

Grab your Bibles and turn to Matthew, chapter 5. In fact, for the next few weeks Matthew 5 is where we'll be. If you're a guest with us this morning, I'm glad you're here. Regardless of how you've come in here this morning, we're excited you have been drawn into this place by the Lord. If you don't have a Bible, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. If you're not familiar with the Bible, we'll put some of the pages on the screen for you to be able to see what page to go to. We're just really glad you're here.

To catch you up and so that I don't lose you for what we're talking about, as we've said in this series called *City on a Hill*, once we were not a people but now we are a people. Once we were defined by other factors other than what Christ has done for us on the cross. We were defined by maybe socioeconomic status, maybe educational level, maybe the color of our skin, maybe our heritage in one line or another. What Christ has accomplished in adopting us as sons and daughters is he has taken us and made us a singular people with all of these different backgrounds and all of these different traits. He has taken us and he said, "This is my people."

The people of God are made up of every tribe, tongue, and nation on earth, every ethnic background, every socioeconomic status, and every background conceivable. So we did that little test. There is a lot of drug and alcohol addiction, either former or current struggle, in this room right now. There are those who have come out of families where we were loved and encouraged, and a lot of us came out of families where we were not loved and encouraged. On and on we could go. We've come from different places but God has made us a people. Because God has made us a people, I am to interact with you and you are to interact with me in a certain way.

I am to give of myself so you might become all God would have for you to become. My gifts, my time, my energy, my efforts are given to you for your good and the glory of God, and there's reciprocity in that, so that we love one another in this way, that we seek to outdo one another in honor. I'm always looking for how I can honor you, encourage you, and edify you in the Lord. Why? Because we are a people. We are family. We are a city on a hill. In God making us a people, God's plan is for us to be salt and light in the world. *Salt* meaning we serve as a preserving agent in culture at large, and then we reflect the light of Jesus Christ to the world around us.

We learned last week that Jesus said we were going to need a superseding righteousness, a greater righteousness, than the righteousness of the Pharisees and scribes. We pushed hard last week that that's really weighty, because in the Old Testament there are 613 commands. Three hundred sixty-five of those are negative, "Thou shalt not." Two hundred forty-eight of those are positive, "Thou shalt." The Pharisees and scribes nailed those things. If that's a sport, you got blown out. Are you with me? You don't win against them. They tithed on what was in their cupboards. Did anybody bring some ham with them this morning? No.

So in regard to external righteousness, these guys are beyond where we currently are, maybe even what we're currently *capable* of, and Jesus said, "You'd better have a better righteousness than theirs, or you'll never see the kingdom of heaven." Then he goes on to change the touchdown. He changes the scorecard. He says their meaning for the word *righteousness* is an incomplete meaning, and he moves us from externals to internals when he talks about righteousness.

The good news is that the righteousness we find in Jesus Christ is not about external, moral conformity, but transformation of the inward man; that God is after not your disciplined will, but after your freedom. So we walked through a quick flyby on the Sermon on the Mount. We just watched how Jesus is changing the scorecard. He says, "You've heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery,' but I say if you have lust in your heart, you're guilty of the same sin."

Do you see what Jesus just did there? An external action is adultery. Most of us think, "In order for me to be right with God I need to behave. He says, 'Don't commit adultery.' I'm not going to commit adultery, and God and I are cool." Jesus says, "Don't commit adultery, but that doesn't mean you and God are cool, and it doesn't mean your heart has been set free. Don't lust." That's monumentally harder, isn't it? Does anybody want to argue that? "You know, it's much easier to not lust than it is to not commit adultery." No one would argue that, ever.

The gospel is after the freedom of heart that then transforms our external behavior, not the conformity of our external behavior by our will with no joy in our hearts. Are you with me? So that's where we were last week. Now we're going to start walking through the details of what Jesus does in our hearts in certain areas that he deemed important enough to put into this, his most famous sermon. The first one is from "no murder" to "no anger." We're going to talk about anger today.

