

Introduction:

- So far in the passages we have covered from Mt. 5 we have looked at:
 - Living Righteous...Life Beyond Anger. Murder vs. Anger
 - Keeping the Command vs. Keeping the Heart - Adultery. Adultery vs. Lust
 - Divorce vs. God's original intention.
 - Oath vs. Integrity. Let your yes be yes and your no be no.
 - Second Mile Christians, those who go beyond the law.
 - In all these passages we finish with these truths: One, God is looking at the heart while man looks at the outside. Two, sin of anger and lust are devaluations of the worth of a person. The devaluing of something God has called precious. Three, **Here is where the value of human life begins – in the heart** – and when human life is devalued in any way it is an affront to the God who created that life. This is what the Pharisees were missing and this is what Jesus wanted the people to “get.”
- **For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.** Mt 5:20
 - Jesus then starts these five sayings, “*you have heard but I say*’ portions of scripture. By doing so, He is after the heart of the people and not just the behavior. He is after the people to find righteousness that is of the heart and not just of the behavior.
 - I believe Jesus is being intentional with his choice of laws to drive home the point...that a changed heart is way better than a changed behavior. Anger, Lust, divorce, integrity, going beyond the call of the law are heart issues.
 - Mt 5:43-48 Jesus issues a call to love our enemies.

I. The Call of the Law

- A. The law called us to “love your neighbor and hate your enemy”
 1. ***“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”*** (Leviticus 19:18, NLT)
- B. Why would you regard someone as an enemy?
 1. Well, they've hurt you. They've treated you unfairly. They've done you dirty. They've robbed you, cheated you, or said bad things about you. In short... there's usually a really 'good' reason why you should not like them.
 2. For whatever reason a person is just antagonistic towards you or you to them.
- C. Now we must face this fact: no where does scripture command us to hate our enemies.
 - a) If you narrowly define neighbor then it might be argued that we can hate our enemies. But Jesus defines it in the parable of the Good Samaritan.
 - b) We see David hating: Ps 139:21-22 says, ***“Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.”***
 - c) So, there are people who feel justified in hating their enemies; in refusing to forgive. Why, because:
 - (1) It shows they have “standards”

- (2) It shows they "respect" themselves
- (3) It shows they refuse to accept "bad behavior"
- (4) They believe that hating their enemies makes them righteous, makes them honorable, and even makes them Godlike. And that was the mindset of the religious community in the days of Jesus. Love your neighbors and hate your enemies (they taught) and you'll be like God. Then along comes Jesus and He says – "Wait A Minute... that's not true." Jesus said: "I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"

II. The Call of Jesus

- A. *"Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?"* Jesus replied, *"'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.'" (Matthew 22:36-40, NLT)*
- B. Is a call to love! Be like your heavenly Father. *"And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength."* (Deuteronomy 6:5, NLT) Jesus said in Mt 22:40, this is the great and first commandment and all the law and prophets hang on this one.
- C. What is the point Jesus is making?
 - 1. Love is more than sentimental feelings. To many people, love is a sentimental feeling.
 - 2. What Jesus is speaking about is: *"Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions."* (1 John 3:18, NLT) This is a love that goes beyond sentimental feelings. It means to love your enemy when he has need. "Your feelings towards him are not the important thing." Love is! FF Bruce p.73 The Hard Sayings of Jesus.
 - 3. But if you want to have more feelings towards your enemy Jesus helps us by instructing us to pray for those who persecute us. *"Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you."* (Luke 6:28, NLT) It doesn't have to make sense to us...it is what Jesus desires that should be good enough.
 - 4. The best way to destroy an enemy is to turn him into a friend. Ie. Kevin Costner movie Robin Hood. He saves a muslim's life and the muslim is indebted to him to save his life too. Ie. Kelly's cousin Lucky hated preachers. I did not hate him back. I actually tried to be his friend. Friendship did not happen until I beat him at horseshoes. Then he wanted the 'preacher' on his team.
 - 5. Paul sums up Jesus teaching with this: *"Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good."* (Romans 12:21, NLT) *"If your enemies are hungry, give them food to eat. If they are thirsty, give them water to drink. You will heap burning coals of shame on their heads, and the Lord will reward you."* (Proverbs 25:21-22, NLT)
 - 6. When you go beyond the law you are now starting to act like your Father in heaven.
 - a) For He gives sunlight and rain to both the good and the evil.
 - b) Notice his use of questions again: vs 47 *If you are only good to friends...then how are you different?* The goal, righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees.

- c) If you love only your friends and those who do good to you then you are no different than the pagans. But if you love beyond your circle of friends to those who do not like you then you are acting like your heavenly Father.

III. Perfect!

- A. Jesus closes the section with the climax to the five antitheses: "*But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.*" (Matthew 5:48, NLT)
1. How could Jesus tell me to be "perfect"? I have always struggled with that!
 2. How can I be "perfect", like God is "perfect"? That's IMPOSSIBLE! There's no way I can ever match up to God's "perfection".
 - a) The CONFUSION lies in our understanding of the English word "perfect". We think of "perfect" as 'sinless perfection'. i.e., being without any sin. For us, until we get to Heaven, that's impossible.
 - b) The Greek word for "perfect" is 'teleios'. It doesn't mean 'sinless perfection'. However, there is a Greek word that does mean "sinless perfection" ... the word 'anamartetos'. Jesus used it in John 8:7 - "So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."
 - c) It is a different word in the Greek, than "perfect", 'teleios'. What does 'teleios', "perfect" mean? It means: 'full-grown, mature, complete, in good working order, sound, fully instructed, to reach your goal'.
- B. What is the theme here? "love". 5:48 is telling us that God loves with a "perfect" love. AND ... we are to "love" the same way He "loves".
1. We are to be 'complete' in our "love" for others, like God is.
 2. We are to be 'fully mature' in our "love", like God is.
 3. We are to be 'in good working order' when it comes to "love", like God is.
 4. This verse (5:48) is not telling us that we could ever become "sinless", like God is. But ... we are to "love" like God "loves" ... with a "perfect, mature, complete, full-grown, sound" love for others ... even our enemies.
 5. God loves His enemies. At one time, we ALL were His enemies. "*For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son.*" (Romans 5:10, NLT) If God didn't love His enemies, then no one would be saved.
- C. This verse, vs 48, brings us back to verse 20. *Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees you will never enter the Kingdom.*

Conclusion:

- Jesus escalates things in Mt 5:20-48
 - murder and adultery to anger and lust
 - divorce and oaths to marital compassion and simple truthfulness
 - revenge and hatred of enemies to the requirements of meekness and love even for enemies.
- Get the heart of your Father not the Pharisees.