>>>>>>> *Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 06* <<<<<<<

1) In our discussions of the fulfillment of the Law, we discussed briefly the "Oral Tradition."
2) There is really a fantastic explanation of this "Oral Tradition" given in the book of Mark by Jesus himself.

Mark 7:1–13 (ESV)
Traditions and Commandments

1 Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come
from Jerusalem, **2** they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were
defiled, that is, unwashed. **3** (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they
wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, **4** and when they
come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many
other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper
vessels and dining couches.) **5** And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why
do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled
hands?" **6** And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is
written,

" 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;
7 in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'

8 You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."

9 And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God
in order to establish your tradition! **10** For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your
mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' **11** But you say, 'If
a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is
Corban" ' (that is, given to God)— **12** then you no longer permit him to do anything
for his father or mother, **13** thus making void the word of God by your tradition that
you have handed down. And many such things you do."

3) The Oral Tradition refers to interpretive traditions about the Torah that began to develop in the Second Temple period.
4) It is important that we get the concept and understand where it started, how it progressed, and most importantly, how it was finally affecting the lives of the people Jesus is teaching.
5) I mentioned last time the idea of the "hedge or fence" around the Torah.
    a) There is a statement in the Mishna which says:

"Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua… and the men of the Great Assembly said three things: **Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a hedge around the Torah.**"

    b) This hedge idea actually began pre-third century BCE in the early Second Temple Period.
        i) The "Great Assembly" refers to a legendary or semi-historical body of Jewish leaders associated with the early Second Temple period, not a formal institution in the later rabbinic sense.
        ii) Formed and in existence from 6th to the 4th century.
        iii) Notables in its founding:

(1) Ezra the Scribe (often portrayed as the central figure)
(2) Nehemiah
(3) The last prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)
(4) Priests, Levites, and scribes

6) This hedge is a boundary set up around the Torah to reduce the risk of violating God's commands.
7) An example would be:
   a) The Torah command is "You shall not work on the Sabbath" (Exodus 20:10)
   b) The hedge defines and prohibits categories of activities which might lead to work.
8) Think of it this way – there is a cliff in the area and you don't want anyone to fall off the cliff so you put up warning signs indicating how close a person is to the cliff.
   a) At this point, if someone wants to look over the cliff, they can ignore the warning signs and go look.
   b) Obviously, if they get too close, they can fall.
   c) As time goes on, there are more and more signs added with more and more warnings – but, they are still only signs and can be ignored.
   d) As time progressed even further, the signs became more like laws that must be obeyed rather than convenient warnings to prevent external dangers.
   e) In essence not violating the warning signs begins to become as important as not falling off the cliff.
9) The Pharisees entered the scene in around 150BCE and they took these interpretations to a whole other level.
   a) Truth is, they for want of a better term systemized these interpretations.
   b) This meant the interpretations became more and more authoritative.
   c) Purity laws are extended into everyday life.
   d) Sabbath and food laws are tightly regulated.
10) To make matters even worse, many of the interpretations became contrary to the Law they were intended to protect.
   a) As we read a moment ago in Mark 7:1–13, the idea of Corban allowed a blatant skirting of the law which said we are to honor our parents to the point that they could legally withhold support from their parents under the guise of following one of the interpretations.
11) This was the state of affairs faced by the people as they listened to Jesus' teachings.

12) With all that being said, we now begin to look at the "antitheses" beginning in verse 21 of chapter 5.

Matthew 5:21–22 (ESV)

Anger

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' **22** But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will

be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

13) Obviously, Jesus is dealing with the oral tradition.

a) We will see this about 7 more times as we proceed.

14) The Torah says in both Deuteronomy 5:17 and in Exodus 20:13, **'You shall not murder.'**

a) However, the oral portions is the rest that Jesus quotes here, **'whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'**

b) This is clearly not from the Torah because in Exodus 21:12-14 we are told that "**Whoever strikes and kills a man must surely be put to death."**

c) There are other oral traditions around this commandment which allow for judicial executions, war, self-defense etc.

d) One I read which is truly a "hedge" and I must admit difficult to grasp is:

A person is not liable for capital punishment unless **warned immediately before the act** and acknowledges the warning.

This rule dramatically narrows the possibility of executing someone unlawfully—ironically protecting the command *against* murder by the court.

15) Jesus then expands on the saying: whoever murders will be liable to judgment.