Now I need to say some things before we get into the text. Biblically, there's a type of anger that God is okay with, but it looks a lot like you not being angry. I just want to be fair, so let me unpack that for you. The Bible says it's okay to be angry with someone, but this is what it looks like: You bless those who curse

you, you pray for those who are angry with you and who you are angry with, and all the while you do good to them.

That doesn't sound like anger to me. Wait a minute. I'm blessing you, I'm praying for you, and I'm doing good to you? That sounds like we're boys. It sounds like I'm taking you out for a movie. That doesn't sound like I'm angry. That sounds like we like each other. But God goes, "The biblical kind of anger that's righteous anger involves you blessing those who curse you, praying for those who hate you, and doing good to them in the middle of their hate."

The text we're talking about today isn't talking about good anger; it's talking about the other kind of anger. Just in case you're wondering if that explosion you had on your friend, roommate, spouse, or children was somehow righteous anger, without knowing all of the details, let me just venture out and say, "Probably not." I needed to explain that right out of the gate.

Then I need to do this in order for me to be clean before the Lord and walk in integrity with you. I have had a miserable week on this front. I have snapped at everyone in my house this week. Literally, no one who lives in my home made it through the week without me snapping at them. In fact, my latest tantrum occurred yesterday at 1:00, four hours before our first service. I completely melted down on my 3-year-old for acting 3 years old. She was not acting like the young, well-adjusted woman I expect her to act like at 3, and I lost my mind.

I don't even know who that guy is, but I'd beat him up if I could. "You don't talk to my daughter that way." I mean, I lost my mind in a way that if anyone had seen it, it would have been embarrassing, ridiculously embarrassing. In fact, if some of our elders saw it, I probably would have just resigned. Like, "You're right. You got me. There you go," and just moved on. It was awful. So I get in my car. You know, Norah is crying. I don't care. I'm getting in my car. I'm coming up to work. I get here, I open up my notes, I start looking over what I'm preaching on, and I'm like, "Dadgum it." So I have to call my wife. "Where are you?"

"We're at the house."

"Is Norah in her nap or is she still awake?"

"No, she's still awake." So I got in my car and drove home. I picked up Norah, put her on my lap, and just said, "Hey, that was uncalled for, and Daddy needs to ask for your forgiveness. Will you forgive Daddy?" to which she responded, "Can I watch *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends*?" I'm kind of glad they heal quickly. She's already completely over it. I'm devastated in spirit. I'm crying, trying to apologize for wounding the soul of my daughter, and she's like, "It's cool, Dad. It's cool. Go back to work."

So I have had an awful week on this front, so this sermon has beaten me up just as much as it'll beat anyone else. Does anyone else have these moments where something comes out of you and you're like, "Who is *that* person?" Yeah. Now that helps me, not because I feel better about me, but I just feel like we're all wicked together. Now that we're all wicked together, we can do some work. Since this seems to be on almost everyone's radar... (The people who didn't raise their hands, I'm guessing you guys are the recipients of this?)

Let's pick it up in verse 21 of Matthew 5. **"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'" Verse 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."**

I want to stop there and show you as much as I can and as best as I can by the Holy Spirit's power how desperately God loves you and is for you. Here's what he just said. He just said, "Hey listen, you've heard it said, you know this is true, that if you murder someone you're going to be liable for that, you're going to be judged, and there's going to be justice on that, but I say to you if you're angry in your heart, you're going to be liable also."

Why does that make God loving? Because God is saying, "Hey, if you murder someone, of course you're going to be judged, but I would rather you just have freedom of heart to not always be angry, to not walk in the kind of anger that would ever lead to that, and actually be set free from those kind of outbursts that might eventually end with you choking someone out." Here's why Jesus is so serious about anger. Jesus is serious about anger, and there are two things that stand out in the Scriptures about why God is so serious about angry hearts.

First, to allow anger to grow and fester in your heart is to give the Enemy a foothold in your life. I know some of you are way too enlightened to believe in devils and demons, but you're enlightened to your own peril. Ephesians 4:26-27 says, **"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."** If you just track the Scriptures, what we know about our Enemy, this lion who is seeking someone to devour, is that he is the father of lies. What Satan and demons excel at is the art of lying and having us believe that lies are true. That's the predominate role of the Enemy in our lives: To lie to us and have us embrace things that are a lie.

