

Morning Sermon May 24, 2020

“When Wronged, Be Right!” Matthew 5:38 – 42

How are Christians to live in a sin-filled world? Jesus says,

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. Do we hate the world back?”

I. Is Old Testament Justice different than the New?

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ Matthew 5:38

We find these same words in the Old Testament –

²³ But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. Exodus 21:23–25 (NKJV)

*These words were from the context of two men fighting, they are fighting in the presence of a pregnant woman and she get hit; either she or the baby are hurt or killed, what is justice? ... then you shall give life for life, **²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth**, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. Exodus 21:23–25 (NKJV)*

How are these words interpreted?

- 1. They can be and were interpreted as a command to take revenge, an eye of my baby boy was taken, God requires me to take the eye of your son!*
- 2. They can also be interpreted as the limits of justice, an eye was lost, no more than an eye can be taken! This interpretation left room for grace ... “yes, my son was hurt, but I know you were fighting me and it was an accident.” Justice was not required but limited ... you were not allowed to take two eyes if only one was lost!*

II. Jesus expounds on this non-retaliatory truth to His followers, to who He recommends EXTREME GRACE -

³⁹ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. ... Matthew 5:38–42 (NKJV)

- 1. The limits of justice, were already set in the “eye for an eye” “tooth for a tooth” Justice of the Old Testament –*
- 2. Here Jesus is calling us to look past justice to extreme grace! Why?*

A. Because He showed extreme grace to us –

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 (NKJV)

The idea is He was gracious to us, even when we were fighting against Him, even when by our sins, we crucified Him –

Us, what we say with every sin - ⁶ ... “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” John 19:6 (NKJV)

Christ - ³⁴ Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” Luke 23:34 (NKJV)

B. Christ calls us to be gracious also to those who might mistreat us; here are the examples He gives:

B1. Accepting an insult –

³⁹ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. Matthew 5:39

What is the goal? To stop a fight at its beginning, and to demonstrate Christ’s grace and love ...

B2. Surprising a thief –

⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. Matthew 5:40

To show grace to someone who probably really needed it ... but whether this person needed your tunic, cloak, leather jacket or watch, you GIVE because you want to honor Christ and show His love!

B3. Amazing a Roman soldier –

⁴¹ And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Matthew 5:41 (NKJV)

It was part of Roman Law in their empire of which a conquered Jewish nation was a part, if a Roman Soldier compelled a Jewish man to carry his armor, or anything else he had, the Jewish man, with no choice, no matter what else he might be doing would have to comply! Of course, you can imagine happy compliance was rare and if an arrogant & maybe Roman soldier wanted to humiliate a captive person, he could do it this way ... But Jesus tells us something so radically different! Wouldn't a soldier be AMAZED! This would allow Christ's followers to share the Gospel!

III. How do we apply these things today?

This is what I found myself constantly debating in college ...

³⁹ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. ...

1. Evil people love these verses, they interpret them as Jesus is telling us, "just let evil win!"

But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. Matthew 5:39

They would say – "turn the other cheek" means "I can rape your wife and you can silently watch..." Or somebody can murder your children and you are not allowed, by Christ, to try to stop them ...

⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. Matthew 5:40

Someone tried to tell me Matthew 5:40 meant I had to give him all my money!

2. These verses do NOT mean Christians are not allowed to defend themselves or their families -

A slap on the cheek was an insult but it would not kill you!

Letting a dear one, or dear ones go undefended when you could HELP is not the way of Christ –

3. Christ does not expect to give all our worldly goods to evil people, rather:

A. He would have us work and care for our families –

¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (NKJV)

B. He would have us give to meet needs, and in ways that would honor Him with an evil person, but He would also have us by wise –

⁴² And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Luke 12:42–43 (NKJV)

4. Matthew 5:38-42 is about handling a variety of circumstances, with Christ-like:

A. Grace – turning the other cheek, especially when the circumstance is a mere insult. It does not mean we should let the defenseless go undefended!

B. Generosity – Christians are and should be GIVERS! Yet, your family or a missionary deserves what you have more than a thief, you may give a thief more than he expected, but Jesus is not telling us to give all to the wicked!

C. The Roman Soldier issue might be applied to some of our circumstance with government now ... wearing masks, social distancing, even if you think it is crazy ...

Bottom line –

³¹ Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV)

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