

*"Defending heaven's values in a fallen world"*

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Text: Mt 5.21-48

Subject: Christian ethics

Date: March 29, 1995

**Introduction:**

Did you know that in one single conversation, Jesus addressed six of the greatest problems in modern-day society? But he was no political activist. He proposed no social theories. Instead, he offered spiritual solutions to society's problems. He taught that *society can make substantial improvement only when heaven's values are defended*. Matthew 5.21-48 (a portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount) discusses six of heaven's values. These values are the subject of this sermon.

**Body:**

I. Human life (vv 21-26)

- 21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:
- 22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.
- 23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;
- 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.
- 25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver

thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

A. Old Testament stipulation (Ex 20.13; Deut 5.17)

13 Thou shalt not kill.

17 Thou shalt not kill.

B. New Testament expansion (James 3.8-9)

8 But the tongue can no man tame; [it is] an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

C. Analysis

The Law taught that murder was illegal. Jesus expanded on this teaching by forbidding verbal abuse and unjustified anger. The value that was at stake was human life. The Pharisees understood that the Law protected one's physical life; this was good. But they failed to realize that a person's emotional and spiritual wellbeing were deserving of just as much protection. God is pro-life. *When we defend heaven's values, we defend human life--in all its facets.*

D. Modern illustration

In the United States, in 1992, there were some 900,000+ substantiated cases of child abuse. (Substantiated cases are those in which sufficient evidence exists to conclude under state law that maltreatment occurred, or that the child is at risk of maltreatment.) 2.85 million children were the subject of a reported abuse.

**Source:** *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1994,*

114th ed. Lanham, Md.: Bernan Press, 1994, p  
213-14.

## II. Sexual intimacy (vv 27-30)

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, 'That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast [it] from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not [that] thy whole body should be cast into hell.

30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast [it] from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not [that] thy whole body should be cast into hell.

### A. Old Testament stipulation (Ex 20.14; Deut 5.18)

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

18 Neither shalt thou commit adultery.

### B. New Testament expansion (Phlp 4.8; 2 Tim 2.22)

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things.

22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

### C. Analysis

The Pharisees properly understood the Law to prohibit sexual activity outside of marriage. However, they failed to see that impurity in one's thought life was just as damaging to marital intimacy as was a betrayal of vows. God desires us

to be sexually satisfied--within marriage. *When we defend heaven's values, we defend sexual intimacy at all costs.*

D. Modern illustration

Recent studies indicate that 56% of women and 73% of men have had intercourse before their 18th birthday.

**Source:** *Sex and America's teenagers.* New York: Alan Guttmacher Institute, c1994, p. 20.

III. Family unity (vv 31-32)

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

A. Old Testament stipulation (Deut 24.1-2)

1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give [it] in her hand, and send her out of his house.

2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's [wife].

B. New Testament expansion (Mt 19.4-9)

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made [them] at the beginning made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

- 7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?
- 8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.
- 9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except [it be] for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

C. Analysis

Because of the stubbornness of the Israelites' hearts, allowance was made in the Law for divorce. However, Jesus made it clear that from the beginning it was not so (Mt 19.8). The only scriptural grounds for divorce is violation of marriage vows. God is pro-family. Therefore, *when we defend heaven's values, we defend the marriage relationship against any divisive influence.*

D. Modern illustration

In 1988, there was a total of 2,396,000 marriages and 1,167,000 divorces or annulments nationwide. The dissolution rate was 48.7%. In 1970, the figures were: 2,159,000 marriages, 708,000 divorces, 32.8% rate.

**Source:** *Statistical abstract of the United States 1994*, 114th ed. Lanham, Md.: Bernan Press, 1994, p. 102.

IV. Trustworthy speech (vv 33-37)

- 33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:
- 34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for

it is God's throne:

- 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.
- 36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
- 37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.
- A. Old Testament stipulation (Lev 19.12; Num 30.2;

Deut 23.23)

12 And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I [am] the LORD.

2 If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

23 That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; [even] a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.

- B. New Testament expansion (Jas 5.12)

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and [your] nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

- C. Analysis

The Law commanded that men keep the vows that they made in God's name. However, knowing that men were prone to make vows they could not or would not keep, thus dishonoring God, Jesus taught that one should refrain from oaths altogether. Our speech should be credible and trustworthy of itself. We need not invoke something higher by which to swear. God wants us to stick by our word. Thus, *when we defend heaven's values, we uphold our word in*

*such a way as to make it trustworthy.*

D. Modern illustration

A person's word no longer seems to express a commitment. No longer can a handshake settle a business deal. No longer can a person's word be trusted. Our society is suffering from a breach of credibility.

V. Unselfish society (vv 38-42)

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye,  
and a tooth for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever  
shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other  
also.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away  
thy coat, let him have [thy] cloke also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with  
him twain.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would  
borrow of thee turn not thou away.

A. Old Testament stipulation (Ex 21.24-25; Lev 24.20;  
Deut 19.21)

24 Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for  
foot,

25 Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for  
stripe.

20 Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he  
hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done  
to him [again].

21 And thine eye shall not pity; [but] life [shall go] for  
life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot  
for foot.

B. New Testament expansion (Rom 12.17-19)

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things  
honest in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live

peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance [is] mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

C. Analysis

The Law authorized exact retribution for injury and death. However, Jesus taught that we are not to be so selfish that we pursue our own rights every time we are slighted. On the contrary, we are to allow the Lord to settle these accounts. God is in favor of harmonious society; he opposes retaliation. *When we defend heaven's values, we defend unselfish interpersonal relations.*

D. Modern illustration

America's judicial system is witness to the increased incidence of crime. It is also witness to the selfish, retaliatory nature of its people. Each year there are over 200,000 non-criminal cases in the nation's district courts. People are fighting for their rights, and many times this amounts to nothing more than greed and selfishness.

VI. Loving society (vv 43-48)

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

- 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more [than

others]? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

A. Old Testament stipulation (Lev 19.18; Deut 23.6)

18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I [am] the LORD.

6 Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.

B. New Testament expansion (Rom 12.14, 20-21; Gal 6.10)

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all [men], especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

C. Analysis

The Pharisees thought that they were responsible to love only those who were friendly to them. But Jesus taught that they should love their enemies, and bless those that cursed them. God desires for us to go out of our way to love others--regardless of their attitude toward us. *When we defend heaven's values, we defend sacrificial love relationships.*

D. Modern illustration

Racial tension, far from being overcome, is only one witness of the lack of love in American society. Wars seem to be fought over almost every conceivable difference: gender, religion, ethnic background, social class, etc.

**Conclusion:**

The problems of any given society stem from a lack of attention to God's principles for harmonious living. America is ignoring the six values that Jesus emphasized in this part of the Sermon on the Mount. We can make a difference, from this point forward, by defending these values in our own lives, in the lives of our families, and within the circles of influence God has opened to us.