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Matthew 5:21,22 *Murder*

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“Father in Heaven, as we are now about to open Your Word, we pray. We pray for Your Holy Spirit to teach us, to lead us, and to direct our thoughts and our hearts. We pray that lives will be changed. And we ask and pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.”!

Karen’s mother is facing her 89th birthday the next time. And she is in good health. She is in great health in fact. She does suffer with some dementia which makes for some interesting experiences. Now, she raised her children; she has four children, one son, and three daughters. And she has, well she and her husband raise them. And Mom, I’ll call her Grandma. Grandma was very supportive of her children. She was a cheerleader. She was right there for them, helped them to succeed, willed them to succeed like every good mother does, and she was dedicated to that purpose. And she has always been a very social individual. She could talk with anybody. And she was just friendly that way.

Well she still is friendly, and she still can talk. And she can carry on an amazing conversation. But if you didn’t know, you would actually think what she was saying was true. I’ll give you an example. A year ago, we were here at the church, it was one week before we opened the doors. And we had a big work-bee. And so lots of us were here, and we were washing windows and doing some last minute vacuuming, and just dusting stuff, and just really enjoying the idea that we were going to worship God in our brand-new building. We were excited about it. It was a Sunday. And we had completed our chores, it was Sunday evening. And Karen and I and Grandma, were walking down the hallway, up by the offices there. We were done and we were ready to go.

Well, Grandma scuffed her foot on the carpet and fell. When she fell she broke her right leg and her right arm. And we called an ambulance, and ambulance came and took her to the hospital. Well long and short of that is; she healed completely from it. She’s got bones of a much younger person. They said this is going to be a problem. Not her! Her bones healed, it was just, it was amazing. But what was interesting is that she tells all the people who would listen to her that Jerry warned her, “Watch out for that pile of wood there in the hallway. Watch out for that wood, but somehow, she didn’t get around it and she tripped.” Well there was no wood there at all. All the wood was gone by then, but in her reality it was true.

And it makes for some interesting conversation because she stays between the four children. She rotates every three or four months or so between the children as they are taking care of her. And all of them have learned not to believe everything she says about the family she is staying with. We got a phone call once from her, she was staying with the daughter that lives in Iowa, and she was saying: “They’ve left me all alone in the house in the woods. I am all by myself, and I am scared.” And in the background we could hear the adult grandchild singing.

Another time we were amused because David, the son, the oldest, and David kind of rules that generation, his generation. And he is the one that took the driving license away from Mom, you know. Grandma can no longer drive. Well, that upset her. I don’t know if you face this with your

parents yet, but you will. These are fun times. So, she was staying with us during that time, and we overheard her telling friends back in Indiana, "They are holding me here captive." Well, it can be amusing, but yet, it can be dangerous because we have no idea what she's told you. And she is so totally convinced that it is true, and she is such a great communicator, it comes across as being true. And that's what I'd like to talk to you about today.

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5 verses 21 and 22. We are studying the Sermon on the Mount and we are looking at Jesus' teachings here. And we have come to verses 21 and 22. New King James Version, it says: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."

When you read a passage like this, immediately our training says, 'well, we need to get some context.' What happened before this? And you back up to verse 20 and you realize Jesus had said this: "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." So Jesus had just said "...your righteousness has to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees," and then He gives an illustration. And He talks about anger. You are not supposed to be angry with your brother; you are not supposed to call somebody 'Raca;' you are not supposed to call somebody 'a fool.' And when somebody looks at that, they say: "Okay, well, all right, I get it. I get it. I need Jesus as my Savior, okay, let's go on."

Well it is true; we need Jesus as our Savior. But Jesus is actually making some points here that are not clearly understood by the casual reading of the passage. It will be our purpose today to understand what this passage means. Let's go to Matthew 5 verse 21. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'you shall not murder.'" We will come back to Matthew 5 so keep you hand there, but turn to Exodus chapter 20. Exodus chapter 20, as some of you are aware, is the chapter that contains the Ten Commandments. And we'll see that this is indeed what Jesus was quoting from. Exodus 20 verse 13 we read this: "You shall not murder." Now some of you memorize that, "Thou shall not kill." And it's true; the Hebrew word can be translated "kill." But it means murder.

