



SERIES: November – December – Walking with Jesus

SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

Thursday, 11/18/2021

Scripture: Matthew 5:21-26

TITLE: The Self-righteous Delusion

In 1931 Two-Gun Crowley, a notorious criminal, was captured. Crowley had brutally murdered many people including at least one policeman. After a bloody gun fight, he was captured. The police found a bloodied note in his pocket that read: “Under my coat is a weary heart, but a kind one, one that would do nobody any harm.” People are convinced no matter how much or how little evil they produce, they are still worthy of mercy and grace. This self-delusion is seen from mass-murderers to the little ol’ grandma down the street.

Jesus’ has an astonishing message for us all today about just how sinful we really are. Let’s listen to Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:21-26 (CSB).

“You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister, will be subject to the court. Whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to hellfire. So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you’re on the way with him to the court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.

Ouch. Jesus’ words cut to the core and sting like salt in a wound.

Jesus’ pulls out a rabbinic teaching that echoes Exodus 20:13. There is no doubt that murdering someone is a horrible crime and sin. But what we forget or frankly reject is the notion that anger, bitterness, and hatred is just as sinful to a holy God.

The, “at least I didn’t kill someone,” won’t hold up in God’s court. Even when remorse is experienced for wrongdoing, Jesus says, hold up. Before trying to make it up to God, go make things right with that person. Even if you’ve been unforgiving and bad-mouthing them behind their back, go and make things right. The prophet Samuel said, “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22). Even when we don’t obey, make things right before doing our penance.

The sins of the heart are just as wicked to God as physical murder. Yes, there are real life consequences that are different. Yes, punishment in hell may differ, but any sin whether internal

or external is offensive to God. So we need to put aside any self-righteousness and live in the grace of God.

So here's my challenge for you today: make things right.

Chances are you've got some relationships that are messed up. Unforgiveness, gossip, bad-mouthing, and so on may define a relationship. Confess it to God and then get to that person and ask for forgiveness.

I've done this many times to people who are shocked by my admission but are transformed by the right humility. So go out and make things right. When relationships are restored we will win the day.