

Normal Christianity: Radical Love
Matthew 5:21-26; 5:38-6:4
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Friday Night Large Group (March 8, 2013)

Matthew 5:21-26

Murder

²¹“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵“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. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Matthew 5:38-48

Eye for Eye

³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ ³⁹But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 6:1-6:4

Giving to the Needy

¹“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Introduction

- The sermon on the mount starts with eight characteristics of what your heart should be like as a Christian. When you read it, it hurts because we fall short of these characteristics. As if that's not enough, the sermon continues to say that our righteousness have to exceed that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were pretty righteous in terms of their actions.
- One time, a man criticized C.S. Lewis, saying that Lewis did not really care for or like the sermon on the mount. C.S. Lewis said, "if 'caring for' here means 'liking' or enjoying, I suppose no one 'cares for' it. Who can like being knocked flat on his face by a sledgehammer? I can hardly imagine a more deadly spiritual condition than that of a man who can read that passage with tranquil pleasure". He's saying that you will enjoy the sermon on the mount as you read it if you're spiritually dead. If you're spiritually alive, it will hurt you as you read it.
- A classic preacher named Alexander White almost had his arm amputated, but a lady said she will nurse him back to health. There was intense pain as the arm healed, but the woman taught him to say "I like pain" every time the arm hurts. The pain meant that he still had feeling in his arm and that it was healing. This preacher learned from this, and when he preached he would say "I like pain". In a similar way, we should like the pain of scripture. I like to preach sermons that you do not like, not because it's boring, but because it hurts, and it will heal you as it hurts you. May there be pain and growth tonight.
- As you read these passages, it may be discouraging, but you have to keep on reading. The fact that Jesus commands us to do these things means he will enable us, and this should encourage us. Christian life is about his grace, mercy, kindness, forgiveness, strength, and empowerment, which comes by his grace, through his word, as we pray. I pray that we will get this kind of perspective from this text. Here, our Lord gives us instructions for building this expansive love in our lives. It is one of the most concentrated expressions of Christian love ethic and personal relations found anywhere in the New Testament. Again, although it is initially discouraging, it is ultimately encouraging.

I. Radical Motive of Love [Matthew 6:1-4]

A. The motive of love

Matthew 6:1 "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

1. We need to love God. That has to be motive for everything in our lives. You will at times get your reward in terms of reward from men, such as praise and appreciation, but not from God. You only have one audience in eternity. God is watching us and we need to live for His eyes only.

B. The wrong way to give

Matthew 6:2 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in

the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

1. When you give, make sure you do it for God, not for men. Hypocrites literally meant that they were actors. Actors at the time wore masks. They were different people under the masks, but they looked like someone else. Sometimes when we give, we look like lovers but underneath we are someone else. We are actors, acting like we actually love other people but we actually only love ourselves.
2. The reward here means that it is a commercial transaction with a receipt. As you give money, you want to get the praise from others. It is merely a business transaction. A lot of the time, when our motives are wrong, we are doing things to get, not to give. Whether we desire appreciation, praise, or good feeling, it is the wrong reason to give.

C. The right way to give

Matthew 6:3-4 **3** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

1. Make sure you do not give for the approval of other people or of yourself. Sometimes we can be deceived. We are so subtly sinful that we will refrain from outwardly showing giving, but inside we pat ourselves on the back for our profound humility. Make sure you do not keep a figurative diary of your good deeds, assuming that you're so spiritual because you did it privately. Do not keep track or give yourself merit marks.
2. Do not remember your goodness, but remember others' goodness more. As we help others, we must keep our eyes on those that we are helping. When we give with a motive of the love of God, there will be a reward of love.

D. The reward of love

Matthew 6:4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'

Matthew 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

Matthew 5:31 "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'

Matthew 5:33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.'

Matthew 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

1. Verse 21 - People say don't commit murder. Pharisees had pride about themselves for not committing murder. This verse is telling us to also not commit murder in our hearts.
2. Verse 27 - People say do not commit adultery, but scriptures say you should also not have lust.

3. Verse 31 - People says that anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate, but scriptures says do not divorce.
4. Verse 33 - People say do not break your oath, but scriptures say to become a person where you do not have to give your oath because people will trust you.
5. Verse 38 - People say eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, but scriptures say to accept those people who are evil.
6. Verse 43 - People say to love your neighbors and hate your enemies, but scriptures say you must love your enemies.
7. There is no reward unless your heart and your motive is right before God.
8. Is doing things for a reward selfishness? According to scripture, we can only receive a reward from God when we do it for the glory of God. If we do it for God, then God will be our reward eternally. He will pour himself for his approval, for his eyes.
9. When you go to heaven, do you think money, your grades, or your status matter? The only thing that will give you pleasure and joy is God himself because we will have no other desire than to live for His glory and to praise Him. We experience a small glimpse of this when we are doing well spiritually, because we have our spirit's nature.