And it's important for us to understand what the Bible means because some people are making life's decisions based on their understanding of the scriptures. And they make ethical and judgment calls based on their concept of the scriptures. It literally means, "You shall not murder." Now, murder is premeditated and deliberate killing. Murder is planning it out. It is not talking about self defense. You will not find the condemnation in the scriptures of somebody who takes the life of another individual for self defense. You will not find in the scriptures a condemnation for taking another's life in war. In fact, God Himself, many times, leads the people in the war describing to them how they shall destroy the enemy.

It is also not against capital punishment, though some would want to use the Bible to argue against capital punishment. It is not arguable using the Scriptures. In the Old Testament where it says, "You shall not murder," in this very same Old Testament it says, when due process has been done, if somebody has taken the life of another individual, their life shall be forfeited. Capital punishment is scriptural. Also, it is not referring to accidental manslaughter. That could happen, it's an accident, but somebody loses their life, they have not necessarily broken that commandment. Jesus said in Matthew 5:21, "You shall not murder." That's what He is talking about. He is talking about premeditated, deliberate killing, all right?

Let's go back to Matthew 5 now. In Matthew 5 verse 22, we move on. He says, "But I say to you..." Now we said you are not to murder; you'll be in danger of judgment. "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." Angry! Is all anger condemned? Is all anger wrong? Let's look at that for a moment. Turn to James chapter 1 in your Bible; we'll have a couple of text on this topic. James chapter 1, we are going to look at verses 19 and 20. In James 1 verse 19 it says: "Therefore my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

Now we are going to show you this in the New International Version, and you will see that where the word "wrath" is used in the New King James, it is "anger" in the NIV. It says, "My dear brothers, take note of this. Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. For man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." Anger could be a problem. Anger can take us away from the righteous life that God wants for us. Anger can be very, very, destructive. Look at Ephesians chapter 4 verses 31 and 32. Here the apostle Paul weighs in on the topic, he says, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor..." and that's loud quarreling, "...and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another just as God in Christ also forgave you."

These two passages clearly teach that anger can take us away from God. Anger can destroy our witness. Anger can even be a form of grieving the Holy Spirit which is mentioned in the verse just ahead of the one we just read in Ephesians. But let me ask you some questions. Would it be wrong for you to be angry if you or your family were lied about? Is it wrong to be angry when that takes place? Is it wrong to be angry if your spouse emotionally or physically abuses you? Is it wrong to be angry in a situation like that? Would it be wrong for you to be angry if your child was sexually molested? Would it be wrong to be angry if injustice was heaped upon you or your family?

And some people will teach, 'well, anger is wrong if you are upset because something happened to you, but it's okay if you are upset because something happened to somebody else.' So somehow, we are supposed to step away from our own experience and not be angry. Is there a place for anger? Is all anger so corrupt that it condemns us to hell? Well, let's look at that. In Ephesians 4, same chapter we are at, look at verse 26. Here Paul says this, "Be angry and do not sin." There obviously must be an anger that is not a sin. We are encouraged to be angry but not to sin. So there is an anger that God says, "Yes, that is appropriate, it is proper, it

is good.” In fact, in the spectrum of emotions that God demonstrates through the Scriptures; if you look up the word, “anger” in a Bible Concordance, you’ll discover that most of the time it’s referring to Him. He is angry! He is angry! He is angry at sin. And He is angry at the results of sin.

Look at Mark chapter 3 verse 5. This takes place in church, Sabbath morning in the synagogue. It’s talking about an experience with Jesus. It says, “So when He ...” that’s Jesus, “...had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, ‘stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.” Well the story was this. There was a man who was crippled. And the religious leaders brought him to church, kind of like a setup to see if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath. Would He do it in church? And Jesus was angry at them. And He looked upon them with anger!

