KINGDOM *of* HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Matthew 5:21-26

(Sermon from Sunday 14 May 2023, Richard van Lieshout)

1. Information

a) Read the passage, perhaps twice using two different versions

- Note: this week there are some interesting differences between the versions (like between ESV & NIV), so this wold be a particularly helpful exercise!

b) Fill in any info that didn't make it into the sermon.

- There are no additional notes on this passage on anger in the CG guide.
- Following are some important additional notes for y'all.

- Before I get there, please note something very important about this passage: ***This is not Jesus's comprehensive teaching on anger!***
- Please keep in mind last week's passage, about the continuity/discontinuity between Jesus & Moses. As I mentioned last week, the primary purpose of the six examples to follow ('You have heard it said..but I say to you') in v21-48 is to highlight how Jesus takes the commandments of Moses and extracts the underlying principles and applies them to disciples today.
- The secondary purpose of the six examples IS to teach on the subject, but it's not comprehensive!
- This will become especially important next week, where Jesus teaches on divorce in v31-32. Later, in chapter 19, he will devote a full 12 verses to the subject!
- This is critical for CG sessions this week, as it introduces the topic of anger, which has much nuance to it, as seen in the other scriptures in the New Testament that speak about anger.

- In the sermon then, I touched on some of the other scriptures on anger, including Ephesians 4:26 & Galatians 5:19-23.
- You may want to study those same passages, but I would suggest (if you do study them) that you study them in a wider context (see the 'Activation' section for ideas).

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- Following are some exegetical notes for the verses, most of which were not used in the sermon.

Exegetical notes on the text

V21:

- '*You have heard*'
    - 'You have heard' reflects an age in which many could not read; most of Jesus' audience depended on what they heard.
- '*Whoever murders is liable to judgment*'
    - These additional words are not part of the 10 commandments, and are not directly quoted from the OT, but they form an adequate summary of several OT passages dealing with legislation concerning murder (Exod 21:12; Lev 24:17; Num 35:12; Deut 17:8-13).

V22:

- '*But I say to you*'
    - Jesus is speaking on his own authority now!
    - This is not a new contribution to an exegetical debate, but a definitive declaration of the will of God as it pertains to our hearts.
- '*Angry*'
    - Derived from the same word used for 'wrath'
    - Greek: '*orge*'
        - Mark 3:5 "*And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored*"
        - The word is used 10 times in Romans, in all instances referring to the 'wrath' of God.
    - There is a different Greek word used for anger: '*thymos*' (fury, quick flare-up, temper)
        - This word is never used of Jesus!
        - Luke 4:28 "*When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath*"
        - Acts 19:28 "*When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!""*
        - Rom 2:8 '*wrath and fury*'
        - Gal 5 '*fits of anger*' in the 'works of flesh'
    - Participle: whoever has lingering anger
- '*Liable to judgment*'
    - Since it is hard to imagine anyone being charged in a court of law with the crime of anger, a strong case can be made that the judgment of God is in mind.
- '*His brother*'
    - The Greek word for brother or sister ('adelphos') refers here more closely to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verse 23. However, this does not mean that anger against those outside of the Christian community is permitted, since v25 speaks more generally of an accuser.
- '*Insults*'
    - This translates the Aramaic word 'Raca', which means 'empty'.
    - Inferiority is at root here, couple with anger
    - Not just being 'silly'!
    - Raca used in deadly earnest demotes another person to the level of a nothing, a nobody.
    - Its a contemptuous word
- '*You fool*'
    - This translates the Greek word '*moros*' (from which we get 'moron').
    - It literally means 'dull' as in 'stupid'
    - Sometimes translated as 'foolish', like in Jesus's parables

- '*The hell of fire*'
    - This translates the word 'gehenna'.
    - The NET bible gives the following information:
        - The word translated hell is "Gehenna" (γέεννα, geenna), a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew words ge hinnom ("Valley of Hinnom"). This was the valley along the south side of Jerusalem. In OT times it was used for human sacrifices to the pagan god Molech (cf. Jer 7:31; 19:5-6; 32:35), and it came to be used as a place where human excrement and rubbish were disposed of and burned. In the intertestamental period, it came to be used symbolically as the place of divine punishment (cf. 1 En. 27:2; 90:26; 4 Ezra 7:36).
    - Pillar commentary on Matthew reveals the following:
        - 'γέεννα' occurs 7 times in Matthew out of a New Testament total of 12 (Mark with 3 is the only other book to have it more than once). It refers to the valley of Hinnom, a ravine to the south of Jerusalem. During the monarchy it was the center of an idolatrous cult that involved passing children through the fire (2 Kings 23:10, etc.). There are prophecies of judgment on this dreadful place (Jer. 7:32; 19:6), and it came to be linked with the final place of torment. There is some evidence that the place was used as a rubbish dump where fires burned continually. Among the Jews there was the idea that the Last Judgment would take place there, and before New Testament times the name was used for the place of fiery torment that awaits the wicked (cf. TDNT, I, pp. 657-58).

V23:

- '*Reconciled*'
    - From the Greek word 'διαλλάσσω diallassō' - 'to change thoroughly'
- '*Come to terms*'
    - 'Agree'
    - Compare Luke 12:58

v25-26:

- '*Last penny*'
    - Smallest coin available

Sermon Outline

- I opened the sermon talking about anger in general, including a few comments on Ephesians 4.

- I then got to the text in Matthew, and spent most of the time unpacking v21-22, as these verses contain the teaching on the root of anger.
- V23-24 then give some implications of this teaching, which I only briefly commented on.

- I closed by referring to the great 'New Covenant' promise in Ezekiel 36, in order to leave people with a sense of the 'new heart' promised in the covenant.

2. **Activation**

- As mentioned earlier, you could further the teaching on anger by Jesus by doing some reading and reflecting on other NT passages that deal with anger.
- In the sermon I referred to the following two passages (mainly commenting on the Ephesians one), which I suggest you study in their wider context:
    - **Ephesians 4:17-32** (which includes the connection between the heart of anger, and angry words, like in Matt 5:21-26)
    - **Galatians 5:16-26**

- You might also want to study some of the following passage which also deal with anger:
    - **Colossians 3:5-15** (very similar to the Ephesians 4 passage)
    - **James 1:19-21**
    - **1 John 3:15**

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- ***Y'all, let's be honest.***
    - We don't need much convicting that we're angry.
    - We don't need much convincing that it's dangerous (although we do certainly underestimate the spiritual effects of anger!)

- ***The problem here is not lack of information, it's avoidance.***
- Therefore, the most important step your group can take is to find a way to safely confess our sin of anger, and invite the Spirit to do what was promised in Ezekiel 36.

- ***Please don't avoid the real issue of anger by just doing more studying.***
    - Take time to confess.
    - Take time to pray.
    - Take time to write down some accountability steps.
    - Lets deal with this at the heart level, where Jesus intends.

3. **Implementation**

- Ditto.

- But also, **write down some real accountability steps the group can take.**
- And be sure to reflect on them again the following week (otherwise it's not accountability, its just intentionality. Which is also good, but not completely transformative on its own)