

**“I AM SO MAD I COULD SPIT NAILS!!!”**  
**Matthew 5:21-26**

**INTRO.:**

1. Have you ever noticed how things tend to get broken when people get angry?
  - a. Perhaps it is a teenager who storms out of the house in a huff and slams the back door so hard the glass breaks.
  - b. Or the golfer who got angry over a bad shot and slams his golf club against a tree harder than he meant to and he breaks his expensive graphite driver.
  - c. Maybe it is the college student who one night got in an angry disagreement with his girlfriend.  
--In the morning he learned that after the fight she had gone into her dorm room and broken a framed picture of him, by slamming it against her desk.
  - d. Someone in anger throws a punch and a nose gets broken.
  - e. In anger one nation lashes out at another and a treaty or pact gets broken.
  - f. Express too much anger in disciplining a child and a trust gets broken.
  - g. Use angry words and a heart gets broken.
    - 1) Church unity gets broken.
    - 2) Relationships get broken.
  - h. As a matter of fact, angry outbursts have ruined many relationships.
2. Thus it is no surprise that as Jesus is talking to His followers about the radically new way that they are to live, that he chooses to deal with the subject of anger.
3. In last week's lesson we noticed that Jesus called for us to have a righteousness that exceeds those who look good on the outside (Matt. 5:20).
  - a. The point Jesus was making is that far from looking good on the outside, what God is looking for are people whose hearts have changed on the inside.
  - b. And so now, starting in Matt. 5:21 Jesus is going to illustrate this kind of heart in several ways.
4. It is safe to say that the average American would consider themselves to have a good heart.
  - a. We think of ourselves as basically a good person.
  - b. Perhaps our line of reasoning for determining if we are good may sound something like this – “Well, I know I'm not perfect, but at least I'm not a murderer!”
    - 1) Perhaps our reasoning is that murder is the dividing line between being good or evil.
    - 2) Once a person commits murder, we say they have reached the point of no return, they can never be considered good again.
  - c. This line of reasoning is not new for it also existed in Jesus day and among the people that He was talking to in the Sermon on the Mount.
5. So in Matt. 5:21-22 Jesus says, “Whoa! Not so fast. Let's think about that kind of reasoning for a moment.”
  - a. He begins by quoting Ex. 20:13 to show that murder is a serious offense.
  - b. It is an ungodly act of violence that is totally against the will of God.
  - c. And if Jesus had stopped here he probably would have gotten a series of “Amens” as the peoples said, “That is right. A murder deserved to be shown no mercy.”
  - d. But then Jesus went on in vs. 22 to state that being angry with your brother is just as serious as murder.
  - e. All of a sudden the “Amens” stop and the crowd becomes very quiet.
  - f. In His statement Jesus said that killing is a terrible sin, but unrighteous or unjustified anger is just as great a sin because it also violates God's command to love one another.

6. If you will notice, starting in vs. 21-48 Jesus adopts a different style of teaching.
  - a. Jesus did not assume everything His audience had heard concerning the content of the OT Scriptures was really in the OT.
    - 1) This is because the Pharisees and teachers of the law regarded certain oral traditions of equal authority with Scripture itself.
    - 2) So He starts out by saying - *“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder.’”*
      - a) That is in the OT.
      - b) That is commandment number 6 of the 10 Commandments.
    - 3) Then He continues - *“And”* - now here is the oral tradition part - *“And anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.”*
      - a) That is what had been handed down for years.
      - b) If you murder, you are subject to judgment - in other words, you would be brought before the local courts.
  - b. The crowd on the mountain with Jesus would have been as familiar with that statement as they were with the simple command - *“Do not murder.”*
  - c. So Jesus goes on to state the real meaning behind the law when He said, *“But I tell you, that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.”*
7. This AM let us spend some time looking in greater detail at the point that Jesus was trying to make.

### LESSON:

- I. The first thing Jesus was trying to warn us about is that anger is dangerous and serious (vs. 21-22).
  - NOTE: If we add a “d” to anger we have the word “danger.”
  - We are in a dangerous situation if we have anger stored up in our hearts.
  - As we look closely at vs. 22 we will see that Jesus describes anger here as a crescendo - it builds through three stages.
  - A. 1<sup>st</sup> Stage: Directing our anger at another person.
    1. Jesus said that anyone who is angry with his brother is subject to judgment; that is, they are worthy of the same consequence as a murderer (vs. 21).
      - a. Jesus was teaching that angry thoughts break the murder prohibition also.
      - b. We may ask, “How is this possible?”
        - 1) First we need to realize that not all anger is bad.
          - a) Even Jesus got angry when people were putting obstacles put in the way of others coming to worship God at the Temple.
          - b) Anger, in its simplest form, is a spontaneous response that has a vital function in our life.
          - c) Anger alerts us to an obstruction of our wills and immediately raises alarm and resistance, even before we have time to think about it.
        - 2) But the problem comes when our anger quickly turns into something more evil.
          - a) It includes thoughts of making a painful impression on others, whether physically, verbally, or emotionally.
          - b) Jesus says, we should not even allow ourselves to become angry enough to consider harming someone in any way (physically or feelings), because when we do we have already committed murder in our hearts.
    2. ILLUST.: Clarence Darrow, one of the most famous criminal lawyer of his generation, once said, “Everyone is a potential murderer. I have not killed anyone, but I frequently get satisfaction out of obituary notices.”
    3. The point is that anger directed at another person is as serious as murder – It is dangerous.

