

Jesus on Retaliation

Introduction: Jesus speaking to his disciples, to individuals. Thus, applies to personal and private justice. Also mention again Jesus is revealing the standards of the kingdom.

Read text and lead in prayer.

You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. Matthew 5:38-42

Jesus on Retaliation (reprisal, revenge, vengeance, retribution, payback)

Principles to Understand and to Apply: (looking to principle of the law not letter of the law)

- **Justice is an attribute of God** Therefore, law comes from God. Jesus came not to abolish but to fulfill the law.
- **Justice is entrusted to civil authority** (verse 38) **magistrates.** government, law enforcement. “the magistrate is commissioned to protect and defend the public good, justice demands retribution” .

The state given the authority to issue retribution against lawbreakers for the common good.
see **Romans 12:17-21** and **Romans 13:1-7**

Lex Talionis. The law of retaliation. Law to insure justice and to limit revenge. ‘Under lex talionis, a person who has been wronged can seek retribution against the person who committed the wrong, regardless of the relative status of the two people. lex talionis is an attempt to regulate and civilize the process by which people seek redress for injuries. The punishment must fit the crime.

illustrations of the code of Hammurabi (1700bc).

Jewish judges were to authorize and regulate retaliation/restitution. “Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Deuteronomy 19:21).

Since justice is entrusted to civil authority, we need Christians (salt and light) on school board, government, judges, lawyers, politicians, law officers, etc.

- **Justice is not pacifism**

silly talk: We should be a *Christian* nation, therefore having borders and legal immigration is immoral. We should just be nicer to terrorist groups want to behead us and rogue nations that have vowed to launch nuclear weapons at us. If the USA would simply turn the other cheek, evil people would hold our hand and sing kumbaya.

A nation has a right for sovereignty. The use of force, within the boundaries and authorities of civil magistrates, is not violence or aggression.

You have right to defend your life and life of family, and life of others. You have a right to defend personal property. Using locks, walls, alarm system, defensive weapons to protect your life and family is just. However, taking matters into your hands and going to the assailant’s home is not just .

Illustration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He decided to participate in an assassination attempt against Hitler.

Illustration of book by C.S. Lewis, "Why I am not a pacifist"

Resistance is not ruled out in response to evil. But two wrongs don't make a right. We are not called upon to take abuse. We are not to allow compromise. But we are to respond in a way that honor's God.

- **A desire for justice reflects of God's image**

A. the positive. we are commanded to respect authority. We must work within the civil code, etc. court system, rights and retribution executed with justice.

B. the negative. a desire for justice degrades to a desire for vengeance or personal vindication

Illustration: think of all the books, plays, movies, tv shows about vengeance

"Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die."

vengeance poisons the soul. resentment is a deadly toxin

vengeance brings us down to the oppressors' level. returning evil for evil just insights more evil.

Everyone has practiced vengeance in some manner. Slack off on the job to get back at pay/boss. silent treatment, cold shoulder, ignore, etc.

- **Justice is not always just**

In the Jewish system there was abuse.

Plus, they were an occupied nation. And Rome, the officers, the soldiers, were abusing justice.

In any government, power corrupts. Officials can be bought, prominent people get preferential treatment justice is not always blind. Can be racist, unfair, be bribed, under-punished, excessive punishment, not prudent. Justice can be abused.

Illustration of MLK. The constitution said all men were created equal. Yet, at one point the Supreme Court had said slaves were property, non-persons. Even after the Civil war, segregation, prejudice, racism was rampant. Along came MLK, he was determined to fight against injustice, inequality, yet he chose to do so in a non-violent way. And he paid a high price for seeking justice, and doing so without resorting to the world's weapons of vengeance.

He showed that it is possible to change an entire nation, stand against injustice, and do so in a way that with respect, restraint, value.

Evil exists. People often abuse their authority. This is precisely why Jesus at this point in the sermon gives these radical illustrations of **how to respond to insult**.

A. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Matthew 5:39

right cheek means slapped with left hand. the left hand was the Charmin hand.

It was an insult. affront to a person's dignity.

quick and natural response is to strike back.

Illustration: Jesus was unjustly struck in the face by an official. Jesus responded firmly and quickly., Yet he did not unjustly retaliate. Later, the same happened to Paul.

B. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. Matthew 5:40

a literal obedience would mean walking around naked.

chitona=a lightweight garment like a shirt but long like a robe.

himation is an outer garment like a coat.

C. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Matthew 5:41

note *forces* Roman law permitted soldiers and other officials to require people to carry a burden for them. Imagine how that forced servitude would feel.

D. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. Mt. 5:42
'most beggars genuinely had no alternative means of income'

Jesus advocates doing good despite the insult and mistreatment received. Which reveals a couple more principles.

- **Injustice can sometimes be defused by yielding more than is required**

'God calls us to live beyond our natural responses' Only by supernatural grace and Spirit's indwelling influence.

- **Justice can sometimes be prompted by valuing others above ourselves.**

"We are forced to consider what we value." People are more important than possessions.

You have to grapple with this and come to terms. It will cost you personal honor, possessions, time to respond biblically.

loving and serving enemies may actually turn them into friends, or at least spark respect and contemplation.
recall **Romans 12:20.** heaps burning coals on his head.

- **Justice and trusting God**

the way we respond points to a higher allegiance

'trust God so much that we leave our vindication with him'

Trust God as Defender (so many Psalms about this)

For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people."
Hebrews 10:30

retaliation is taking matters into our own hands. A Christ follower must not retaliate or engage in vigilantism.

Realize that behind the person attacking or abusing or insulting you, there is a greater enemy.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 1 Peter 5:8-9

- **Justice practiced by Jesus**

he could have called 10,000 angels.

'Jesus trusted the Father's vindication to raise him from the dead.'

GOSPEL

Our actions are a reflection of who we are and what we believe about our self. Redeemed Like David, p70. see p 76. ref to Romans 12:21 overcome evil with good. see pages 77,79 about justification and sanctification vvvv.'

reference Matt 23:26-28. warning to pharisees about outward/inward.

Ownership is behind desire to seek revenge.

If I can't get to the other person directly, some go after the person's stuff, reputation, family.

Active Revenge

- defame character gossip, taint reputation, slander
- violence, destruction of property
- financial withhold payment, child support, control through money
- backstab, say one thing to person, but another thing at water cooler
- silent treatment
- moral (dress, language)
- hurt self (anger, cut, food)

Passive Revenge

- not doing best at job, degrading another's ideas or project, creating a climate of division, not being a team player
- apathy
- total cooperation
- Sometimes when injured, we take our revenge out on those nearest us.

Transition:

Flesh dictates - you take from my stuff and I'm going to retaliate and get your stuff. You hurt me and I am going to hurt you more. **SELFISH**

Spirit dictates – This is not my stuff. I am a steward. Yes, I am responsible, but it is the master says give, her you go. Take this as a gift from God. **GENEROUS**