

Reconciliation in the Kingdom

Kingdom Living #4 - Pastor Gary Combs - April 13, 2025 - Matthew 5:21-26

INTRO: Good morning church! Happy Palm Sunday! It's called "Palm Sunday" because the large Jewish crowds that had come to Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire for Passover heard that Jesus was approaching the city, riding on the back of a donkey. As He and His disciples approached, the people cut palm branches and waved them in the air, welcoming Him as King! As the gospel of John reported:

John 12:12-13 (ESV) ¹² The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

Yet, before the week was out, early on a Friday morning, another crowd stood before Pontius Pilate, shouting, "Crucify him!" A week that began with a triumphal entry ended with what seemed to be a tragic exit. For the week ended with Jesus crucified and buried. But as Pastor SM Lockridge preached, "It's Friday, but Sunday's comin'!" For early on the first day of the following week, Christ Jesus was risen!

The crowds who welcomed Jesus on Palm Sunday, shouting, "Hosanna to the King of Israel!" Got it right! Jesus is King! Jesus is our risen, reigning, and returning King!

Trans: Today, we're continuing our sermon series entitled, KINGDOM LIVING. It's a study of Christ's Sermon On the Mount. We've called this series KINGDOM LIVING because the Sermon on the Mount is a call by King Jesus to live under His rule and reign as His kingdom citizens!

In our text last week, Jesus said that "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven" (20). In other words, unless our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of these religious experts, we cannot be saved. However, Jesus is clear, we cannot obtain such righteousness on our own. It is a gift of God, not a result of works. It is a gift, a "blessing," granted to the "poor in Spirit" (3) and the "pure in heart" (8). It is not the rigid, rule-following, legalism of the scribes and Pharisees, but a righteousness by grace through faith in Jesus, who makes us right with God.

Now in our text this week, Jesus explains how this righteousness, which has the blessed mark of being a "peacemaker" (9), calls us to pursue reconciliation with those who are in discord with God and with one another.

Need: Do you have this blessed mark of being a peacemaker, of being one who pursues reconciliation in all your relationships? We live in a world filled with division, uncontrolled anger, and broken relationships. Whether in families, communities, or workplaces, unresolved conflict is a barrier to true peace. We're hearing of fathers and sons being at odds over politics, over how they voted. We're seeing mothers and daughters fighting over gender issues and appropriate pronouns. Neighbors are ripping up yard signs, pulling down flags, and keying one another's cars. Even in the church, we struggle with unresolved conflict that disrupts our unity. People leave their community group, their youth group, or even the church over discord, rather than learning to reconcile with one another.

Trans: Yet Jesus calls us to pursue reconciliation as an essential element of living in His Kingdom. But how can we understand its importance?

BODY: In the Gospel of Matthew 5:21–26, Jesus confronted His hearers with the deeper intent of the Law by exposing the seriousness of unresolved anger and urging them to pursue reconciliation as true citizens of God's kingdom. We can understand how pursuing reconciliation is essential for life in God's kingdom. Why is pursuing reconciliation essential for life in the Kingdom? The text gives three compelling reasons why pursuing reconciliation is essential for life in the Kingdom.

Read text: Matthew 5:21-26 (ESV) ²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

WHY PURSUING RECONCILIATION IS ESSENTIAL FOR KINGDOM LIVING:

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1. Because it reflects our new Christlike character.

EXP: (21-22) Jesus speaks of the heart attitude behind “murder” (21) and “anger” (22), calling His followers to a higher standard. His Kingdom standard requires a new Christlike character that keeps the 6th commandment from the heart—in both attitude and action. Kingdom citizens will reflect this new character.

