

Sermon on the Mount: Murder, the Bud and the Bloom

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of dealing with murder in the bud, which refers to having anger or hatred in one's heart, and the need to prioritize defusing anger in someone's heart even over the most sacred act of worship.

Duration: 43:40

Scripture: Matthew 5:21

Topics: "Sermon on the Mount"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker acknowledges the vastness and complexity of the passage being discussed, but aims to focus on the main points. The first main point is the importance of addressing murder at its root, not just when it has fully manifested. Jesus emphasizes that being angry with one's brother is also subject to judgment. The speaker then moves on to discuss the urgency of settling matters with an adversary before going to court, using the example of unpaid dues. The sermon is titled 'Murder, the Bud and the Bloom,' highlighting the need to address and prevent murder at its earliest stages.

Transcript

Would you kindly turn in the word of scripture to the gospel recorded by Saint Matthew and you will find that the passage before us this morning in pursuing our studies in the Sermon on the Mount begins with verse 21 in chapter 5 and proceeds to include verse 26 verses 21 to 26. You have heard that it was said to the people long ago do not murder and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment but I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again anyone who says to his brother Wrecker is answerable to the Sanhedrin but anyone who says you fool will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you leave your gift there in front of the altar first go and be reconciled to your brother then come and offer your gift settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you're still with him on the way or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge may hand you over to the officer and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth you will not go out until you have paid the last penny.

We have entitled our theme this morning as found in this passage murder the bud and the bloom now a few Sunday mornings ago we were looking at these words of our Lord in verses 19 and 20 where he was telling his disciples in the first place and telling us of course through his word that our righteousness as the subjects of his kingdom must exceed, must excel, must surpass the righteousness of the teachers of the law and of the Pharisees of his day. The righteousness of the subjects of the kingdom of our Lord must be something which is altogether different from anything else that bears the name. It is something altogether surpassing every other claimant to that name.

In the passage now before us we encounter the first of six illustrations given by our Lord in the body of this one chapter illustrations of what this larger, this greater, this surpassing righteousness really is and this is going to be our theme for meditation over a number of Sunday mornings. Now thus far our Lord has been expressing various facets of that righteousness in positive terms in the Beatitudes for example and in telling us as he told his ancient disciples that we are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world all that is very positive. But now he moves to the negative and he tells us what is not adequate, what is short of the mark what this qualitative righteousness is not and when we come at last to put the negative and the positive together in our Lord's teaching we have virtually a very remarkable statement of the case that can only humble us and however arrogant we may be in and of ourselves if we are not humbled by it, it bespeaks of our being very far away from the Spirit of God.

Well here it is this is the subject the righteousness that excels and our Lord begins to elucidate this with reference to the commandment given by God in the Old Testament the principle operated of course before the commandment was enunciated but it was enunciated in the law in the Decalogue in the Ten Commandments as given on Mount Sinai thou shalt not kill you shall not commit murder Now may I just say this so that everybody will understand the passage before us today is very full. Also there are a number of difficult questions relating to it that are well nigh impossible to answer. I have to choose out this morning what we can fit into the time at our disposal and what I deem to be the main thread.

What I will have to leave I leave only because in some cases I don't understand in other cases the time does not permit. But I just want you to know that I realize the passage before us is too big for this hour, too large, too great to cover nevertheless may the Lord help us to have the main thrust of it and to be able to apply it to ourselves Now there are three main things if we have time that we must look at. First of all and this is the most important the necessity to deal with murder in the bud as well as in the bloom.

Verses 21 and 22 you have heard that it was said to the people long ago do not murder and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment but I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment again anyone who says to his brother Raka is answerable to the Sanhedrin but anyone who says you fool will be in danger of the fire of hell. Now the deeper and more exacting Christian ethic is not content with mere abstinence from the committal of murder. It demands a radical approach to anger in the human heart which is murder in the bud in the embryo.

That in embryo is the thrust of the message before us this morning. Now by way of background we need to bear in mind that the Pharisees and the teachers of the law in our Lord's time and day they restricted the application of the sixth commandment to the simple act or terrible act of course of murder to the actual deed of murder. They took the meaning of the sixth commandment to simply say do not murder, don't kill, don't shed blood and if you don't shed blood well then of course you're free, you're not guilty of it what our Lord is saying here is this there is a deeper meaning to the commandment than that and even though you may be quite innocent of the dastardly deed itself you've never shot anyone you've never knifed anyone,

you've never cut anyone down you've never been drunk driving and you've never you've never murdered anyone on the highway but you may nevertheless have murder in your heart and murder in your spirit and if you have it in the bud in the sight of God it is tantamount to performing it in act.

