

Sermon Notes for October 17, 1999

**The Sermon on the Mount**  
**“A Murder Without Death”**  
**Matthew 5:21-26**

A young girl who was writing a paper for school came to her father and asked, **“Dad, what is the difference between anger and exasperation?”** The father replied, “it is mostly a matter of degree. Let me show you what I mean.” With that the father went to the telephone and dialed a number at random. To the man who answered the phone, he said, **“Hello, is Melvin there?”** The man answered, “There is no one living here named Melvin. Why don’t you learn to look up numbers before you dial them?” “See,” said the father to his daughter. “That man was not a bit happy with our call. He was probably very busy with something and **we annoyed him.** Now watch . . .” The father dialed the number again. **“Hello, is Melvin there?”** asked the father. “Now look here!” came the heated reply. “You just called this number and I told you that there is no Melvin here! You’ve got a lot of nerve calling again!” The receiver slammed down hard. The father turned to his daughter and said, **“You see, that was anger.** Now I’ll show you what **exasperation means.**” He again dialed the same number, and when a violent voice roared, “Hello!” the father calmly said, **“Hello, this is Melvin. Have there been any calls for me?”**

**A Syracuse, NY court has dismissed a Pennsylvania man’s lawsuit against God. Donald Drusky, 63, blames God for failing to bring him justice in a 30 year battle against his former employer, USX Corp. The company fired him in 1968. “Defendant God is sovereign ruler of the universe and took no corrective action against the leaders of his Church and his Nation for their extremely serious wrongs, which ruined the life of Donald S. Drusky,”** the lawsuit said. Drusky wanted God to return his youth and grant him guitar playing skills of famous guitarists, along with resurrecting his mother and his pet pigeon. **If God failed to appear in court, federal rules of civil procedure say he must lose by default, Drusky argued.** The suit was found by the judge to be frivolous as it also named Presidents Reagan and Bush, the television networks, all 50 states, the 100<sup>th</sup> through the 105<sup>th</sup> congresses, all federal judges and every single American.

### **Introduction**

#### **A. MAN’S STRUGGLE With Anger**

1. The first crime that man committed was murder when Cain murdered his brother, Abel.
2. Since that day, anger has been at the root of millions and millions of murders around the world.
3. There are:
  - a. 38,000 gun deaths annually with another 65,000 additional serious injuries by guns.
  - b. There will be 1 million criminal misuses of guns annually.
  - c. Of the 38,000 deaths, a majority are suicides.
  - d. Medical care for gun violence is 1.5 billion dollars annually.

- e. Cost to our society for:
  - 1. attempting to apprehend these criminals is \$400,000.00 per criminal.
  - 2. and \$25,000.00 per criminal per year while in prison.
- 4. Further evidence that hate is rampant in our society by the deaths of students in:
  - a. Mississippi
  - b. Colorado
  - c. Texas
- 5. Road rage is becoming an epidemic.
- 6. More people were killed in Detroit last year than in all of Northern Ireland - most of them by family members to one another.

## **B. JESUS' TEACHING On Anger**

- 1. There was a colossal misunderstanding of the meaning of the original 10 Commandments when Jesus came on the scene.
  - a. The religious leaders, the Pharisees, had added some 4,000 additional laws to the Laws of the Old Testament.
    - 1. But with all of these laws, they had missed the real essence of the "original" meaning.
    - 2. Their thought was that these laws were to be obeyed only externally -
      - a. A good day in the life of the Pharisee - "Honey, I'm home - I didn't kill anyone today, steal from any one or have sex with another woman."
      - b. They had no concept of anything OTHER than the letter of the law.
  - b. In addition, during the time of the 70 years exile in Babylon, the Jews learned the Babylonian language, Aramaic
    - 1. However, the religious leaders maintained their language/Hebrew.
    - 2. By the time this exile was over, the common man had to depend on the religious leaders to interpret the Old Testament for him.
- 2. So Jesus, in The Sermon On The Mount, is attempting to "straighten out" the misunderstanding AS WELL AS the real meaning of the Law.
  - a. In some ways, Jesus was saying - as the second person of the Trinity -
    - 1. You have heard from these religious leaders what it means to be religious, however, I want to tell you it means to be spiritual.
    - 2. I want to tell you what "I" meant when "I" wrote the 10 Commandments!
    - 3. I want to tell you the spirit as well as the letter of the Law.
- 3. Jesus starts with the Sixth Commandment - Thou shalt not kill.

