

Sunday School
April 12, 2020

***Typo from last week: the passage dealing with anger is James 1:19-20, NOT 5:19-20

-Read: Matthew 5:33-48 (we will be skipping Matthew 5:27-32 in this study, but by all means, read through it as well and apply what you see there to what we've been discussing)

-Questions to consider and discuss:

- **Q:** What do you think is the reason Jesus talks about taking oaths?
 - **A:** Our words should be reliable and true. If we need to say, "Believe me this time, I *swear*," then there must be other times where our word isn't good.
 - Read James 5:12. The old way of thinking (cf. Matthew 5:33) states that you should make good on your sworn oaths. Jesus states that your word should always be good, and that integrity should pervade your language and follow-through.
- Verses 38-42 are about retaliation. You can actually find the law that Jesus is referring to in the Old Testament (Leviticus 24:17-22).
 - The intention of this law was for appropriate punishment to be doled out (the punishment should fit the crime). Thus, if you punched someone and knocked out their tooth, they do not have any right to escalate things and bring even more harm upon you (including death). While this is a good intention, unfortunately, people frequently resorted to "getting even." If someone knocks out your tooth, you go ahead and knock theirs out. It'll make you feel good, giving you retribution and vengeance. This is the lie that people seeking revenge buy into.
 - Jesus wants people to keep at bay the temptation and natural human tendency to seek out personal revenge. Instead of slapping back, be slapped a second time. Instead of suing back, be wronged and defrauded. Instead of getting back at someone who costs you time, money, or energy, be willing to give more. This is a *very* difficult lesson for humans to learn. Sometimes the better choice is to just be wronged and allow injustice to happen to you, knowing that vengeance belongs to God (cf. Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30).
- Fact: there is no passage in the Old Testament that says "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." Jesus is not merely adding to Old Testament Law, but is correcting misconceptions and misinterpretations of the Old Testament.
 - **Q:** Who is your enemy right now? Is it a certain political group or leader? Is it a boss or authority figure who is being completely unreasonable? Is it the people who have been hoarding all the toilet paper? **Q:** How well are you *honestly* loving those people and praying for them? (it's not the easiest thing to do!).
 - God hates sin, yet still extends some blessings and providential care to everyone. If we want to be like God, we need to love *everyone*, not just those who are easier for us to love. Our lives shouldn't look *the same* as that of unbelievers; our transformed lives should result in behavior that displays *significantly greater love*.
 - v. 48 concludes the "you have heard it said" statements, showing that all of the Law and Prophets find their perfect fulfillment in the perfection of the Father, which is what all who follow Jesus are called to pursue.

- All three sections (Oaths, Retaliation, Loving Your Enemies) have to do with us being genuine and sincere in the ways we deal with others. Jesus calls us to treat others in a certain way (a fairly high calling), and ensure that we are beyond reproach when it comes to the ways that unbelievers perceive us and the way we lead our lives.
- What is one takeaway from this teaching from the Sermon on the Mount that you can apply this week?