

1. Jesus Christ was not a new law-giver. <sup>gives</sup> The Jews interpreted the OT wrongly. Jesus interpreted the OT rightly. That is the whole point of Mt. 5:21-48. In these vss. Jesus gives six examples from the OT. Our text is one example, quoting Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20 and Deut. 19:21.
2. "An eye for an eye" and "a tooth for a tooth" were principles of civil law, guidelines for civil courts, not of daily personal relationships. For example, if a man murdered someone, the court demanded that his life be taken. If he stole 500 rubles, he had to repay 500 rubles.
3. These civil principles prevented revenge by taking the matter out of the hands of the individual and permitting the civil government to do it. The principle in the NT is clearly taught at Rom. 13:1-9. The civil government does not bear the sword in vain, says St. Paul.
4. In our text, Jesus speaks vs. 38 as a true principle of the civil courts and government. But in vss. 39-42 He gives us four examples of how we should deal with others in everyday affairs.
5. First example, vs. 39: "Do not resist the evil." It can also be translated "Do not resist the evil person." Jesus means: "Do not be vengeful." Do not say: "I'll get him!!!" or "He'll pay for this!!!" Jesus means: "Under ordinary circumstances, return good for evil." Jesus says: "Turn the other cheek when you are slapped." He does not mean this mechanically. At Jn. 18:22 Jesus, when slapped, did not mechanically turn the other cheek. He returned good for evil. He made the man face his sin honestly. When someone attacks my body, my property, my family, I have the right and duty to preserve what is rightfully mine. That is not vengeance. Vengeance means to act like God. Evil must always be resisted. Think of Joseph, Gen. 39:8-9. But he was not vengeful. When he became ruler (Gen. 41:41) he did not punish Potiphar's wife. Our Apology (Art. XVI, 7) rightly says: "Public redress through a judge is not forbidden but expressly commanded, and it is a work of God according to Paul (Rom. 13:1-9)."
6. Second example, vs. 40: "To him who desires you to be taken to court to get your shirt, give him also your cloak." This example is a legal confrontation. The case is not yet in court. You are only being sued. Even then practice love. The Christian has a legal right to fight back but in a negligible matter the Christian should not only not fight for principle, but should even give double. True love produces true moral courage, a courage which yields rather than take vengeance and cause further trouble. By the way, I Cor. 6:1-11 does not forbid Christians from using courts. It means that Christians should take every means to settle differences privately, not publicly in court. Christians going to court with Christians is offensive to the world.
7. Third example, vs. 41: "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two." In the Persian Empire (539-331 B.C.) marching soldiers had the legal right to compel citizens to carry their pack one mile. The Romans, who ruled Palestine at Jesus' time, did the same. Jesus says: "Don't go just one mile. Go two." By the way, Simon of Cyrene (Mt. 27:32) was compelled to bear Jesus' cross. The same verb is used there.
8. Fourth example, vs. 42: "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away." In this life we are only stewards, not owners, of what God lends us. We should use our goods to the glory of God and the benefit of man.
9. Jesus is saying: "Do not be selfish and vengeful. When you feel wronged by someone, return good for evil (vs. 39). When someone threatens to sue you in court, settle the matter to his advantage (vs. 40). When you <sup>are</sup> requested to do something, do twice what is asked (vs. 41). When others beg or borrow, be charitable, asking nothing in return (vs. 42). Jesus is not inducing poor stewardship of property. He is saying: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."
10. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Ps. 51:10. Read also Philipppians 3:12-14. Lord, have mercy!

Sermon Outline on Mt. 5:38-42, Trinity VI

Theme: PRODUCE THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT NOT THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

Introduction: Jesus says at Mt. 5:20: "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Then, in vss. 21 to 48 Jesus gives six examples (vss. 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43) of how people twist the words of the Bible to justify their works of the flesh. Such people are not on the way to everlasting life, says Jesus. Our text today is one of those six examples.

I-THE EXAMPLE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT. Vs. 38

The OT says: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21. Read these passages in their context. These are not personal deeds. They are acts of civil courts. If a man kills he must pay with his life. If he causes loss of property he must pay a fine to restore such property. But this is not vengeance. It is not personal. It is the work of a court. God is a just God. He establishes governments to administer justice (Rom. 13:1-9). It often happens that injustice is done by a court. But that does not invalidate the principle. The sinfulness of mankind does not invalidate the Word of God. If and when a civil court does its work faithfully, it is a fruit of the Spirit of God.

