

Sermon on the Mount
Lesson #11
“Kingdom Righteousness”
Is not vengeful or retaliatory Part V

Matthew 5:38-42

Scripture: Matthew 5:20 *“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

Introduction:

Late one summer evening in Broken Bow, Nebraska, a weary truck driver pulled his rig into an all-night truck stop. He was tired and hungry. The waitress had just served him when three tough looking, leather jacketed motorcyclist - of the Hell's Angels type - decided to give him a hard time. Not only did they verbally abuse him, one grabbed the hamburger off his plate, another took a handful of his French fries, and the third picked up his coffee and began to drink it.

How did this trucker respond? How would you respond? Well, this trucker did not respond as one might expect. Instead, he calmly rose, picked up his check, walked to the front of the room, put the check and his money on the cash register, and went out the door. The waitress followed him to put the money in the till and stood watching out the door as the big truck drove away into the night.

When she returned, one of the cyclists said to her, "Well, he's not much of a man, is he?"

She replied, "I don't know about that, but he sure isn't much of a truck driver. He just ran over three motorcycles on his way out of the parking lot."

Transitional Statement:

Church, Justice belongs to God. As Christians God calls us to suffer many things for the good of others. He calls us to sacrifice and even to the endure of hardship and abuse, that we might share Jesus with a world lost in the darkness of sin.

I. Jesus begins with bringing up the scales of justice under the Law of Moses

Matthew 5:38

38 " You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' "

A. Now let's look at this point in the Law of Moses

1. There are three main locations that talk about this verse in detail but let's start with Leviticus 24:19-20

19 'If a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: 20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him.

B. Thinking, around this verse, provides another faulty view of Pharisaical righteousness

1. The Pharisees rightfully understood that God is just and that His scales always have to be balanced.

a. Proverbs 16:11 says:

*11 A just balance and scales belong to the LORD;
All the weights of the bag are His concern.*

b. There are many other verses that point to the same thing and they ultimately spell out God's own justice

2. But the Pharisees thought it was not only their right, but their responsibility to exact God's balance with everyone around them on a daily basis.

a. In short Pharisaical righteousness demanded that if you accidentally run over my chicken in the drive way....I have to go over to your place and murder one of your chickens.

b. And as you might guess, they wanted this to apply to everyone except themselves.

C. So what is the eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth really all about?

1. This legislation was specifically for the judges of Israel.

a. You might recall that Moses was a judge for God...Ex chapter 18

1) Making judgments from the tent of meetings

b. Later at the advice of his father-in-law he added others to help him make judgments

1) These judges made determinations about who was right and who was wrong and even imposed penalties.

- b. The eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was a measure given for these judges to balance justice under the Old Covenant system.

2. Exodus 21:22-25 helps us see the connection more clearly

22 "If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide. 23 "But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

3. Deuteronomy 19:16-21

16 " If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, 17 then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days. 18 "The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely, 19 then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. 20 " The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you. 21 "Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

4. So judgment was not an individual policy in Israel

- a. It is in America...Our predominate thought is captured well on the bumper stickers that say: I don't get mad I get even.
- b. But Leviticus 19:18 directed God's people away from this type of thinking. It says:

18 ' You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD."

D. Now let's think about God's scales of balance under the Old Covenant system

1. On God's side of the scale

- a. Was His standard....The Law of Moses
- b. It demanded exactness....
- c. And it condemned the violator at the first infraction of the Law
- d. As Deut 19:21 shows....there is no pity connected with it.

2. On the other side was the people of Israel

- a. Even though they tried to stay balanced with God.

b. They always came up short.

1) Because the blood of bulls and goats didn't help....Heb 10:4

2) These guys would commit a sin and go offer a sacrifice and on the way home stumble and curse and they were right back to square one.

a. What a real.....Bummer!

3. The tragedy of this type of balance system is most clearly understood when you think yourself in God's balance scales. The Law of Moses being the standard on God's side and you on the other side.

a. With that in mind if you accidentally break your neighbors leg...your leg must be broken.

b. If you cause harm to someone else....the same harm will befall you.

c. If you, in an act of evil, maliciously do hurt someone, repentance is not an option....you must be hurt back with the same intent.

4. This is where while writing this sermon that I stopped and thanked God that I don't live under the Old Covenant system...Amen?

II. Now let's stop and think about balance with God under the New Covenant system

A. First, it is important to note that God still demands balance in His scales.

1. Some have thought that Jesus has mysteriously brought us to a time and place where, simple belief in God, or a proclamation of faith miraculously equals a balanced scale with God.

a. But this type of thinking is nothing more than an abuse of God grace see Romans 6:1

2. You see, God's standard (That is, God's side of the scales) really doesn't change under the New Covenant because He still expects holiness, righteousness, purity and even perfection.

C. The great change under the New Covenant comes on our side of God's balance scale

1. Under the Old Covenant the only thing we could have with us as we stood on the opposite scale from God's expectation was imperfect things like the blood of bulls and goats in a futile attempt to please God.

2. But then the Son of God showed up in the flesh

a. He died on the cross of Calvary

1) And according to Ephesians 1:7

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

- b. So through baptism we have the ability to be dipped in the blood of Jesus and when you stand in God's mighty balance dipped in the blood of Jesus you understand that Jesus Himself is our leveling agent with God.

1)1 John 1:7 puts it very nicely.

“... if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

- a. The verb tense here makes it a continual thing.

- 3. So as a result of the atoning sacrifice offered by the blood of Jesus the old attempt for balance with God was discarded and New, or we might say the intended covenant came into view, so that God's eternal plan of balance with Him might only be realized through His Son Jesus John 14:6

D. So as Christians we jump for joy as we find the fullness of God's grace and mercy through Jesus.

1. With Jesus the scales are fixed in our favor

- a. The only demand is humble, faithful obedience

- b. What an awesome privilege it is to walk in the blood of Jesus

2. Through Jesus we come to understand balance was never or will never be within our own ability.

III. So what does God expect from us in view of this wonderful gift of balance that we have in Jesus?

Matthew 5:39-41

39 "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. 41 "Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 " Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

- A. First, and most important, is that we as Christians learn to have the mindset of Christ who from the cross didn't call down judgments of exact fairness, but begged God for their forgiveness explaining, even defending that they didn't know what they were doing.

1. This action of heart, by our Lord and Savior instead of promoting hatred, bitterness and long lasting struggles.

- a. Lead to salvation of 3000 of those who hated Him on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2

B. Church God wants us to help others become balanced.

1. He wants us to try and help the sinner

- a. Not to condemn them

2. But be willing to become a suffering servant that we might show those who are lost the true balance of between God and man....Jesus the Christ.

C. You see unmerited forgiveness is the single strongest power that this world has ever seen.

Conclusion:

Have you like many others taken the seat of the master of the scales.

Maybe your like old King Belshazzar in Daniel 5:27 weighed and found lacking

Please don't let the world see you trying to balance justice...let them see God doing it.