

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

# JESUS IS KING



## Teaching About Anger

**Text:** Matthew 5:21-26

Jesus in v. 20 goes on to the offensive, claiming that the standards of the kingdom are actually far higher than those of the Pharisees: *“indeed you will not even enter the kingdom, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees”*.

The onlookers would have gasped at this. They held the pharisees and teachers of religious law as blameless. Considering the incredible devotion to the law shown by the scribes and Pharisees, how can we ever hope to exceed their righteousness?. How can we measure up? We can't! We desperately need Christ. We need His grace. We need His forgiveness and mercy. We need His Spirit - the Holy Spirit to transform us.

### 1. Jesus interprets the law against murder v. 21-22

Now, Jesus begins to interpret the law for his audience. It is important to say Jesus didn't reinterpret the law. He just went deeper into its meaning. In this section, Jesus shows the

true meaning of the law. But this isn't Jesus against Moses; it is Jesus against false and superficial interpretations of Moses. In regard to the law, the two errors of the scribes and Pharisees were that they both restricted God's commands (as in the law of murder) and extended the commands of God past His intention (as in the law of divorce). **They hit you both ways - coming and going!**

**Quote:** *"But, I say unto you! Who but a divine being has authority to speak in this fashion? His word is law. So it ought to be, seeing he touches vice at the fountain-head, and forbids uncleanness in the heart."* Charles Spurgeon

**It really is important to distinguish "kill" and "murder".** The Hebrew meaning of the sixth commandment is "Don't murder". I don't want to trip you up on this. Scripture condones or allows capital punishment or the death penalty as instituted by God with Noah after the flood and as listed in the mosaic law. Killing was permitted in wartime or in military combat. To kill someone in battle is not the same as murder. What the sixth command was addressing was premeditated murder.

**What the Pharisees taught:** The teaching of the scribes and Pharisees ("thou shalt not murder") was true enough. Yet they also taught or implied that anything short of murder might be allowed. Jesus corrects this, and makes it clear that it is not only those who commit the act of murder who are in danger of judgment, but those who have murderous intent in the heart are also in danger of the judgment.

**What kind of Anger is mentioned in Matthew 5?**

The English word translated to anger is the Greek term *orgizō*, which means settled, nurtured, non-forgiving, long term, bottled up anger. In other words the person continues to be intensely angry. He or she has it locked up inside of them. This type of anger often spills out against the people we love and interact with. Unrighteous anger causes collateral damage! Like bitterness, many around you are defiled by this type of unrighteous anger.

### **Is there such a thing as righteous anger or indignation?**

Yes there is. Anger is a God-given emotion. There are some things that should make us angry. Jesus was angry at the pharisees and religious teachers for their hypocrisy and self righteousness. Jesus was angry at the moneychangers in the temple for taken advantage of the people coming to offer their sacrifices.

**Jesus wants us to understand how deep this command “Thou shalt not murder” really goes.** When someone physically commits murder what has to happen first? They have to conceive of the idea first, carry it around in their heart and then they have to carry it out. That is what we call premeditated murder. Jesus says this to you and I, “if you have had an unrighteous anger or bitter thought towards someone (the root or source where murder comes from) you are guilty of the deed”. If God were to ask us today if we are guilty of murder we would have to raise our hands up if we are honest with ourselves. Can you see how high Jesus has raised the bar and standards of what it means to be righteous?

This is revolutionary teaching to these people listening. We thought being righteous had to do with the external deeds

that we do or don't do. But Jesus is declaring it is not just the external deeds that must be good but it's also the thoughts that you think

**Quote:** *"So Jesus forbids for ever the anger which broods, the anger which will not forget, the anger which refuses to be pacified, the anger which seeks revenge."* William Barclay

Jesus says anyone who is angry with his brother without cause is subject to judgment and He goes on in verse 22 "whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

**Anyone ever yell at you "You Raca!"?** Probably not. "Raca" was an Aramaic term with a meaning similar to "num scull" "dim-wit" "idiot" or "empty-headed". It was more about the tone than the actual word. It was a total contempt for the person's intelligence. It was meant to be supremely disrespectful. By saying someone is stupid Jesus said you would be called before the council or Sanhedrin (72 member court of religious leaders). That was their supreme court. Serious stuff!

Then Jesus said if you call someone a fool (which is to call into question their moral character) you would be in danger of the fires of hell. The crowd must have been silent on that one. It just got heavy!

**We must be careful to not misread scripture with western eyes.** In our time and in American culture, name calling is not as bad as it was in Jesus' time. We need to

realize that in Jesus' time it was an honor and shame society. Most people in those times had only their honor to trade with. So if you attacked a person's honor by calling them stupid and then calling them a fool - you pretty much called them a stupid cheat. If you belittled a person publicly, it was a very serious matter. If you attacked a person's honor in public you were setting that person up to lose their good reputation. Someone had to go! It's duel time!

**I should emphasize that Jesus is not saying that unrighteous anger is as bad as murder.** Yelling at someone in anger is not the same as murdering someone in anger. Jesus emphasized that the law condemns both, without saying that the law says they are the same things. The laws of the people could only deal with the outward act of murder, but Jesus declared that His followers understood that God's morality addressed not only the end but also the beginning of murder.

