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Matthew 5:23-26 Reconciled

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Children are a great source of joy and a great source of humor. Probably the most pristine humor comes associated with children. Our oldest grandson, Conner, will be a year old in October. And I was, I get to babysit him quite a bit, and I am really thrilled to do that. It's a sacrifice I am willing to make. And you learn their personalities. And he has a little game he likes to play with me. We have an old, used telephone. And he likes to take that phone and hand it to me. So I get the phone. It's one of those phones that have the receiver/speaker thing with the cord. But I took the cord away because it ends up getting wrapped around him sometimes. So all we have is the handle and the telephone part.

He likes to hear it clank down on there and he likes to pick it up and hand it to me. And I say the same thing every time. "Hello, this is Connor's grandfather. Yes, he is a good boy. Okay, goodbye!" And I hang it up. And he'll hand it back to me, and he'll play that game forever. Well, we were doing that the other morning, he'd hand it to me, "Hello, this is Conner's grandfather. Yes, he is a good body. Aha, okay, goodbye!" Click! And he'd hand it to me again. Well we were doing that all morning for awhile, and then he got on to something else. He was doing something else, and I don't remember exactly what it was, but I know I tried to enter into it, and he didn't want me to enter into it. And it seemed like I was irritating him a little bit, and he just reached over and grabbed that phone and hand it to me... I laughed 'till I cried. It was so funny.

Children, they say and do the funniest things, and they are so pure in the way they do it. Even this morning during the children's story after Craig collected all of the items that he had that needed a battery, a little boy grabbed the computer and the batteries and started to head down the aisle. He'd found what he wanted. I remember Karen doing a children's story a couple of months ago, and she had a puppet with her. And she had a puppet do a talk and stuff. And at the end of it she had a puppet sing. And afterwards, there was a four year old girl that came out after church and I said to her: "Did you like that puppet?" She said, "Aha." And I said, "Now that puppet could really sing, couldn't it?" And she said, "Yeah, but that lady was helping it."

Well I was listening to a radio show a number of years ago. And the topic was "Children and Humor." And people would call in and share stories. And so this lady called in and she said she was watching her three year old grandson. And that kid was into everything. That day he had taken her to her last nerve, she said. She couldn't take anymore of him. So she suggested that he go outside in the backyard and play. But she made it crystal clear. "When you go out there, stay out of the mud puddle that is there. Don't go in the mud puddle." And with great detail she described what would happen to him if he got in that mud puddle. While she is washing the dishes, and she looks out the window that goes into the backyard, and there he is. And you know where he is; he is a three year old boy. He has plopped right down in that mud puddle, and he is having the time of his life.

Well these are her words. She said she threw that door open, it slammed behind her. And she started heading for him. She said, "Like a freight train, choo, choo, choo..." Well just as she got

there ready to grab him, and jerk him out of that mud, he looked up at her and smiled and he said: "Hello Darling!" So she confessed to all that were listening, "I couldn't do a thing. I started to laugh, I wanted to hug him; there was peace, there was harmony, there was reconciliation." And boy, I'll tell you. Hey, any men that are here, if you are married; we ought to try that sometimes. "Hello Darling."

Well reconciliation, peace, harmony, such a beautiful concept. And Jesus talks about it and I'd like to study it with you today in Matthew chapter 5. Please turn there. In Matthew chapter 5 our passage is four verses today, verses 23-26. We are continuing our series of Jesus' teachings on the mount, His Sermon on the Mount. In verse 23 we read: "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison."

"Assuredly I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny." Two illustrations Jesus gives. He is given them right on the heels of talking about the sixth commandment, "You shall not murder." And for us to understand verses 23-26, we need to read verses 21 and 22, and have a short review of what we studied last week. Verse 21: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder...'" Murder according to this passage and according to the sixth commandment is premeditated deliberate killing. It goes on to say, "...and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment." That's what you've heard He said. "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."

Last week we learned that in the Greek there are two words that describe "angry." One word describes a quick, quick anger that comes on hot and it leaves quickly. It's like lightning, something very combustible like dried straw. Poof, gone! But there is another anger that is habitual and entrenched, long-living, it's nursed to keep warm, it's bruited upon, individual won't let it die, and it evolves into bitterness and hatred. That's the anger that is described here. "You are in danger of the judgment if you have that" Jesus says. "And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!...' and we learned that 'Raca' was a Greek word with no English words to translate it into to, that's why it's there, 'Raca.' And it's more of an attitude; it's more of a tone of voice. It's a tone of voice of contempt. Jesus says, "...you shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'you fool' shall be in danger of hell fire."