“**You have heard**” (21) - Jesus begins the first of His six antitheses, (murder, adultery, divorce, swearing, retribution, and response to enemies) comparing the external interpretation of the Law with His deeper interpretation. For He didn’t come to “abolish” (17) the Law, but to “fulfill” it, not to destroy, but to deepen it:

Matthew 5:20 (ESV) For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

“**Murder**” (21) (φονεύω, *phoneuō*) - to kill, murder. KJV “Thou shalt not kill.” (Ex.20:13). 6th commandment.

“**Liable**” (21,22 - 4X) (ἔνοχος, *enochos*) - in danger of, guilty of, subject to, liable.

“**Judgment**” (21,22 - 2X) (κρίσις, *krisis*) - A reference to the penalty for murder proscribed in Scripture:

Leviticus 24:17 (ESV) Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death.

“**I say to you**” (22,26 - 2X) - This is the 3rd (and 4th in v26) use of His authoritative first person formula.

“**Angry**” (22) (ὀργίζω, *orgizō*) - angry, wrathful, aroused to anger. KJV “without a cause.” Not all anger is sin, but man’s anger usually is. Anger is the attitude most often behind murder.

“**Brother**” (22,23,24 - 4X) (ἀδελφός, *adelphos*) - “Jesus primarily has in mind interpersonal relationships within the community of faith, rather than broader social ethics.” (Craig Blomberg *NAC Commentary*).

“**Insults**” (22) (ῥακά, *raka*) - An Aramaic insult. Lit., “empty-head.” “good-for-nothing.” Not smart.

“**Council**” (22) (συνέδριον, *synedrion*) - assembly of judges. The Sanhedrin was the great council.

“**Fool**” (22) (μωρός, *mōros*) - Not just intellectual slowness but moral foolishness. Origin for “moron.”

“**Hell of fire**” (22) (γέενναν τοῦ πυρός, *geenna tou puros*) - Lit., “Gehenna of fire.” “Comes from the Hebrew *gēy hinnom*, “Valley of Hinnom,” a valley south of Jerusalem where kings Ahaz (2 Chr 28:3) and Manasseh (2 Chr 33:6) offered child sacrifices to the pagan god Molech. ... it became the place to burn refuse and to dispose of corpses (Isa 66:24; Jer 31:40). ... It is a place of unquenchable fire (Matt 3:12; 22:13; 25:30) and eternal punishment (Matt 25:46)” (Danny Akin, *Sermon*, p.54).

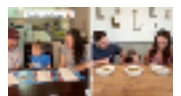
ARG: In Christ, we are a “new creation,” given the “ministry of reconciliation.”

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 (ESV) ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

We are to “put on” Christ’s character and let Christ “rule in our hearts.”

Colossians 3:12-15 (ESV) ¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.

ILL: Have you seen the video going around called the “Cookie Challenge? Toddlers are faced with an ethical challenge, they get 2 cookies, one of the parents gets one and one none. What will the child do? How has being a member of the family shaped their character?



APP: Ask yourself: “Does my response to conflict look more like Christ or like the world?” Do you struggle with uncontrolled anger? Have you been guilty of “murdering” someone with ugly name-calling? How could you “put on” the character of Christ this week and pursue reconciliation with someone?

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2. Because it recognizes how discord hinders our worship.

EXP: (23-24) Jesus explains that discord hinders us from “offering” (23) our worship to God and calls us to “first” (24) pursue reconciliation before coming to God in worship.

“**Gift**” (23) (δῶρον, *dōron*) - a gift, present; of sacrifices and other gifts offered to God as worship.

“**Remember**” (23) (μνάομαι, *mnaomai*) - as you bring your worship, the Spirit brings to your mind a broken or unreconciled relationship in the family of faith (“brother”).

“**First**” (24) (πρῶτον, *prōton*) - first in time or place, first in rank or priority.

