

# Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom

## That's Not Fair • Message 7

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### August 4, 2024

#### A. Introduction

Have you ever watched a movie where a villain is so evil, you would do anything to get in that movie and teach that person a lesson...

Have you ever read a news report that has made your blood boil?

Have you ever said the phrase... well that's not fair? or if you have kids have you heard that phrase this week?

Have you ever struggled with wondering why Godly people suffer? And evil people seem like they prosper?

I remember being in high school and watching a kid bully a younger kid because he was a Christian... and when it happened a friend of mine said we should pray for them... I said you pray for them I'm going to kill them...

The title of today's message is that's not fair... and I promise I will solve every one of your problems in 30 minutes or less or your money back... ☺

What I do promise to do is give you a couple of really helpful and challenging points to remember when navigating things that aren't fair from what Jesus says in Matthew 5..

What would I tell my son about revenge and retaliation if I were sitting down with him... He's going to face pains and heartaches and I'm imagining the first time he's truly hurt and I sit him down and talk to him... even though as a dad I want more than anything to protect him and even hurt the people who hurt him... but this is what I would say to him from my heart to his.

#### B. Remember

##### 1. **REVENGE** will change you.

(Matthew 5:38. C/R: Leviticus 24:17-20; John 14:15; Romans 12:21)

Remember the old saying you are what you eat? The premise was that to be fit and healthy you must consume or eat the right things.

The general idea is that what you eat affects you! I don't know anyone who would disagree with this... I have never seen someone eating a bucket of fried chicken who says just getting my beach body ready...

We understand physically what we consume affects our physical bodies... but do we understand that what we consume in our soul affects our spiritual lives.

And some people in Jesus' day missed the way revenge affected their soul...

“You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’”

**Matthew 5:38 (NLT)**

There was something in the Jesus day called *lex talionis* ((*lex* = law + *talionis* = retaliation = literally the "law of retaliation")

They got this principle from 3 Old Testament passages that all say an eye for an eye or tooth for a tooth...

Here is an example of one of those passages...

*“Anyone who takes another person’s life must be put to death. Anyone who kills another person’s animal must pay for it in full—a live animal for the animal that was killed. Anyone who injures another person must be dealt with according to the injury inflicted—a fracture for a fracture, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Whatever anyone does to injure another person must be paid back in kind.”*

**Leviticus 24:17-20 (NLT)**

The problem is that each of the passages mentioned was about the civil law or governing courts.

R.C. Sproul says there are:

**Three Purposes in Old Testament Law:**

- 1) 1<sup>st</sup> purpose is to be **A MIRROR**. (the law of God reflects and mirrors the perfect righteousness of God The law tells us much about who God is. And who we are, our sinfulness)
- 2) 2<sup>nd</sup> purpose is to **REVEAL WHAT’S PLEASING TO GOD**. (“If you love Me, keep My commandments” John 14:15 NLT. This is the highest function of the law, to serve as an instrument for the people of God to give Him honor and glory.)
- 3) 3<sup>rd</sup> purpose is **THE RESTRAINT OF EVIL**. (The law, in and of itself, cannot change human hearts. It can, however, serve to protect the righteous from the unjust.)

Mark Taylor is teaching **Introduction to the Old Testament** beginning August 20. Registration is open until August 14.

So, what was happening was people were taking a divine principle for the courts and making it a matter of daily vendettas...

**This was given by God as a limit on vengeance and they took it as license for vengeance.**

If someone gets your tooth or eye, then you automatically do it back... so they were using this system to justify the hate in their hearts...

Why? Because deep down the human heart is driven by retaliation.

Think about it, if you’re older, people loved John Wayne... the man who took nothing off anybody... Even today, there is a different John who goes on a killing rampage because someone killed his dog...

Story of man in drive-thru?

A *get-even* kind of thing, and in our society, frankly, we make heroes out of people who take nothing from nobody. They are the strong and the tough, and the courageous and the macho. And our society looks down on the meek and the non-retaliating, the gentle, the forgiving, the gracious, the merciful person who demands nothing from anybody, and we say *he's a weakling and a coward*.

Jesus knows that revenge is in the spirit, but it really does change you.

*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

**Romans 12:21 (NLT)**

## **2. Ask God when to SPEAK up and when to stay SILENT.**

(Matthew 5:39-40. C/R: Exodus 22:26)

This verse has been perhaps one of the most misinterpreted verses in the whole Bible... some had used this verse to command pacifism, that we should never go to war, or that you can't physically defend yourself or someone who is being hurt.

*"But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also."*

**Matthew 5:39 (NLT)**

Most people in that day were right-handed... so for me, as a right-handed person, to strike your right cheek, I would have to give you a backhanded slap... This context is more referring to insult than injury...