## **I. The MEANING of Anger**

### **A. Anger Is Murder.**

1. While Jesus was agreeing that the Sixth Commandment forbids murder, He went much, much further in the definition of murder than merely the physical .
  - a. Do you remember the words of President Jimmy Carter when he admitted that he had “lusted after a woman in his heart?”
    1. President Carter was being very Biblical in his understanding of the commandment not to commit adultery.
    2. Agreeing with Jesus that to commit a sin in his heart is the **SAME THING AS COMMITTING** it physically.
  - b. Thus, Jesus is saying that to hate someone in your heart is the same as murdering them with a gun or a knife.
2. We **MUST** realize that sin in the Old Testament has always been about the **heart** -
  - a. I Samuel 16:7 - The choosing of David to be king  
“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. **Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.**”
  - b. Jeremiah 31:33: Circumcision “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. **‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.’”**
  - c. How **ELSE** could it be?
    1. Marriage Seminar - the need to go out once a week
    2. I’m “supposed” to tell you I love you.
3. Jesus is saying that what takes place in the **HEART** is the real indicator of what is going on with a person spiritually.
  - a. The letter of the Law.
  - b. The spirit of the Law.
4. So, Jesus is saying that if you hate in the heart - **YOU HAVE COMMITTED MURDER.**
  - a. And if you are brought to judgment by actually killing someone,
  - b. you were also brought to judgment by hating someone.

## **B. Three Steps Toward Murder**

1. **Step One - Our ANGER**  
Vs. 22 - “Anyone who is **angry** with his brother will be subject to judgment.”
  - a. After someone has hurt you, you go into a brooding, simmering, smoldering mood.
  - b. This mood does not die, but continues to simmer; “do a slow boil.”
  - c. In a sense, it is to cherish resentment and refuse to make any effort to reconocile.
  - d. We must **REALIZE** these truths about brooding:
    1. **THIS** is the stage where I see many Christians.
      - a. They aren’t throwing things.

- b. They aren't yelling or screaming.
  - c. In fact, many don't even know that they are angry - BUT THEY ARE!
  - d. **JUST ASK THOSE AROUND YOU** - I call it "leaking" - my sister - "Do you realize how critical you are?"
2. Brooding IS sin!
- a. It may not be so obvious, but what you are doing; simmering, smoldering, is a sin!
  - b. WHAT HAPPENED?
    - 1. The person who made fun of you at work.
    - 2. The person who talked behind your back.
    - 3. The person who has not paid you back.
3. Brooding is MURDER!
- a. In fact, Jesus says that brooding is worthy of the **judgment.**
    - 1. The Town Council of 23 men.
    - 2. To be brought before a tribunal.
  - b. You may as well shoot them!
    - 1. You avoid them.
    - 2. You can't pray for them.
    - 3. In some ways, you revel in their misfortune and wish harm on them.
  - a. One day, two monks were walking through the countryside. They were on their way to another village to help bring in the crops. As they walked, they spied an old woman sitting at the edge of a river. She was upset because there was no bridge, and she could not get across on her own. The first monk kindly offered, "We will carry you across if you like." "Thank you," she said gratefully, accepting their help. So the two men joined hands, lifted her between them and carried her across the river. When they got to the other side, they set her down, and she went on her way.

**After they had walked another mile or so, the second monk, began to complain. "Look at my clothes," he said. "They are filthy from carrying that woman across the river. And my back still hurts from lifting her. I can feel it getting stiff." The first monk just smiled and nodded his head.**

A few more miles up the road, the second monk griped again, "My back is hurting me so badly, and it is all because we had to carry that silly woman across the river! I cannot go any farther because of the pain." The first monk looked down at his

partner, now lying on the ground, moaning. “Have you wondered why I am not complaining?” he asked. **“Your back hurts because you are still carrying the woman. But I set her down five miles ago.”**

4. Are you brooding?
  - a. Are you very uncomfortable around this person?
  - b. Do you avoid them?
  - c. Can you look them in the eye?
  - d. Can you wish them well?
  - e. What would you say to them if you could say anything?

## 2. Step Two - Our APATHY

Vs. 22b - “Again, anyone who says to his brother, **RACA**, is answerable to the Sanhedrin.”