What happens when you let anger fester in your heart, grow in your heart, and you don't proactively handle the anger in your heart, is you become experts in other people's weaknesses and become blind to their strengths. You start saying things like, "You always," or "You never." In *my* house that's a 15-yard penalty.

That's a flag. Nowhere are you overstating more than when you're in a fight with someone and you go, "You always [do whatever]. You never [do whatever]."

What you're revealing about you when you say that is you've become an expert on where they are weak, and you have become blind to where they are strong. What you've done is you've taken *your* strengths, and you've laid *your* strengths against *their* weaknesses, and you have made a case for your anger. Because *you're* awesome at this and *they* stink at that, and then everywhere you look, you'll justify and fuel your rage. "Well I bring *her*... I don't know why she doesn't bring me..." "I clean the dishes. I don't know why *he* can't just clean the dishes out this one time." Right?

So you'll start to elevate your own strengths and compare those strengths to their weaknesses, and guess what? You win, and you fuel that rage. How well does that work out in the home? Happy home? Do you get to cuddle a lot when that's the environment? How's the romance flickering in *that* house? Are roommates getting along if that's the temperature? How are things going with your kids?

Do you know how many relationships have disintegrated because anger wasn't dealt with and we became experts at where other people are weak and became blind to their strengths? We couldn't rejoice in the good things they do, couldn't even *see* the good things they do, because we had become such an expert at all their shortcomings and failures, while completely owning or being ignorant to any of ours. To not be serious about anger in our hearts is to give the Enemy a foothold in our lives that causes a lot of problems for us.

Here's another reason why it's really, really serious. Not only do anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, resentment, and jadedness give the Devil a foothold, but they also have the ability not only to destroy you, but to destroy those around you. Hebrews 12:14-15: **"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled..."**

Here's what's interesting about the analogy the Scripture uses here. Roots are under the surface, right? So when he's saying, "root of bitterness," he's referencing not what's visible, but actually what's *invisible*. He's saying, "Hey, be careful of that root, because when it does spring up..." Anger can work itself out in a thousand different ways. Some of us when we get angry we explode. Some of us when we get angry we withdraw. "I'm so angry with you, I'm not going to give you the pleasure of being around the awesomeness of me. I'm going to punish you by withdrawing how awesome I am from you." We pull back and we pout, and... "What's wrong?" "Nothing." That's anger. Pouting is anger.

Then sometimes it's tears. Sometimes anger is tears. Tears maybe because we're hurt, or tears because maybe we understand that tears hurt. Anger works itself out in all of these different ways. We'll discuss a couple more that are actually in the text here in a minute, but the Bible just said, "Watch your roots," because if you let bitterness root and you let it start to supply nutrients to your externals, when it blossoms it's going to defile not just you, but all of those around you.

When I got married and we started having children, that was a terrifying thing for me, because if I have to reap the effects of my rebellion against God... I mean, I'm not all right with that, but I'm not wounding my wife or my children with my idiocy; it's just me. In this text, if you let rage, bitterness, unforgiveness, and jadedness exist in your heart, you're going to defile those around you. Let me flesh that out for you just a tiny bit.

Saturday Night Live rolled out a character about six or seven years ago called Debbie Downer. Are you familiar with Debbie Downer? No matter how awesome or epic the thing was, she was like, "Mwa, mwa, mwa. I've had better. This is what was wrong with that." Bitter, jaded, angry, unforgiving people are evangelists into their jaded worldview. They refuse to let other people experience the pleasure of things. They point out weaknesses. They point out failures. They point out shortcomings. They are jaded men and women who want to invite others into their unforgiveness, bitterness, and rage. So they will be very quick to dampen your enthusiasm about places, people, things, and ideas because of their own resentment, bitterness, and unforgiveness.

