

# You Have Heard It Was Said

Jesus challenges the traditional understanding of the law and calls us to a higher standard of love and compassion. Today we continue our discussion of the Sermon on the Mount.

## Introduction

We continued our conversation last week about Jesus' sermon on the mount. We discussed that the beatitudes are a challenging way to follow Jesus and answer his call. This week we continue our discussion based on the sermon on the mount. We are discussing Jesus' teaching about heart attitude.

In Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus teaches us about the true meaning of righteousness. He challenges the traditional understanding of the law and calls us to a higher standard of love and compassion.

The gospel is far more than a list of dos and don'ts or black-and-white rules to follow. This passage of scripture breaks down heart attitudes and helps us to see that we can do all the acceptable things and still miss the Kingdom. Let's look at this part of Jesus' teaching one section at a time.

## You Shall Not Murder

Matthew 5:21-22 says:

Matthew 5:21-22

(21) "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.' (22) 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.

Jesus begins this part of his teaching by addressing one of the most common heart issues, anger. He says that if we are angry with our brother or sister, we have already committed murder in our hearts. This is a radical teaching, but it is based on the principle of love. Jesus knows that anger can lead to violence, and he wants us to stop the cycle of violence before it starts.

Anger clouds our judgment and takes our focus off God's plan and purpose for our lives. It is difficult to remain clear-headed and make wise decisions when our heart is filled with anger. An angry heart is just as bad as a murderous heart in the Kingdom of God.

## You Shall Not Commit Adultery

Jesus teaches about adultery next. Matthew 5:27-28 says:

Matthew 5:27-28

(27) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' (28) But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

He says that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. This is another radical teaching, but it is based on the principle of purity. Jesus knows that lust can lead to adultery, and he wants us to guard our hearts against it.



Even though Jesus talks about looking at a woman lustfully, this goes for women looking at a man lustfully, too. The teaching is clear, once again. Lust in your heart leads you down a path of destruction. Adultery destroys marriages, families, and the church. Love the person God has given to you with your whole heart and don't even think about anyone else in that way.

### You Should Not Divorce

Jesus continues by talking about divorce. Matthew 5:31-32 says:

Matthew 5:31-32

(31) "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' (32) But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

He says that divorce is not permitted except for the case of sexual immorality. This teaching is in contrast to the teaching of the Pharisees, who allowed divorce for any reason. Jesus knows that marriage is a sacred union, and he wants to protect it.

We teach that marriage is an ordinance of the Church given to us by God from the beginning with Adam and Eve and should be honored and respected accordingly. Marriage is a lifelong covenant to one another and God in the presence of others. The dissolution of marriage must be an absolute last resort.

### Turn The Other Cheek

Jesus then talks about retaliation. Let's read Matthew 5:38-42:

Matthew 5:38-42

(38) "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' (39) But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. (40) And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. (41) If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. (42) Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Jesus tells us that if someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other cheek also. This is a difficult teaching, but it is based on the principle of love. Jesus knows that violence only begets more violence, and he wants us to break the cycle of violence.

Last week we referred to the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and his non-violent protests for civil rights for Black Americans in the 1960s. Jesus has not called us to violence or to defend him or his cause using violence. We can only win the hearts of people and point them to a life in Christ through love.

### Love Your Enemies

Jesus concludes by talking about love and perfection. Let's read Matthew 5:43-48:

Matthew 5:43-48

(43) "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' (44) But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (45) that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (46) If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?



Are not even the tax collectors doing that? (47) And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? (48) Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus teaches us that we are to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. This is a lofty goal, but it is attainable through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus knows that we can never be perfect on our own, but in him, we can strive to live a life of love and compassion.

With the power and understanding granted through the Holy Spirit, we can see those around us with the eyes of Jesus and love them unconditionally. With the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the heart of Jesus, we can love those we come in contact with.

### Conclusion

This part of Jesus' teaching in his Sermon on the Mount teaches us that we are called to a higher standard of righteousness. We are called to love our enemies, to turn the other cheek, and to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. None of this is easy but is possible with the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to constantly examine our hearts and motivations to live up to Jesus' teaching. Are you angry with anyone? Are you lusting after someone? Are you holding on to bitterness or resentment? If so, you need to confess these sins to God and ask for his forgiveness.

We must also forgive others. If someone has wronged you, you need to let go of your anger and resentment and choose to forgive them. Forgiveness is not easy, but it is necessary if you want to live a life of peace and joy.

Most importantly, you need to do your best to live a life of love and compassion. You need to love your enemies, turn the other cheek, and help those in need. When you do these things, you are being the hands and feet of Jesus Christ and reflecting the love of God in this lost and dying world.

Matthew 5:21-48 is very challenging, and can only be accomplished with the help and counsel of the Holy Spirit. It is also life-altering. If you follow Jesus' teaching, you will experience a new level of freedom and joy. You will also be able to make a difference in the world by reflecting the love of God to others in Jesus.