Well we learned that that's talking about a malicious gossip that's attacking the moral character of another person. So Jesus says, "You've heard you shall not murder," and then He begins to apply what it actually means in the spirit of the law vs. the letter of the law. And then He uses these two examples. He says, there is a man who goes to church and he is there to give a gift at the altar. He is going to give this gift to God. And while he is there he remembers that a brother has an offense against him. A brother has something against him. Jesus says, "Leave the gift, go

to the brother, reconcile yourself, and then when that's done you can come back and continue with your worship. You can continue with your gift to God."

He gives another illustration, not a brother but an adversary, somebody that is taking an individual to court. Jesus says, "Find them along the way, quickly find them along the way, settle this thing out of court before it ever gets to court or he'll take it to the judge. And the judge will hand you over to the officer, and the officer will put you in jail, and you will stay there." And it means in the Greek, 'till the very last drop.' You will stay there till the end, you will pay for it. So what does it mean? What does it mean when your brother has something against you? Well, some questions come up in our mind when you read a passage like this, for all of us have experienced somebody being angry with us. Somebody being upset with us, somebody even possibly maligning us.

Somebody is saying things about us, somebody claiming we have abridged them in some way and they are telling the story about. What does it mean a brother with something against you? What if it's not a righteous thing? What if it's a made-up lie? What do you do in that situation? What do you do if you're in a management in a business, and the higher-ups have said, "We are changing our policy, and here's how the employees are going to be related to in this particular area." And it's your job to relate it to them, and you have thirty or forty people that you have to explain it to and they are upset. Are you going to go speak to every one of them? What if you are a leader in an organization, and it's clear in your mind and it's clear in a leadership's mind, other leaders that we have to go a particular direction but people rise-up in anger. Are you going to seek out every single one of them and try to make it right?

Where are the boundaries to this? What is the practicality of it? Because probably, on any given Sabbath as we sit in church, and we contemplate God and His goodness, a thought will run through our mind as we see either somebody in church or somebody reminds us of somebody, and we think, "Oh man, they are upset with me." So does that mean that half of us every week need to sit-down sing a song or two, and then go "oops, got to go," and head out and try to be reconciled with somebody who is upset with us? What is the nature of what Jesus is teaching? Does this apply to all situations and all times? Let me give you a Bible lesson today about reading the Bible. Please turn to Proverbs chapter 26. In chapter 26 we are going to read verse 4. Here, very clear, concise direction is given.

It says, "Do not answer a fool according to his folly lest you also be like him." Now that's essentially saying if somebody is being loud and obnoxious, don't respond in-kind or you are going to be like him. If they are a fool in that way, don't go down to their level to meet them. Now, that's pretty clear. Look at verse 5, same chapter. "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes." Well this is the exact opposite. Which one of these texts is true? Which one of these texts are we to follow? Which one are we to say, "Well, you know, that one works and the other one doesn't." Remember that the Bible, 66 different books, in one binding. The Bible is written for all people, all times, all places, all situations. And we are not all the same. Our situations are not all the same. Our places are not all the same. Circumstances are different.

It's like an illustration of a man walking down the street and he hears through an open window of a house, the father is saying to the son: "You are always inside with your nose in the book. Get outside. You need some fresh air, you need some exercise. Get outside!" Six months later, same man, walks by and hears the same father talking. He says, "You are never inside, you are always outside. You need to stay inside; you need to read a book." Well when you hear that, first thing comes to mind is that father can't be pleased. But the reality is, it's the same father but there are two sons and they are different. One needs to get outside and get exercise, the other one needs to come in and read a book. Same father, same book, same principle in the Word of God – this Book tells somebody to stand up and fight, it tells another person to sit down and be quiet.

God has principles in this book and we are to apply those principles to the situations. But we are supposed to be humble before Him asking what does apply? It's easy to take the teachings of the Word of God literally, and check thinking at the door. "That's what it says, that's what I am going to do." But God wants us to think. He created us with the capacity to think. He wants us to reason. He enjoys it. He invites us to reason with Him. Probably here in Proverbs where it says, "Don't answer to a fool according to his own folly lest you also be like him," "Answer a fool according to his folly lest he be wise in his own eyes," probably what it means is when you are dealing with a fool, you are going to lose no matter what you do. That's probably what it means. But you got to do something, so you do the best that you can.

