

Before Offering Your Gift

Communion October 7, 2017

Matthew 5:23-24 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Jesus in these verses explains that our relationship with God is dependent on our relationship with others. When we come to the house of worship, that is the church, and offer to God our praises, prayers and financial gifts, we believe that we are beneficiaries of His mercy and love, is that not right? We believe that. But while receiving the benefits of his mercy and love we adopt an unloving attitude toward someone else is that not contradictory? You want mercy from God. Then show mercy. Jesus said, "...go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

In every dispute we consider ourselves right and the one opposing to be wrong. We say to ourselves, "The other party must come to me and ask forgiveness. I don't have to ask forgiveness from them." O.K., if God took that attitude where would you be? Isn't it God who made the first move regarding reconciliation? But the guilty party is you.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2 Corinthians 5:19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

If we cannot reconcile with our fellow church members how will we explain the word of reconciliation to the world?

John 13:35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

You say to me, "How can I reconcile with the other party? They don't even talk to me." Did you try to reconcile? Did you ever say to them, "Let's sit down and talk this out"? Without trying to make reconciliation, leave your gift on the altar and first try to reconcile with them. If they will not listen to you, take one of the elders of the church with you try to talk with your brother. If that doesn't work, tell it to the church.

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The expression in our verses, "therefore" directs us to the previous verses. We want to answer the question, "why therefore?"

Matthew 5:21 " 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.'²² "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.

Murder is the result of anger. People can hide their anger from others. The courts can only punish the actions resulting from anger. But God who reads our hearts can judge anger itself. What anger will the Lord judge?

Anger against sin is not wrong. But most of the time our anger is not against sin but is directed toward the sinner. Jesus talked about saying, "raca." This word probably comes from the Aramaic word reka which means "good for nothing" or "stupid." This word expresses contempt. In Jesus' day, using this word against someone could be a matter of a court case. If that is the case then surely it will be a matter in God's judgment. We must show respect to everyone, no matter how degraded they may be, because they are God's property.

Jesus said, "But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." The word translated as "fool" here is the word "moros." It means "stupid" or "foolish." This is a more serious expression than raka because Jesus said that the use of the word would bring a greater judgment. Apparently the word moros was talking more about someone's motivations than their intelligence. If we talk like that, we are saying that someone's motivations are evil and we judge them.

Jude 1:9 Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Jesus did not bring a railing accusation against Satan. But he said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Is there anger in your heart toward your brother? Have you taken an unloving attitude toward them? What should you do?

Matthew 6:14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.¹⁵ "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Jesus, in these verses, did not put a condition of someone's coming to you and asking forgiveness before you forgive them. Whether that person comes or not, Jesus gives you no permission to harbor animosity or anger toward them or hold a disparaging attitude toward them. Jesus does not give permission for your saying even in your heart, "stupid" or "foolish."

1 John 3:15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Then, "...go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."