And so there is obvious, there is anger that is not pleasing to God, but there is an anger that is acceptable to God. Now let me tell you brothers and sisters. Many times Christians have been taught a concept regarding anger that is not wholesome to themselves, not wholesome to their families, and it wears away at commonsense and good mental and emotional health. Let me share with you what has been taught some people. “You are not allowed to be angry, period. You are not allowed to be angry! So if someone does something to you, you have to take it.” I am telling you brothers and sisters that is not scriptural. God does not tell you to take it. He does not say, “Now that you are a Christian, you are to become a ‘welcome mat’ to abuse.”

You are to stand up for right; you are to fight what is wrong. God allows that in our experience, but He has some perimeters. Let me share with you a simple illustration. Well, I’ll get to that. Before we do that, let’s go back to Matthew 5 verse 22. As we look at this anger, “I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment,” all right. There are two Greek words for anger. One, it describes a flame that would come to a dried piece of straw. Rises, speedily, passes speedily, just poof! Some of you have experienced that type of anger before.

There is another type of anger described in Greek language. It is habitual, entrenched, long living, nursed to keep warm, brooded upon. There is an unwillingness to let it die. It takes on its own life within a person, and it creates bitterness. And it creates a hateful spirit and an attitude towards somebody else. Four hundred years before Christ, Plato leaved in Greece. He was a Greek Philosopher. And he wrote and taught, and he gave a description. He said, “The task of the soul is to drive a chariot with two horses.” Two horses in this chariot. “One is gentle and obedient, easy to reign and listens to commands. The other is wild, untamed, rebellious, full of energy and power. One horse is reason. The other horse is passion. They must be bridled together. And in so doing, you will be successful in dealing with life.”

If you let the horse of passion run the chariot, you will have no control. If you allow the horse of reason to run the chariot, you will have no energy. You will have no force. You will do nothing. You will accomplish nothing. But those two placed together, get done what needs to get done. Every fight for right has been done by somebody with passion, but it’s been combined with reason. Everything that happens that is good on planet earth, that somebody has to get in there

and really rally, and have strength and energy for it, is done with passion, but it is bridled with reason. If you take reason away, and you function just with passion, you will have what is called, 'losing your temper.' And temper takes over. And when temper takes over, it literally is momentary insanity. It does and says crazy things.

I got a phone call one day. It wasn't from any of you because it was a church I pastored long ago. Church member called, and I could tell they were upset. They were mad! They were hopping mad! They said, "I want so and so's phone number, and I want it right now!" And I said, "Well why do you want it?" And they said, "Because I am mad, I am really, really, mad!" And I said, "Well, don't you want to wait until you calm down?" And they said, "Absolutely not! I want to tell them exactly how I feel, and I only do it when I am really, really mad!" Temporary insanity! Nothing good ever comes out of unbridled passion. But all good comes with passion bridled with reason. Do you see how that works?

So in our lives, brothers and sisters, when injustice comes upon us individually, you don't just stuff that. You don't just take it. You, with passion bridled with reason, and the power of the Lord, deal with it. And you tell, "Here is my boundary brother, here is my boundary sister, you will not talk to me that way. You will not raise a hand at me. You will not do this, you will not do that..." we have been given that right by God and it's time we took it. Unfortunately, people aren't, and they have no self-respect and self-dignity as a result.

Matthew 5 verse 22: "And I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." Good! 'Cause it's my sister that really ticks me off! Or it's not a family member at all.' And so we can look at this and say, "Oh, ah, well, good; there is a loophole in this." When Matthew uses 'brother' he is talking about a fellow believer. And Jesus is using an example of a situation that should never happen. Fellow believers journeying together towards heaven should never be angry with each other in the way that is described here. So if that's not supposed to happen there, it's not supposed to happen anywhere. So, don't be angry with somebody, and it goes on to say, "...without a cause."

