

Last week we discussed **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.”

**Dallas 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?

“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.

**Willard** says, “We can be angry at someone without denying their worth.” What does this mean to you?

**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.”

Have you thought of this this week?

**Augustine of Hippo** 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?

**Francis de Sales** says “I mean that when we feel stirred with anger we ought to call upon God for help...”. What does this do for you?

**Matthew 5:23-26** – Jesus says: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. 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. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

What do you think Jesus is telling us here?

**F. B. Meyer** (1847 – 1929) was an English Baptist evangelist involved in inner city mission work.

“Your gift at the altar” denotes some act of self-surrender to God’s service which we are eager to make.” The Shekinah fire is at the altar “and we hear His voice say solemnly and searchingly, “Does your brother have something against you?”

Why would God care if a brother has something against us?

“We cannot deceive Him, but we evade His inquiry by enumerating the many causes of complaint that we have against the person who has been the subject of our Lord’s question.” What is Meyer describing here?

**Meyer** goes on, “Does your brother have something against you?” We are to consider the relationships we have with others and determine if we are at fault or hold a grudge against this person. Have you or are you holding any grudges against anyone?

**Meyer** says, “Ask his forgiveness for that ruffled feeling, that unkind and harsh bearing, that icy reserve. Pay him any due that he may rightfully claim. Ask his forgiveness as you would ask God’s and your approach will bring a flood of repentant and protesting words, which will show that you have won your brother. But if these do not follow, and he receives your apology as his right, or without remark, still you have done your part, and there is nothing to be said against you further. I will deal with him – then come and offer your gift.” What are the two reactions you may receive when confronting someone in this manner?

How are you to feel if your forgiveness offering is met a haughtiness or no reaction at all?

“...we find ourselves able to offer our gifts to God with an emotion of love that we could never have experienced otherwise.”

Why does harboring hate or contempt towards others block our love of God? How does this effect our gift?

**Henri J. M. Nouwen** (1932 – 1996) was a Dutch Catholic priest, spiritual writer, and member of L’Arche. His interests were rooted primarily in psychology, pastoral ministry, spirituality, social justice and community.

“So much of our energy, time, and money goes into maintaining distance from one another.” What is **Nouwen** saying here?

“Just imagine that there was no longer fear among people, no longer rivalry, hostility, bitterness, or revenge.... We say, “I can’t imagine.” But God says, “That’s what I imagine, a whole world not only created but also living in my image.”

**Nouwen** is describing a different world than the one we live in today. But we are capable of that world within us through the Holy Spirit. Do you see the difference in what we must deal with in this world as opposed the world God wants us to have?

We can look forward to an outer world with the same convictions as God. When will this be?

**George MacDonald** (1824 – 1905) was a Scottish Congregational minister turned novelist. He became a pioneering figure in the field of modern fantasy literature and the mentor of fellow-writer Lewis Carroll.

**MacDonald** says regarding paying a debt to someone who also owes you, “Whether he pay you what you count his debt or no, you will be compelled to pay him all you owe him. If you owe him a pound and he you a million, you must pay him the pound whether he pay you the million or not; there is no business parallel here.”

What is **MacDonald** saying here about what Jesus tells us in **Matthew 5:23-26**? Why are we as Christians required to act this way?

He then says, “...by refusing to pay, the man makes an adversary who will compel him – and that for the man’s own sake. If you or your life says, “I will not,” then he will see to it.” What is he saying here?

What prison is Jesus talking about that “you will not get out until you have paid the last penny”?

**Psalms 146: 7** – “The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind,...” **Psalms 142:7** – “Set me free from my prison.”

**Gal. 3:23** – Paul wrote: “Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.” What was the purpose of the law? What was the prison? Why are we free? Go in Christ!