

## 1 Revenge Mania Smackdown:

- and the longing for retributive justice!

## 2 Preface to Tonight's Sermon

- Tonight's sermon is an adaptation of a sermon I did in 2017, entitled "Revenge Fantasies," which was about issues relating to retributive justice.
- Retributive justice is the longing for revenge against those we believe are our enemies, where we either directly or indirectly carry out the punishment.
- When governments don't carry out their role to provide justice, we Christians can be tempted to repay evil with evil.
- This sermon tonight is to help us understand that as disciples of Jesus Christ, this kind of attitude can lead us down the wrong path and shipwreck our faith.

## 3 Introduction

- The world, in general, loves getting revenge.
- In fact, revenge fantasies are so common in the movie industry that they have become a genre of their own.
- In fact, almost all Quentin Tarantino movies are ...
  - based on revenge and ...
  - most often filled with violence and malice.

## 4 Introduction

- The standard movie plot of these revenge movies is as follows:
  - A vulnerable hero is wronged or hurt by some sinister person, organization or force.
  - He or she gains strength from their anger at the injustice and sets out to get revenge.
  - In the end, the villain is vanquished, justice is done, and the credits roll.

## 5 Top Revenge Movies

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## 6 Top Revenge Movies

## 7 WWE Revenge Mania

- Where the hero always wins and where the villain always loses.
- However, not before, there is lots of
  - drama,
  - cheating, dirty play, and
  - the hero then almost loses if not for a miracle superhuman comeback.
- Then the crowd goes wild!

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## 9 Retributive Justice

- If the truth is to be known, we all love the idea of retributive justice.
- It appeals ...
  - to our sense of fairness and
  - the idea that everyone finally gets what they deserve.

## 10 Retributive Justice

- Some psychologists suggest that these revenge fantasies are actually good for us.
- They're products of an often overlooked emotion called "embitterment."
- It is a feeling produced by victimization coupled with the desire to fight back.
- Because the person feels helpless, it leads to fantasies of revenge or aggression.

## 11 Revenge Fantasies

- Psychologists think that these accompanying revenge fantasies actually serve as buffers against the negative feelings associated with victimization, which is why people love revenge movies.
- We don't have actually to do anything vengeful; it's the feeling of justice that counts.

## 12 Revenge Fantasies

- If we're all honest with ourselves, we all have had these kinds of feelings—getting even with those we think have hurt us.
- However, Jesus warned us that even harboring such fantasies can give ...
  - birth to actions—bad decisions—which, in turn,
  - can lead to our own destruction.

## 13 Sermon on the Mount

- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reframes the retributive justice of the law of Moses and calls his disciples
  - to turn from “embitterment,”
  - to the embodiment of the way of the kingdom of God.
- Rather than merely restating part of the Mosaic Law that gives the plaintiff the right to ensure that the offender gets at least what he or she deserves, ...
- Jesus overrules that law for his disciples.

## 14 Scripture

- “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’
  - But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person.
  - If someone strikes you on the right cheek,
  - turn to him the other also.”
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## 15 Scripture

- “And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic,
  - let him have your cloak as well.
- If someone forces you to go one mile,
  - go with him two miles.”

## 16 Scripture

- “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’
- But I tell you:
  - Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
  - that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.”

## 17 Scripture

- “If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?
  - Are not even the tax collectors doing that?
- And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others?
  - Do not even pagans do that?”
- “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

## 18 Sermon on the Mount

- For Jesus, it wasn’t just about limiting revenge;
  - it was about rejecting any kind of retaliatory attitudes or violence.
- Jesus wanted his disciples to reject the revenge fantasy in favor of the redemption factor for both

- the offended and
- the offender.

## 19 Lamech

- Six generations after the fall and long after Cain was made a wanderer, one of his descendants made this statement.
- Lamech said to his wives,
  - “I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me.
  - If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times.” (Gen 4:23–24 NIV)

## 20 Lamech

- What Lamech is saying here is that if a blood feud begins and he is killed, then avenge his blood 70 x 7.
- In this statement is found what scholars call the beginnings of disproportional and irrational violence.
- In other words, Lamech is not only known as the father of polygamy but also vindictiveness.

