

Briefing Document: Matthew Lesson 76

Sunday AM-July 26, 2026

Executive Summary

The following document synthesizes the core teachings from a lesson on the Sermon on the Mount regarding the nature of true worship and interpersonal relationships. The central theme is that reconciliation with fellow human beings is a mandatory prerequisite for reconciliation with God. Jesus Christ elevates the standard of the law, teaching that harboring anger, using malicious words, or maintaining grudges is equivalent to murder in the eyes of God. Because no human can meet this perfect standard, the sermon emphasizes the necessity of the "imputed righteousness" of Christ. Believers are urged to resolve conflicts immediately and completely to avoid the judgment of God and to maintain the integrity of their worship.

The Foundation of Worship: Horizontal and Vertical Reconciliation

The sermon posits that a person's relationship with others directly impacts their relationship with God. Before a person can properly function as a worshiper, they must address the "gaps" in their human relationships.

- **The Priority of Reconciliation:** Jesus instructs that if a person is at the altar offering a gift and remembers a conflict with a brother or sister, they must leave their gift and go be reconciled first.
- **The Order of Operations:** The gap between man and man must be repaired before the gap between man and God can be bridged.
- **The Hindrance of Anger:** Harboring anger or "angst" against others prevents proper worship. God does not accept worship when the heart of the worshiper is in a state of unreconciled conflict.

The Expanded Definition of Murder

A key focus of the teaching is the deconstruction of the Pharisees' self-righteousness. While the Pharisees felt holy because they had not physically killed anyone, the sermon explains that Jesus sets a much higher internal standard.

- **Internal Sin:** In the eyes of God, murder is not merely a physical act but a condition of the heart.
- **Equivalency of Offense:** The following actions are equated with murder:
 - Harboring anger or bitterness.
 - Speaking malicious words about another person's character.
 - Cursing others or speaking under one's breath.
 - Maligning or being unreconciled to a brother or sister.

- **The Standard of Holiness:** The sermon describes the physical commandment "Thou shalt not kill" as merely the "tip of the iceberg." True righteousness requires addressing the internal "iceberg" of grudges and hatred.

The Legal Analogy: The Urgency of Agreement

Using an illustration from the Jewish legal system concerning debtors, the sermon highlights the extreme urgency required in resolving conflicts.

- **The Adversary:** Jesus commands, *"Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison"* (Matthew 5:25).
- **The Risk of Delay:** Conflicts should be settled immediately because tomorrow may be too late—either the other person or the individual themselves could pass away before the matter is resolved.
- **Divine Judgment:** In this analogy, the court represents God's judgment or "chastisement." If a conflict is not settled "out of court" (personally and immediately), it may lead to a state of judgment where the "debt" can never be paid back.
- **The Concept of Debt:** Debt in this context is not merely financial; it includes debts of kindness, love, and respect.

The Necessity of Imputed Righteousness

The sermon concludes that the standard set by Jesus is so high that no human being can successfully keep it. This realization is intended to lead the individual to a state of spiritual humility.

- **Universal Guilt:** According to the definition provided by Jesus, all people are "murderers" because all have experienced anger or unreconciled conflict. As the scripture states, all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, and the wages of that sin is death.
- **The Role of Grace:** Because humans cannot achieve righteousness through their own deeds or the law, they must rely on the righteousness of Jesus Christ.
- **The Exchange:** Through the Gospel, Christ takes upon Himself the individual's anger, hatred, and malicious words. In exchange, He provides His own "imputed righteousness." This gift sustains the believer and allows them to repent and work on their relationships.

Historical Illustration: The Restoration of Robert Robinson

The sermon highlights the history of the hymn "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" as a testament to God's desire for reconciliation.

- **The Author's Background:** Robert Robinson was a young man who lived a life of "sin and debauchery" before being moved by a sermon by George Whitefield on *Matthew 3:7*: "*Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*"
- **Prophetic Words:** At age 23, Robinson wrote the hymn, including the line "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it."
- **Restoration:** Years later, while in a backslidden state, Robinson was moved by a woman reciting his own hymn. He was eventually restored to the Lord, illustrating that God yearns for His children to return to Him, just as He requires them to be reconciled to one another.

Phonetic Guide and Definitions

Greek Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition
Quat clat ^[^1]	kwat-klat	A very small fraction of currency; the last quarter of a penny.
Huparitis ^[^2]	hoo-puh-RAY-teez	A submissive officer of the court; historically, the "lower rowers" on a naval warship who strictly followed orders.

[^1]: Referenced in the sermon as the Greek phrase for the smallest amount of debt mentioned in *Matthew 5:26*. [^2]: Described in the sermon as a submissive officer who carries out the court's judgment without mercy.