So a couple of things. One, I think you need to look deep into your own heart and see, "Is this the type of person I am? Am I known for my critical spirit?" I've heard some people brag about it. "I just have a real critical eye." Congratulations? Michael Bleecker, who leads worship here at Flower Mound, one of my really good friends... Everything is awesome. It doesn't matter what it is. It's just awesome. "Oh, this is a great burger."

"It's just McDonald's, man."

"It's great!" Just everything is awesome. I want to be around guys like that. It just doesn't take much to impress them. They think everything is amazing. Then that kind of rubs off, doesn't it? "It *is* a good burger." Then on the other side of things, if you get someone who always is complaining, don't you get sucked into that too? Don't you get drawn into that also?

So again, the community of faith, God's city on a hill, we're serious about dealing with anger, because not only does it give the Enemy a foothold in our lives, but when it's all said and done, it defiles not just us but those around us. Where I've been wounded I don't want to drag my wife into the wound. Where I'm jaded, I

want the innocence and the romance of life to keep existing in my children. I want wonderment and joy to be there as long...

Now are they going to get popped? Yes, it's a fallen world, but I don't want Daddy to pop it. I want wonderment and amazement and joy to be there as long as it can. I don't want to be the guy like, "Well, you know, that was awesome, but you know there's a better one, and that better one is..." I don't want to be that guy. If you're not going to *be* that guy, if you're not going to *be* that woman, you have to let the Lord work on your heart. You have to deal with anger.

How does anger flesh itself out? Well, the text gave two predominate ways you can spot anger that's residual, built-up, always-there anger. Two ways. First, through *insults*. There are two ways to insult people. There's *active*. *Active* is just blatant, in-your-face insult. "I don't think you're the sharpest knife in the drawer." That's an active insult. You don't have to go, "I wonder if he... What does he mean?" "I mean, you're not sharp." That's an active insult. "You're a moron." That's *active*.

Passive insults are confusing, and they put you into a vortex of doubt and concern and confusion. A *passive insult* is an insult wrapped in a compliment. Years ago I was preaching at a large First Baptist Church, very formal and traditional. I tried to behave myself. I wore my suit, tucked in my shirt, and wore a nice tie. They said, "We need you to go 30 minutes." If you've been here long, how nearly impossible is that? Sometimes I don't get out of my intro in 30 minutes.

I pared it down. It took me just as long to pare down the sermon as it did to *write* the sermon. I pared it down to 30 minutes, nailed it at the 30-minute mark, and felt good about it. About three rows deep, center of course, right in the line of sight, this old guy has his arms folded and his legs kicked out in the aisle, and he's just glaring. Some of the crowd would giggle, and other people would take notes, and he's just scowling at me the whole time.

The service is over. I have to go shake everybody's hands. I don't know how that got into Baptist DNA, but I had to go shake everybody's hands. I had to go walk to the door and then I'm shaking everybody's hands, just wondering, "Who's going to give me the flu? Which one of these people is going to get me sick?" I shook all their hands. (I'm a bit of a germaphobe; it's all right.) I shook all these hands, and then here he comes. I can see him in line. So I'm going, "Oh, okay. Well maybe this guy doesn't despise me." Then he got up to me and he shook my hand and he goes, "You know what? For someone who's not educated, you did pretty good."

Here's what happens. Maybe, just maybe (I'm going to give him this), maybe he was genuinely trying to encourage me. Maybe in his head he was like, "This kid hasn't been to seminary. He's still in college.

Pretty good." That's how I went. I'm like, *What is he trying to say? Hey, listen old man.* I didn't say that. I was just like, "Thank you." But then the rest of the day it bugged me.

Does anybody else have passive-aggressive people like this? They'll say things and you're like, "I think you're trying to insult me." But you can't even confront them on it, because if you confront them they're like, "That's not what I said. I said you did a good job considering the fact that you're not formally educated. I don't know why you're angry at me right now." It totally could have been my insecurity.

