

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes July 19, 2006

With special guest Father Ray Ryland

Matthew 5:21-32

21: *"You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.'*

22: *But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall 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: *Make friends 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 till you have paid the last penny.*

27: *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'*

28: *But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

29: *If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.*

30: *And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.*

31: *"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'*

32: *But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

Discussion Notes:

Intro: (Review)

0. Ever notice that once you attempt to clean up your act, you begin discovering far more problems than you anticipated? All of a sudden you've opened a hornets' nest of hidden faults and failures; makes you want to throw up your hands in defeat.
1. Context:
 - Jesus has called his first disciples;
 - Jesus' entire ministry was about calling disciples;
 - Jesus' last words (in Matthew): "Go and make disciples;"
 - On the mount, speaking to disciples, beckoning others to come & join.
 - Basic purpose of Sermon / Beatitudes: Call to Discipleship = holiness.
2. Now beginning section of "illustrations" / Examples of what he means by fulfilling the law:
 - His Beatitudes didn't abolish law, but call for deeper understanding / obedience.
 - SIX examples: "You've heard it said ... but I say..."
 - The way they have been taught versus
 - The way they now need to live, imitating Jesus.
 - Many consider these as SIX separate teachings brought together;
 - But following Matthew's intent (7:28-29), assume as presented as the unified flow of a sermon.
 - The overarching deeper implications of Jesus' illustrations:
 - Living out the Beatitudes / following Him / truly becoming a disciple requires a radical overhaul of our entire selves, outside as well as inside.
 - First, we must remember that we are talking about a spiritual battle... world, flesh, and the devil.
 - As long as we persist in complacency, our spiritual "enemies" may remain content to leave us be.
 - However, as soon as we get it into our heads to clean up shop, the enemies awaken, and start fighting back, to discourage us, and even make us worse of than before (i.e., Mt 12:43-45)
 - The great mystical writers (John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, etc.) describe this process: the journey begins with cleaning up the obvious external sins / bad habits, leaving us appearing "holy." But then the more difficult battle begins as we become more aware, maybe for the first time, of the internal sins of our heart and mind.
 - Choosing to follow Christ into / thru the Beatitudes makes us aware of sin & sinful attitudes that are otherwise easily hidden from others, but never from God; these are more difficult to eradicate; they may even seem to grow worse the more we attack them; and they may lead to despair: this is what happened to Luther...
 - Jesus' insight in these SIX Illustrations is breathtaking: he addresses the most common inner sinful attitudes of man, that separate us from one another & God, running rampant in our modern world:
 - Anger & bitterness
 - Lust
 - Divorce & remarriage (Selfishness)
 - Dishonesty

- Retribution; revenge; “rights!”
- Loving selectively; bigotry
- The underlying message: Sin is more than merely an act; it involves an ongoing process: *
 - Data thru the senses;
 - Assimilation by the mind / heart / soul / conscience;
 - Temptation from “the world, the flesh, & the devil”;
 - Discernment (good or bad);
 - Decision;
 - Act of the will.

(* see St. Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life)

Today:

- Further discussion of 5:21-26 on Anger;
- Discussion of 5:27-30 on Adultery and lust;
- Discussion of 5:31-32 on Divorce and remarriage