

Last week we discussed **Matthew 5:20** - Jesus says: **“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”** What does this mean to you?

Leo Tolstoy says “there are two ways for moral guidance in the case of a man who is seeking the truth.”

1. **“external definitions, of rules”** by religions to be acceptable to God
2. **“unattainable perfection”**, **“Love God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.”**

“A man who professes an external law is a man who is standing in the light of a lamp which is attached to a post.” As opposed to a man who accepts a relationship with God becomes a light to others. Can you see the difference? Which man are you?

Oswald Chambers says “Is it too strong to call this a spiritual torpedo?” Why would **Matt. 5:20** be a “spiritual torpedo”?

“These statements of Jesus are the most revolutionary statements human ears ever listened to,” Why are they revolutionary?

“Jesus says our disposition must be right to it depths, not only our conscious motives but our unconscious motives.” How can this be?

Matthew 5:21-22 – Jesus says: **“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.” 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.”** What are some things that stand out to you in this quote from Jesus?

Dallas Willard (1935-2013) was an American philosopher and writer on Christian spiritual formation.

Willard says “According to Jesus, contempt is a greater evil than anger and so is deserving of greater condemnation. ...it is a kind of studied degradation of another, and it is more pervasive in life.” What is the difference between anger and contempt? What are some examples of anger and what are some examples of contempt?

“Raca” is an Aramaic word for a contemptuous insult, derived from a term that means "empty," "vain," or "worthless fellow". It was used to suggest someone is empty-headed or foolish. Jesus used this word in **Matthew 5:22**, warning that to call someone "raca" is to commit a grave act of contempt. What words do we use today that may be comparable to the word “raca”?

Willard says “We can be angry at someone without denying their worth. But contempt makes it easier for us to hurt them or see them further degraded.” What is Willard saying here?

“The intent and the effect of contempt is always to exclude someone, push them away, leave them out and isolated.”

Have you ever experienced this in your life whether being on the receiving end or the giving end? How did it feel?

Why are children so susceptible to this on both the giving and receiving sides?

What does this tell you about adults who are this way?

How does our society react to those that show no contempt for others and do not participate in these exchanges and gossip? Why?

Willard says “In most professional circles and “high” society where one might hope for the highest moral sensitivity, contempt is a fine art.” It is part of being in “Good standing”. What is he saying here? How do you deal with this?

C.S. Lewis said in “The Inner Ring”, “in all men’s lives at certain periods, and in many men’s lives at all periods between infancy and extreme old age, one of the most dominant elements is the desire to be inside the local Ring and the terror of being left outside.”

What is the “inner ring” to you? Have you ever experienced this?

As you have matured, do you see the difference in how this affected you then compared to now?

Willard says “You fool” ... is a deeper harm than either anger or contempt alone...”

In **Matthew 5:22**, the term for "you fool" in the original Greek is **μωρός (moros)**, meaning dull, stupid, or godless, a severe insult indicating spiritual foolishness, contrasting with the Aramaic **Raca (ῥακά)** meaning "empty" or "worthless," showing Jesus warned against all contempt, from mere disdain (Raca) to outright damnation (moros). While Raca is Aramaic/Chaldean, **moros** (fool) is Greek, emphasizing degrees of spiritual danger for harboring anger and contempt, leading to fiery hell (Gehenna).

Willard goes on to say “It is not possible for people with such attitudes toward others to live in the movements of God’s kingdom, for they are totally out of harmony with it.”

What does he mean when he says “out of harmony” with the movement of God’s kingdom? What is the movement of God’s kingdom?

Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430) was a Bishop, church father, and saint. Augustine of Hippo was a theologian and philosopher, the bishop of Hippo Regius from Thagaste in Numidia Cirtensis. His writings deeply influenced the development of Western philosophy and Western Christianity, and he is viewed as one of the most important Church Fathers of the Latin Church in the Patristic Period.

Augustine says “For anger habitually cherished against anyone becomes hatred since the sweetness which is mingled with what appears to be righteous anger makes us detain it longer than we ought in the vessel, until the whole is soured, and the vessel itself is spoiled.....”

What is Augustine saying here? What does anger become and what does that do to us?

Francis de Sales (1567 – 1622) was a Roman Catholic bishop of Geneva and a saint. He became noted for his deep faith and his gentle approach to the religious divisions in his land resulting from the Protestant Reformation.

De Sales says “I mean that when we feel stirred with anger we ought to call upon God for help...” Have you done this?

He also says “make immediate amends by some opposite act of meekness. What does this mean to you?

And then he says “when there is nothing to stir your wrath,” ...speak and act as gently as possible. What does this do for you?