Ancient Jewish writings say that striking someone with the back of the hand—a severe insult—was punishable by a very heavy fine.

*"If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles."*

**Matthew 5:40 (NLT)**

The shirt here refers to a garment on the inside, worn beneath one's tunic. In Jewish law, you couldn't take a neighbor's cloak or coat, as mentioned above... because it served as a blanket for many... nights got cold in that area... so, if you made a pledge you were supposed to take your cloak to the person and then at night it was to be returned... (Exodus 22 speaks about this).

*"If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset,"*

**Exodus 22:26 (NIV)**

And it says if someone asks you to carry his pack for a mile for them... Under military law, any Roman soldier might command a Jew to carry his soldier's pack for one mile—but only one mile.

I want you to think about this... what Jesus is showing is quite counter-cultural here.

***Let me tell you this before I go on... I wrote this sermon back in May... so this isn't tied to all the political chaos, it's not tied to all the stuff with the Olympics... if I could erase your memory of those things, I would... don't attach this sermon to those events ... this is a bigger truth and it's timeless... so let me show you this principle...***

## Jesus' Way

Personal Wrongs  
(silent)

Cultural Wrongs  
(speak up)

So, if you insult me and tell me this is the worst sermon, and I'm a terrible person... I'm not to speak up... I'm to be silent... but if you say that something the Bible says is wrong that culture says is right, I should speak up.

Think about this, Jesus Himself was insulted and spoken against (as a glutton, a drunk, an illegitimate child, a blasphemer, a madman). He stood silent before His accusers...

Jesus spoke up to the evils of His day... and that is why, in Matthew 5, He calls us to be salt and light... Light casts out darkness... and salt was used to keep things from decaying.

Most people are prone to speak up when they have something done to them, and they're silent to the cultural evils...

Listen there are some schools in Boston that are trying to teach porn literacy—safe ways for people to explore pornography...

And we bought our daughters a kid's tablet that limits what they can watch. So, we put the Disney channel on there. And the other day I looked over and my 5-year-old daughters on Disney Pride... During Pride Month, they were talking about the LGBTQ... Listen, my daughters are 5, they aren't even interested in the opposite sex yet... Selah has told me she is not going to get married and she is going to live in my basement for the rest of her life... The not getting married, I'm fine with, but I'm not sure about the whole living in my basement forever thing... but to put the LGBTQ theory in front of them isn't culturally progressive... its culturally wrong... (I'm not boycotting)

I don't believe we are to be silent about those things. God wants us to speak up...

We are to resist the evil and the evil one, you need a vision of Satan or you make people Satan, the Bible says... but we are to love people.

Principles of speaking up:

- 1.) Keep your heart soft towards people. Keep your tone down. Be direct.
- 2.) Don't use justice issues as a vehicle for your anger or bitterness.
- 3.) You don't have to have the last word. (My son has to have the last hit. He learns it from his mother, I guess.)

I will teach him that it takes courage to speak up, but it always takes courage to not try and right every wrong... sometimes the most spiritual thing to do is to stay silent before our accusers. (Not, obviously, if you have been abused, sexual misconduct, you should speak up.)

Sometimes things aren't always done fairly to us...

### **3. You can't ask God to FORGET your sins and REMEMBER the sins of others.**

(Matthew 5:41-42)

When I was dating Steph, there was this guy who was a family friend who tried to break up me and Steph. He would talk bad about me because he wanted to date her... and the crazy thing is his father would also talk bad about me,

trying to get us to break up... and it bothered me a little because I don't love people talking bad about me... but I remember someone asking me how I could keep from being angry...

And you know what my response was... I won. Listen, I landed the prize, with the divine help of Jesus. Why get bitter, when I've got someone better?

Here's my point: if I only looked at the situation, I would have been angered, bitter, hurt...

But I didn't dwell on that. I had my eyes on something else...

Listen, I'm not naturally a good enough person to let go of my annoyances and bitterness on my own... the only way I know how to truly deal with it is to get my eyes on something else, and that's Jesus.

The reason I can forgive others and not retaliate is because God did that with me...

How can I ask God to forget my sins and then I remember others'?

There are only two ways to deal with wrongs done to you...

- 1.) Pay them back
- 2.) Absorb the loss

You can't wish it away or pretend it didn't happen. You can pay them back, but the retaliation cycle keeps going on... or you absorb the loss. Like Jesus says here, you can turn the other cheek. You can stay silent, you can forgo getting equal or getting what you deserve all the time. You can bless those who curse you...

And there is only one way that's possible... you see that's exactly what Jesus did on the cross for us...

The Bible calls us enemies of God. Our sin has been a direct slap to the face of God. He could pay us back, He could get even... but instead, He absorbed the loss. Let's remember that.