Now this is very challenging first of all then let's look at the prohibition of the overt act of murder. You have heard that it was said to the people long ago do not murder. That this was the first and evident import of the sixth commandment was agreed by all concerned by Jesus the Pharisees and the teachers of the law and everybody else they agreed that it meant in the first place don't actually murder, don't commit the overt act of homicide human life is not ours to tamper with human life is not ours to do as we please with it murder in any form whether it be of the fetus in the womb at the beginning of life or of someone aged at the end of life or of anyone in between the one and the other murder in any of its forms is reprehensible in the sight of God.

Now that is clear as crystal from the most superficial reading of the sixth commandment what is in mind here it would seem however is the killing of a personal enemy. Now here is something that I cannot pursue this morning I don't personally believe that we are actually dealing with war here but with personal relationships between people. We come to the act the matter of war or peace in other places in scripture but I don't think that that is the main thing that is it isn't what is envisaged here.

Of the seven words available in the Hebrew language to express the act of terminating life by killing it that used here and in 46 other places in the Old Testament, Ratzach is almost always if not always used of killing one's personal enemy. Killing one's personal enemy, getting rid of someone I hate and who has become or whom I have made my enemy. Now life was deemed to be sacred in the Old Testament this is this is basic and all violent forms of snatching it away brought guilt not only upon the individual but upon the land and upon the nation.

Whether in the case of manslaughter or a premeditated killing and that in turn must lead to the yielding up of a life in its place that is the law of the Old Testament. You take a life, you forfeit a life. In the case of premeditated murder in the Old Testament there was no such thing as atonement now it would be very wise of us to read the Old Testament when we're thinking of capital punishment.

The Old Testament does not know of such a thing as atonement that relates to premeditated murder. There was no substitute, there was no lamb, there was no sacrifice that could cover for the sin of premeditated murder. No ransom could be paid and Dr. Walter Kaiser Jr. whose ministry in this pulpit has been a great benefit to a number of us in our summer fellowships over over the years, he explains why.

Genesis 9.6 he says would explain why this is so this one capital offense required the death penalty but was unlike the other crimes that also had a capital punishment which allowed substitution and so forgiveness it was because humans are made in the image of God. The capital punishment for first-degree murder became a perpetual obligation to kill a person says Dr. Kaiser was tantamount to killing God in effigy. You've seen it happen in some of the parades on the street some of the people out to manifest on which side they're on and they have an effigy of someone and they burn him up.

To murder a human being made in the image of God is to murder God in effigy says Kaiser I think it's a very remarkable way of declaring a truth from scripture. It is to murder God in effigy. That murderer's life is owed to God.

Not to society not to the grieving loved ones and not even as a preventative measure for more crimes of a similar nature it is owed to God. It has been forfeited because it has murdered one on the image of God now that was a fact generally accepted by the Jews generally accepted by all Jews of our Lord's day and our Lord concurs. Our Lord agrees there is no question about that.

According to Jesus however the scribes and the Pharisees had added something to the sixth commandment something which be clouded the divine intention you notice how Jesus quotes the addition in the verse before us. The second part of verse 21 the words anyone who murders will be subject to judgment now that is not in the Ten Commandments. This is something that they have brought in alongside the words from the Ten Commandments the words which say thou shalt not kill.

They add this anyone who murders will be subject to judgment will you say that's that follows automatically doesn't it and in any case isn't it a quotation from somewhere else in the Old Testament well it is. Why then is this wrong? What is there wrong with it? and now let me explain. The Pharisees by putting these two things together in juxtaposition had reduced the import of the commandment thou shalt not kill to being just a question of committing actual murder they've reduced it to the matter of actually shedding blood actually committing murder and that's all it means and they're crystallizing that thought when they bring in this here this addition to it and then they go on to say if you do commit the act of murder you will be punished and punished as it is clear here from the Hebrew punished by the local tribunal by the magistrate.