Here's what I've learned to do on passive insults. I agree with the compliment overzealously. If I could go back in time and I'm in that line again and the guy said, "You know, for a guy without any education, you did really well," I'd be like, "You're right. I nailed that sermon. Thank you." Because now, the rest of the day it's on him, not on me. The rest of the day *he's* going, "I don't think he got my point." *I'm* not going, "I wonder if he was trying to insult me."

So if you're passive-aggressive with me, I'm just going to take the good part of what you said, and I'm going to elevate it way beyond where you did it, and I might even hug you and give you five for that. "Thanks, man. Killed it." So that's the way to deal with that if you... I say a lot about Jesus and you've never applauded like that, and on that you did. That's embarrassing for you. That's an active insult. That's active.

Now, in the end here, if you have a heart that breathes out insults to people, I don't want to let you off the hook, because here's what happens to most of us. Most of us lack the courage to insult anyone to their face, so we take it behind the scenes. We're not known as an insulter; we simply insult other people to other people. Don't think that because you're not bold enough to tell somebody what you think your heart is free. If you, in backrooms, love to run your mouth about other people and then when you see them you're like, "Hey," that's a problem. Do you hear me? That's a problem. *Insults.*

Then it marks itself, and it almost seems redundant but it's not. He moves on from insults and he says if you call someone a fool, or "Raca," you're in liability of the hell of fire. *Raca*, or this term *fool*, means obstinance. On one hand anger reveals itself in *insults*, and in another way, an angry heart reveals itself in *obstinance*, which translates, "I will not help you in any way. If I can make things difficult on you, I am going to make things difficult on you."

Again, it's kind of passive. It's not in your face, but it's kind of behind the scenes. "I don't want you to succeed, and I will rejoice when you stumble and fail." It's *obstinance*. "I will not serve you, I will not help you. In fact, if I can kind of wound you, I'm going to do that." On both of these fronts, here's what's amazing to me. People think this is just fine; this is just how we interact with one another. In reality, the tongue and the mouth do far more damage than any physical blow could ever put on you.

In tenth or eleventh grade I got in a fistfight with a kid named Jimmy, and I lost. By the time I got home, my left eye was just kind of closed. I mean, full-on closed. My mom was like, "What happened?" "Nothing." Jimmy and I are great friends to this day. He lives in the Metroplex. In fact, he called me this past week. Here's the thing. I have never lain in bed at night and gone, "Oh, if I could just go back and do that again, this is how I would handle it." I just don't.

Now I learned a lot of things on that day. I learned that I don't need to fight fair. God has not given me the physical body to fight fair. I need to fight dirty. I need a weapon. Throw honor out the window and survive. That's what I learned that day. In the end, though, there have been people who have said things to me, and those sentences are haunting even now as a 38-year-old man. The mouth is unbelievably powerful to build up and encourage, or to tear down and wound.

What you do when you're obstinate or you insult is your interest is not wounding the physical body; you want to wound the soul. You want to hurt them. You want to hurt them in such a way that it haunts them. You want them to feel pain. Not *externally*, but *internally*. That's wicked, and I don't know how we give ourselves the hall pass on that. I don't know how we soften that so that's not really what we're trying to do.

When you're insulting, when you're obstinate towards your brother or sister in Christ, or anyone, you are in essence going, "I'm interested in wounding your soul. That's what I want to do. I want to hurt you in a way that's haunting. Ten years from now I want you to replay that sentence in your head." Some of us purposely make those statements, and sometimes it just slips out. But the mouth reveals the heart. The mouth reveals the heart. "Well, it doesn't." Okay, it's you and then there's the Bible. So I have your interpretation of how life works and the Creator of the universe's interpretation, and although I like you and I think you're cool, I'm probably going to go with the Author of all things.

Insults and obstinance are ways that an angry heart works itself out and reveals itself. So look at how Jesus wants us to respond to this, starting in verse 23. "**So...**" That's a great word, because he's connecting it to what he just said. Since anger is such a dangerous thing to your soul and to the souls of those around you... **"So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."**

Here's where we're really going to get into reflecting the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ to the world around us. Do you see what he just did there? The first couple of verses that we're in are talking about *your* anger and *your* angry heart and why it's destructive to *you*. Now he has flipped the thing on its head, and now he's talking about how we interact with one another as a community of faith. He says, "If you come

into the house of God, and there at the house of God you remember that your brother has something against you..."