B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage: Contempt.

1. In vs. 22 Jesus said, “Whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court.”
  - a. “Raca” was an expression of contempt.
  - b. “Raca” means “empty head.”
  - c. The word may have originated from the sound a person makes in clearing the throat in preparation to spit.
    - 1) Rrraaaacah! That’s what I think of you!
    - 2) ILLUST.: I am sure that most of you have seen an old western where the cowboys are in a saloon and one cowboy spits a big wad of tobacco juice on the boot of another cowboy.
      - a) It is a sign of contempt.
      - b) It is saying I don’t care if someone gets hurt or not.
2. Jesus said that this is a greater evil than just anger.
  - a. In anger, we want to hurt someone.
  - b. In contempt, we do not even care if someone gets hurt.
  - c. In fact, we hope that they do respond so that we can feel justified in our actions toward them.
3. Today, instead of Raca, we might use dork, nerd, bonehead, fat or something worse like a sexual innuendo or racial slur.
  - a. While the word may be different, the intent is always the same.
  - b. It is meant to cast someone aside - like spitting on them - and saying you do not belong here.
  - c. And sadly, sometimes these words hurt so bad that murder would almost be more merciful.
  - d. In fact, it was only a few months back that a girl made headlines when she killed herself because of what people were saying about her on Facebook.
4. Jesus said that people who express contempt are guilty enough to be judged by the Sanhedrin - The highest court in the land - the Supreme Court.

C. 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage: Malice.

1. Jesus continued vs. 22 by saying: “And whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.”
  - a. The word “fool” is an expression of malice.
  - b. The word today no longer captures what Jesus had in mind.
  - c. For us, fool is more like Raca - empty head.
  - d. So, fool is not so cutting, but we sure have plenty of other terminology that allows us to go ahead and do exactly what Jesus was condemning without using the word “fool.”
2. Let me illustrate what Jesus said here a little differently.
  - a. For those of us who grew up in the church we have heard this verse all our lives.
  - b. At school we would never think of calling someone “a fool” because we did not want to receive Jesus’ condemnation.
  - c. But how often did we use other words, and perhaps some even R-rated words to describe another person.
  - d. While we were good at keeping the rules of God we overlooked the intent, just like the Pharisees did in Christ’s day.
3. The Pharisees of Christ’s day would never have committed murder personally.
  - a. Yet they were angry enough with Jesus to have Him killed.
  - b. They said enough things about Him to get someone else to kill Him for them.
  - c. They kept the rules, but they overlooked the intent.
4. APPLIED: What about today.
  - a. When someone at work misses a deadline, or when someone cuts you off in traffic, do you shout, “You fool. You brainless idiot.”
  - b. Even with those words we have gone too far.
  - c. We have gone beyond the intention of the command not to murder.
  - d. Jesus said that to brand someone with words like that is a violation so devastating that it justifies a person who said such things as being severely punished and even going to hell.

5. The point is that hateful words spoken in anger are treated like a crime - specifically murder - in God's eyes.
  - a. Anger is a form of murder because its desire is to destroy anyone who blocks our paths to satisfaction or assaults us or makes us look bad.
  - b. Jesus reminds us, it is not possible for people with such attitudes toward others to be thought of as truly good, or righteous.
  - c. People who think this way are out of harmony with God's kingdom.
6. From Jesus' perspective, we can see why this is so serious.
  - a. As He was saying these words, He already knew what kind of death awaited Him on the cross.
  - b. So reading between the lines we can hear him say, "Hey, you people who cut others down with your words. I'm here to give my life for them and for you. That guy you just called an idiot? I love him. He's so valuable to me that even if he was the only person in the world, I'd still die for him. And you're making him sound worthless and insignificant? What's that say about my mission to die for him? How dare you? That's not the kind of heart inside a person who is truly good - inside a person who chooses to follow me."
7. Jesus is operating at heart level - where anger grows.
  - a. Anger embraced and allowed to grow through these three stages is dangerous and serious.
  - b. ILLUST: There was once a famous snake charmer.
    - 1) His trick was that he taught his giant snake to wrap around him and retreat.
      - a) He'd say, "COIL!" and the snake would wrap around, and around his body all the way up to his face where it would HISSSS!
      - b) Then he would say, "RETREAT!" and on command the snake would uncoil and slither across the floor.
    - 2) This became such a great trick that he went on tour.
    - 3) One night he and the snake went on stage in front of the biggest crowd ever.
      - a) Like always he said, "COIL!" and the snake coiled around him.
      - b) Everyone gasped.
      - c) Then he said "RETREAT!" and nothing happened.
      - d) Again he said, "RETREAT!" and still nothing happened.
      - e) "RETREAT, RETREAT!" he cried, and there in front of that crowd the snake began to squeeze on the snake charmer tighter and tighter until the man died.
    - 4) After the show, backstage, a man told a newspaper reporter, "I remember when he got the snake. It was just a baby. So small he could have crushed it in his hand. But he played with it and let it grow. It finally crushed him."
  - c. The point is that anger is like that snake.
    - 1) Do not go the route of anger.
      - a) Do not embrace it.
      - b) Do not harbor it.
      - c) Do not nurse it.
      - d) Do not befriend it.
      - e) Do not play with it in your mind.
    - 2) Crush it while you still can.
    - 3) It's so serious it can cut you off from God.
    - 4) It is so dangerous it can crush you and send you to hell.

