

Anger

A sermon preached by Ted Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on February 11, 1990. Scripture Lesson: Matthew 5:17-26.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

bBbzZzbBbzZz

So many people have told me... and I know from my own experience... that Sunday morning's can be the most stressful, angry times of the week... angry at your husband or wife, your children... angry with your brothers and sisters in Christ. I wouldn't be surprised if some of you are angry this morning?

Do you know that anger is hazardous to your health? Anger can destroy your life- your physical life, your emotional life, your family life, your social life, your spiritual life. *Anger has wrecked & destroyed many churches... far more than fires.* The anger that we often experience and sometimes even enjoy is one of the biggest threats to our well-being.

Our genetic makeup can contribute to our tendency to become angry. The way we were brought up can also contribute to this tendency. People whose parents and brothers and sisters were often angry in the home probably have learned angry responses as a result. People who see a lot of anger on the job probably learn from their fellow workers how to be angry. So if you come into this world predisposed to be angry and your environment reinforces that predisposition, it's very difficult to overcome anger.

Have you ever asked yourself why you're so angry. Have you ever probed beneath the surface of your life to see if there might not be some underlying anger that's there all the time?

But let's be clear. Not all anger is bad. Anger does have a good side. *we don't hear much about God's anger any more. But the Bible often speaks of the wrath of God.* The Bible speaks about God's anger. God's anger is different from ours. God responds in anger to circumstances that we've learned to accept without becoming angry. God gets angry with unrighteousness and

injustice. We're skilled, however, at compromising with unrighteousness and injustice and often ^{when} we learn about ^{some injustice we} it ~~and~~ simply shrug it off/ But God ^{or forget it.} gets angry with it. There were times when Jesus got angry and acted angrily. He once became so angry that he drove money changers out of the temple. ^{He angrily denounced self-righteous people so kicked sepulchres...} For the most part, though, Jesus wasn't angry but compassionate.

And there are times in our own life when we have good reason to be angry. A husband is justified in being angry with someone who violates his wife. Parents are justified in being angry with anyone who leads their children astray, possibly by introducing them to drugs or teaching things that undermine their ~~faith~~ childlike faith in Christ. ^{Citizens are justified when no read or hear about injustice & become angry but so quickly our justified anger can turn to self-righteous.}

But so often our anger hurts others as well as ourselves. So often our anger is caused by events that don't justify an angry reaction. ^{we become angry before the facts have been fairly gathered.}

Think about it. A lot of our anger is caused by our being in a hurry. ^{we want information & can't get it.} We're impatient. We want something and we can't get it. When you're in a hurry to get to work and a traffic light seems to stay red forever, you get angry.

And there are other causes for our anger. Husbands and wives can be very angry with each other without ever coming right out and expressing it to one another. One woman who'd been married to her husband for more than twenty years said she could hardly stand the way he acted when he read the newspaper in the evening. He'd clear his throat, scratch his head, mutter to himself, and wiggle and squirm. She came to a point where she couldn't be in the same room with him as he went through this routine. There was nothing evil about what he was doing; he was very nice to her and considerate, but she found herself boiling inside whenever he read the newspaper.

Sometimes a husband and wife talk about certain things that will bring

their tempers to the flash point. Sometimes it's money. Sometimes they can't agree about how to deal with their children. This anger lies just beneath the surface, ready to make its unwelcome appearance whenever these subjects come up. Husbands and wives who manage to irritate each other unmercifully may not even realize that what they're feeling is anger. It may be anger in one of its smoldering forms, never quite breaking out into the open where it can be recognized. Because they don't realize they're angry, these husbands and wives don't realize their unhappiness, maybe even their ulcers or depression stems from their chronic anger with each other. Sometimes people who really love one another cease to believe they love one another because they've never dealt with the anger and hurt they're feeling. They say, "I never loved you" or "I don't love you anymore" when, in fact, they're angry enough to kill and yet just don't know how to deal with it.

We can have the same kind of anger in our work. People who have to drive for an hour every day to work often spending many hours each week tied up in traffic can become angry with that daily routine. Sometimes conditions at work or people there, a boss or a fellow worker, arouse anger everytime we go to work.

Church is also a place where we get angry. A person irritates you, says things that get on your nerves, goads you, antagonizes you. Maybe they don't believe everything you do or maybe that get more attention than you do and you feel like you've been passed by. And this anger expresses itself, not so much directly, or honestly, but in carping criticisms, subtle put downs, endless bickering and back-stabbing.

