



March 25, 2007

The Uncomfortable Christian III

It all started a couple of weeks ago with a the sermon based on Luke 13 where Jesus told His disciples to bear fruit, be like a mustard seed and spread like yeast. The question that comes out of that is, “how exactly do we bear fruit, grow like a mustard seed or spread like yeast?” The answer is through Christian living. But what exactly is Christian living? Well we saw Matthew 5:48 Jesus said, “Be perfect therefore as your Heavenly Father is perfect.” This statement was toward the end of the Sermon on the Mount; it was right after six specific instructions on Christian living and right before one last instruction, which has a warning with it concerning our motive for Christian living.

Last week we saw why the sermon series is called *The Uncomfortable Christian*; Christ’s preaching style and His choice of words could really make a person feel guilty if not down right uncomfortable. He began each discourse on Christian living with the statement, “You have heard that it was said.” The “you” He used was plural it’s a corporate you as in “all of you”. For instance, “all of you have heard the Pharisees say do not murder.” Then He continued by saying, “But”, that’s the great eraser, but cancels out everything that was just said, “But I tell you”, and this you is personal. It is like looking in each eye of each person and pointing a finger at each individual and saying, “But I tell you if you are angry or call your brother or friend or fool you’re just murdered him.” This pattern continues with adultery if you look and lust you’re guilty. It continues with divorce, if you’re divorced for any reason other than unfaithfulness you’re guilty. If you’ve sworn you’re guilty. Jesus also gives the answer we saw He said to be reconciled to the brother or ex-spouse, cut out whatever causes the lust, be truthful let your yes be yes and your no be no. The really hard part He says take care of it before you pray, before you worship or before you give an offering.

Now remember those aren’t my words those are the words of Christ Himself. And since you’re here to pray, worship and present

your offering to the Lord I'm assuming that you've done that. If not you've got something to take care of still. But today we finish up Christ's lesson on Christian living at the Sermon on the Mount. He continues with the, "you have heard it said but I tell you" style.

We pick up at verse 38 where He says, "You have heard that it was said eye for eye and tooth for tooth." Who said it? God did in Exodus 21:23-25, Leviticus 24:19-20 and Deuteronomy 19:21. But please understand the Old Testament passages do not mean take personal revenge whenever you are wronged which is how the Pharisees were using it. Rather, it means do not avenge yourself but let justice be administered publicly. This is supported by Leviticus 19:18 and 24:14, Proverbs 20:22 and 24:29, which basically say, "let the congregation or courts of the people dispense justice but you shall love your neighbor as yourself." This is why Jesus continues and says, "But I tell you do not resist an evil person as someone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other also. If someone wants to sue and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you." If you're face with evil, whether its in the form of physically threatening you, legally threatening you or forcing you to serve them and do their work, don't fight back. Smile and meet their demands in fact go beyond their demands turn the other cheek, give them your coat in addition to the shirt, or smile and say you would like to carry their burden an extra mile.

You may be labeled as a wimp by your enemies but as a hero by God. This is why Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:19-20, "For it is commendable of the man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God but how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and endure it this is commendable before God to this you are God because Christ suffered for you leaving you an example that you should follow in His footsteps." We are to bear up because that's what Christ did and so we see in Romans 12:18-21 Paul writes and says, "If it is possible as far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone do not take revenge my friends but leave room for God's wrath for it is written it is mine to avenge I will repay says the Lord. On the contrary, if your enemy is hungry fed him if he's thirsty give him something to drink in doing this you will be heaping burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with

good.” And now I know that is a difficult command I know I’m a fan of Jack Bauer on the show 24. Jack’s always getting revenge but Jack’s got it all wrong.

Christ continues with a similar theme in verse 43 He says, “You have heard that it was said love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” This is found nowhere in Old Testament scriptures, hate your enemy, but we have found it in the Dead Sea Scrolls one that’s titled the Rule of the Community. Obviously the religious leaders had changed the intent of Exodus 21 to accommodate revenge but Jesus says, “I tell you love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your father in heaven.” He causes His son to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Again we get caught wanting to say, “you just don’t understand.” But Jesus’ reply is, “Yes I do.” Whenever anyone sins it is a total offense to and against God yet God still loves us. He loves the evil person. The last I heard the sun came up on Al-Qaeda the rain was falling in Afghanistan God shows even His greatest enemies love and mercy in the hope that they will respond to that love and mercy. So Jesus continues, “If you love those who love you what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? If you greet all your brothers what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?” He says be kind to everyone because being kind to the kind; everyone knows how to do that we are to be kind and love the unlovable. Why? Because God does which takes us back to the word Christian, Christ-like.

If you are truly a Christian then we must walk in His footsteps. You’ll be carrying a cross, which is what He did, and a cross is something you don’t want to do but you’ll be doing what you must do. So now Jesus has told us how to be a Christian He’s come full circle. It gets back to where He began, exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. The Pharisees did many things they wore the long robes, they recited long prayers, they tithed everything they did it all very publicly so that they would be praised and admired by the people. But Jesus says, “Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men to be seen by them if you do you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.” “So when you give to the needy do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets to be honored by men. I tell you the truth they have received their reward in full but when you give to the needy do

not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your giving may be in secret then your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

In short, give and live from the heart. It is between you and God. Be in contact with Him and let Him know what and why you are doing what you do. Mow the lawn for you neighbor and say, “God I do this for you.” Take an elderly person to the doctor and say, “God I’m doing this for you.” Pray for your enemy and say, “I do this for you father.” Reconcile with your brother, “I’m doing this for you father.” Put the offering in the plate, “I’m doing this for you father.” And when we do this it keeps us humble and reminds us we can never out give God but when we do this we are truly bearing fruit, growing like a mustard seed or spreading His love like yeast spreading through dough.

In our Savior’s name, Amen.