Jesus is opening the eyes of the listeners on that mountain to the truth. Sin definitely reveals itself on the external in murder but it begins in the heart of man with unrighteous anger, hatred, and bitterness.

## **2. Jesus' Two Illustrations on Anger v. 23-26**

He has just taught that we must not only avoid the external act of murder but also the internal hatred in the heart that leads to murder. He first deals with the unrighteous anger in our own hearts. Now he illustrates how we deal with the anger or hatred in the hearts of those we relate to whether they be a Christian brother or an enemy.

**What a powerful passage.** God says unrighteous anger and hatred are so deadly that not only do I want you to be concerned with eradicating it from your own life but also be mindful of the hatred you stir up in others. Don't have the attitude "well that's their problem!" You and I must realize how damaging and corrupting anger can be in someone else's heart.

### **Acts 24:16**

And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

**Bringing your sacrifice to the temple was not always an easy task.** In many instances it was a multi day journey. Jesus says if you remember while riding that donkey to Jerusalem that your brother is stewing over something you may have said or done, drop off your gift, go back home and deal with it and then come back again and then offer your sacrifice. Whoah!!! Jesus is making an extreme point here.

**Let's put this in 2020's terms.** Imagine you are driving to church (we don't need to offer sacrifices for forgiveness or atonement) and you remember that a brother is offended by you and is most likely stewing by your actions or words.

**Whether you think you are guilty or not you need to address it.** God is saying pull over the car, pick up your cell phone and call your brother to resolve it.

*"Hey man, I was just on my way to Kauai Baptist Church and God just put you on my mind. I know I can be hard headed. Im not sure how I offended you but I am not perfect. I know*

*that there is this distance between us. We keep each other at arms length and avoid each other. You are my brother and sister in Christ and I just want you to know that I am sorry if I hurt you by my words or actions.”*

Jesus considers it far more important to be reconciled to a brother than to perform a religious duty. It is truly loving your brother to be concerned about their emotions and to be concerned what is going on in their heart.

### **This next illustration that Jesus gives is much tougher!**

It's one thing to pick up the cell phone and call a brother or sister in Christ who is angry at you. What about your adversary or enemy? This is the guy who wants to sue me! He deserves my wrath is what we like to think! Jesus presents an adversary who is angry with us and is on the way to court. Jesus isn't saying you must resolve everything out of court, especially criminal or civil law issues. What Jesus is emphasizing is that it is always beneficial to resolve anger and malice amongst two parties quickly. Agree with your adversary quickly.

Paul teaches this thought in...

### **Ephesians 4:26-27**

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

27 Neither give place to the devil.

**Why is it beneficial to resolve the matter quickly?** God wants us to care about what He sees at the heart level. He wants us to understand that God sees these situations at the heart level. Anger is a spark that can lead to a shipwrecked life. Hatred leaves an opening for Satan to take

a foothold in the life of a believer. Be angry and sin not the Bible teaches. There is righteous indignation but far too often we love our unrighteous anger as we do with any other addiction. We love our sin. Let's be real. There are times when we love to feel hatred for someone. It strokes my ego and my pride just a little. I feel superior to that person. What a deadly trap that is. **My life and your life must not be characterized by anger.** Proverbs says we are not to make a friendship with an angry man. Why? Lest ye learn his ways.

### **Conclusion:**

Anger and hatred isn't masculine. Foolish wrath isn't admirable. Righteous anger against sin or evil is an emotion and a tool that must be wielded carefully and purposefully.

## **2 Ways to to put away these angry thoughts?**

### **1. Yield to the Holy Spirit living inside you**

I am thankful for the forgiveness of God when we blow it in this area. But how do we accomplish Jesus' teaching on resisting unrighteous anger and hatred? The answer is surrendering to the Holy Spirit. You and I can resist the work of the Holy Spirit. We can grieve the Spirit of God. The spirit of God wants to bring out the character of God in you. Our walk with Jesus is all about surrendering our lives. The power is there. We just need to surrender to Him. There needs to come a point in our life when we want the godliness of Christ displayed in us more than we want our hatred or other evil desires. We need to cooperate with the Spirit of God.

### **2. Guard your heart**

Let's not be like the Pharisees who were whited sepulchers.



Can you see why Jesus called the Pharisees whited sepulchers? They were clean on the outside but inwardly they were full of dead man's bones. Jesus exposes the key to the scribes' heresy. To them, the law was really only a matter of external performance, never the heart. Jesus brings the law back to the matters of the heart.



## GROWTH GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Is Jesus telling his disciples to never get angry?
2. How does the true disciple of Jesus live in a world which is deeply troubling and avoid the kind of anger Jesus describes here?
3. Social media makes it so easy to respond in anger without penalty. How can we safeguard this pitfall?
4. What is the believer's responsibility if the other party doesn't want to reconcile or will not accept the apology?
5. Can a person be characterized by their anger? How can someone love being angry?
6. How does Satan use anger to gain a foothold in our lives?