Sometimes we keep our anger to ourselves. Sometimes this happens at work. An employee would like nothing better than to tell his employer off,

but the employee simply has to do what the boss wants and say nothing. The anger is driven deep inside where it stays until the angry person meets someone on whom he can vent his anger without fear of retaliation. We all know that children can suffer because their parents have had a workday in which they couldn't express their anger, so as soon as they're home, they scream at their children.

Now what can we do with this anger which can kill us as well as others? Sometimes we don't want to anything with our anger. We take it for granted. We expect it. We even enjoy our anger. Fred Buechner, a Presbyterian minister and novelist, writes, "Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back- in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you."

You may be saying to yourself, "I don't think I'm going to bother trying to control my anger. That's too difficult. I've lived this way for too long. Besides, I enjoy being angry once in a while. It scares people a little. It makes them do what I want them to do, and it makes me feel strong and powerful."

Jesus said that anger, if not properly dealt with leads to death... leads even to hell. A lot of people today are going through hell because of the way they've dealt or failed to deal with anger. A lot of people today are going through hell because they're the victims of somebody's anger.

Jesus tells us to deal with our anger openly and honest.¹ Admit that what you're feeling really is anger. Look at what that anger is doing in

your home, to your family, to your work, to your church and then deal with it honestly. ^{2. ~~Be patient~~ Make reconciliation your aim not retaliation} "If you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar (or

communion table) and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar (or communion

table), go at once and make peace with your brother or sister, and then

come back and offer your gift to God." Make peace. ^{That doesn't mean you have to grovel & apologize whenever someone is angry with you. Sometimes it simply means listen. "When I act that way I'm angry"}

People who place their trust in the Risen Christ and who know that God loves them unconditionally want to make peace with those who have something against them. People who trust Christ and what Christ says have something that can check them and keep them from flaring up in a rage when they feel the impulse to express their anger in destructive ways. They remember that God has forgiven them in Christ and they become forgiving people themselves.

Think of it. God has every reason to be angry with us; yet he saves us. I invite you to examine your own life in terms of what Jesus says. Would you have to admit that you're really a very angry person? You may be a ^{Do you express your anger passively... by doing things that you know irritate others.} person who is making life miserable for yourself and for everyone around you by the way you act.

I believe that Christ can change us... can begin to change our lives, our work, our families, our church. Christ can change us by overwhelming us with his love as we continue to turn to him and trust in him and what he says.

Let us pray: O God, your Word tells us you are a God who is slow to anger and abundant in love. Today we have heard you call us to be like you. Fill our hearts with your power so that our unrighteous anger may be displaced by more kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. We are sorry for the destructive ways we have expressed our anger. Open our hearts to realize that this sermon isn't for the other person, but for ourselves. And above all, thank you for Christ who died to forgive us all our sins and empowers us to do your will. Amen.

See 3 sermons on anger by
Joel Nederboord

Prayers of the People

For the joys of human life, for the wonder of loving another person and being loved, for friendship and family life, our thanksgiving will never cease. For the wonders of your creation, the earth spinning in darkness around the sun, the stars scattered in the depth of space and for the teeming life on earth; for the long story of redemption and salvation from the creation of human kind to the calling of a people to a love which could not forsake even in the wake of a constant rebellion; our thanksgiving will never end. ... but most of all, we praise and adore you for everything you have done for us in Jesus Christ. ... because he lived as one of us and everything he did reflected your love, because he met the full force of the evil that drags us down but never gave in to it, because he lived his whole life in loving obedience to you even though the road of obedience led to the cross, because you brought him back from death to be the Lord of the living and the dead, our thanksgiving will never cease.

Lord, your hands were nailed to the cross for us. Keep our eyes on your hands, that our hands may no longer be closed for fighting, but open to shake the hand of the stranger and to fill the hand of the hungry, for your love's sake.

- let us pray for the safety of Nelson Mandela
- let us pray for a free & democratic South Africa
- let us thank God that there has not been more violence
- let us pray for the friends & family of Rodney Forester
- let us pray for the police of Oxford
- let us pray for the ongoing investigations
- let us pray for the rebuilding of our church
 - for patience
 - for guidance
 - for wisdom
 - for spiritual as well as physical rebuilding
 - for a renewal of obedience & faith

Sybil Pitt
Rev Boyce

Carousal
- Conference Room Friday night 7 PM
- Sat 630 - adult social in the centre
Abre Shaeef
Tues 130