



The Sermon on the Mount (Part 3)

Discuss – How seriously do you take your giving your word to someone / or making a commitment?
What sort of things stop you keeping your word?
How do you think people will treat you if you don't keep your word?

Read – Matthew Ch 5 v 31 – 37

Although these verses appear to be about different issues there is a common thread among them. The common issues is about the importance of honouring your commitments and words to each other. The context of Jesus teaching on adultery is that in this culture women were seen as second class citizens. The Pharisees put forward a view that a man could divorce his wife on almost any whim he had. This left many women with no husband and as a result no income. Jesus goes back to God's original intention for marriage and makes it clear that divorce on any ground other the sexual immorality (*homosexuality, adultery, fornication, prostitution*) is a sin.

Discuss –

What do you think Jesus is telling us about the issues of marriage and divorce in this passage?
In light of Jesus' stand against the law of his land what do you think our stand should be in regard to divorce?
Do you think people genuinely today understand the importance of the vows they make in marriage?

The whole point of Jesus teaching about giving your word is that you should mean what you say all the time not just some of it. The Pharisees have developed a elaborate set of rules that meant that only those That used the name of the Lord bound you to your promises. This resulted in a double standard where people did not keep their words and therefore suspicion and mistrust was common place. For Jesus the believer has to be a person who means what they say and if they have given their word must follow through with it. there is no room for white lies in the Kingdom of God.

Discuss – In your experience how honest do you think Christians really are with each other?

What can happen in the fellowship if people don't keep their word?
How good do you think you are at doing what you say and honouring your promises?

Read - Matthew Ch 5 v 38 – 48

In these verse Jesus gives us a new vision of what love and forgiveness looks like in the Kingdom of God. It is important to say that for Christians to be able to live like this takes a real supernatural filling of divine love. Jesus shows us the God wants His people to live above the base standards of the world and truly be different.

The laws in the old testament were put there to limit the amount of revenge and retaliation that could be levelled at someone. The idea of these Laws was to protect the individual from punishment harsher then his offence warranted. Jesus forbids revenge and says that we must do good in the face of evil.

Discuss – How difficult do you think it is to turn the other cheek when someone has personally injured you in some way?

Why do you feel that most Christians do not show the love that Jesus is talking about here?
How do you feel we can encourage each other to develop this radical love for those we dislike and even at times hate?

One of the reasons so many Christians struggle to live in the power of Christian love today is because they are to self centred. If the most important thing in our lives is ourselves , then if our rights, or self esteem gets stamped on then our reaction will be hostile.

Discuss – how do you think we can overcome our focus on self / and selfishness?

when people look into the church do you think they see real Christian love expressed as is described in this passage?

The fact is this radical love that even forgives enemies and reaches out to them in good is only going to become a reality if each one of us is prepared to radically change.

Discuss – how willing are you to make real changes so that divine love might be your response to hate?