Now there are two things there very important. One as far as they're concerned murder is simply the taking away of life the shedding of blood the terminating of human life. Two the consequences for murder come exclusively from the tribunal from the magistrate and what they're forgetting is this even though you may escape the ire of the magistrate you have yet another and a higher tribunal and Jesus later on in this passage goes on to speak of the fire of hell.

You may not be a murderer according to this definition and you may avoid all the charges brought against you before the civil magistrate or whatever nevertheless there is a higher tribunal that knows your heart and knows your soul and knows your spirit and says the Lord Jesus you are answerable there. Now the second thing is this the condemnation then of the attitude underlying acts of murder I tell you says Jesus that anyone who is angry with his brother and some manuscripts have the words inscribed there without cause. Anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes agreed up to that point now we come to the dividing line Jesus insisted that the command to desist from murder goes beyond the mere prohibition of the act itself to the condemnation of the attitude of soul that gives birth to the act that gives one the desire to murder, the hatred the fire in the soul, the venom in the spirit the bitterness that lies dormant in the soul and will ultimately express itself in the act of murder the divine commandment says Jesus does not simply proscribe murder itself, murder in full bloom but it also proscribes murder in the bud, namely in the form of anger and therefore our Lord Jesus demands of the subjects of his kingdom a quality of righteousness that is not only free from acts of murder from cultivating and permitting the underlying spirit to germinate and to thrive and to live on in our hearts. You see this is very challenging for all of us I don't suppose any of us here this morning have committed murder in the strict sense, in the first sense homicide but you see many of us may well be carrying in our hearts a murderer spirit and we want to dispatch of someone and we want to see him or her dead either the opportunity has not come our way or we've not had the courage to do it or we've been afraid of the consequences but there it is and we carry it with us and we feed it by one

means and another now the Lord Jesus Christ says if you're living under my rule in my kingdom subject to my law, listen he says you've got to deal with that and the righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law must be a righteousness that penetrates and permeates your soul so that you do not have murder in the bud in your heart. Now good people I don't know how you feel but but I find this very challenging.

There is a world of difference between these two positions as will become evident upon a moment's reflection.

Let me just give you an illustration you see there was a young man who went to Jesus one day and he said good master he said what must I do to inherit eternal life well says our Lord what does the law say and Jesus quoted some of the commandments oh he says wonderful okay I'm through then I've passed he says I've kept all these from my youth up what he meant was he'd kept them superficially see in terms of the understanding for example of the commandment thou shalt not murder he hadn't murdered anybody he hadn't shed anybody's blood but what our Lord is saying you see is that we can have murder in the heart and you and I may be like that young fellow or like the Pharisees and the scribes thinking just because our hands are clean and there is no law in the land that can touch us they're

all right brothers and sisters we may not be we may not be the Savior's teaching here is challenging in the extreme you cannot claim innocence from murder if you have hate in your soul for anyone anger is the breeding ground of murder of premeditated murder at any rate hate or anger desires as we've said the removal of someone out of life not just away from your presence but out of life altogether oh yes there is such a thing as righteous indignation Jesus practiced it Paul commends it when he writes to the Ephesians but it's a very difficult thing to practice worthily in the sight of God because James says man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God requires James 1 10 the ethics of the kingdom therefore demand that this that we are dealing with this morning this hatred

that gives birth to murder shall be dealt with in the butt thirdly the expression of humiliating language now this takes us further on the road and it it humbles us correspondingly more and more again says Jesus in second part of verse 22 anyone who says to his brother raka is answerable to the Sanhedrin but anyone who says you fool will be in danger of the fire of hell now there are many things we cannot comment on here but let me say the obvious and this is it and it is it is it is it is something that we must give note to give our attention to you can kill with words you can murder with words we can slay a character in the first place with innuendo and gossip and slander and lies and the worry that may emerge in the consequence of all that can be such as will bring a man or a woman to

actual physical death and if you spread enough gossip with enough and sufficient innuendos and lies somebody who loves you very much may take the weapon in his or her hand and slay that person instead of you so that you murder by proxy and according to British law murder by proxy is murder in the first degree I believe that is true to scripture you don't need to use the axe you don't need to use the pistol you don't need to use the automatic but you may so arouse the enmity of somebody else who loves you so much he or she will take it upon himself to get rid of the individual concern but you are responsible my brother my sister before God there is a very close bond between hateful words and the hateful spirit on the one hand and murder on the other and in between between very often most