' **22** But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

16) If we take what Jesus says at face value, one might say that he is just expanding the hedge concept to a more serious level.

17) Except that in first-century Jewish law and practice, the courts (local or the Sanhedrin) generally did not try individuals solely for internal emotions like anger.

a) Courts judged actions such as murder, theft, or slander rather than internal attitudes.

b) There have been some exceptions found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in other places, there are some cases where leaders were insulted, the person might be brought before the Sanhedrin.

18) However, here, most scholars say that Jesus is not really saying that if you get angry with someone you could be taken to "court" or worse.

a) Those in his audience would have known this and understood what he was saying.

b) In other words, this is not to be taken literally but is His figurative way of emphasizing the seriousness of our emotions.

19) Bruce Barton brings this out and adds a somewhat different perspective to it:

It's not the words that put us in jeopardy of hellfire. We could think of a lot worse names than "you fool" to call people. It's the attitude. By calling someone a fool, you write that person off as worthless, a zero, nothing, nobody.
And what is the problem with that? That worthless nobody (in your judgment) is someone made in the image of God. If God's image is a fool, doesn't that make God a fool too?

Next time you write someone off, think about whom you're really talking about. [8]

20) I think Barton's comment is exactly on point with what Jesus is saying.

21) It is our heart, the way we think that is the real root of the problem – murder maybe the end result but it is every thought of the heart that took place before the murder that is the real problem.

22) One thing we must not overlook here is the phrase "But I say to you."

a) Jesus speaks with an authority here that is unheard of – the oral traditions say one thing, But I say…

b) That must have been astounding – that this backwoods Nazarene would claim with such audacity to add comments to these sacred sayings.

How does what Jesus said affect the oral tradition or hedge around the Torah?

c) From my perspective, what is happening here is the external warning signs of the "hedge" are being done away with.

d) They are being replaced with the proper warning signs that God meant for us to have when He gave the Law.

e) We are to write the law on our hearts.

f) When that happens, we will be able to see the internal warning signs of anger, ill feelings, and writing people off as nothing as the things that will keep us from breaking the commandment.

1) Now, Jesus gives us a little different application of what he has said than we might have expected.

a) We know it pertains to that because of the "So" that precedes the example.

Matthew 5:23–26 (ESV)

23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **25** Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. **26** Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

2) To be clear here, the accuser in context of this passage is right. We are not being wrongfully accused!

The first thing we must answer is – Who is angry?

a) Most likely the brother who has something against you.

b) And of course, the person who is the accuser.

The second thing we must answer is – Who is responsible for at least the start of the reconciliation?

[8] Bruce B. Barton, Matthew, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 92

c) Us – the person who remembers that someone is angry with us or has something against us.

d) Us – the person being accused.

3) Obviously, what has happened here is Jesus has first told His listeners that they should not be angry with one another.

4) Then, he drops the other shoe, so to speak, if you know someone is angry with (has something against) you then go immediately and attempt to make it right.

a) Then, He deals with consequences.

i) In Jesus' time, if you owed money and could not pay, it was a given that you could be thrown in prison.

(1) In that case, what you owed would have to be repaid by others or the sale of your possessions.

ii) It was common for one who had large debt to be put in prison and die there because they could not pay.

(1) No bankruptcy, credit-help companies, no get out of jail free cards in those times.

iii) Given that situation, it was to the persons' advantage to settle up before reaching the court.

(1) This could be done by reducing the debt by agreement or even becoming a slave to the person to which you owed money in order to work off the debt.

b) All of what Jesus is saying here in these verses deals with relationships.

c) We must do all in our power to ensure that our relationships are without anger and malice between us and others be they of the faith or not.

d) The result is that with these proper relationships we will never be in danger of murdering anyone.

So, taking this one step further, are we allowed to get angry?

5) James told us as you probably recall:

James 1:19–20 (ESV)
Hearing and Doing the Word
19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; **20** for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

6) I think I want to add one comment here that might give something in the way of a different way of thinking (maybe?).

a) Jesus clearly states that anger at a person is the problem. The example He gave was also really related to anger at a person – in this case the one who remembers.

b) So, here is a thought, are we dealing with personal anger that is really at the person and headed toward hate?

c) Or are we dealing with anger at what that person did – the situation.

d) Anger of any type, as James points out is not going to "bring about the righteousness of God."

But is there a difference in being angry at a situation and being angry at a person?