

Reflecting the Beauty of Our King

Matthew 5:38-48

I. Civil law and personal relationships are not the same.

- A. The Mosaic Law had both civil and personal applications.
 - 1. "An eye for an eye" was civil law (Exodus 21:22-25).
 - (a) The civil law seeks justice.
 - (b) The loss to the defendant is equivalent to the loss he caused.
 - (c) Anything less would be an injustice (a small fine for murder).
 - (d) So would anything more (a hand cut off for stealing a loaf of bread).
- B. Jesus is responding to teaching that applied that standard in personal relationships.
 - 1. "An eye for an eye" would then have everyone seeking revenge.
 - (a) But God says, "Vengeance is mine" and "I will repay".
 - (b) So we are not to be seeking payback.
 - 2. Jesus says, "Do not resist an evil person."
 - (a) He is acknowledging that that person is doing wrong to you.
 - (b) Even so, he says, my followers are to respond with love
 - 3. He is teaching the values and identity of his followers.
- C. The highest value is love.
 - 1. Jesus is our model.
 - (a) We are to be like him, even when we are wronged.
 - (b) Our identity is that we are the children of God, in Christ.
 - 2. This is very difficult. Our fallen nature wants to hurt back.
 - (a) Jesus says we are to love even those who persecute us.
 - 3. When we strike back, we are forgetting who we are.
 - (a) We are forgetting the values of God's kingdom.
 - 4. Sometimes we need to remind each other.
 - (a) "I think you've forgotten who we are."
 - (b) "This is not Jesus' way."

II. Holy war and personal relationships are not the same.

- A. People often don't understand the context of the Old Testament.
 - 1. There is a parallel between physical things in OT and spiritual realities in the NT.
 - 2. In the OT, the Kingdom of God is the land of Israel.
 - (a) In NT, the Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom.
 - 3. God told Israel to go to war against the people in the promised land.
 - (a) That is holy war, God using Israel as an instrument of judgment. So, their battle was against people.

- 4. But our battle is spiritual, "not against flesh and blood".
 - (a) Our battle is against "spiritual forces of evil" (demons).
- 5. Israel's holy war is a picture of God's judgment.
 - (a) To us, it looks brutal.
 - (b) But it is just. God's justice is perfect justice.
- B. But Jesus is saying that there is no longer holy war against people.
 - 1. Spiritual warfare is not against flesh and blood.
 - 2. Once again, he says, love is the way of his kingdom.
 - (a) We are to love even our enemies.
 - (b) We are to love those who persecute us.
 - (c) We are to love those who bully us and treat us badly.
 - 3. So, we are to love our enemies, and pray for our persecutors.
 - (a) It is because we are called to be like our God (Matt.5:45).
- C. Jesus is teaching group identity and values.
 - 1. He is saying that we are called to love, even those who don't agree with us or who oppose us in some way.
 - 2. Current ethic of "tolerance" can lead to a denial of truth.
 - (a) We are to love people, even when we don't agree with lifestyle choices, still value them as made in his image.
 - 3. Current politics leads some people toward hatred.
 - (a) We are to love, even those we strongly disagree with.

III. The Gospel is our motivation to love our enemies.

- A. Jesus shows us what it means to love our enemies.
 - 1. "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do."
 - (a) He is praying as he receives the ultimate persecution.
 - 2. He is not looking for payback.
 - 3. As human beings, we were enemies of God.
 - (a) The wages of our sin was death.
 - (b) That is the justice we deserved (an eye for an eye).
 - (c) Yet he gave himself for us while we were still enemies.
 - 4. It seems like God is expecting a lot, that we would love our enemies.
 - (a) But that is what God did for us.
 - 5. We have all heard, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."
 - (a) The Gospel says, "Do unto others what God has done for you."
 - (b) Forgive as you have been forgiven. Extend grace.
 - 6. "Then you will be called sons (children) of your Father."
 - (a) We will be like him.
 - (b) Reflecting identity, his children, recreated to be like him.
 - (c) Living out his values.
 - (d) Representing Jesus by reflecting the beauty of our King.
 - (e) Expressing gratitude to him by loving even our enemies.