“**Be reconciled**” (24) (διαλλάσσω, *diallassō*) - to change the mind, reconcile, to renew friendship. “Forget the worship service and be reconciled to your brother; and only then worship God. Men love to substitute ceremony for integrity, purity, and love; but Jesus will have none of it.” (D.A. Carson, *Jesus’ Sermon*, p.45)

ARG: **Worship that does not come from the heart is not acceptable to God.**

Psalm 51:16-17 (NLV) ¹⁶ For You are not happy with a gift given on the altar in worship, or I would give it. You are not pleased with burnt gifts. ¹⁷ The gifts on an altar that God wants are a broken spirit. O God, You will not hate a broken heart and a heart with no pride.

When we’re aren’t reconciled to our spouse it “hinders” our prayers.

1 Peter 3:7 (ESV) Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

ILL: Picture a married couple having a huge argument on the way to church. They walk in, smile at the greeters, and begin to sing worship songs together—while still seething inside. The disconnect is obvious. How can you pour out praise to God with a heart that’s closed off to your neighbor, spouse, sibling, or friend?



APP: Ask yourself: “Have I come to worship today with an unreconciled heart?” Before you sing or serve, make peace. Don’t just worship with your lips—worship with a clean heart! Jesus says, “Leave church and go be reconciled to your brother!” Pursuing reconciliation is essential for Kingdom living and worship.

3. Because it responds quickly before things escalate.

EXP: (25-26) Jesus warns of the consequences of not reconciling “quickly” (25), urging us to settle matters quickly before they lead to greater judgment. Notice the change from brother to “accuser” (25).

“**Come to terms**” (25) (εὐνοέω, *eunoeō*) - to be well- minded, i.e. reconcile:—agree. Come to agreement.

“**Quickly**” (25) (ταχύ, *tachy*) - quickly, speedily (without delay)

“**Accuser**” (25 - 2X) (ἀντίδικος, *antidikos*) - opponent, adversary, enemy.

“**Judge-guard-prison**” (25) - the human justice system at work. The convict is passed from one to another.

“**Truly, I say**” (26) - use of His authoritative first person formula, with “Truly” (“amen”).

“**Last penny**” (26) - You’ll lose your freedom and all your money. Wouldn’t it have been better to reconcile?

ARG: **Deal in truth. Avoid uncontrolled anger. It can lead to the devil!**

Ephesians 4:25-27 (NLV) ²⁵ So stop lying to each other. Tell the truth to your neighbor. We all belong to the same body. ²⁶ If you are angry, do not let it become sin. Get over your anger before the day is finished. ²⁷ Do not let the devil start working in your life.

Be quick to listen, to reconcile. Be slow to speak and to become angry.

James 1:19-20 (NLT) ¹⁹ Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. ²⁰ Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.

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ILL: Have you been seeing the result of forest fires in California and more recently in the Carolinas? Anger and discord is like a fire in a dry forest—leave it unchecked, and it doesn't just smolder, it spreads. What starts as hurt feelings can quickly turn into resentment, gossip, division, and broken relationships if not addressed swiftly.



APP: Ask yourself: “Am I waiting too long to deal with conflict? Am I letting it fester?” Don't give anger the upper hand. Don't assume time will heal all wounds—it often makes them worse if left unattended. Pursuing reconciliation is essential for Kingdom living and for avoiding where possible unnecessary consequences.

CONCLUSION: Kingdom living isn't just about avoiding outward sin—it's about pursuing inward transformation. Jesus' words in Matthew 5:21–26 remind us that *pursuing reconciliation is essential for life in God's kingdom*.

Why? Because it...

1. reflects our new Christlike character,
2. recognizes how discord hinders our worship,
3. responds quickly before things escalate.

But let's be honest—reconciliation is hard. It requires humility, courage, and grace. It calls us to lay down our pride and trust Jesus to help us do what we cannot do on our own.

So today, is there someone you need to forgive? Someone you need to seek forgiveness from? Don't delay. By faith, take the first step. Trust Christ to give you the strength to reconcile—because when we do, we not only restore broken relationships... we reflect the heart of the King Himself.

Let's depend on Him—and let's live as true citizens of His kingdom.

Let's pray.