
THE BLESSED LIFE

Part 4 - Anger Management

There are lots of really practical things that we can do that we learn in the sermon on the mount.

BUT:

- + Does me being obedient to what Jesus says here make me a Christian?
- + Does doing the right thing the right way make me right with God?

Our answer to these questions changes how we look at what Jesus says next...

How Soon is Now?

Matthew presents Jesus as a new and better Moses AND the King coming to set up his new Kingdom

The sermon on the mount is Matthew's version of Jesus fulfilling and then re-initiating the Law of God, like Moses received on the Mountain in Exodus (and as expressed in Leviticus). These new 'laws' are the laws of the new kingdom because there's a new King – no longer the kings of this world. Everything changes now, as Jesus brings this new kingdom.

You're Not the Same

This is all about God's kingdom coming to earth - Matthew 6:10. The old ways are no longer the covenant marker of the people of God. Now, it's a kingdom thing. And the marker of the Kingdom is the King Himself – God. God the king resides in each kingdom person – the Holy Spirit. So the Spirit is the new marker of God's commitment and connection and promise and purpose in His people.

What's on the inside – WHO is on the inside – makes all the difference!

Why is ANY of this important?

Because, when we come to these next sections of the Sermon on the Mount, we can easily fall for the lie that if we just do these things, if we tick these boxes, if we get our gold star for best behaviour, we'll be counted 'in' when it is all said and done. But that's not the case...

The inside determines the worth of the outside.

The Fool on the Hill

Matthew 5:21-22

Jesus says, "You heard it said long ago...", and then speaks about murder. He's quoting the sixth commandment from Exodus 20 (the Ten Commandments) and adds the further laws from Leviticus. He starts with the old covenant, with Moses, but takes it up a whole notch!

But we can miss the most explosive thing that Jesus says: "But I tell you..."

The Law of Moses said it this way, but Jesus, under the authority of God, because the old law is fulfilled, brings a new law – a new way of understanding what God's intention was.

Jeremiah 31:33

We can forget, in our modern context, that our salvation and faith is between us and God, and even when I share it with others, I'm using my one-to-one relationship with God to help them establish their own one-to-one relationship with God. But Jesus paints a picture for the rest of this chapter that how we act within the community of God, and how the community of God interacts with people outside it, is REALLY important!

Don't Look Back In Anger

Anger is a little confusing, because Paul reminds us in Ephesians 4:26 that we should not sin in our anger, suggesting that not all anger is sin. Jesus gets upset with the money exchange that was taking place in the temple, where innocent and poor people were being taken advantage of, and gets pretty angry. I mean, He made a whip and drove them out...

There's clearly a difference between what Jesus is saying here, and what can happen in moments in our lives.

When we fall into a fleshly response – that's when it becomes sin. Think of it this way: when anger drives me towards God and His kingdom outcomes – good! When it drives me toward murder and murderous thoughts – bad...

Only a Fool Would Say That

Raca: something like "you idiot, you empty-headed buffoon"!

When you say 'you fool' – the word here gives us our word 'moron'...

Here's why I think this is such a massive deal. Jesus is establishing the new way that we connect with God, and how we then connect with others. The way He lives life (with the Father, by the Spirit) is the way we're supposed to live. If we, as Spirit-filled people being directed by the Spirit, we start to question the leading and directing of God, and those made in His image, we damage what Jesus is establishing – deal breaker!

The King is setting out the new rules of His new kingdom, reflecting the true heart desire of the Creator God who sent Him to be King. So these new rules need to be clearly defined.

Jesus is making the inside-out kingdom ways very clear. Behaviour doesn't get us into the kingdom, Jesus does, and so the behaviour is the result of our belonging, not our ticket in!

Trouble(un)maker

Matthew 5:23-26

Because what's inside matters, and this is a serious issue, then you should be proactive. Jesus flips it around now, and instead of someone that you are angry at, He suggests that if you know someone is angry at you, go sort it out. That's proactive!

Notice it doesn't say, 'if you're angry at someone in your heart, go and tell them.' That will destroy a community!

Don't let a problem lie there – address it – from the overflow of God's love in your heart! Worship is best when it's done in reconciled community.

Don't Go Away Mad

This is a really complex thing to bring a point of application. "Don't get bad mad" isn't helpful!

Matthew is very intentional in how he crafts his recollection of Jesus' ministry. He is alluding to all the events of the crucifixion time and again. Jesus will, Himself, have to demonstrate this.

Jesus tells us to remember we are blessed when we are persecuted, reviled, falsely accused, because it's about to happen to Him. He tells us that a light on a pole can't be hidden, and pretty soon the light of the world

will be lifted up on a cross. He says that you need to make sure that your inside attitude to others, even your enemies, is one of forgiveness and reconciliation- says the one who, on the cross, as He was being murdered – said, “Father, forgive them...”

Jesus lives out the heart of the Sermon on the Mount – He is the living demonstration of it.

Is the dwelling place of God on the inside of you? How close are you in relationship to Him? Today is the day to put side the inside blockages, to come back to that place of relationship with King Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. How aware are you of your inside attitudes to others, compared to your actions to others?
2. How would you approach living life differently if Jesus wasn't giving us rules, but describing the reality inside those who are a part of His kingdom, that is designed to come out of them?
3. How do your internal thoughts and responses to others impact your participation in community with them?
4. We know that being healthy in our lives helps our relationships (things like rest, reflection, physical practices, etc.). Are you making it a fair fight to let the Spirit help you love others? Or do you need to adjust some things to make it fair?
5. If all of this anger management is in fact a result of the Spirit of God living in us, how close are you to Him right now?
6. What is the Spirit inviting you to do or change that will allow your personal intimacy with Him to grow, so that His characteristics are replicated in your life – peace, patience, love, joy, etc)?
7. What's one thing you can do differently from today that will allow the Spirit space to grow your capacity to love others?