I-WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT THESE ABUSES.

A-Do not resist evil. Vs. 39. Jesus is talking about the sin of vengeance, not about protecting your own property. If someone attacks your property, your wife, your good name, you have the right of self protection. Jesus is not talking about that. He is talking about paying back a sin with an equal sin. That's what He means by saying: "turn the other cheek." Prov. 15:1 says: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." If you repay sin with sin, it makes matters worse for you and the other person. Jesus is saying: "Repay evil with good." That's the story of salvation. God loved a sinful, miserable world of people by giving His own Son. Where there were works of the flesh God gave fruits of the Spirit.

B-Give him also your cloak. Vs. 40. Jesus is not talking about making yourself poor by giving away all your goods. God does not induce poverty. Jesus is talking about a vengeful person who threatens to sue you in court. He wants to sue you over loss of a shirt. That is not very much. If you let him take you to court, both you and he will lose much, not only property but also there will be hard feelings which are difficult to erase. Do not let it come to this. Yield to the other person. Read Lk. 6:36-38. Be yielding, merciful, kind. Win your enemy by deeds of kindness, fruits of the Spirit.

C-Go two miles with him. Vs. 41. During the days of the Persian Empire a soldier carrying a heavy pack could compel a citizen to carry his pack for him. The Romans introduced the same practice in their Empire in Jesus' day. In fact, Roman soldiers did this at Mt. 27:32. They compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus' cross. When this happens to you, says Jesus, go twice as far as you're asked to go. It's a principle in daily living. Gladly and ungrudgingly do twice as much as people ask you to do. Go the extra mile. That's a fruit of the Spirit.

D-Be generous to people. Read vs. 42. Jesus does not mean that we should not be careful with our property. There was once a man who painted the handles of all tools red because he had a neighbor who constantly borrowed tools and forgot to return them. Periodically the owner went and collected his tools. Jesus is saying: "Don't be selfish. That is a work of the flesh. Be generous. That is a fruit of the Spirit."

Conclusion: "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Luther said: "Faith alone saves but faith is never alone."

Sermon Notes on Mt. 5:20-26, Trinity VI

1. Mt. 5:1-12 are about the Beatitudes. Vss. 13-16 are about the Christians exalted calling in this world. He is like salt which preserves meat from corruption. The Christian preserves society from becoming like Sodom and Gomorrah. Like Christ the Christian is a light to the world. Christians must not hide their light. Vs. 16 tells us that others should see the work of the heavenly Father in our deeds. They should see our deeds, not us. Nature shows God and creation to the world. The Christian's good deeds, though not a means of grace, show the saving Father to the world.
2. Vss. 17-20 tell us that truly righteous living comes only from the proper understanding of the Bible. Vs. 17 tells us that Jesus came not to do away with the Bible but to bring out its true OT meaning. The prophets said: "Thus saith the Lord." The Apostles said: "It is written." But Jesus said: "Truly I say to you." In vs. 18 the point of the first "until" clause is that the Word of God is permanent and the point of the second "until" clause is the exact truthfulness of the Word. The word "iota" denotes the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. The word "tittle" or "mark" denotes the little marks on Hebrew letters which can change the meaning of words. The point is that the meaning of God's Word is changeless. Vs. 19 tells us that if anyone changes the meaning of anything in God's Word simply because he considers it of less importance, that person is condemned in time and eternity. But whoever teaches and does God's Word according to its true meaning will receive the reward of faithfulness. He does not earn salvation but is promised a reward.
3. "Righteousness" here denotes the righteousness of living and of deeds, not the righteousness of faith. Vs. 20 implies that the Pharisees and scribes were twisting the meaning of Scripture. Five examples follow in vss. 21 to 48. Their righteousness was only a civil, worldly righteousness. It was merely external. True righteousness is moral, of the heart, proceeding from faith in Christ. "The kingdom of heaven" here means the true family of God in time and eternity.
4. Vs. 21, though true, states only the external or civil side of this commandment. See Ex. 20:13; 21:12; Lev. 24:17; Deut. 5:17. But Jesus brings out the true meaning of this commandment in the OT. That is the meaning of vs. 22. The person who is angry at his brother (see I Jn. 3:15) is not only guilty of earthly judgment as a murderer but is also guilty of hell-fire. Read Eph. 4:26-27. Anger in itself is not wrong. Anger is an attribute of God. But it should never be the kind that consumes the brother or turns into a grudge. Christians are still sinners. But they have a new man which must rule the old man. There are times when Christians, like Jesus, are rightfully angry. But the anger must not destroy or hurt the brother or become a grudge. To summarize: Wrongful anger destroys the brother and is murder.
5. Vss. 23-24 tell us that an unresolved situation with another human being is dangerous for the Christian. He must not live with a guilty conscience or offensive unforgiveness toward his neighbor. The point of vss. 23-24 is that anger or hatred of the heart is murder.
6. For vs. 25 read Lk. 6:27-35. Jesus is not saying that we should give up our principles to our adversary. But you should not hate him because that can lead to the loss of your soul.
7. Note the frequency of "Truly I say to you," vss. 18, 20, 22, and 26. This denotes the divinity of Jesus. He is true God.
8. Vs. 26 is like Lk. 13:3.5: "Unless you repent you will perish." Condemnation to eternal punishment is irrevocable. It cannot be changed. But a living repentance (confession of sins, faith in Christ, the fruits of faith) frees us from the condemnation of hell. Christians produce not only external, civil righteousness but also the internal heart righteousness which is a fruit of faith.

