

(Matthew 5:21-26, NIV84)

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."

There is so much hatred and division; accusations of racism and bigotry are being tossed about pretty freely. Where are we to stand on these issues? Let us always and only stand with Christ. And that doesn't mean we are to take the "moral high ground." It's not about taking "ground" at all. It's really about standing on the Rock of our salvation.

Jesus tells us, "God so loved the WORLD" (John 3:16). Because God loved us, the unlovable sinners that we are, and sent Jesus to our rescue-the innocent to take the place of the guilty-we as His followers are empowered and called to love the unlovable-people just like us, and by that, I don't mean people who share our skin color or political views or nationality, but people who need a Savior just as much as you and I.

The Apostle Paul put it this way: "Do not owe anyone anything except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8). And Jesus promises us: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Pursuing love with you in Christ,
Pastor Golm

July 2

Reconciliation or Vindication?

First be reconciled! Matthew 5:24

We hear so much about reconciliation today. We hear the word so often and see the deed so seldom that we begin to wonder whether or not there really

is such a thing as "reconciliation".

Could it be that what we really mean by that word is vindication? Has reconciliation come to mean proving ourselves to be right? Or, still worse, proving our brother or sister to be wrong? When we ask our brother to be reconciled, are we (despite our pious allegations to the contrary) asking him to admit that he was wrong-so that we can live at peace with him again?

This can happen in families, in congregations, in whole denominations. In effect we say: "Come on, let's get together and admit that you were wrong." That is NOT what the Holy Scriptures mean by reconciliation.

The Greek word that is translated "reconciliation" or "reconcile" in this passage involves a changing of disposition-not only our brother's but also ours. How frequently attempts at reconciliation fail because we bring to each successive attempt the same hostility, the same stubbornness, the same prejudices, with which we closed our last conversation. Rather, with the Holy Spirit's help, let us cleanse our hearts and minds and approach our brother in love and understanding.

If our attitude in the past was hateful, it should become friendly. If it was cold or distant, it should become warm and loving. If there is to be genuine reconciliation, we must be sure the change begins in us. Frequently that will mean getting down from our high horse and apologizing for whatever we have done to cause the unhappy relationship. Are you and I up to that?