II. Radical Love for Believers [Matthew 5:21-26]

A. Principle

Matthew 5:21-22 **21** “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ **22** But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

1. Chances are, most of us have never killed anybody. However, dislike or hatred is similar to murder.
2. These quotes are not necessarily talking about old testament, but a lot of people's interpretations of the old testament.
3. Angry literally means "flare with poison". Raca means "contempt for a person's head". Fool is "moros", the word "moron" comes from that. You can murder someone's reputation or their confidence with the power of your tongue. Not showing someone love is like murder.
4. Sermon on the mount is not only about action, but also the motive. Not about what, but why. Not how to, but how much to. Hatred is the motive and cause of eventual murder. Think about the progression in our lives. If we want something, but someone keeps us from getting it, or if we don't want pain, but someone causes it, we won't like them. When this process repeats, we grow to hate them. We start to ignore them and avoid them, or, if we cannot avoid them, we want to get rid of

them. If this happened for a thousand years, there's some chance that we might kill them. That's exactly what people will be like in hell because we carry our sinful desires in hell. People are gnashing their teeth because they still have their sinful desires, which continuously grows, but there's no pleasure. Any sinful desire that exists in our hearts will probably lead to murder in eternity.

5. The difference between murder and hatred is a matter of quantity, not quality. It is a degree difference, not a nature difference. Only by the grace of God are we restrained from murdering. We always look at the worst people and think we're not like that, but if we need to really understand our sinful natures. Paul lived in a time of many mass murders, but he called himself the chief sinner because he can see the seed of hatred in his heart and he knows that he has the same nature as those murderers.
6. The bible is saying we are all murderers. Gollum was right in Lord of the Rings when he accused himself of being a murderer. The bible says we are all murderers of Jesus Christ. Our sin put Christ on the cross. God does not have to send someone to hell because hell is already in their souls, and in hell they will suffer because of their nature and desires.
7. However, just as hatred leads to murder, love leads to dying for other people. The bible is saying to keep on having that love for other people.

B. Action illustration 1 - Before worship

Matthew 5:23-24 **23** "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, **24** leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

1. Notice the passage doesn't say that you did something against someone else, but that person has something against you. That person is the one who has a problem. He may have wronged you, but you need to go and reconcile. I always thought, without careful reading, that I only need to go reconcile if I've done something wrong. Of course this is taught in scripture as well, but here it's saying that even if somebody else has something against you, and it might not be your fault, you need to go and reconcile before you worship.
2. You may think this is not practical, but the sermon on the mount is about how much you want to be salt and light of this world. I'm not concerned with realistic or practical because whatever scripture says, no matter how unrealistic it is, can be practical by the power of our Lord.
3. We want to influence the world, and to do that we need this kind of radical love, especially in the body of Christ. When we are united in Jesus Christ, as we serve and love one another, there is more power and synergy. When we are separated there is lack of power in the body of Christ. Diffused light does not have power. Poking somebody with your finger is a lot weaker compared to punching them with your hands. Learn to reconcile.

4. Notice it says *remember* that your brother has something against you. Remember means that there are reactive sins in your heart because of your sinful nature. If you remember that, it becomes important in your mind, and you hold on to any little feelings of grudge. Make sure you repent and reconcile those grudges before worship.
5. Our hearts are like buckets of water in the cold. When the top freezes, you cannot use the water underneath. We are like that in our lives. When things affect us, unless we repent right away so we can act on our love and spiritual nature, our heart freezes. Break the ice right away. Keep on walking and reconciling because there is incredible power in the community of our lord Jesus Christ.

C. Action illustration 2 - A legal situation

Matthew 5:25-26 **25** "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. **26** Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

1. When there is personal conflict that can be resolved, do it quickly and do not go to court. You're in a no-win situation when two believers go to court. This is not an absolute commandment. There is situational wisdom required because there could be times when you may have to go to court as a last resort, but try not to. Love each other and try to settle things out of court. You might lose some money, but it's ok because God will provide.
2. The longer I live, the more I value my relationships with people. When you're young, you don't really know the value of each person, but as you get older, you realize more and more how valuable each person and your relationship with them is. Any person you meet has the potential to eternally glorify God. When I was younger I did not realize that our personal relationships greatly affected our heavenly relationships. I pray that you value your relationships more and more.