Well that's an interesting phrase. It's not actually found in any manuscripts. It was added by the people who translated the manuscripts. It's not in the New International Version and it doesn't find itself in a lot of other Bibles as well. And so, the best I can say about it is, well, it's helpful, but it's not there so I can't preach about it. So, we'll just go on. "Whoever is angry with..." a fellow believer, "...shall be in danger of the judgment." Now the next one is curious. "...and whoever says to his brother, "Raca" shall be in danger of the council." Now the judgment that Jesus refers to would be the Elders of a small town. You know, you live in a town with several hundred people. There are a couple of elders there, and you say some things, you are going to get in trouble with them.

The council though, that's the Sanhedrin Council. Now you are talking about the Supreme Court of the nation, so there is a little acceleration here of importance. "Whoever calls his brother "Raca" shall be in danger of the council." Now I have a question for you. How many of you know what "Raca" means? How many of you use that phrase? You know, when was the last

time you were really ticked off at somebody and said, "You Raca!" You know, Jesus taught in Aramaic. His words were written in Greek, and this word is Greek. How come everything else is English but "Raca?" You call somebody "Raca;" you are in danger of the council. Well, we don't use that word.

And the reason we don't have it in the Bible is that there is no English word to translate what it means. Because it's not actually a word as much as it is an attitude. It's untranslatable because it's more a tone of voice. It's the accent of contempt. Yeah, you can say, "Brainless idiot," or "Empty headed fool," but it really is not catching it. It is the voice of one who despises with an arrogant contempt another individual. It is scornful, it is hateful, it is contemptuous, and it can be brought about because somebody has a position greater than somebody else where they can speak of that person with contempt. Their education is greater or their appearance, their race, their nationalism, their wealth, their religion, their politics.

Boy, in this age of insanity, this time of insanity that we are in right now, this, everybody claims to be a believer. Everybody claims to be wanting to serve God, and yet, speech is so contemptuous. Our side vs. their side, back and forth... I wrote this in my notes. "Be careful what you say." That's what Jesus is talking about. "Raca" is contempt for another individual and speaking in a way. An illustration was given of a Rabbi that was walking along the road, and he was filled with himself because he just had a nice session. And he really thought he was something. And a fellow came walking by, and the fellow unfortunately wasn't very handsome. And so the fellow walking by said to the Rabbi; he gave him a greeting, probably "Shalom." And the Rabbi said, "Are all the people in your village as ugly as you?" That's contemptuous speech!

You know what the man said? He said, "I don't know? Perhaps you should ask the Creator who made me this way? Ask Him if I am ugly?" Wow, that's a good come-back. But that's contemptuous speech, you get the idea. Jesus says that person will be brought to the council that does that. But then this is strange, come back to verse 22. All right, "I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment, and whoever says to his brother "Raca," shall be in danger of the council. But, whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be in danger of hell fire." I call people "fools" all the time. Don't you when you are driving? You use worse words, don't you?

What can this mean? You know, in the Bible it says that "... a man that says there is no God is a fool." Jesus Himself uses the phrase 'fool.' Look at Matthew 23 verses 16 and 17; He is speaking to the scribes and the Pharisees. He says, "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' "Fools and blind!" and He goes on. "Fools and blind!" Why is it so sinful to call somebody a "Fool?" Well, what does Jesus mean in this context? What does He mean by saying "Fool?" In this context Jesus is not talking about mental ability. He is not talking about somebody saying, "You are a fool" because of the way you think. He is talking about calling somebody a "fool" because of their moral character or lack there off.

Now, and before you get too excited, I already know there is a balance to this. That there is church discipline, there is a time to call sin, "sin!" And if somebody is stealing, I mean, he is a thief. If somebody commits an adultery, he is an adulterer... it's not a judgment, it's a reality! Somebody is a liar, they are a liar. It's not a judgment, it's what they do. Okay? So there is a balance. But note what this is saying here. It is talking about the destruction of a person's reputation, by taking away their good name, by destroying them and their character.