So when we look at Matthew 5 and it says, you are sitting at church and you are looking at somebody, "Do I have to leave church, is Jesus speaking literally, is He talking about a concept, is He talking about a principle? Is he talking about an attitude? Is he demonstrating a spirit that He wants people to have?" Let's look at Luke chapter 12 because Jesus, the Prince of Peace, says some pretty startling things. Do you think it's possible that if you are honest and humble that you can go to people and be reconciled when they have something against you? Do you think it's possible? Yes, it's possible but it's not always going to happen. In fact, Jesus said, in verse 49, chapter 12 of Luke, "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!"

"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided; three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." Does that sound like everybody will be reconciled? All you have to do is get up from church, go, make it right with people and everything will be okay. Jesus is saying that's not going to be the way it is. When it comes to the spiritual journey we are on, if you commit yourself to God and are walking with God, you will have people against you.

Now I want to ask you a question. Did Jesus have people that were His enemies? Did Jesus have people who could say, "He offends me?" "My brother has offended me by what he said." Yes,

He does! First of all let me show you that and then I'll make an application. Look at Mark chapter 3 verse 6, it says: "Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him." So you have the Pharisees plotting with the Herodians and they are enemies. But they are together, plotting against Jesus, trying to destroy Him. Now I ask you a question. Show me a story in the Bible; show me any reference to Jesus going out of His way to meet with the Pharisees and the Herodians to try to win them back? You will not find it! Jesus is on a mission for God and He moves forward. He knows that there are people that are upset with Him. But you don't find anywhere where He stops and goes and corrects that with everybody. I will tell you it's not practical to do that.

Now I want to say something and I want you to listen very carefully to what I am going to say. Jesus is teaching in Matthew chapter 5 verses 23-26 a way to keep the sixth commandment that we will not murder. And He says that it is having a spirit of reconciliation, being willing to be reconciled. He is not saying that you will be able to be reconciled with everybody, nor is He saying that you should seek reconciliation from everybody. He himself did not do that and He is our example in all things. There are some people that are not worth your time. There are some situations that you cannot do any good by trying to correct. In fact, there is a law out there that says, "If you chase a rumor, you create a rumor."

Sometimes is best just to sit quiet and let happen what happens. And so in our lives what God wants us to do is to be humble before Him and ask, "Lord, I've heard this person is upset, is it worth it?" You know, in our lives, sometimes, let's just be honest, sometimes is better for some people to be out of our lives. And it's best not to seek reconciliation. But it's always right to have the spirit of reconciliation, where we are willing. It's just, "God do you want me, is this who you want me to spend my time?" Jesus goes on speaking in Matthew 5; let's go to Matthew 5, about an adversary. You got a brother, go to him, but what about an adversary?

Verses 25 and 26, kind of a strait forward thing here, "Agree with your adversary quickly while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you'll be thrown in the prison. Assuredly I say to you, you will by no means get out of there until you had paid the last penny." Now, what is He saying? He is saying, let's be practical. If someone is taking you to court, settle it out of court if you can. Because once it gets into judge's hands, you don't know what is going to happen. And that judge may turn you over to the authorities, and you are in jail. So seek to settle things out of court if you can. Now that's good, common sense. That's good practical common sense, but what does it have to do with murder? Why does Jesus even bring it up here?

Well, it's even in a more strange place when Luke records it. Look what Luke says in Luke 12. Let's turn there. Luke chapter 12 Jesus will be recorded saying the same thing in a different circumstance. In Luke 12 beginning with verse 54: "Then He..." that's Jesus, "...also said to the multitudes, 'When you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?'" Weather, time, "You can discern the weather, you

know when it's going to rain, you know when it's going to be hot, but you don't discern the time."

And Jesus is talking about His time. He's talking about the time that the prophets wrote about; the time that is being fulfilled in their very presence with Him being there. But then, He goes on and says something strange, verse 57: "Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there until you have paid the very last mite."

Now Luke records the conversation in the midst of a 'weather report' if you will. "When you see a cloud on the west, you know it's going to rain, when the wind blows from the south, you know it's going to be hot. You can discern that but you don't know the times." "Hey, by the way, when you are on your way to court, try to settle before you get into court." What's He talking about? He is talking about the Biblical principle that "a wise man foresees trouble and prepares for it, a fool passes on." "You see the weather, and you prepare for it. These are the times we are living in. You should be prepared for it. And when you go to court, you should know you may lose. You could be in great difficulty, be wise, take care of it out of court."