likely you have hateful words a hateful spirit in the heart hateful words on the lips and the act of homicide now the offensive language referred to here by Jesus is very significant to call someone racker is virtually

to brand the person as what you and I would say in common parlance a blockhead or an empty-headed person brainless it speaks of sheer contempt for someone you see it presumes that I am a knowledgeable character I've been through the schools I've graduated I've got something you know and here I am sitting on my pedestal and he's brainless he's a dud says the Lord Jesus you can't talk like that about your father's creature what have you but that you have received not nothing and you cannot speak disparagingly as if he were in a different category from yourself to call someone

a fool or the Greek word moros to give it its real title denotes someone as a rebel as the second reference here or an apostate or an outcast and John Stott quotes Dr.

A.B. Bruce of a former generation as probably expressing what the two words mean in this way I quote racker says Dr.

Bruce expresses contempt for a man's head he translated you stupid how often I've heard that word used by people not realizing how awful it is in the sight of God you stupid brainless mindless more you fool expresses contempt for his heart or his character you scoundrel now it may well be that we have been in the habit of using such unseemly language in ignorance of their true implications in the sight of God brothers and sisters if we have let's desist from it let's by the grace of God say to him right here where we stand or where we sit this morning that's enough of that he will not have it he will not hold us guiltless we use such language demeaning and unworthy of creatures made after his image however spoil the image has become and particularly so when they have been redeemed by the

blood of Christ and are our brothers and our sisters in the church he will not have it you and I will not go unscathed he will thrash us he will chastise whom he loves whether or not these angry thoughts and vicious words actually result in physical murder in the sight of God they come too near to the act of murder to be safe in our lives therefore by the grace of God let's get rid of them let's seek his mercy from day to day to keep us from the evil way that's the implication here as subjects of the kingdom let us obey our king and honor him there are many other or there is so much that one might say here I have no time to say it this morning I must rush to conclude by briefly referring to the two other matters here the next is the necessity of defusing anger in someone's heart and the

stress that in the defusing of anger that is to have priority even over the most sacred act of worship verses 23 and 24 look at them says our Lord if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you leave your gift there in front of the altar don't go on with it first go and be reconciled to your brother then come and offer your gift now these words are staggering in their import the law and the prophets would agree with the teaching of Jesus and his apostles that the loftiest exercise of any man any woman anywhere anytime is the worship of Almighty God you may occupy a very important station in life and we ought to respect one another for the important stations we we may occupy but there is nothing in life comparable to the worship of

Almighty God himself this is the chief end of man and this is the highest point to which man rises if you are a true worshipper in the sight of God you've risen above anybody and everybody apart from those that are with you there here we are on common ground nevertheless Jesus the Son of God and the King of the heavenly kingdom categorically affirms here that it is not only legitimate but it is our bounden duty to put that act of worship on hold if we remember in process of our worshiping that our brother has got something against us and we should put the act of worship on hold for a moment or even for longer and go and be reconciled to our brother as someone has put it I'm not sure who God is content to wait the

Almighty God the Lord the creator of the ends of the earth the Lord of time

the eternal being himself is content to wait for you and for me to put things right with our brother he says don't go on with your worship put things right now in practice of course it may not be as simple as that and in chapter 18 of Matthew how Lord deals with this this this subject more more elaborately where it isn't as easy as that not just going to an individual and putting things right it may not work out like that but it's got to be done that's what Jesus is saying can I just spell that out very briefly the act of worship envisaged here of course is against the background of the Old Testament an offering of one's gift at the altar somebody's grateful to God somebody's worshipping God and he's bringing a sacrifice to offer it to God now Mark there's a lot of things going on before

he brings the sacrifice there's the gratitude in his soul then there's the decision made what sacrifice is required of me and then there is the finding of the sacrifice and the paying for it if he wasn't a farmer even if he was a farmer of course he's had to pay for it but if he's not a farmer he's had to buy it from someone probably from the priest and then he brings the animal into the temple now all this has been going on and the worship has come to the point where the animal is being offered is being handed over to the sacrificing priest to be slain now that's the point now says our Lord there comes over the worshipper the awareness that somebody somewhere's got something against him some brother somewhere has something against him the cause of complaint which that brother may be

