

MARCH 3
8A & 11AM ET



NEW LENTEN SERIES

PART 1

THAT'S WHAT



HE SAID

MATTHEW 5:21-28

A Sermon By
REV. DR. HOWARD-JOHN WESLEY
@PASTORHJW

301 S. ALFRED STREET • ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314 • ALFREDSTREET.ORG
REV. DR. HOWARD-JOHN WESLEY, SENIOR PASTOR



Date: March 4, 2024
Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
Sermon Title: That's What **He** Said - Part 1
Scripture: Matthew 5:21-26 (NIV)

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. ²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

SERMON SUMMARY

China has become the largest purveyor of “superfakes” in the world. A superfake is a knockoff of a designer product. These new imposter products are so good that neither retailers nor consumers are able to identify them easily. Over 4.2 trillion dollars of superfakes entered the economy in 2022. The obsession with these knockoffs is that they look like the real thing, but they cost much less. Pastor Wesley reminds us that there is a kind of “Superfake” Christianity that is not the real thing, that looks good, but does not cost as much as the real thing.

“Superfake” Christianity can manifest itself when we can quote the Bible but do not live according to the Bible. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus teaches us that he has come to fulfill the law, and in doing so he reinterprets Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) teachings for a contemporary audience. In Matthew 5:21 Jesus quotes the 6th commandment and reinterprets the command not to murder to include a commandment to avoid anger.

Pastor Wesley extends Jesus’ reinterpretation to highlight the following points regarding anger:

- **The Danger of Anger.** Being angry is dangerous and leads to hurting self, hurting others, compromising your walk with God, as well as your witness for God.
- **The Necessity of Reconciliation.** If anger has reared its ugly and destructive head, there is a necessity for reconciliation.
- **The Imminence of Judgment.** If anger arises, and there is no reconciliation, time may run out, which results in the danger of judgment and prison.

As we consider That's What Jesus Said about anger in the Sermon on the Mount, we must remember:

- The Sermon on the Mount is a summary of the moral teaching of teachings of Jesus.
- Everything biblical does not align with the will of Jesus Christ.
- Reliance on just the law is not enough. We must embrace grace as taught in the gospel.
- It is not enough to be able to quote the word of God; we must learn to live it.

KEY POINTS

1. There is a new obsession with “Superfake” knockoffs. People want the best, without paying the cost. Similarly, there is a “Superfake” Christianity that looks good, but does not require you to sacrifice, love others, or honor God.
2. Pastor Wesley reminds us that we do not follow Paul, Moses, or anyone else. A Christian’s understanding of the Bible must be based on the teachings of Jesus.
3. “Superfake” Christianity is heavy on the Ten Commandments and light on the Sermon on the Mount.
4. The Sermon on the Mount is not concerned with being right with God, but about being in right relationship with one another.
5. “Superfake” Christianity is living as if there are no consequences for our behaviors.
6. Jesus came to fulfill the law. The word used for fulfill means to fill up to the brim a cup that is only half filled. Jesus came to fill up our understanding of the law.
7. You are most in danger in your walk with God when you are angry.
8. Acting in anger will cost you more than the cause of your anger.
9. When we are out of “right relationship” with others, we should be uncomfortable in the presence of God.
10. The work of the Holy Spirit is to agitate us to move toward reconciliation.
11. When you know God is watching, it ought to shift the way you behave.
12. Judgment can leave us in prisons of missing the abundant life of Christ, living a life of misery, carrying burdens alone, living in fear, forsaking the anchor that keeps life steady, missing out on joy and peace, and living a life of regret.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Have you ever purchased a knock-off? How did you feel when you wore it? Did you try to pass it off as the real thing? If you could go back to the beginning of that situation, would you do anything differently?

3. The word *Christological* means an understanding of Christ and is understood as the study of Christ. Pastor Wesley mentions that everything in the Bible isn't aligned with the teaching of Jesus Christ. Can you cite an example of something in the Bible that does not align with Jesus' teaching? (Hint, remember the phrase, "You have heard it said...")