So in Jesus' scenario, are *you* the one who's angry? No. Someone is angry at *you*. Jesus is so serious about how we interact with one another on this anger deal, that he's saying, "If you come to worship me and you remember there that your brother has something against you, you press pause on worship. You press pause on worship and you go make things right. You go seek to reconcile with your brother." That's hard. In a day and age where you can hide, like our day and age, it's hard to work at reconciliation.

Let me point out a couple of things you need to know out of this text. If you're in this service right now because there's someone in another service you're trying to avoid, that's a problem. If you're in this church right now because there's somebody at another church you're trying to avoid, that's a problem for your soul. That's a major issue. So much of an issue that Jesus just said, "Hey man, don't come up to my altar with that. You go make it right."

God puts the onus on us. If someone is angry at us because of sin, or I'll say, even because of a blundering... I've had people angry at me before and it had nothing to do with sin. I just messed up. I wasn't purposely trying to hurt them or purposely trying to make them angry; it just happened. You and I need, in that moment, to own what we can, and maybe even own *more* than we can, for the good of the relationship and the glory of Christ.

That means I need to seek out who's angry at me, and I need to own whatever I can. Owning what I can does not mean, "Sorry I acted that way because you did these things that forced me to act that way." That's not you owning anything. That is not an apology; that's a passive insult. I need to own all I can own, and maybe even *more* than I need to own, without any expectation whatsoever that there'll be any reciprocity in that. That's hard.

Several years ago I had a massive falling out with a guy. He felt extremely insulted by me. He felt like I disrespected him. And I had no idea I did any of that. In fact, when I saw him I was like, "What's up?" It took one of those things where I was like, "Hey, are we cool?" You could just tell he was withdrawn. Then when I finally sat down and said, "Hey, are we all right? You're not really returning calls. We're not hanging out much. Are we all right?" he was just like... I mean, he just word vomited all over the table.

My first... I don't know if you're picking it up. I'm a bit aggressive in personality type, so I just started talking about how everything he said wasn't true or was revisionist. "That's not how that went down. That's not what I meant." That was my initial reaction. You know this whole, "Don't let the sun go down on your anger"? This was a situation where we needed the sun to go down a couple of times. If you think I'm

straying outside the bounds of Scripture, you can press on me with an email or something this week, but I'm not.

There comes a time where you're exhausted, weary, and you just need some space so you can talk like mature grownups. That lunch had disintegrated into something that wasn't helpful, so let's take some days and pull back. I just wanted to pray, and then I wrote a long email just owning everything I could own and then some, and shot it to him. Then he shot me back an email and said, "Hey man, thank you for that, thank you for owning these things, but if our relationship is going to continue, this is what I require."

Some of those things on that list of what he would require were ridiculous, and I would even say would have me walking in ways that wouldn't be in tune and in step with the Lord and the gospel. So now this thing is really tense. What am I going to do here? I've owned more than I think I even needed to own, and what I got back in response was not like, "Thank you. I totally forgive you. Let's move on." That's not what I got. I got, "Close, but here's how you're going to need to prove that you're really..." There's penance involved. I'm Protestant.

In the end, I had to write him back and just go, "Here's what I'm going to do, bro. I'm going to love you. I'm going to encourage you. When I feel like calling, I'm going to call you. I'm going to ask you to go out and get a cup of coffee or have a meal or come over to the house. I'm going to encourage you like I always have. I'm just going to be your friend. I feel clean before the Lord in this moment. If you want to take part in that friendship, then praise God. If you don't, man, I feel clean before the Lord. I have no ill will toward you. I'm in a good spot with you. I'm in a good spot with the Lord.