Sermon Outline on Mt. 5:20-26, Trinity VI

Theme: WHY THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES LACKED TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

Introduction: Jesus often told the scribes and Pharisees the truth about themselves. He warned them often. They accepted the Bible but twisted its meaning. They lived clean lives but were unacceptable to God. Why? Their religion was only external. It was fruitless. It was without love. They are a warning to us.

I-THEY TWISTED THE SOURCE OF THEIR RELIGION

The OT contains the true Christian religion. But the scribes and Pharisees twisted the OT. They condemned murder but they had hateful hearts. They condemned adultery but allowed sinful lust. By the misuse of oaths they told lies. They loved their friends but hated their enemies. Jesus came to bring out the true meaning of the OT. He told them hatred is also murder. He told them that lust for a strange woman is also adultery. He told them that to love one's neighbor also meant to love one's enemies. This is found in vss. 21-48 of Mat. 5.

II-THEY NURTURED COLD AND UNFORGIVING HEARTS, vss. 24-26.

A-Holy deeds without reconciliation of neighbor is mockery. This is described in vss. 23-24 of our text. The covenant people brought offerings to the altar in the Temple at Jerusalem. These were offerings for forgiveness and thanksgiving. They were holy deeds. They were offered to God. But Jesus says that they are worthless if the heart is nurturing hatred toward the brother. First go and be reconciled with your brother and then come and offer your gift. Holy deeds are an abomination to God if offered with a sinful heart.

B-A loveless life will lead to hell. This is described in vss. 25-26. All of us have adversaries. Christians, like their Lord, are kindly minded, even to their adversaries. Jesus said: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He told His adversaries the truth about themselves but He loved them. If I refuse to be kindly minded toward my adversary I will have to pay for it in hell.

III-THEIR BASIC PROBLEM WAS LACK OF FAITH IN CHRIST AND LACK OF REPENTANCE

A-They rejected the Savior. Lk. 15:2 tells us that the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled at Jesus because He associated with tax collector and sinners. These tax collectors and sinners repented of their sins and believed in Jesus. That is why they wanted to associate with Jesus. The Pharisees and scribes grumbled because they neither repented nor believed in Jesus.

B-They were not renewed people. II Cor. 5:17 tells us: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. They have become new." Heb. 11:6 tells us: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." In the Bible faith always means faith in Christ. And Rom. 14:23 tells us: "Whatever is not from faith is sin." Read Jn. 15:1-8, the vine and branches passage. Jesus says: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit. For without Me you can do nothing."

C-They are like Paul the Pharisee before he was converted. Php. 3:7-11. When Paul found the righteousness of Christ by faith he abandoned his former empty life. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, the best Pharisee. But he calls his own righteousness dung, manure.

Conclusion: Our text, Mt. 5:20-26, is given to us so that we might examine ourselves. Do we twist the Scriptures to hide a sinful heart?

Do we harbor anger in our hearts? Do we refuse to be reconciled with our brother? Are we unkind to our adversaries? Let us confess our sins to God. Let us turn to Jesus Who forgives us our sins. Let us abide in Him by faith so that we can produce much fruit to glorify our Father in heaven and to benefit our neighbor on earth. These deeds do not save us but they prove that we have faith in our Lord Jesus.