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Pastor Wesley says, "Your walk with God is most threatened when you're angry. Anger can escalate to hostility, which leads to destructive behavior." Please share an example of anger that led to a destructive act. Consider the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5 - 7. If the persons involved had followed this teaching, how might the situation have been improved?
2. Pastor Wesley notes that part of the work of the Spirit is to convict our hearts of what we've done to hurt or damage another. The same Spirit also calls us to reconcile. Share with your village a time when you felt convicted of harming another and, if applicable, how the Holy Spirit empowered you to reconcile.
3. There is a form of Christianity that looks like the real thing, but does not cost as much. As you consider being a true disciple of Christ, what do you think is the cost of our discipleship? What do we owe in order to be a follower of Christ?
4. Pastor says "Superfake" Christianity may quote the laws of Moses, but not the Sermon on the Mount and may be clear about abomination, but fuzzy about grace. Why do you think it is easier for some people to focus on law and not on grace? What is it about the law that seems to attract some? How would you characterize the difference in law and grace

5. If destructive anger is dangerous, we must work to remove it from our lives. How does one work to eliminate destructive anger in our lives?

“CAN I PUSH IT?” QUESTIONS

1. Pastor Wesley mentioned people who foment destructive anger in the world. As Christians, we are called to be peacemakers. What is the Church’s role in confronting anger that is destructive? What is the Church’s role in working toward peace in the conflicts throughout the world?

2. Though Pastor Wesley used the phrase, “Time is running out” to encourage us toward reconciliation. Applied to the current state of the world, where do you sense that time is running out? What is our individual and/or collective responsibility in responding?

FOR INDIVIDUAL OR VILLAGE STUDY

ACTIVITY/SPIRIT WORK

1. Pastor Wesley mentions how necessary it is for us to reconcile with family, friends, and others within our community. Think of a time when you’ve attempted reconciliation, and it did not work. Read today’s scripture again and the call to worship scripture (Romans 12:14-18) and write a prayer asking God to reveal Godly wisdom.

2. In your heart, whom have you knowingly done wrong? What does this sermon call you to do? Please go back and find the portion of the sermon that speaks to you and calls you to a next step. Write down what action you think best to take. Spend time praying about this and ask God for a timeline to help you move toward the necessity of reconciliation.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Pastor reminds us that “Superfake” Christians act as if there are no heavenly consequences to their actions. Have you ever behaved as a fake Christian? How did you recognize that you were acting in this manner? What did you do to rectify it?
2. Pastor referenced the symbolism of the church built atop Elmina Castle in Ghana and how this typifies the act of reciting, but not applying, the word. Can you think of any other buildings, structures, garments or symbols in life that illustrate this type of disconnect?
3. Pastor Wesley says, when you’ve hurt someone and you haven’t tried to reconcile, judgment is inevitable. Failure to repent and make amends for any harm caused not only affects those harmed, but can block our blessings and make life a prison. What are some of the privileges the Pastor said we risk losing when we don’t humble ourselves, repent and heal the harm we caused?

4. Pastor Wesley reminds us that the word of God can be used in a manner that does not align with the will of God. Has anyone ever used the word of God in your presence that you believe was not aligned with the will of God? How did you respond? What did you learn from this experience?

5. If there is a need for reconciliation, we need to know what it means. What is your definition of reconciliation? What are the necessary steps to move toward this resolve?

6. Considering the danger of being angry, what are some practical ways you manage your anger in love and work relationships?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. The Greek word underneath the word fulfill in Matthew 5:17 is, πληρώω (pronounced, play-ro'-o). It means to make full or to fill up. When Jesus said he came to fulfill the law, he was saying that he came to fill up the full meaning of the law.
2. The Hebrew Bible is called, The Tanakh. This is an acronym derived from the names of the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible: Torah (Instruction, or Law, also called the Pentateuch), Nevi'im (the Prophets), and the Ketuvim (all of the other writings). When Jesus refers to the law and the prophets, he is referring to the Torah and the Nevi'im.
3. Christology is the study of the teaching and doctrine concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Christology is concerned with the nature and work of Jesus, including such matters as the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and his human and divine natures and their relationship.