

Readings

Scripture

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.
- Matthew 5:21-26 (*English Standard Version*)

Reflection

We tend to be taken aback by the thought that God could be angry. How can a deity who is perfect and loving ever be angry? Just look at us – we manage to be very understanding and accepting of our flaws. We take pride in our tolerance of the excesses of others. So what is God’s problem?

Of course the Bible never suggests that God’s anger is lightly provoked. Or that God is ready to pounce at the first misstep. On the contrary, we are told he is “slow to anger” (Exodus 34:6). And his anger does not come from having a bad temper. Indeed, God’s anger issues from the intensity and depth of his love for us, as well as the height of his moral perfection and his outrage against evil. God’s anger is not the kind that comes from feeling slighted or ignored, as in “You’ve really hurt my feelings this time.” God’s anger is a just anger, arising from perfect motives.

- Rebecca Pippert, *Hope Has Its Reasons* (Intervarsity Press, 1989), Chapter 5

Think how we feel when we see someone we love ravaged by unwise actions in relationships. Do we respond with benign tolerance as we might toward strangers? Far from it. We are dead against whatever is destroying the one we love...The fact is that anger and love are inseparably bound in human experience...If God were not angry over how we are destroying ourselves, then he wouldn’t be good and he certainly wouldn’t be loving. Anger isn’t the opposite of love. Hate is, and the final form of hate is indifference.

- Rebecca Pippert, *Hope Has Its Reasons* (Intervarsity Press, 1989), Chapter 5

Sermon Outline

Indifference
Matthew 5:21-26

And His Disciples Came to Him
Brad Anderson

We are as confused about anger as we are about love... (Matthew 5:21)

What more does Jesus invite us to discover about our anger?

That anger is a precursor to murder... (Matthew 5:22)

That little words spoken are more significant than we think... (Matthew 5:22)

That our pride makes it difficult to see our offenses against each others...

- Our offense with a brother in worship... (Matthew 5:23-24)
- Our offense with an enemy in court... (Matthew 5:25-26)

Reflection Questions (*taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups*)

- What do you think about the statement, “We are as confused about anger as we are about love.”? How are anger and love related? Use the reflection quotes to help shape your response.
- Does it seem a stretch to say that anger is a precursor to murder? Why or why not? How does God express anger? What does the Bible say about God and anger? Look at Exodus 34:1-9 to help shape your answer.
- It is often a challenge for us to remember that we have offended others. It is not difficult for us to remember how we have been offended. What do the two stories in verses 23-26 demonstrate about our need to pursue the people we have offended (when we offend brothers/sisters and when we offend enemies)? How do such actions transform the angry heart?
- How does this deepened standard related to murder and anger impact you? Does it move you to hunger and thirst for righteousness? Does it move you to mourn? Does it move you to consider your own spiritual poverty? Does it move you toward greater humility?
- How does Jesus meet you in your need related to this command?