D. Our action - Repentance and forgiveness

1. Think about yourself. If you've done something wrong, take responsibility and apologize, without excuses or blame. If you ask for forgiveness and you forgive others, then you're giving up the right to retaliate.
2. Here are some signs to show that you have a problem with someone. These are light things, but if it happens, resolve it right away: If you roll your eyes and sigh (outwardly or inwardly); when unpleasant things happen to them and you like it; when there's inverse feelings between their feelings and yours; when you start to be irritated by someone else because you're counting the record of their wrongs; when there's awkwardness in the relationship and you start to avoid somebody; when you start to pass negative information about the other person and you like it; or when there's disruption and friction when you're together.
3. It hurts to do all of these things. It hurts to have a good relationship with other people, but when it hurts it's like nails in your hands and nails in your feet. We

have to remember Christ. That's what he did for us and that's what he will enable us to do for his glory.

III. Radical Love for Unbelievers [Matthew 5:38-48]

A. Raising the norm of love

Matthew 5:38-39 38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

1. This passage contains three verses from the Old Testament, which means that it's a pretty important verse. It presents the oldest law in the world, the law of retaliation. Today, the law of retaliation is the foundation of all justice, the whole system of civil, penal, and international law. As it exists in the bible, it was given to the judges of Israel as the basis of jurisdiction, as shown by Deuteronomy 19.
2. Individuals were not permitted to use the law to settle disputes with others. However, the Jews applied this to the individual and used it as an excuse to hate the enemy or the gentiles. However, it says "do not resist an evil person". Problems arise when we isolate Jesus' words without giving due attention to the context, the flow of argument and specific social implications of the time. Some people took this to mean that there should be no retaliation whatsoever. That's not what scripture is saying. There has to be situational wisdom. However, Jesus is raising the norm of love from the Israelites of the Old Testament to the spiritual Israelites of the New Testament.

B. Loving in difficult situations

1. Insulted

Matthew 5:39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

- a) Most people are right handed. If someone who is right-handed hits you, it's usually on the right cheek. If someone hits you on the left cheek, that means they're using the back of their hand, and so it's more for the purpose of an insult than for pain.
- b) The believers of the time were slaves of the Roman empire, and as people who are under the Roman government, they faced many injustices and insults. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to them the other. It's not about being nice, but about being powerfully influential.

2. Cheated

Matthew 5:40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.

- a) As a Jew or a slave, you would lose if you were being sued. When someone misuses you or cheats you, use it as an opportunity to give and to serve.

3. Forced Labor

Matthew 5:41 If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

- a) If a Roman official asks someone to carry a burden, that person has to do it regardless of who they are or what the circumstances are. Almost all Jews have experienced this and they hate it. A few Sundays ago we talked about Simon the Cyrene. When a Roman soldier told him to carry the cross, he had no choice but to do so. Of course, when he did that, it was one of the greatest experiences of his life. When someone forces you to do something, use it as an opportunity to serve rather than to be bitter.

4. Borrowing

Matthew 5:42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

- a) Do not misuse this verse and use it to demand from others. This passage is talking about radical generosity. Jesus is not recommending that his followers give to every open hand, but he calls us to be deeply and wisely generous. We can be extra generous to those who do not know Christ to show the generosity of Christ. However, if it is not good for the other person, maybe loving them means not giving to them so that they can learn.

C. Widening the norm of love

1. Loving with limit

Matthew 5:43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

- a) There is a limitation to love. This is an Old Testament quotation (Leviticus 19:18). Love your neighbor comes from scripture, but hate your enemy is not. It was added by the Pharisees because they interpreted neighbors as only the Jews. In the Old Testament context, the Israelites were often commanded to take care of their own neighbors but not of their enemies. They not only had to show the love of God, but also the justice of God, and so they often had to go to war. Therefore it is understandable how they would misinterpret this verse. However, your neighbors are not just Jews or Gentiles, but anyone who loves Christ.
- b) The Israelites were also in fear of being defiled by the Gentiles ceremonially and spiritually. Even God's judicial judgment in the OT was out of love. In eternity, there will be eternal judgment. When there is death coming, it is a warning of the eternal death that is coming so that they will turn back to God. Even his judgment was out of love.