- a. This word RACA is almost untranslatable, but it means:
  1. brainless
  2. idiot
  3. bonehead
  4. empty-headed
  5. worthless
- b. This is the second step toward murder.
  1. In a sense, it is being so angry at a person that you “write them off” as a human.
    - a. How can anyone be so stupid, so worthless, so brainless?
    - b. They are so worthless that they are not “worthy of my time.”
  2. And you have “become” apathetic; “deadened.”
- c. We must REALIZE these truths about apathy.
  1. This is the natural progression of murder.
    - a. Love – anger – hate – apathy
      1. You have hated them for so long (brooding) that you don’t feel anything any more.
      2. You don’t care, because you have no care left.
    - b. Illustrations
      1. Being in a difficult situation - alcoholic; abuse - you just don’t care anymore.
      2. But your hate has actually “hardened”
      3. Israel, Jordan
      4. Armand M. Nicholi, M.D., professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, explains that **Sigmund Freud died at the age of 83, a bitter and disillusioned man.** Tragically, this Viennese physician, one of

the most influential thinkers of our time, had little compassion for the common person. Freud wrote in 1918, **‘I have found little that is good about human beings on the whole. In my experience most of them are trash, no matter whether they publicly subscribe to this or that ethical doctrine or to none at all.’** Freud died friendless. **It is well-known that he had broken with each of his followers. The end was bitter.**

5. Bill - “Oh, he’s a nothing.”
2. Jesus thinks that apathy is so serious that the offender should be taken to the **Sanhedrin!**
  - a. 72 judges who dealt with the most serious of sins.
  - b. Here, their method of justice is to stone you!
  - c. Jesus is clearly saying that we are getting into a serious area when we allow our emotions toward another to go dead. **DON’T LET THAT HAPPEN!**
3. **Step Three - ATTACK**  
 Vs. 22c - “But anyone who says **you fool!** Will be in danger of the fire of hell.”
  - a. You have brooded, and simmered and said that you didn’t care - but after days, months and even years, you explode and call a man a fool
    1. The Greek word moron
    2. A rebel; outcast; a waste;
    3. A godless one
  - b. The term fool is a verbal assault on a man’s character.
    1. He has no ethic
    2. He has no character
    3. He is a godless soul.
  - c. In a sense your bitterness and contempt have not had the desired effect, so you **WANT** this person to know how you feel.
  - d. We must **REALIZE** this:
    1. We have allowed our hatred to simmer far too long.
    2. We **MUST** tell someone - to **DESTROY** their reputation.
    3. But Jesus says that this stage is so serious that you are in **danger of hell itself.**
      - a. This is a most serious sin.
      - b. But realize this, you **HAVE DONE NOTHING PHYSICAL YET!** But Jesus does not see it that way.
      - c. **THIS sin of verbal abuse indicates that you are one step short of doing something you may ultimately regret.**

1. Camels may build up a pressure cooker of resentment toward human beings until the lid suddenly blows off and they go berserk. **In Asia, when a camel driver senses trouble, he gives his coat to the animal.** Rather like Japanese workers reported to work off frustrations by beating up models of their executives, the camel “expresses its anger” – jumping on it, biting it, tearing it to pieces. When the camel feels it has blown its top enough, man and animal can live together in harmony again.
2. **On June 11, 1998, Luke Woodham, the 17 year old Mississippian who opened fire on his Pearl High School classmates,** testified that his involvement with satanism had caused him to do it. An older friend had encouraged him to join in worshipping Satan. Woodham said that he became a “believer” after he and the boy cast a spell and a teen they knew died in a car accident the next day. Two died and seven were wounded in Woodham’s shooting rampage at his school. The boy said on a videotaped confession, **“I knew what I was doing, I was just [angry] at the time.”**

## II. Our MINISTRY to Anger

### A. TIMELINESS in Dealing With Anger

#### 1. Our anger in CHURCH

Vs. 23-24 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift **at the altar** and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”

- a. Jesus is FULLY aware that Christians will have personal problems with one another - so He sets the stage within a worship service.
  1. The Jews understood the context of the Temple
    - a. They were to go to the Temple, take their animal for sacrifice, give it to the priest so that their sins could be forgiven.
    - b. The temple was the holiest of all places.
  2. Jesus understood the heart of the matter.
    - a. To continue His point about the heart, Jesus tells His audience **TO STOP DEAD IN THEIR TRACKS** -
      1. If they came to the Temple with anger in their heart.