Are you ready for this? Hold on! It is malicious gossip that murders another person's reputation and character. Jesus is talking about 'malicious gossip.' 'That'll get you a ticket to hell,' He says. Wow! I want to read this verse to you with our definitions in it: "Whoever nurses and bruises hatefulnes against another believer shall be in danger of judgment. Whoever despises another believer with arrogant contempt shall be in danger of the council. But whoever maliciously gossips about another, will go to hell." Wow!

I mean, it's one thing for Grandma to say things she doesn't know better -- but what about us? And we are all guilty of it. I know a few things on earth as exciting as talking about other people. And you know, we always say, "It's the ladies' problem." Every man that's married enjoys hearing what she's got to say, what she just heard at the market. Do you see what Jesus is saying here? You destroy another person by malicious gossip, you are going to hell. Well, that's pretty plain.

Well, I am doing everything I can to stay out of political discussions. Because I really don't care who you vote for, I just hope you will vote. I hope you vote your conscience. And whatever happens will happen. We've survived whoever's been in there before; we'll survive whoever gets in there again, okay? So I don't have a political ax to grind. But I have to share a story to make a point. Yesterday, Karen wanted to go to the store. She had to shop in Chattanooga. I hate to shop, and she hates to drive. But we like to be together. So I said, "I'll make you a deal. I will drive you there and back if I don't have to go into the store." "No problem!"

So she went into the store, and I've read for a while, I slept for a while, I watched people for a while... You know, it's amazing how many different positions you can get into in a couple of hours sitting there. After a while, I turned the air off and just let the heat blow, and who cares anymore, you know. And I was just sitting there, and it was evening. And I was a little bored, so I am fanning the radio dial, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. I don't even know who the speaker is. So it's not some of the big name folks that you may be aware of. But, they play a tape of a political add. Now before I say this, I need to set it up this way.

Regardless of where you are in politics according to what people say, everybody recognizes that John McCain is an American hero, right? His service in Vietnam, and what he went through, he is a bonafide American hero. Whether you agree with his positions or not, it has nothing to do with that. He is an American hero. Well there is an ad from the other side that came out. And it said something like this. In 1982, Senator McCain went to Washington. He'd been there ever since. And in that time, he's never learned how to send one single email, he doesn't know how to use a computer, and yet, this is the man that is supposed to take us into the future, and bring

change, and to protect us from cyber-terrorism and all that kind of stuff. And the guy doesn't even know how to use a computer. He doesn't even know how to send an email.

And I am listening to that and I thought, "Well, that's a pretty compelling argument, you know. That's got some stuff to it." And then there was a rebottle. And then I realized. You know, this may portray what is so sad with American politics today. Do you realize that due to the injuries that he received in the prison of war camp, John McCain cannot comb his hair? He cannot tie his shoes; he cannot type on a keyboard. Why would he learn how to use a computer then? He can't even reach the thing. But that's the type of malicious stuff that happens.

I am not asking you to vote for him. I am not asking you to vote for the other side. I am just saying, let's be careful what we say. And that's an example. I am saying this. Every one of us is guilty of gossip. Every one of us is guilty of saying things about other people that are hurtful. Every one of us does it in the family, we do it in school; we do it in the dorm, we do it the workplace; we do it in the neighborhood, we do it in the community; we do it in church. And Jesus says, "Gossip will get you to hell." He also says if we'll accept Him as our Savior, He will get us to Heaven. And the good news is this. We all can repent, we all can have Christ in our heart and we all can go to heaven and by His grace we can stop the nonsensical talk that hurts other people.

The question is do you want that? And if you do, please stand. "Father in Heaven, please Lord, forgive us for our sin. We ask for Jesus to come into our heart. And we pray for pure speech, and we thank you in Jesus' Name, Amen."