My plan is to be your friend, and then moving forward we'll see what the Lord wants to do. So I'm going to call you, and if you don't want to answer the phone, screen me. I'm not going to go, 'I wonder why he's screening me?' Just screen me. If I leave you a voicemail and you don't respond back, I'll just believe you're still kind of in a hurt spot and you don't want to engage, and I'll back away. I'm not going to show up at your house every day until we get this thing fixed. I'm just going to tell you I'm going to be your friend. I'm going to give you space, but I'm going to be your friend."

Then over the next couple of years, God did a really good work in that, but I want to be honest with you. Although God has reconciled us as brothers, we're still not great friends like we were before. I don't know that we'll *ever* be great friends like we were before. But there's no animosity; there's no anger. There was just a season where that relationship was really strong, there was fallout, and God has not fully reconciled that, but for the sake of his name and the good of the relationship, I see him, I love him, I hug him when I see him, he hugs me when he sees me. We're for each other. We celebrate one another. We don't rejoice when bad things happen. We're for one another. That's the reconciling work of Jesus Christ in our lives.

He's so serious about our reflection of this, that he's saying, "Own more than you have to." Do you know who took the initiative and owned more than he had to? Christ did for you. He saved you when you weren't bringing anything to the table. You didn't own your stuff. He owned it, he took it, he absorbed it, and because he did that, you and I are reconciled before God. What's happening here is he's going, "You reflect that. You reflect that to your brothers and sisters, and you reflect that to the world around you by owning more than you have to and taking the initiative."

Then look at how he ends this thing. Verse 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. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny."** Again, Jesus is not letting up on the pressure on you and me to quickly go to those who have been offended by us and make things right. He's saying, "Don't let it get to this massive point. Do work early."

Sometimes doing work early means just quickly... Not rehashing the whole event or rehashing the whole thing, but simply granting forgiveness. If you've been deeply wounded, forgiveness is something that might need to be laid down a billion times. Can we agree with one another in that? I've forgiven certain people like 30 times, and it just takes the right circumstance for me to realize, "Oops, I haven't really fully forgiven him." Some things I'm wondering if I'm just going to have to lay that forgiveness down until glory. But God's invitation is to keep laying it down. Keep laying it down and trusting him.

He's saying not only do you press pause on worship, but you're diligent. You own all you can, as much as you can, maybe even more, as quickly as you can. Don't let it grow. Don't let it fester. Don't let it change. Own your part. You don't always have to rehash every detail of an argument. Just own what you can own. That stops it from elevating. Now there are two well sources that feed bitterness, and in conclusion I want to talk about those two.

The first kind of wellspring that fuels our bitterness and causes explosions, withdrawals, and all of those things, is a failure to trust in the good, right, beautiful providence of God. We don't trust God. For me, all my meltdowns this week were over this: I'm stressed. We're currently moving. There are things happening here, things happening here, things happening over here. I'm about to go out of town for a few days. There are all these balls in the air. I don't like that. I want to feel like I'm in control. I'm completely aware that I am not in control at all, yet something deep inside of me wants to know where all of the balls are at any given time.

In this process that's not happening, so that comes out with me praying a lot through the night, waking up at 2:00 and going, "Oh yeah, there's that. Okay, Lord. I just want to lay that at your feet. There's nothing I

can do about it now. It's 2:00 in the morning." Then I fall back to sleep, and then like at 2:40, "Oh yeah, and then there's..." Then at 3:15, "That first thing. I'm worried about that first thing again that I laid down. I don't know why you gave that back to me. I'm trying to give that to you." It just goes that way until the alarm goes off. That's a failure to trust God. Think of how silly that is, that in my little head, in the moment, I'm going, "God brought me all the way through to kill me in this move." Right? "I let you survive all of that so I could destroy you now." No, but this is what happens. We don't trust God.

The second one, and I believe a far bigger one, is shame. Shame feeds anger like nothing else. Shame is gasoline on the fire of anger. Shame comes from two sources. One, secret sin is a major player in shame. The dirtier you feel, the more ashamed you feel, the more you're going to lash out at people to get the response you feel like you deserve. It's dark. Another place, and this is a really common place for shame to come from... Shame is also birthed when you believe you should be further along than you are.

