

Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

A Discipleship Journey



Sermon on the Mount

Week 10

Beyond the Commandments...

Jesus Teaches Us to Reconcile with Others First

Matthew 5:21 - 26

Opening Prayer:

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
conscious of our sinfulness,
but aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us,
and enlighten our hearts.

Give us light and strength
to know your will,
to make it our own,
and to live it in our lives.

Guide us by your wisdom,
support us by your power,
for you are God, sharing the glory of Father and Son.

You desire justice for all;
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance
or corrupted by fear or favor.

Unite us to Yourself in the bond of love
And keep us faithful to all that is true.

As we gather in your name, may we temper justice with love,
so that all our discussions and reflections
may be pleasing to you, and earn the reward
promised to good and faithful servants.

We ask this of You who live and reign with the
Father and the Son, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(St. John XXIII)

Reflection

We now begin our reflection on Jesus' examples that demonstrate His approach to life. The first of these is:

You have heard it said to your ancestors, "You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be subject to judgment." But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.
Matthew 5:21 – 22

Many of us might look at the commandment, "You shall not kill," and think, "Check – didn't kill anyone today so I'm good;" but Jesus doesn't let us stop at this literal interpretation. Jesus tells us that the word "kill" is just a metaphor for all of the ways that we harm each other: angry thoughts, bitterness, resentment, insulting words, sarcasm, or gossip, as well as harmful deeds. While there may be no intention of harm, these kinds of thoughts and words cultivate the very spirit that hurts and destroys (i.e., murders). We can destroy a person's reputation and/or shake one's confidence in someone by whispering criticism, deliberately finding fault, or making offhand comments. Killing does not only mean destroying life physically, it means much more: trying to destroy the spirit and the soul, destroying the person, in any shape or form. Simply by harboring angry, bitter thoughts violates the spirit of this commandment.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown in prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.
Matthew 5:23 - 26

Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are given the opportunity to right the wrongs we do, at least with God and within ourselves. Yet, Jesus is saying that is not enough. We must take the extra step to right ourselves with the one wronged. In fact, Jesus tells us that anger and insult are so serious and so dangerous that we should make God wait. Go and put it right, Jesus says; we cannot be right with God until we right ourself with the other person.

The choice is ours. We can harbor anger and resentment, cultivating a spirit of murder and hate, or we can make the world a better place by doing what Jesus teaches us: to love.

Reflection Question: Do I need to make amends with anyone in my life ... and so strengthen my relationship with God and others?

Closing Prayer

Speak to Jesus about what is on your heart, then rest in silence for a few moments listening for His response.