Well let's go back to Matthew 5 because we are going to see a common thread. Jesus is teaching an application of the sixth commandment. He is saying that we need a spirit of reconciliation, should try to work things out, outside of court if possible. In verse 23, I am going to read verses 23, 24, and 25 and I want you to look for a common thread that runs through these three verses. "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison."

Here is the common thread: you have a brother, you have an adversary. Deal with them quickly. When it comes to your mind, go your way for the brother, take care of it. You got an adversary, take care of it. Deal with it quickly. And this is a profound principle when it comes to reconciliation. That little three year old boy, he had no idea he was living out a Biblical principle. When grandma was chugging down upon him, ready to jerk him up from the mud and spank him, or whatever she was going to do? He just looked up, "Hello Darling!" And it diffused the whole situation; he took care of it quickly.

Now, Jesus is laying a principle before us that is true. In relationships when things are stressed, and you can tell when they are, it's better to deal with it quickly. Rather than the old proverbial snowball coming down the mountain, just getting bigger and bigger, and more difficult and more issues associated with it. So that's one thing Jesus is saying. Jesus is saying if you have the spirit of reconciliation, you will not seek to murder another person. And if you want more information about what that means, last week's sermon can help inform you. So with the spirit

of reconciliation, do it quickly and know as hard as you try is not going to work for everybody nor is it for everybody. But you must pray and discern God's will.

Jesus had the spirit of reconciliation and He gives that spirit of reconciliation to us. That's what the principles are but now we are going to take this to another level. We are going to go down. We are going to dig deep. We are going to put our roots deep because we are going to reach high as a result of it. There is more to this passage than that simple principle. Look at chapter 5 verses 21 and 22: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of..." what? "...the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of..." what? "...the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council." That's the Sanhedrin Council, that's the court, that's judgment.

"And whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." Verses 21 and 22 are talking about judgment. It is a judgment scene. Now, listen very carefully to what I have to say. I don't want to be misunderstood; I don't want to be misquoted. The Bible teaches us that we have an adversary. Who is our adversary? It is the devil, it is Satan. Right? However, are you aware that reconciliation, if you turn to Romans 5 verses 10 and 11, it'll describe how Jesus reconciled us to God while we were yet enemies with God. There is a Biblical principle in understanding that Jesus is trying to get us to here, and that is this: When it comes to an adversary, settle it out of court. If it ends up in court, it may be too late, and you may be in big trouble.

Now, God says, we were enemies of His. He is the judge. Who is the one taking us to be judged? It would be the Holy Spirit. Look at John 16. I am not saying he is an adversary, but he is one who is taking us to court. It's described here in chapter 16 of John beginning with verse 7. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the helper..." that's the Holy Spirit, "...will not come to you. But if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of the judgment. Of sin, because they do not believe in Me. Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more, of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged."

Every single human being on this planet will be influenced by the Holy Spirit, and the work of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. The Holy Spirit is taking us to court. And when it gets to court brothers and sisters, we are in trouble. But right now we don't have to be in trouble because the Holy Spirit is here telling us we are a sinner a need of a Savior. The Holy Spirit is here convicting us of judgment to come. And Jesus says, "Go quickly and settle it out of court." If we do that, we have no court to deal with because Christ is our Savior, and our salvation is secure in Him.

How do you do this? What is the principle of reconciliation? What is the peace and harmony that God is describing? He is describing of having that with Him by heeding the counsel of the Holy Spirit. And He is also describing that when we accept Christ, we will have that spirit of reconciliation for others. And He will direct us whom we need to spend time with on that in our lives. But today, the lesson I want us to concentrate on is, there is a judgment coming, and we

are all being called to it. The Holy Spirit is dragging us off to court. We'll end up there unless we settle out of court. That's what this service is today. We can settle it before it gets to court. Jesus is here. But He wants to be in your heart. He wants to be your Savior. Every morning when you wake up, He wants to come into your life. Every day that you live, He wants to walk with you. And if that's our life, we have no need to fear the judgment. Why? It's been settled out of court. It was settled today. And Jesus says, "Do it quickly."

Is there anyone here who would like to say, "I do indeed want Jesus to be my Savior?" If you want to say that, please stand where you are at. "Father in Heaven, we ask for Jesus to come-in to our hearts. We heed the prodding of the Holy Spirit, and we recognize we are sinners. And we recognize our need to settle this out of court. Thank you that Jesus will take care of all that. In His name we pray, Amen."