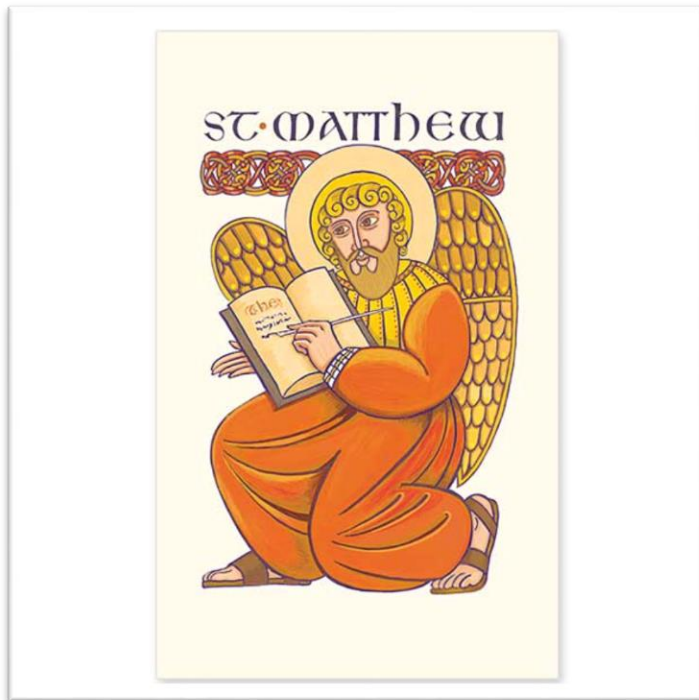


The Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 5 part 2



6 Antitheses

Last week - The Beatitudes



Psalm 1:1-2

Blessed is the man who does not walk
in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the way of sinners,
nor sit in company with scoffers.
Rather, the law of the LORD is his joy;
and on his law he meditates day and night.

Also last week....

- ▶ **We are called to be a light to the world and not place our light under a bushel basket.**

Isaiah 49:6

“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.....



Jesus begins his teaching on the Law with an explanation of his intent.



- ▶ Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17-18)
- ▶ Jesus is affirming the teachings of the Torah, not replacing them or denying them. His teachings challenge his listeners to a righteousness that is *greater* than that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

What does it mean to “fulfill the Law”?

- ▶ To fulfill the Law means to bring it to its perfection or completion. Jesus himself is the completion or fulfillment of the Law. Jesus goes on to affirm that the Law itself is eternal. It will not pass away until it has been *fulfilled* by the Messianic work of Jesus.
- ▶ He also recognizes that there are great commandments and minor commands among the 613 Laws of Moses.



The promise of heaven and a familiar curse or warning?

- ▶ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the *least of these* commandments and **teaches others** to do so **will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.**
- ▶ But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments **will be called greatest** in the kingdom of heaven. I tell you, unless your **righteousness** surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19-20)

The curse or warning in Matt 18 and Luke 17-

- ▶ If anyone causes one of these little ones-- those who believe in me--to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. (Mat 18:6)
- ▶ What is meant by **righteousness** of scribes and Pharisees?
- ▶ Righteousness refers to God's justice and to human behavior and relationships. The righteous are those who show fidelity to God's commands.



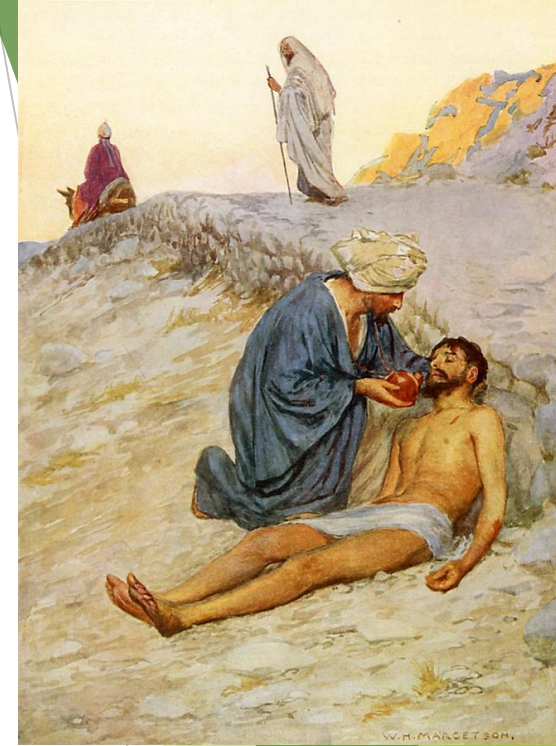
Antithesis #1

On Murder- 5:21-26

- ▶ “You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘**You shall not kill;** and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.’ **22 But I say to you,** whoever is **angry** with his brother will be liable to judgement, and whoever says to his brother, ‘**Raqa,**’ will be answerable to the **Sanhedrin,** and whoever says, ‘**You fool,**’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna. **23** Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, **24** leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **25** Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. **26** Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

