

2.20.21
Staying Salty in an Un-Salty World – Part 2
Matthew 5:21-26

Last Wednesday, for the time I spent teaching the Bible study I do on-line going through the Psalms, I hit upon one of the Psalms that I really don't enjoy, Psalm 10. It speaks of all the evil in the world and how an evil person invents evil and spurns God.

Personally, I don't focus too much on the evil in the country. I pray for our leaders and the country as a whole but I tend to spend looking at the positives and Jesus and how I can grow in Christ-likeness and help others do the same. But the reality of a growing darkness is happening and if you watch people it is interesting to see how people justify their actions.

A few years ago, a Missouri State official accepted a \$25,000 bribe to further a bill that would benefit a certain group. A bit later he accepted a \$50,000 bribe from the opposing side so he returned the original \$25,000. When all the corruption came to light he was asked why he returned the original \$25,000. His reply? You should know that I am too honest to take money from both sides.

Human nature is such that even when caught in a sinful practice, people are very good at quickly justifying themselves as being righteous. This has been true throughout history and it is just as true today.

Never before, at least in my history, have I seen such a display of poor humanity. Never before have I seen such a lack of integrity, purity and dignity. It seems as if all manner of respect, dignity and self-control has been thrown out the window.

What we are seeing today in politics and news media is so far from God's standards that if it wasn't so serious it would be laughable. Name calling, constant accusations and justifications for acting poorly.

I know for movie stars and entertainers, they purposely do things to get their names in the news. Its called shock media. They start fights with other stars when there is no fight. They announce they are asexual when they are not and a number of other dishonesties just to keep their names in the public eye. In fact they even have media reps who think of new ways to keep their star up in front of people's eyes.

But what we are seeing in politics and the media is not just about keeping your name in the public eye, I think it has descended into cold, un-godly, pure humanistic behavior and speech.

In His teachings Jesus deals with this and He uses the religious leaders of His day and how they were handling themselves as an example.

This morning we find ourselves in Matthew 5:21-26. Remember, one of the things Jesus is speaking into is the ability of His disciples to be just as salty as they can be. Jesus' disciples are called to influence the bubble of society around them with their speech and acts of righteousness, right-living according to God. So Jesus is giving us an example of the saltless, religious people and then He encourages His disciples how to be set apart from society with true teachings straight from the throne room of God.

As I was studying for this sermon I was amazed at the conviction of the Holy Spirit in my own life. I was amazed at how easily certain behaviors, thought patterns and speech had entered into my life. I was convicted as I know you will be too.

Jesus' words, if we allow them, will cut straight to the issues of the heart. I hope you have had a chance to prayerfully read Matthew 5-7 and if you have not, let me encourage you to. The sermons over the next several weeks will be from this text and if you are familiar with them I think it will help you hear what God has to say to us.

As you know by now, the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' great teachings of the true nature of righteousness. He describes what right living according to God looked like in verse 3-12. He told us that as we walk out this righteousness, odds are that we would be persecuted in some way. He then said that, as His believers, we are the salt and light of the world and as we walk in righteousness, right living according to God, God and Jesus are glorified and the world will stand up and take notice. Hopefully drawing some of them into salvation.

We find ourselves this morning on the beginning of Jesus' teachings where He begins with the statement, "You have heard, or it was said." Jesus says this six times and the first topics He covers are murder, adultery, divorce, vows, revenge and loving your neighbor.

When Jesus says you have heard it said, He is speaking to a very illiterate group. Most people could not read and even if they could, books were very rare and expensive. Those who went to church services were limited to hearing the Old Testament read to them and then having the religious leaders tell them what it meant.

If you were here last week, you know this wasn't working very well as the religious leaders were limiting themselves to teaching the letter of the law, not the spirit of the law. I'll show you what I mean here in a minute.

The first subject Jesus brings up is murder. Let's look at this morning.

Matthew 5:21-22, "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' 'But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing, shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell."

Jesus starts off with saying you have heard that the ancients, the religious teachers over generations, the ancients, you have heard them say that you shall not commit murder. They got this part right but then they tagged the teaching with whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.

Now for us, in the system we live in, we know there is a penalty for committing murder and the penalty is through our court system. When someone murders another and they are caught, their case is heard before a judge and jury and they decide innocence or guilt and penalty.

This is as it should be. Scripture tells us that government officials are there to help maintain good behavior and to discourage poor behavior. Over the last year we have seen this not working very well for sure but biblically, this is what we are told. (Romans 13:1-4)

But God's view of murder goes beyond what the civil authorities understand. God's teaching goes all the way back to Noah. Look with me.

Genesis 9:6, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood will be shed. For in the image of God He made man (and woman)."

When a person intentionally kills another human being without godly reasons such as just warfare, self-defense, police action or carrying out capital punishment, it is murder and the life of the murderer is forfeit. The reason for this that God gave Noah was that

- 1. Murder is an attack on God because humanity is created in God's image**

One of the things the religious leaders didn't deal with was what was happening in the heart of the person who committed murder, they only taught the letter of the law.

Meaning, if you didn't physically kill someone what you did in your mind, words and actions didn't matter. They liked thinking this way because it meant they could see themselves as innocent before God if they didn't physically commit murder.