2. Put down the sacrifice, go find the person you have a problem with **AND FIX IT FIRST!**
  3. Don't make it worse by "appearing" to worship while your heart is full of hate.
  4. This is the same view that God expressed through the prophet: (Isaiah 1:10-20 (read))
- b. **WHAT** is Jesus saying to us?
1. Anger and hate toward another is murder.
  2. If you come to the sanctuary to sit down to prepare yourself:
    - a. God reminds you that there is a brokenness between you and another person (the word is "to be reminded")
    - b. **DON'T COMPOUND THE PROBLEM BY CONTINUING TO WORSHIP!**
      1. Is God honored by your hypocrisy?
      2. Is your heart right as you come to worship a holy God?
      3. Can you come close to God with sin so present in your heart?
    - c. Jesus says . . .
      1. **GET UP OUT OF YOUR CHAIR.**
      2. **LEAVE THE WORSHIP AREA**
      3. **GET INTO YOUR CAR**
      4. **AND GO FIX YOUR PROBLEM WITH ANOTHER . . . NOW -**
        - a. Don't wait - even a minute
        - b. **GO!**
        - c. And don't wait until next week to make a phone call - **DO IT TODAY!**
  4. Note: If you are driving to church and know that there is bitterness between you and your spouse:



- a. Turn the car AWAY from church and spend AS MUCH TIME AS NECESSARY TO GET THIS FIXED!
- b. You not only have my permission - you are COMMANDED by Jesus to do so.
- c. Otherwise you turn your worship experience into a farce.

## 2. **Our anger IN THE WORLD**

Vs. 25-26 “Settle matters quickly with your adversary **who is taking you to court**. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the office, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

### a. **With the world**

- 1. The urgency to settle matters QUICKLY with believers is also urged in relationships with those in the outside world.
- 2. Don't ALLOW YOUR BROKEN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS TO DRAG YOU TO COURT.
- 3. SETTLE THESE PROBLEMS QUICKLY AS WELL.
- 4. Jesus is saying to be EXPEDIENT IN BOTH CASES!

### b. **With God**

- 1. Many believe that this “courthouse” is the courthouse of God.
  - a. If you don't settle matters with fellow believers
  - b. you WILL be dragged to heaven's court BY GOD UNTIL YOU DO MAKE IT RIGHT.
- 2. So don't make God take you to His court.

## B. **TACTICS In Dealing With Anger**

- 1. Public and private sins
- 2. Face to face
- 3. How to confess
  - a. Deal with your emotions HONESTLY.
  - b. Confess the LITERAL SINS.
  - c. Forgive privately and, if need be, publicly.
  - d. Ask God to fill the hole left by the departure of your sin of hatred.

## **Conclusion**

**Shortly after the turn of the century, Japan invaded, conquered, and occupied Korea. Of all their oppressors, Japan was the most ruthless. They overwhelmed the Koreans**

**with a brutality that would sicken the strongest of stomachs. Their crimes against women and children were inhuman. Many Koreans live today with the physical and emotional scars from the Japanese occupation.**

**One group singled out for concentrated oppression was the Christians. When the Japanese army overpowered Korea one of the things they did was board up the evangelical churches and eject most foreign missionaries.**

**The conquerors started by refusing to allow churches to meet and jailing many of the key Christian spokesmen.** The oppression intensified as the Japanese military increased its profile in the South Pacific. The “Land of the Rising Sun” spread its influence through a reign of savage brutality. Anguish filled the hearts of the oppressed – and kindled hatred deep in their souls. **One Pastor persistently entreated his local Japanese police chief for permission to meet for services. His nagging was finally accommodated, and the police chief offered to unlock his church . . . for one meeting.**

**It didn’t take long for word to travel.** Committed Christians starving for an opportunity for unhindered worship quickly made their plans. Long before dawn on that promised Sunday, Korean families throughout a wide area made their way to the church. They passed the staring eyes of their Japanese captors, but nothing was going to steal their joy. As they closed the doors behind them they shut out the cares of oppression and shut in a burning spirit anxious to glorify their Lord.

**The Korean church has always had a reputation as a singing church.** Their voices of praise could not be concealed inside the little wooden frame sanctuary. Song after song rang through the open windows into the bright Sunday morning. For a handful of peasants listening nearby, the last two songs this congregation sang seemed suspended in time. It was during a stanza of “Nearer My God to Thee” **that the Japanese police chief waiting outside gave the orders. The people toward the back of the church could hear them when they barricaded the doors, but no one realized that they had doused the church with kerosene until they smelled the smoke. The dried wooden skin of the small church quickly ignited. Fumes filled the structure as tongues of flame began to lick the baseboard on the interior walls.**

There was an immediate rush for the windows. But momentary hope recoiled in horror as the men climbing out the windows came crashing back in – **their bodies ripped by a hail of bullets.** The good Pastor knew it was the end. With a calm that comes from confidence, he led his congregation in a hymn whose words served as a fitting farewell to earth and a loving salutation to heaven.