On Murder and Anger

- ▶ You shall not murder- quoted from the TEN COMMANDMENTS, EXODUS 21:12.
- ▶ *LIABLE TO JUDGEMENT* -is also translated as *guilty* and subject to punishment
- ▶ These verses suggest that both our actions and intentions will be judged.
- ▶ What else do these verses say about the Great Commandments to love God and love your neighbor (or brother)?
- ▶ As in the story of the Good Samaritan, love of neighbor is a part of or a reflection of our love of God. First make things right with your brother, then make your offerings at the altar.
- ▶ “Your brother” is a term used for “fellow Israelite”.



On Murder and Anger

- ▶ Other terms in verses 21-26:
- ▶ **whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa-** this is an Aramaic term that is abusive.
- ▶ **Sanhedrin** – the highest council/court of the ancient Jews, consisting of 71 members, and exercising authority from about the 2nd century B.C.
- ▶ **whoever says, 'You fool,'**- this is also derogatory, it suggests a judgement and a public slander. It is also suggests that a person has rebelled against God or would rebel against God, (blasphemy).
- ▶ **Gehenna-** "the valley of the sons of Hinnom", a deep, narrow glen to the south of Jerusalem, where the idolatrous Jews offered their children in sacrifice to Molech (2 Chronicles 28:3 ; 33:6 ; Jeremiah 7:31 ; 19:2-6). Later became a garbage dump. The fires burn constantly and there is perpetual stench.

Lesson Learned

Murder/anger

- ▶ Our actions and intentions *are both* important.
- ▶ It is as or more important to reconcile our differences *before* we offer our gifts to God. Love of God and love of neighbor are two sides of the same command.
- ▶ Even words of anger are contemptable and subject to judgement.



Mathew 22:36-37

- ▶ ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”
- ▶ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹
- ▶ ***And the second is like it:***
- ▶ ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Antithesis 2

The Law and Adultery- Mat 5:27-30

- ▶ You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ **28 But I say to you**, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. **29** If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. **30** And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

Teaching on adultery and lust-

The Ten Commandments

- ▶ **The dictionary defines “adultery” as “voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not his or her spouse.” The Bible would concur with this definition.**
- ▶ **Leviticus 18:20, God told Moses, “Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her,”**
- ▶ **In Deuteronomy 22:22 , we find a similar statement: “If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die.”**

Teaching on adultery and lust



- ▶ **“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor’s house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”
Deuteronomy 5:21 and Exod. 20:17**
- ▶ **In Buddhism it is taught that desire or covetousness is the source of all suffering.**

The lustful gaze or covetousness is as guilty an act as the act of adultery. Why?

- ▶ **What is at the root of the impulse?**
- ▶ **It is a failure to love both self and others.**
- ▶ **Jesus does not discuss the prescribed punishment for adultery or lusting after another.**
- ▶ **The comparison of murder to anger with adultery to lust is similar. Both are reflections of the state of one's heart.**
- ▶ **We are called to a higher standard.**

The Question for today.

Was Jesus figurative or literal here?

- ▶ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna. Matt 5:29-30



Some Clues from Scripture

- ▶ **Deuteronomy 23:1 forbids anyone who was permanently damaged while working “in the stones” or anyone who was castrated, from entering the Temple.**
- ▶ **There are also prohibitions against tattooing or maiming or cutting oneself in the Torah: “You shall not make gashes in your flesh for the dead, or incise any marks on yourselves: I am the Lord” Leviticus 19:28**
- ▶ **Consider the words in the Act of Contrition when we pray to avoid the “near occasions of sin”.**

Antithesis #3

The Law and Marriage- Matt 5:31-32

- ▶ “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.’ **32** But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. (NAB)

Other translations of the exception clause

- ▶ The Anchor Bible - *except in the case of adultery*
- ▶ The Jerome Bible - *except in the case of unchastity*
- ▶ NRSB- *except in the case of unchastity*
- ▶ NAB - *Unless the marriage was unlawful*
- ▶ ESV- *except on the ground of sexual immorality*

- ▶ **The Gospel of Luke leaves out the exception: Luke 16:18** Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Divorce and marriage in the first century

- ▶ Only a man could enact a divorce, but this did not mean that women could not get a divorce. If they could show a court of rabbis that they had sufficient grounds for a divorce, the court could persuade her husband to divorce her.
- ▶ A man had to enter into divorce voluntarily, but a woman could be divorced against her will.

