

RCMI L-Path Teaching

August 14, 2022

TITLE: GO THE EXTRA MILE

TEXT: Matthew 5:38-42

Big Idea: A Christlike disciple practices forgiveness over retaliation, pursues selflessness over rights, and personifies excellence over mediocrity.

INTRODUCTION:

- In the Beatitudes, we learn that meekness is one of the characteristics of God's people. There's a strength in being meek that can resist anger even when you're wronged. Christlike Christians are called upon to display different behavior.
- Jesus corrects the Pharisees' teachings and teaches how to respond to insults and persecution.

I. PRACTICE FORGIVENESS OVER RETALIATION [Matt. 5: 38-39]

- It's our nature as humans to demand justice when we're wronged.
- The Old Testament established a legal principle of an "eye for an eye," intended to prevent excessive revenge. An eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth means that the punishment must fit or be proportional to the crime committed, and the punishment will be carried out by the governing body, not an individual.
- However, the religious leader's teaching permitted anyone to get revenge on an adversary.
- Jesus clarified that the law was never meant to allow personal revenge, so in response to insults and unfair treatment, Christians must endure and not retaliate.
- Christlike Christians do not retaliate because they're scared, but because they recognize that vengeance belongs to the Lord.

II. PURSUE SELFLESSNESS OVER RIGHTS [Matt. 5:40, 42]

A. Selflessness Over Rights

- You will notice that our rights are voluntarily revoked in these illustrations. In Christ Jesus, we do not say that we have a right. Selflessness replaces personal retaliation, just as Jesus showed us with his life.
- The big idea is that we don't make our rights the basis for our relationships with others. Be prepared to take a lowly position as a humble servant.
- *"If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also."*
– Matthew 5: 40, NKJV
- Many people may not understand Jesus here because we don't wear tunics and cloaks. The tunic is a man's undergarment, and the cloak is the outer garment that goes on top of the tunic. According to Jewish law, you could sue me and take my tunic, but the law prohibited you from taking my cloak.

- Jesus is saying is that if somebody is so desperate that they need your tunic, they probably need your cloak. Although it's your legal right to hold on to your cloak, sometimes you have to give away your rights because it's in someone else's best interest.
- You can identify yourself as a disciple of Jesus with faith in our God because you can give up something important for others, trusting that God will provide for you.
- Paul echoes this best in the NT repeatedly. Philippians 2:3; Romans 12:10
- Jesus is saying that you must live your life to know how to care for others and look after their interests.

B. Selflessness Through Generosity

- v.42, "Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn from the one who wants to borrow from you." Proverbs 3:27 says, *"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power to act."*
- The overall idea is that followers of Jesus should overcome evil by freely giving themselves more than the evil person wants to take. Jesus demonstrates that giving is powerful because you have chosen to do so. More importantly, you have chosen to trust God to continue providing for you despite giving away what He has freely given you.
- This command does not mean being naïve or gullible about charity (Matthew 10:16). It does mean that sacrificial, purposeful giving is the proper response when someone expresses a legitimate need.

III. PERSONIFY EXCELLENCE OVER MEDIOCRITY [Matt. 5: 41]

- Exemplified excellence is the third characteristic that identifies you as a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. You go the extra mile.
- The Jews back in Jesus' day were under Roman occupation, and the Roman soldiers could stop you at any time and force you to carry their belongings, but only for a prescribed distance.
- Jesus says if someone forces you to go one mile, double the distance instead of fussing and complaining. Show a radical love that goes beyond what is required. One mile was what you were forced to do, but Jesus dares you to go two.
- The extra mile means deliberately going above and beyond what's demanded of me.
- I am marked as a child of God if I have an excellent spirit that says: "all I have to do is not all I'm going to do because good enough is never good enough, and just getting by, that if God would be glorified in my life, I've got to learn to go beyond what is required and requested of me."
- It requires that we make a **deliberate decision** to exceed, but the second thing that the extra mile needs is that I have an **adjusted attitude**. Jesus says the first mile is forced on you; the extra mile is volunteering. Excellence is not about performance; it's about attitude.

CHALLENGE: A Christlike disciple practices forgiveness over retaliation, pursues selflessness over rights, and personifies excellence over mediocrity. That's what life in the kingdom looks like. And then finally: Trust God with the results. As Christians, we are called to go the extra mile!

DISCUSSION:

- How does Jesus transform our understanding of this law, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”? So what can we learn and put into practice from this passage?
- Do we have any objections to the course of action Jesus outlines in verses 38-42? What objections? Why?
- What do our objections tell us about ourselves? About the world we live in (or at least about how we understand that world and how it works)?
- Optional: Have you ever wronged someone that did not retaliate and seek vengeance but loved you instead? If so, how did this impact you?