2. Loving without limit

Matthew 5:44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

- a) Love means to love without limit in Jesus Christ. You have to show appropriate love to both Jews and Gentiles and to anyone who hates you or persecute you. We need to wisely love them in different contexts, but we need to love them, that is a command. Jesus is not asking us to have a romantic, buddy, emotional love for them, but he commands us to have a Godly, *Agape* love, a deliberate, intelligent, determined, committed love. Feelings are merely

pleasures that we receive. Don't worry too much about it, especially in our sinful nature. Due of our Spirit's nature, we desire to love them apart from our feelings because we love Christ.

- b) There was a Christian woman who had a terrible neighbor. Their kids would urinate in her yard and one time the kids splashed orange paint onto her patio. She was upset and mad, but she decided to love them. She did not feel any different, but she resolved to exercise love. She baked her neighbors a pie and took it to them, thus starting a caring relationship. She said, "those neighbors would not change until they moved or she did". When she started to do acts of love for them, she began to actually love them and care for them, to the point that when the neighbors moved, she wept for them. This is what we have to do in our lives. That's what Christ is calling us to do, and as we do that, we will learn to love them more.
- c) One of the best ways to show love is at the end of the verse. "Pray for those who persecute you". I find this tremendously helpful. There are two natures in my heart, sinful nature and spirit's nature. I must talk and act, not pretend, but love them. When I can't do that, I just pray for them. Nothing helps me love the ones I do not want to love more than to pray for them. Learn to pray for them right away. They will experience the love of Christ through you, and it will help your heart to love them.

3. Love bearing fruit

Matthew 5:45-47 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. **46** If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? **47** And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

- a) When you love, you will become like Jesus. God is your father in Jesus Christ, so you will become like him. Because you have Jesus Christ in your heart, you have the DNA of God. Because of who God is, His love for both the believers and the unbelievers will be the same until the judgment day.
- b) Your love is the proof of your relationship with Jesus Christ and it will help you to grow to be more like him. You will be the sunlight that He shines on the evil and the good. You'll grow to be like Jesus and you will be blessed by Jesus. As our hearts grow, we receive the fullness of him which will progressively grow in eternity. You'll be blessed with Jesus and with the father, and then you will be a blessing to others. If you can greet the ones you do not want to greet and love the ones you do not want to love, you'll be different from the world. We are called to be different, not necessarily more. We must be different in our nature and our hearts, then our actions become light and we become powerfully different beams of light in the world.

4. Love with power

Matthew 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- a) The law shows our sins

- (1) Scripture is a mirror. It shows that we are not perfect. It shows our sin and ugliness. Initially this may be discouraging.
- b) The law shows Jesus
 - (1) Jesus Christ is the perfect representative of God. All of the laws of the Old Testament is a description of the Jesus that is coming. Luke 24 says "the law and the prophets are about me". If Jesus is a Jew at that time, he would have lived like the law. The shows our sin and how we fall short, but it also shows Jesus.
- c) The law shows our justification forgiveness
 - (1) Jesus died for me and as me. When I see perfect law, I know that it is the description of Jesus, and I know that I failed. However, Jesus Christ lived as me and died as me, so all of my sins are on him and all of his righteousness are on me. Therefore, I am forgiven.
- d) The law shows our glorification strength
 - (1) Romans 8 says God is doing everything in eternity so that we become like Jesus. He predestined us to be the likeness of His son. The law shows that this is what we're becoming. The word of God is our strength. What it says will be done in us and through us. Whenever the bible gives a command, be excited because that's where we're headed in Jesus Christ. As the word of God goes into us, our spirit's nature is fed and it becomes our strength, overcoming our sinful natures and sinful desires, dominating them because the second Adam is so much greater than the first Adam. Through this verse, God is saying we are different from the ones who do not have access to the grace of God. We are his children, therefore by God's grace we can be perfect. Because of this, we can have radical love and raise the norm of Christianity in this world.

Conclusion

- Jesus Christ, while we were yet sinners, loved us, and we should love our enemies with the same love. I believe that radical love will transform others because it will show them the supernatural, powerful love of God.
- Love God with all of our hearts. Live for His eyes only. It should be the only motivation in our hearts We need to love our brothers and sisters in Christ because each and every one of them has a beam of light in their hearts. They are the sunlight that God is using to shine on the good and the bad. We need to be together and to love one another. Never hurt our brothers and sisters in Christ, never talk bad things about the church, never look down on others. We need to be together, reconciled, and together we will shine the love of Jesus Christ through us. The world needs Christ. Just as someone came to you and showed Jesus to you, be that light to others. We can change the world.