



Grain

The greatest gift you can give is your presence.
Paraphrase of Thich Nhat Hanh's writing

Field

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire.... 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell. 31 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Matthew 5:21-22 & 29-32

Thoughts

A couple can be legally married but absent to each other, focusing their attention elsewhere. They may divorce, and within the law one might intentionally try to make their ex-spouse as vulnerable as possible. Someone may never do physical harm but can legally chip away at, even murder another with words, something you hear about in relationship to school and workplace bullying.

Jesus discerned what was needed in his context to make the law relevant. In the first century, men had exclusive power to divorce for any reason even if it meant leaving a woman desolate. There are no examples of Jesus demanding that a person remain in a terrible marriage. He was concerned about people taking how they used their power for granted, even if their external actions didn't contradict the law. A contemporary version of how to address relationships could be in Thich Nhat Hanh's words about presence, suited for any type of relationship, but he used them in an example of a married couple occupying the same room with one never really being present. A problem not determined by gender.

At the same time, Jesus didn't want to abolish the law, but give it a salty interpretation, one to which people would respond, "That! That is what I was missing in my mindset. "That is not how I want to live in private or public." Or, "Those who would do us harm do not define us."

For salt to keep its saltiness, we need to interpret the law in new ways for every generation in the changing contexts we face. In this continuation of the Sermon on the Mount, remember you are blessed. You are light and salt. The law is imprinted in your heart - from there your personal life and public life flow. Don't turn this into a perfection script, but a salty interpretation to which you return in your heart. Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy Crane