

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

Matthew 5:21–26

The Law Intensified & The Kingdom Inaugurated

Preaching Date: June 28, 2026

Opening Prayer

Ask God to give us the courage to let His holy Law hold a mirror to our hearts and expose our hidden anger, contempt, and self-righteousness. Ask Him to keep us from the illusion of external religion, reminding us that He desires truth in our inward being. Ask Him to grant us a profound awe for Jesus Christ, who paid our unpayable debt down to the absolute last penny. Finally, ask Him to empower us by His Holy Spirit to yield our rights, forgive our adversaries, and passionately pursue peace with our brothers and sisters.

Recap

In Matthew 5:21–26, Jesus provides His first radical example of what it means for our righteousness to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. He takes the widely accepted Sixth Commandment—"You shall not murder"—and rescues it from the shallow, external interpretations of the religious elite. By equating unrighteous anger, quiet contempt, and casual insults with the physical act of murder, Jesus shatters the illusion of our own innocence. He demonstrates that the Law of God demands total internal conformity, placing the entire human race under the just condemnation of God's courtroom.

Because the Law exposes our hearts as factories of malice, we are driven entirely to the Covenant of Grace. Jesus does not leave us without hope, but transitions us into the supernatural ethic of His inaugurated Kingdom. He commands His citizens to live fundamentally different lives: we are to urgently pursue reconciliation with our brothers, even leaving our sacred worship to do so, and we are to swiftly yield our rights to our adversaries.

Ultimately, Jesus calls us to a posture of peacemaking that can only be fueled by the Gospel. We can yield our rights and forgive others because Christ intercepted us on our way to ultimate judgment, stood before the Father in our place, and paid our infinite debt with His own blood.

Understanding the Text

1. What is the significance of Jesus's repeated formula, "You have heard that it was said... but I say to you"?
2. How does Jesus expand both the definition and the penalty of murder in verse 22?
3. Why would Jesus's command in verses 23–24 to interrupt a temple sacrifice to go make peace have been so shocking to a first-century Jewish audience?
4. What eschatological and spiritual warning is Jesus conveying in verses 25–26 with the imagery of the judge, the prison, and the "last penny"?

Personal Reflection & Application

1. In what ways are you tempted to act like the *Vasa* warship—obsessing over managing your external behavior and reputation while ignoring a heart rotting with anger or bitterness?
2. Are you currently using "justified frustration" as a loophole to assassinate someone's character in your mind or with your words?
3. Jesus explicitly says to go if *your brother* has something against you. Is there a relationship where you need to take the initiative to make peace, even if you feel you only own a tiny percentage of the blame?
4. When faced with an adversary or someone demanding their pound of flesh, how does remembering that Christ paid your infinite debt free you from fiercely defending your earthly rights?

God Has More to Say

The Heart and Murder

- 1 John 3:15
- Mark 7:20–23

True Worship and Justice

- Isaiah 1:10–17
- Amos 5:21–24
- Psalm 24:3–5

Peacemaking and Yielding Rights

- Romans 12:18
- Ephesians 4:26–32
- James 4:1–3

Christ Paying Our Debt

- Colossians 2:13–14
- Romans 5:8–10