Status of women in first century Palestine

- ▶ In the Jewish tradition, a woman was regarded more as a chattel than as a person.
- ▶ Respectable women did not appear in public alone.
- ▶ A woman lived with her family until the end of her betrothal when she moved in with her husband's family.
- ▶ First Century Palestinian Jewish women could not inherit. They were first dependent on their father, then their husband and finally on their son for support. A woman who did not have a son might be reduced to poverty and begging for alms in her old age. The shame of divorce could also reduce a woman to such a condition.
- ▶ **John 19:26** When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son,"

Pope Francis weighs in on modern marriage



- ▶ Pope Francis has said that in some cases “separation is inevitable” and “can even become morally necessary” at times.
- ▶ The pontiff was clear in specifying the extreme cases in which he saw family breakdown as justifiable: “when it comes to saving the weaker spouse, or young children, from more serious injuries caused by intimidation and violence, by humiliation and exploitation, by lack of involvement and indifference.”
- ▶ He also suggested the possibility of opening Communion to divorced Catholics who have remarried outside the church, the issue will likely be the subject of further heated debate.

Antithesis #4

The Law- Oaths Matt 5:33-37

- ▶ Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow.’ **34 But I say to you, do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. 37 Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’ Anything more is from the evil one.**

Vows in the OT

- ▶ Numbers 30:1-2 Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: “This is what the LORD commands: ² When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.
- ▶ Ex 20:7 You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
- ▶ Lev 19:12 'Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

Let your “yes” mean “yes” and your “no” mean “no”.

“The prohibition of perjury is intended to secure truthfulness where a solemn affirmation or denial is demanded.

In the new ethics of Jesus, truthfulness would be secured, not by an oath, but by the *inner integrity* of the person.”

Jerome Biblical Commentary

- ▶ Integrity: when a persons beliefs and faith are in agreement with their actions and words.



Antithesis #5

The Law - Retaliation Matt 5:38-42

- ▶ The three examples in these verses form a trilogy. These are three examples of oppression.
- ▶ Israel is an occupied nation in the first century. Rome and Rome's agents have the power over the people of Israel.
- ▶ Slavery is legal and the slave's master has power over the slave.
- ▶ The wealthy might oppress the poor.
- ▶ But Jesus discourages retaliation, retaliation against Rome could be a death sentence. He encourages non-violent resistance.

Matthew 5:38-42

scenario # 1 Turn the other cheek

- ▶ You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’³⁹ **But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil.** When someone strikes you on [your] right cheek, turn the other one to him as well.

Lev 24: 19-20 Anyone who inflicts a permanent injury on his or her neighbor shall receive the same in return:**20** fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The same injury that one gives another shall be inflicted in return.

This Law was intended *to limit* the amount of retaliation.

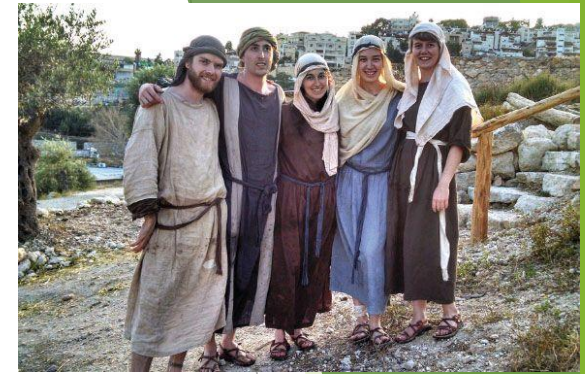
Turn the other cheek

- ▶ This is an example of a person of authority or power abusing another. A slap to the RIGHT cheek would be a back slap, used to demean another. Once the cheek is turned the same action is difficult. Rather than a back-handed slap a forward hit would ensue to the left cheek. Such an action in the first century is not demeaning, it suggests the two persons are of equal status.



