

Murder

Scripture Reading — Matthew 5:21-22

“I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.” — Matthew 5:22

In this passage Jesus frames anger in terms of the sixth commandment (“You shall not murder,” Exodus 20:13), knowing that most of his listeners would think they hadn’t broken it. But rather than congratulating them for being obedient, Jesus explains how they have violated the spirit behind the command.

He does this by giving two examples of angry speech that are judgmental or condemning. The Aramaic word *Raca* can be translated as “idiot” or “stupid”—it’s a way of questioning the mind of someone who has wronged you. The second word Jesus uses, which is translated as “fool,” is a judgment on another person’s character.

It may seem like a stretch to compare angry speech with physical murder, but Jesus wants us to understand the power of our words. Angry speech is destructive against another person made in God’s image. It can push them into shame or self-loathing, rather than leading to fruitful repentance. And oftentimes our angry words create a cycle of retaliation and escalating anger.

So we must learn to control our anger and not to speak rashly. Thankfully, through Christ, we can find the grace to root anger and its hurtfulness out of our lives, and to become the peacemakers we are called to be.

Prayer

Lord, help me not to rush into judging people out of anger. Move me to greater grace and compassion for everyone, even those who might hurt me. Amen.

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