

JESUS ON RELATING TO OTHERS (MATTHEW 5:17-48)

Video 2

Jesus says – to understand the Old Testament, you’ve got to go deeper than actions. To the level of motivation and attitudes.

Let’s hear what he says about one area of Old Testament law – murder.

Jesus’ teaching on murder in verse 21 matches the pattern we’ve already noted:

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...”

Then he continues:

But I tell you...

The prohibition against murder is vital. But, according to Jesus, simply not murdering someone doesn’t capture its full significance.

He continues:

Anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.

Then:

Anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court.

Then most surprisingly of all:

Anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Let’s notice two things about Jesus’ teaching on murder.

Firstly, he asks us to notice the connection between murder and other behaviours.

He starts by addressing anger. Jesus is alluding to the kind of seething anger that the Old Testament character Cain felt towards his brother Abel. Cain’s sin didn’t begin as he murdered Abel. His anger already made him guilty.

He then condemns insults. ‘Raca’ meant ‘worthless.’ A similar level of shock would be caused today by using a racist swear word against someone.

Then finally, even to call someone a fool left you guilty.

In all this, Jesus notices a shared deeper attitude.

Each is an expression of judging someone as worthless. Not seeing them as precious and made in God's image. Saying *my world* would be better if you didn't exist in it.

What we might consider trivial, Jesus considers deadly serious. Jesus words are supposed to jolt us. Our attitudes in our relationships matter.

Which is why, secondly, we should be reconciled to those we have hurt.

If you are offering your gift at the altar...

In other words, even if you're doing an important religious act...

and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you...

You remember you've sinned against someone by being angry with them, insulting them or calling them a fool...

leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Do it urgently, says Jesus. Be reconciled.

Listening to Jesus' teaching is highly convicting.

We may not have murdered anyone – but most of us have seethed in anger. We've not valued others as God values them.

Yet remember how Jesus opened his sermon:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Those who are welcomed into Jesus' kingdom aren't the perfect – but those who know they need help.

And he welcomes us by dying for us. As Jesus was insulted, hated, and ultimately murdered, he made a way for us to be forgiven for all the ways we've related to others wrongly.

Jesus knows what we're like. All of our failings. Yet he never seethes in anger against us, he welcomes us as precious to him.

So – as you relate to others. Allow Jesus to show you your deepest attitudes and motivations. Cry out to him for help. And then embrace the adventure of living out Jesus' kingdom, wherever you are, whoever you live amongst, at your university.