TRANSITION: Anger is serious and dangerous. It ruins relationships. With that point being made, Jesus turns to some practical examples that show us what we should do if anger crops up in our life.

II. To avoid anger, Jesus said take action immediately (vs. 23-26).

--Notice 2 scenarios Jesus gave showing what we should immediately do:

- A. 1<sup>st</sup>: Settle things with others before attempting to worship God.
  1. Jesus sets the scene at the altar - one of the holiest moments in life: vs. 23-24: (Read).
  2. He said if you have come to worship God and right then you remember:

- a. Someone is angry with me.
  - b. I am at odds with someone.
  - c. Or my actions have knowingly hurt someone else.
  3. Jesus says, "Go! Settle the matters immediately!"
  4. He says it is far more important to be reconciled to someone than it is to engage in religious activity.
  5. John put it this way in 1 John 4:20-21: "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also."
  6. Worship becomes a sham if we have behaved so poorly prior to coming to worship that we have knowingly hurt someone.
  7. So Jesus says settle things before attempting to worship God.
- B. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Settle things with others before receiving a court decision: vs. 25-26: (Read).
1. In this illustration Jesus is saying that this is urgent business.
    - a. In debtor's prison, in order to get out, someone else would have to pay your debt because you will not be making any money in prison.
    - b. So settling the matter outside of court is always safer.
  2. Anger can turn you into a hypocrite.
    - a. Anger can land you in jail.
    - b. So settle matters quickly.
    - c. Jesus says, "Do it right now! If you wait, it could turn out to be disastrous."
  3. Remember - Jesus is not so much giving a law as He is giving a warning.
    - a. The law in question is do not murder.
    - b. Since anger is as serious as murder, and it is also what leads to most actual homicides.
    - c. Avoid it at all costs by fixing broken relationships as quickly as possible.
    - d. Do not let anything get in the way – wither it is a religious ritual, or a court verdict.
    - e. Just do what you can to get it fixed.
    - f. And the truly righteous person will do this.
  4. ILLUST.: I read that when President Bush was governor of Texas he had to deal with a lot of conflict.
    - a. He came into office with a legislative majority that was in the opposite party.
    - b. Early in his term he met with the opposition leader of the legislative branch with the hopes of building a cooperative coalition for the future.
      - 1) The meeting was a failure.
      - 2) There was no trust and no agreement.
      - 3) There was plenty of conflict.
    - c. At the end of the session as Bush got up to leave he suddenly reached over and grabbed the opposition leader with both hands on his neck and gave him a big kiss on the cheek.
    - d. The man was completely stunned, he got red faced and stammered, "What did you do THAT for?"
    - e. Bush said, "If I can't get your cooperation and help, I'm at least going to get a kiss!"
    - f. The opposition leader broke up laughing and that was the beginning of friendship and the end of conflict.
  5. Now I am not suggesting that a kiss on the cheek will fix all broken relationships!
    - a. I am suggesting that we worry more about our relationships and less about having the upper hand!
    - b. That we act more loving and harbor less anger.

CONC.:

1. Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisee's if we are going to enter into heaven.
  - a. While most people would be able to stand before God and say that they have not killed a person; how many of us could say that we never hated a person or harbored anger and contempt toward another person?
  - b. What Jesus wants is for our hearts to be pure as well as our actions.
  - c. He desires our worship with a whole heart, not just outward actions.

2. If you are harboring ill will toward someone then Jesus says you need to do something about it today.
  - a. You need to strive to settle the dispute today.
  - b. You need to ask God to forgive you for the harsh words you have spoken against someone.
  - c. And you need to give your anger to Jesus instead of embracing it.
  
3. An outward show of righteousness is not enough; we must also have a change of heart.
  - a. Without such a change Jesus said we are in danger of spending eternity in hell.
  - b. He said we must get serious about our life before it is too late.
  
4. Are there some things you need to change in your life today?