

Jesus was a great teacher, among other things, and he had a way of captivating and keeping his audience while all the while delivering to them God's truth. So put yourself in the robes and sandals of those gathered on the Mount as they hear Jesus preaching his most famous sermon.

He has already turned their world upside down with the Beatitudes which were and are contrary to the world's philosophies and beliefs. He then uses two figures of speech to illustrate the influence his followers are supposed to have on the world. Next, he clarifies his position on Scripture, establishing his authority on them in the process, and calls for a righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees. In short he has challenged the listeners' image of the world, he has challenged their impact on the world, and he has challenged their ideas on religion.

Now he is going to challenge their illusion of righteousness and their interpretation of God's Word. The remainder of Matthew 5 consists of 6 antitheses. Each section opens with Jesus saying something to the effect of, "You have heard or been told, but I tell you the truth."

Allow me to digress for a second. Sherri and I have a love for crime shows and the kids have developed one as well. One of the things we like is the mystery and trying to figure out who the killer is. We swear that if Hawaii 5-0, the FBI's BAU, or any of the NCISes would hire us we could save them a lot of time because we're pretty quick.

I think that's one of the things that people have always enjoyed about murder mysteries (whether in literature such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes or Agatha Christie's books or in television and movies); the testing of their own wits to identify the murderer. We take joy in putting forth our theory and waiting for the end of the show where the killer is revealed. It's fun finding out who the killer is.

The best murder mysteries will withhold some key piece of evidence and even offer up a few red herrings to keep you from figuring them out too soon. Some will even have an unforeseen twist at the end that catches you completely off guard.

Let's now return to Jesus' sermon. He has drawn the crowd in and he has their attention. Now, he starts to get into some specifics about living as one of his followers. And he doesn't start just anywhere. He starts with murder.

Most of the audience is probably about to check out because they are thinking to themselves, "I don't need to hear this part because I'm not a murderer." But Jesus' teaching on the matter includes a twist. Let's look at what he has to say as he reveals who the murderer is . . .

Scripture: Matt. 5:21-26

I. Revealing a Murderer

A. **Reminding**

1. Raising?
 - a) Many times when we look at the six antitheses we think of Jesus raising the standard but this is not so
 - (1) It used to be X but now it's X+
 2. Redefining?
 - a) Many times when we think of the six antitheses we think of Jesus redefining the standard but this is not so
 - (1) It used to be X but now it's Y
 3. Returning
 - a) The six antitheses are examples of Jesus returning to the original intent
 - (1) You were told it is X but it has always been Y
 - b) Righteousness is a matter of the heart not the hands
 - (1) 1 Sam. 16:7
 - (2) Ps. 51:6
 - (3) Isa. 1
 - (4) Matt. 15:18-19

B. **Revealing**

1. Ranges and Results of Anger
 - a) Righteous (Matt. 21:12-13)
 - (1) What we feel when God is dishonored
 - (2) We confront and correct
 - b) Reasonable/Rational (Matt. 18:15-17)
 - (1) What we feel at injustice and sin committed against us and others
 - (2) We confront and correct
 - c) Rage (Matt. 5:22)
 - (1) What we feel when we hold on to anger (selfish anger)
 - (2) We conspire and condemn
2. Revelation of a Murderer
 - a) Recognizing Murder
 - (1) Murder is a sin not because we are taking a life but because we are taking the life of someone created in God's image out of rage
 - b) Realizing Murder
 - i. Unforgiveness and/or seeking vengeance in our hearts is equivalent to murder because our hearts are murderous
 - ii. Anger => Expression of anger => Character assassination

C. Recommendation

1. Reconciliation
 - a) Reconcile with your fellow man
 - (1) We must seek forgiveness and be forgiving
 - (2) Unresolved anger hinders our relationships with others and our relationship with God
 - (3) Seek reconciliation before anger and resentment make it more difficult
 - b) Reconcile with your Father in Heaven
 - (1) All sin is a sin against God and we must seek his forgiveness
 - (2) Do so quickly to avoid judgment

In 1931 a notorious murderer known as Two Guns Crowley was captured. When the police found him, he had in his pocket a note that read, "Under my coat is a weary heart, but a kind one, one that would do nobody any harm." Clearly old Two Guns was not being honest with himself. He was delusional. He was a murderer several times over. Many people today deny what lies within their hearts. They believe that just because they have never actually killed a person in rage that they are not murderers. But Jesus reminds us, as he reminded his original audience, that what's in our heart matters to God.

My kids have recently found the fun of a game I played as a kid, Clue. They've updated it a bit but the premise is still the same. Through a series of guesses and the process of elimination you try to figure out who committed the murder, in what room they committed it, and with what weapon. When Gabby was home, we sat down and played a few games. After several rounds it was my turn and I was ready to make a formal accusation. If I was wrong, I would no longer be in the game. I announced that my character was the murderer, named a room, and a weapon. I was right, so I won.

It is important for us to recognize the truth that Jesus was teaching that day on the mount. That means that we must confront our sinful anger and pronounce ourselves murderers by God's standard. When we do so, we can win. We can win because once we have recognized our sin; we can confess and repent of it. We can seek reconciliation with those with whom we are angry and with God for being unforgiving.

But victory can only come through a careful Spirit led self-examination and our obedience to God's corrective guidance. This morning will you be a Two Guns Crowley or will you be a reconciliation seeking obedient child of God?