Matthew 5:40

Scenario #2

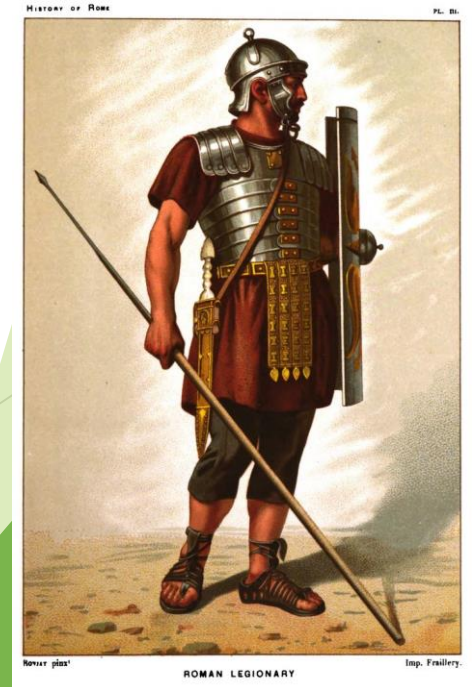


- ▶ If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well.
- ▶ Palestinian peasants wore two garments one underneath the other. If they were so poor that the only way to pay back a debt was to give the “shirt off his back” this is oppression of the rich over the poor. Jesus suggests giving the loaner your underwear as well! This shames the lender publicly.
- ▶ Ex. 22: 25-26 If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you shall return it to him before sunset; 26 for this is his only covering; it is the cloak for his body. What will he sleep in? If he cries out to me, I will listen; for I am compassionate

Matthew 5:41-42

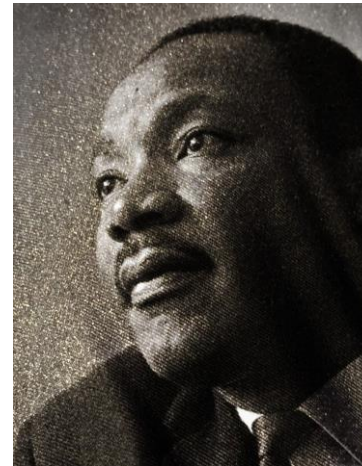
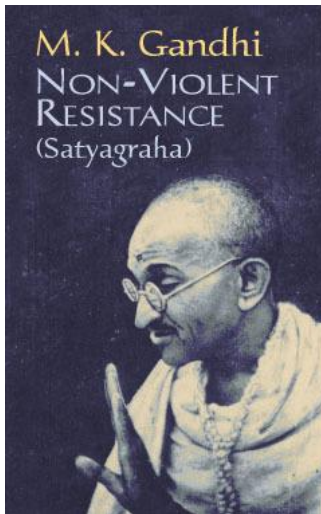
Scenario #3 Walk the extra mile

- ▶ Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.
- ▶ This third example refers to the legal right of Roman soldiers to press civilians into service. Simon of Cyrene is pressed into service to carry the cross for Jesus. Instead of resisting Jesus suggests doubling the service. It was only legal to force service for 1 mile. There were punishments for a second mile.



Lessons learned for these examples?

- ▶ **Non-violent resistance points out oppression or social injustice without putting yourself in danger. Both Gandhi and Martin Luther King used the example of Jesus and non-violent resistance to change society and work for justice for the oppressed.**



Antithesis #6

The Law-Enemies

Matt 5:43-48

- ▶ You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ **44** *But I say to you*, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, **45** that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. **46** For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? **47** And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? **48** So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Lessons Learned

- ▶ This last antithesis focuses on the meaning of neighbor and calls on us to fulfill the command to love God and neighbor. God cares for all creatures and all of creation. We must step outside of the box and care for even those persons who can not benefit us or who love us already.

- ▶ Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.



PRAYER FOR CHARITY IN TRUTH

Father, your truth is made known in your Word.
Guide us to seek the truth of the human person.
Teach us the way to love because you are Love.
Jesus, you embody Love and Truth.
Help us to recognize your face in the poor.
Enable us to live out our vocation to bring love
and justice to your people.
Holy Spirit, you inspire us to transform our world.
Empower us to seek the common good for all
persons.
Give us a spirit of solidarity and make us one
human family.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

This prayer is based on Pope Benedict XVI's 2009
encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate (Charity in Truth)*