We have three small children: 9, 6, and 3. I screamed at all of them this week. Our friends fit that demographic for the most part. One of the things I've seen in my wife and in other young mothers is this idea that they're supposed to be better at what they're doing than they're doing. So when anything happens that doesn't fit in their minds where they think they should be, they get frustrated and angry.

Then that spills out on the kids, on the spouses, on traffic, on wherever it can go, because in their minds they should be further along than they are; they should be better at being a wife, being a husband, being a father, being a mother than they are. When they feel like they're not doing as well as they should, they get angry instead of resting in God's delight in you where you are and his commitment to transforming you more and more and more into the likeness of his Son. I keep saying this. You have to get over you. Breathe.

What happened yesterday after I yelled at Norah and came to my office was really kind of a beautiful thing, because the Lord was just like, "Hey, you know, the whole cross thing, that was about this moment right here, this little 'Oh, how can I stand up and preach' little thing you're doing in your heart right now. Why is this about you, bro? Isn't this thing about me? Isn't this thing about what I've done, what I've accomplished, what I've handled for you? You think you're going to let that little girl's heart grow to its full potential, or am I going to do that? Who's responsible for what here, bro?"

Grace was just kind of lavished on me, and I got to just rest. I got up here boldly and just get to preach the Bible to you, knowing that I'm not where it's telling me to be, but knowing that through this really kind of hard week, he has chiseled some stuff off of me. So here's what I want to do. Would you bow your head and close your eyes? I want to ask you a couple of questions then we're going to end the service.

If you're here today and you would say, "Matt, if I have to be honest, I have an angry heart. I'm prone to outbursts. I'm prone to withdraws. I'm prone to pouting. I'm prone to all of those things. So if I had to be honest, Matt, I feel like I really have an angry heart..." If that's you, would you just lift your hand up? "I have an angry heart, Matt." If you're in Denton and Dallas, I know I can't see you, but get your hand up. It's a good practice of confession. "I have an angry heart. I'm prone to outbursts. I'm prone to pouting." Okay, put your hands down.

Maybe you didn't raise your hand there, maybe you did, but my second question is how many of you in here are going, "Oh man, I have to have a conversation with someone this week who I know is angry with me. I know we're on the outs, and I'm going to need to have that conversation. Matt, I'm not looking forward to it." If that's you, would you just lift your hand? All right, praise God. We have a real shot this week at becoming more and more and more what Christ would have us be. All right, put your hands down.

Now here's how we're going to end. I'm going to pray for us, and as I pray there are going to be men and women who line up at our campuses, in the back of the room in Denton and Dallas, and in FloMo we're going to be up front. If you need to be prayed for, if you raised your hand and you said, "Matt, I'm an angry person," let us minister to you. Let us pray for you. It's a good thing to let other people know what's going on in your heart.

If you're going to have to work at some reconciliation this week... You can't make reconciliation happen, but if you're going to take those steps, then I want to encourage you to tell someone so you can have the accountability of actually following through, because that conviction you feel right now is going to begin to wane the second you get in the parking lot. By the time you get home, it won't feel near like it feels now. You're going to need to tell someone, "I need to do this to be obedient to the Word of God and to reflect all the more clearly the glory of Christ in my life, in our church, and in those around me."

I'm going to pray. There will be men and women who are willing to pray with you, and I want to put the onus on you to come and be prayed for if you want to. There is no healing for deep-seated anger outside of Jesus Christ, so maybe some of you for the first time today just need to, again like I said last week, lay your yes down and go, "I need to put my faith in Jesus Christ. I need to have him work in me in these areas." So let me pray for us, and then you'll be free to come and be prayed for.

Father, thank you for these men and women, and thank you that you heal our hearts. For some of us our anger, our bitterness, our jadedness is not birthed out of simple insults or simple argument. Some of us have been wounded deeply, we've been abused severely, so we carry around a deep amount of hurt. I pray, Father, that you would help us trust your justice, that you would help us trust your resolve to make sure

that either grace is extended or just judgment is handed out, and that we can trust you to be our Savior, our Friend, and to be for us. It's through your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Love you guys.

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