## 21 Lamech

- This attitude years later became so bad that the Bible says,
  - Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. (Gen 6:11 NIV)
  - So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them.
  - I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. (Gen 6:13 NIV)

## 22 The Days of Noah

- Concerning Noah, Jesus says the following . . .
- As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. (Matthew 24:37 NIV)

- In this passage, Jesus is paralleling the idea that just as the flood was a surprise and caught people off guard, so will his second coming.

### **23 the Days of Noah**

- However, we know in other passages in the New Testament that when Jesus returns to the earth, it too will be filled with corruption and violence.
- So then,
  - as we wait for Jesus' coming,
  - let us not be tempted to repay evil with evil.

### **24 Jesus' Commands**

- Some argue that these commandments of Jesus actually turn his disciples into doormats for evil people who will take advantage of them.
  - Standing there and just taking whatever it is that our enemies dish out is a sign of weakness.
  - Culturally speaking, aren't we conditioned to fight for our rights?
- So then, no wonder that Jesus' approach seems unrealistic and even dysfunctional to many.

### **25 Jesus' Commands**

- But rather than seeing these actions as signs of weakness, Jesus asserts that they're positions of strength.
- The way that Jesus confronts evil is by realizing there is a time and place for everything.
- Justice will come, and when it does, it will be ...
  - fair, just, and
  - proportional.

### **26 God's Patience**

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- It's not that God is soft on evil.
- He will ultimately avenge the evil in this world.
- But unlike the swift vengeance laid out in our own revenge fantasies,
- Scripture tells us that God is a slow avenger—
  - “slow to anger and
  - abounding in steadfast love.”

## **27 God's Patience**

- God's slowness is not weakness but a sign of His patience and longsuffering (or tolerant delay).
- God withholds wrath so that all people will repent and turn to Him.
- If God gives us that chance, God will also give it to our enemies.

## **28 God's Patience**

- So, revenge is never up to us. As Paul explains to the congregation in Rome, . . .
  - Do not repay anyone evil for evil.
  - Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.
  - If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.
  - Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## **29 Bottom Line**

- The bottom line is that we as individuals are not to dish out to offenders what we think they deserve.
- As the Apostle Paul says,

- Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.
- If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
- In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.

### **30 Bottom Line**

- Make every effort
  - to live in peace with all men and
  - to be holy; without holiness, no one will see the Lord.
- See to it that
  - no one misses the grace of God and that
  - no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

### **31 Bottom Line**

- I don't know if you caught this or not, but according to Hebrews, bitterness (revenge fantasies) can corrupt our souls.
- In fact, it is a major contributor to disqualifying many from God's grace.
- Therefore, as it is possible, make every effort to be at peace with everyone.
- As Jesus has said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." (Matthew 5:9 NIV)

### **32 Bottom Line**

- So then, instead of thinking of ways to get even with people, think of ways of being reconciled and at peace with everyone—without compromising the faith.
- While the Bible supports justice, it doesn't support us in "settling the score" or "paying back hurt."



- According to Proverbs, Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver [avenge] you. (Proverbs 20:22 NIV)

### **33 Bottom Line**

- To this, you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21 NIV)
- He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. (1 Peter 2:22 NIV)
- When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him, who judges justly. (1 Peter 2:23 NIV)

### **34 James & John**

- As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.
- And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him, but the people there did not welcome him because he was heading for Jerusalem.
- When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked,
  - "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?"
  - But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village.

### **35 Conclusion**

- Here is my advice to those of you who have issues with your near-neighbor or one-on-one relationships.
  - Recognize that vengeance is the Lord's responsibility, not ours.
  - If possible, stay away from those who have hurt or still hurting you.
  - Instead of plotting revenge or how to get even, pray for your enemies and ask God to help you be reconciled to them.
  - If you see your enemy in need, as far as it is appropriate, help them.
  - Remember, Christ has set the example.

- Are we greater than he?