Their song became a serenade to the horrified and helpless witnesses outside. Their words also tugged at the hearts of the cruel men who oversaw this flaming execution of the innocent: *Alas! And did my Savior bleed? And did my Sovereign die? Would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?*

Just before the roof collapsed they sang the last verse, their words an eternal testimony to their faith: *But drops of grief can ne'er repay the debt of love I owe: Here, Lord, I give myself away 'Tis all that I can do! At the cross, at the cross Where I first saw the light, And the burden of my heart rolled away—It was there by faith I received my sight, And now I am happy all the day.*

The strains of music and wails of children were lost in a roar of flames. The elements that once formed bone and flesh mixed with the smoke and dissipated into the air. The bodies that once housed life fused with the charred rubble of a building that once housed a church. But the souls who left singing finished their chorus in the throne room of God. Cleaning the incinerated remains was the easy part. Erasing the hate would take decades. For some of the relatives of the victims, this carnage was too much. **Evil had stooped to a new low, and there seemed to be no way to curb their bitter loathing of the Japanese.**

**In the decades that followed, that bitterness was passed on to a new generation.** The Japanese, although conquered, remained a hated enemy. The monument the Koreans built at the location of the fire not only memorialized the people who died, but stood as a mute reminder of their pain. Inner rest? **How could rest coexist with a bitterness deep as marrow in the bones?**

**It wasn't until 1972 that any hope came. A group of Japanese pastors traveling through Korea came upon the memorial.** When they read the details of the tragedy and the names of the spiritual brothers and sisters who had perished, they were overcome with shame. Their country had sinned, and even though none of them were personally involved (some were not even born at the time of the tragedy), they still felt a national guilt that could not be excused.

**They returned to Japan committed to right a wrong.** There was an immediate outpouring of love from their fellow believers. They raised ten million yen (\$25,000). The money was transferred through proper channels and a beautiful white church building was erected on the sight of the tragedy.

When the dedication service for the new building was held, a delegation from Japan joined the relatives and special guests. Although their generosity was acknowledged and their attempts at making peace appreciated, the memories were still there. Hatred preserves pain. It keeps the wounds open and the hurts fresh. **The Koreans' bitterness had festered for decades. Christian brothers or not, these Japanese were descendants of a ruthless enemy.**

The speeches were made, the details of the tragedy recalled, and the names of the dead honored. It was time to bring the service to a close. Someone in charge of the agenda thought it would be appropriate to conclude with the same songs that were sung the day the church was burned.

The song leader began the words to **"Nearer My God to Thee."** But something remarkable happened as the voices mingled on the familiar melody. As the memories of the past mixed

with the truth of the song, resistance started to melt. The inspiration that gave hope to a doomed collection of churchgoers in a past generation gave hope once more.

**The song leader closed the service with the hymn “At the Cross.”**

The normally stoic Japanese could not contain themselves. The tears that began to fill their eyes during the song suddenly gushed from deep inside. **They turned to their Korean spiritual relatives and begged them to forgive.** The guarded, callused hearts of the Koreans were not quick to surrender. But the love of the Japanese believers – unintimidated by decades of hatred – tore at the Koreans’ emotions: *At the cross, at the cross Where I first saw the light, And the burden of my heart rolled away.*

One Korean turned toward a Japanese brother. Then another. And then the floodgates holding back a wave of emotion let go. The Koreans met their new Japanese friends in the middle. They clung to each other and wept. Japanese tears of repentance and Korean tears of forgiveness intermingled to bathe the site of an old nightmare.

**Heaven had sent the gift of reconciliation to a little white church in Korea.**

In his book, Lee, the Last Years, Charles Flood reports that after the Civil War, Robert E. Lee visited a Kentucky lady who took him to the remains of a grand old tree in front of her house. There she bitterly cried that its limbs and trunk had been destroyed by federal artillery fire. She look to Lee for a word condemning the North or at last sympathizing with her loss. **After a brief silence, Lee said, “Cut it down, my dear Madam, and forget it.”** It is wise to graciously forgive the injustices of the past, rather than allowing anger to fester into bitterness that takes root and poisons the rest of your life.