

**Date:** 10-13-2019  
**Series:** The Sermon on the Mount

## HOW CHRISTIANS MURDER OTHERS

(Matthew 5:21-26)

**Matthew 5:21-26**-----<sup>21</sup> “**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.’ <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> **Therefore** if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

When I was a kid still playing Little League baseball, a song sung by Roberta Flack came out on the radio called, “**Killing Me Softly With His Song.**” I had no idea what it meant when I was 12—all I knew was that **Roberta Flack** could sing. But when you read the lyrics, it’s clear what the song is about. It’s about a woman listening to a man sing about all of the things in her past that had caused her great pain.

You might remember some of these words:

**Strumming my pain** with his fingers  
Singing my life with his words  
Killing me softly with his song  
Telling my whole life with his words  
Killing me softly with his song

The man on the stage singing **wasn’t literally killing the woman** with his words, but they were so painful to her, they were killing her on the inside. His words were agonizing reminders of her past and were like daggers being plunged into her heart.

In our text this morning **in Matthew 5:21-26**, Jesus is teaching us that there is a sense in which you and I can “kill” people around us without pulling a trigger or wielding a knife—that we can do great damage to them and deprive them of the kind of life God wants them to enjoy without shedding a single drop of their blood.

And that’s what would like to speak to you about this morning for a few minutes. The extremely unusual title for my message this morning is...

**Title:** How Christians Murder Others

(Prayer)

In March of 2012, an American soldier killed 16 innocent civilians in Afghanistan. In the aftermath, newspaper columnist David Brooks wrote:

Even people who contain reservoirs of compassion and neighborliness also possess a latent potential to commit murder ... David Buss of the University of Texas asked his students if they had ever thought seriously about killing someone, and if so, to write out their homicidal fantasies in an essay. He was astonished to find that 91 percent of the men and 84 percent of the women had detailed, vivid homicidal fantasies. He was even more astonished to learn how many steps some of his students had taken toward carrying them out.

This morning, I'm speaking to you of how Christian people (in the words of Brooks) "possess a latent potential to commit murder."

Very quickly though, let me start by saying that Christian people **can and do commit murder**. The Apostle Peter told God's people that they **would** suffer. But he also told them:

**1 Peter 4:15** (NLT)---- If you suffer, however, **it must not be for murder**, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs.

In our text, Jesus said God's command against murder goes back to the beginning:

**Matthew 5:21**-----<sup>21</sup> "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.'

Murder is the sinful and unlawful taking of another person's life.

The founders of our nation believed this and it is seen in the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, [obvious] that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, **that among these are Life**, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

But murder is not the only way that both saved and unsaved people kill others. Please allow me to share with you OTHER ways that we "kill" others and deprive them of life while they are still alive:

### 1. **By being angry with them (5:22a)**

**Matthew 5:22a**----But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment [before a judge]. [*Remember--future kingdom*]

The first murder (Cain of Abel) started when Cain got angry at both Abel and God.

In an article entitled: "Wars' Lethal Leftovers Threaten Europeans," Associated Press reporter Christopher Burns writes: "The bombs of World War II are still killing in Europe. They turn up---and sometimes blow up---at construction sites, in fishing nets, or on beaches ... years after the guns fell silent." Hundreds of tons of explosives are recovered every year in France alone. [In one year alone,] Thirteen old bombs exploded in France ... killing twelve people and wounding eleven, the Interior Ministry said. "I've lost two of my colleagues," said Yvon Bouvet, who heads a government team in the Champagne-Ardennes region that defuses explosives from both World War I and II. ... "Unexploded bombs become more dangerous with time, Bouvet said. 'With the corrosion inside, the weapon becomes more unstable, the detonator can be exposed.'"

What is true of lingering bombs is also true of lingering anger. And when you and I explode in anger, Jesus said there is a sense in which we kill those around us.

A second way that Christians often murder others is...

## 2. **By speaking harshly towards them (5:22b)**

**Matthew 5:22b**-----And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' [idiot] shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

We must keep in mind that **Jesus is speaking** of the laws in His future earthly kingdom. Obviously, no one on earth now is in danger of being dragged before a council for calling someone an idiot, or in danger of being sent to hell for calling someone a fool. But this WILL BE the case in Christ's future kingdom. (And this is why you and I can learn from this today.)

Some of you can still remember things that your parents or others said to you when you were a child that have affected you your entire life.

**Be careful moms** and dads, or you might "kill" your kids for life with your words! **Teenagers, be careful** what you say and what you type!

## 3. **By ripping them off financially in some way (5:23-24)**

In the future kingdom, Jesus tells people who have done this:

**Matthew 5:23-24**-----<sup>23</sup> Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, [in the temple in Jerusalem] and there remember that your brother has something against you,

*[Note: "something against you" probably means something like "has something against you because you haven't paid him what you promised to"]*

<sup>24</sup> **leave your gift** [to God] there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift [to God].

Jesus doesn't want us as His **people ripping others off** and causing possible financial heartache to them. You wouldn't want people to do that to you...and you shouldn't do it to them. You get it right with those you owe FIRST (you might need to negotiate a payment program), before you go back to the temple and offer your gift to God. Jesus is not saying STOP giving to God. He wants both---gifts offered to Him and honest repayment of debts to others.

**4. By attempting to win a lawsuit in which you know you are guilty (5:25-26)**

In Christ's future kingdom, every courtroom will administer PERFECT justice. And that is why Jesus tells the people of that day:

**Matthew 5:25**-----<sup>25</sup> Agree with your adversary [the person suing you] quickly, while you are on the way with him [to court], lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

Jesus is saying it is better to settle your lawsuit outside of court than to hope that the court will approve your unjust or dishonest case. In that day, justice will be swift and fair:

**Matthew 5:26**-----<sup>26</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. [You will pay the full amount---every penny you owe!]

**In Ramsey Count, Minnesota** ninth and tenth graders were interviewed recently about their dads. They were asked this question: "**What comes to mind when you think of the word 'dad'?**" Answers came immediately from both ends of the spectrum. One end of the spectrum said, "I think of the word jerk." Others thought of the words angry, mad, and absent.

On the other end of the spectrum, young people said, "I think of wholeness, kindness, security, safety." Dad is an immensely powerful word.

**Close:**

**If people were asked for** what comes to their mind when they think of you and I, what would they say? Would they say angry ... mean ... rip-off ... cheat or other negative terms?

Probably none of us have ever literally murdered someone. But the question we need to ask ourselves is this: "How often do I 'kill' people other ways and not even think about it?"