel relationships are pursued, built and empowered.

Key Scriptures:

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

- Matthew 5:23-24

And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.

- 1 Samuel 15:22

Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

- Amos 5:22-24

"When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

- Isaiah 1:12, 16-18

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

- Luke 2:13-14

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

- Romans 12:18

Message Highlights:

- We Rethink Christmas because we believe that Immanuel--God with us--is the greatest gift ever given or received. We want to help all people experience genuine Christmas.
- In the Old Testament, sacrifice by itself could not atone for ongoing disobedience to God's commands, especially as they related to others.
- Jesus prioritizes relationships with others when it comes to our gift giving.

- There is a holy, sacred, and spiritual aspect to reconciling relationships. God prioritizes reconciliation over the offering of sacrifices.
- It was God's intent from the beginning to reconcile all things back to Himself - we are part of God's intent!
- When we have peace within ourselves and with others, we are aligning ourselves to give gifts that are motivated by a pure heart to reconcile others with our God.

Conversation Starter:

- What do you think is more important when it comes to gift giving: the gift itself, or the relationship between the giver and the one receiving the gift? Why?

Discuss the Message:

1. What is the connection between our relationship with God and our relationship with others?
2. Read Matthew 5:23–24. Why did Jesus tell us to reconcile our relationships with others before presenting an offering (worship) to God?
3. What does it mean that it is better to obey than to give a sacrifice (see 1 Samuel 15:22)?
4. Read Amos 5:18–24 and Isaiah 1:10–20. Under what circumstances does God refuse our gifts to him?
5. What is the difference between giving gifts just for the sake of giving, and giving gifts to serve a greater purpose?
6. In what ways does God work in people's lives when we as the church give generously, motivated to help people be reconciled to him?

Pray:

- Pray for one another as a group.
- Pray that we would be those who pursue reconciliation with others.
- Pray that we as a church would be partners with God in his mission to reconcile all people to himself.