But Jesus, the Son of God, comes along and says

2. Murder in the mind, words or actions is an attack on God for it is an attack on someone who is made in His image. And the penalty is just as severe as physically killing someone.

Now as I said last week, we know committing murder and adultery has more consequences because it affects those around you who are caught up in the event. But the truth is, to God, sin is sin. There are varying degrees of consequences but sin is still sin.

Let's look deeper at what Jesus has to say.

Matthew 5:22a, "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother (or sister) shall be guilty before the court..."

In the previous verse Jesus said, 'you have heard it said if you commit murder you shall be liable to the court.' Now Jesus takes it to the next level by saying even if you are angry, and I will put in here, stay angry, you are liable to the court.

Jesus is going to go through several levels of anger and the expression of anger and by the court I think He means this.

Jesus says this later. **Matthew 12:36, "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgement."**

2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for their deeds in the body, according to what they have done, whether good or bad.”

I wonder if these are verses that most people skip over? They think about the verses that we will get to heaven and all everything is going to be hunky-dory and I believe that is true but only after the things mentioned in these verses occur.

I don't believe it will be a long period of time that we stand in front of the judgement seat of Christ, it may just happen in a twinkling of an eye as our life flashes before us and before Jesus. But once we get into the presence of pure holiness, then all of our deeds, all of our words and all of the motives of our heart will be exposed. And I think it might sting a bit.

But thank goodness for the grace of God amen? Thank goodness for the forgiveness we have through the shedding of Jesus' blood. But I believe the

3. The court Jesus speaks of is His judgment seat

In our text in Matthew 5, Jesus is teaching that He is concerned with the motives of our heart. It is not just about whether we commit the physical act of murder or not, it is how you how think and behave towards another one of His creation, creations that have been made in the image of God.

Now before we move on we need to understand there is righteous anger. Anger that is okay in the sight of God. We should be angry at a nation that is willing to kill millions of babies. We should be angry at a nation that says certain lifestyles are okay. We should be angry at dishonesty and immorality that people believe is okay. But God is also concerned about how we handle our anger.

1 Timothy 3:24-26, “The Lord’s bond-servant (Christians) must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”

Look at this next teaching in Galatians.

Galatians 6:1, “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”

I think what Paul is speaking about here is not the potential of someone getting caught up in the same sin as the person they are going to is involved in. I think Paul is saying you can easily become self-righteous, condemning and even have some unholy anger coming out of you towards that person.

There is a potential of sinning as we handle ourselves poorly towards another who is doing wrong or doing wrong against us. And if we do, Jesus says there will be court that will look at it.

I want to say again, in Jesus’s love for you and for others, He is teaching us how to let the light of Christ in us to shine in the brightest possible ways. He wants us to be salty, as salty as we can be for others sake.

In the verse in Timothy it says that if handle ourselves correctly then maybe, maybe they will see our love and the love Christ has for them and they will repent which will lead them to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

Cool opportunities for us amen? It is not just a matter of us being the salt and light to influence the world around us, it is a matter of being used by God to bring salvation into someone's life.

Very cool but yet a very serious responsibility.

Let's go back to Jesus' teaching in verse 22.

Matthew 5:22a, "But I say to you...and whoever says to his brother, 'You good for nothing, shall be guilty before the supreme court...'"

Here we see Jesus saying that

4. If there is increasing anger, there is increasing liability

Jesus was speaking in language the leaders of Israel and the people understood. The nation of Israel, much like this nation, has different levels of courts, the ultimate being the supreme court. In Israel, your offense had to be pretty severe if you ended up in their supreme court.

I think Jesus is saying the same thing. Your anger towards another occurs and you don't do anything with it. This is the first stage. Then your anger begins to take root in your heart and you begin to slightly slander them to their face. And in the last stage of anger, you really feel ill about another and you have not but evil to say about them. Then this last stage really is serious, serious business. God sees.

One more thing Jesus says here. **Matthew 5:22c, "and whoever says, 'You fool, shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.'"**

This is ultimate judgement and penalty of a life that is not covered by the blood of Jesus. Again, thank God for His grace and mercy towards His children.

I have and I have no doubt that each of you have reached this level of anger at one or more points in your life.

But even if you have not acted it out, I wonder, if you are like me, you have had these thoughts in your mind. Or, you have spoken to another about so and so and what they are doing.

Jesus really spells it out didn't He. It is not for us to do.

Jesus is grieved when He sees His children enter into this type of behavior. He knows how destructive it is for the angry person and for the person who the anger is directed at. Jesus knows that a root of bitterness can lodge in a person's life and keep them from entering into a level of blessings that He has for them.

So He teaches us how to stay pure, how to stay salty.

Jesus follows this teaching with verses 23-26 which we wont take the time to go through this morning. We spoke about them when we went through verse 9, blessed are the peacemakers, for the shall be called the sons and daughters of God. You can take a look on line for that teaching.

I wanted to share with you some action steps this morning. Some of you might have seen this but I think it is good for us to have a hard copy so we can look at it as a reminder.

Whoever the author of this was they did a pretty good job of detailing the good and the bad of the choices we have of how we can handle ourselves when we get offended or have a disagreement with someone.

For those of you who are at home, it was included in your e-mail. We are going to be handing out a copy of this to everyone here so there will be a quiet pause as this occurs. If you would like a copy of this action step please put your email in the comment section and we will send one to you.