nursing in his soul may be legitimate may be illegitimate there may be good reason for his wounded feeling or there may be none nevertheless says Jesus in that same brother's heart there are seeds of thought and of feelings that can if allowed to go unattended develop into anger and beyond anger into murder so he says put things right the appropriate course in such circumstances as Jesus leave your gift there in front of the altar first go and be reconciled to your brother then come and offer your gift the point is you see that even the worship of almighty God is unacceptable to the God whom we worship whilst we carry a grudge or anger or we know that our brother carries it we must defuse it in ourselves or in our brother we must do everything we can to that end the commandment not to

kill not to murder requires us to assume this ruthless and painstaking discipline in order to extinguish that which can lead to an act of murder somewhere down the line whether it be in ourselves or in someone else we can't allow it to go on we must learn to extinguish the flame that can blaze forth into murder in anyone this is the righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees and the scribes I wonder whether there is someone among us this morning and you have thought in your heart that the demands of the New Testament are far inferior to the demands of the old and you thought that to be under the law in the Old Testament subject to the law pure and simple as it was understood the way back there was something far less exacting than being a subject of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus

Christ my friend I'm sorry to disabuse you I'm sorry to disabuse you or the law cannot condemn us who are in Christ Jesus we are not under the law we're under grace what does that mean because our king is a king of grace he is a king who is able to change our hearts and take murder out of our soul and he will bring us there I just say one word about this other matter the urgency of settling our differences with an adversary now notice we've moved from a brother to an adversary verses 25 to 26 settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court do it while you're still with him on the way or he may hand you over to the judge the judge may hand you over to the officer and you may be thrown into prison I tell you the truth you will not get out until you've paid the last

penny can I summarize it Jesus says this is urgent really somebody's taking you to court charging you with not having paid up your your dues now look he says you're on the way to court don't let him put his foot inside the door of the court and make his case before the judge because that'll be too late I have no time to try to explain and apply that and it's too late see he says that you put it right on the way before you get into that position now that is but an introduction to the righteousness which Jesus expects of his people it exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees and of the teachers of the law and it does so particularly because it is not legal and it is not literal even though it respects the literal and if you like the legal but it goes beyond that it is deeper it is vaster

it is more total and comprehensive Jesus Christ demands the sanctification of the whole man of the whole woman of the whole person the heart must be right with God God save us from thinking of holiness and sanctification simply in terms of not going there not doing that all those may be important have their place relatively important but the basic and fundamental thing is the matter of the heart the condition of the heart and if the king of the heavenly kingdom doesn't do anything he does this he gets to the root of the matter in our hearts and he says that's where the problem is and that's what I'm addressing you to and I'm determined to deal with your heart see that's why we sang don't you think it was a good choice we need the Holy Spirit don't we I can't do this of myself we're proud

aren't we I am apart from the grace of God it is thine to cleanse the heart to sanctify the soul to pour fresh life on every part and new create the whole we can only do this brothers and sisters insofar as the Spirit of God is exercising his sovereign saving mighty transforming grace upon us and if he's urging you today in this direction if he's saying anything to you as he's saying to me brother and sister let's be obedient he is still the one who pardons transgressions and who cleanses us from unrighteousness if we confess our sins come then to the fount where sin is washed away but do not let us only ask for cleansing and pardon and be rid of our burden let us ask for the grace that gives us a burden for holiness of heart let us pray oh Lord God our Father in heaven we thank you for a

lovely morning such as this the end of November but we nevertheless come to thank you now particularly for your disturbing word not because we like to be disturbed but because we have known you at least well enough to understand that whilst we remain undisturbed in our immaturity and perhaps in our rebellion we are in a dangerous situation and therefore our Lord we thank you for this disturbing message from your word even on this lovely sunny morning grant that as we obey your truths discover your grace we may find that there is a day which is brighter than this bright morning even a day without a cloud between us and yourself and the blood of Jesus Christ your Son cleanses us from all sin yea though our sins are a scarlet they become a snow though they be red like crimson they shall be

as will Father in heaven come renew us strengthen us put strength into our vacillating wills and energize us to be obedient to your truth that we may be subjects of your kingdom who are living epistles clearly read and understood of men just because you are fulfilling your saving purpose in each of our lives in Jesus name, Amen

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/4/SID4591.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/sermon-on-the-mount-murder-the-bud-and-the-bloom/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net