

Welcome

We're glad you are here.

Today we are going to be talking about Anger. We are going to be talking about Anger in our lives and how Anger affects us. How Anger affects our relationships. Whether Anger is good or bad, or both.

Here are some questions for you to wrestle with:

Is it wrong to get angry?

Is anger a sin?

The short answer to both of those questions is no and yes.

For us in our lives and in our relationships, Anger left unchecked often grows into bitterness, contempt, un-forgiveness, broken relationships, etc.

And yet, Ephesians 4:26 says:

*In your anger, do not sin*

Clear as mud right.

You see Anger can be righteous, and Anger can be unrighteous.

In its purest form, Anger is not wrong. In fact, Anger finds it's source in God. All you have to do is read the Old Testament, and we see a God who is angry over the sin of His people.

Or you could flip through the New Testament and see that Jesus was a man of Anger.

This day and age, progressive Christians like to paint Jesus as:

**-SLIDE:** one who always smiled,

**-SLIDE:** never raised his voice,

**-SLIDE:** always drove a Prius,

**-SLIDE:** recycled

**-SLIDE:** loved playing in fields with Tigers and children

**-SLIDE:** while simultaneously drinking a soy latte and being the nicest guy to ever walk the earth.

But when you actually start to flip through the pages of the New Testament, we start to get a much different picture of Jesus. Yes we see a compassionate Jesus.

But we also see a Jesus who was angry with the way things were, angry when good was threatened, angry when things didn't line up with what the Father wanted.

In Matthew, Jesus eventually gets so angry with the Pharisee's, that in Chapter 23 he calls the Pharisee's '*Son's of Hell*' which I don't really know what it means, and then he calls them '*a brood of Vipers*'.

Or you could go to the Gospel of John, chapter 2, where when you read the text, it indicates that Jesus made a weapon, yes a weapon out of chords, and he whipped, and turned over tables, and drove away those who were defiling the temple.

When Jesus confronted the Pharisee's, he was angry. When Jesus cleansed the temple he was angry. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, he was angry that things were the way that the Father intended.

Jesus loved what God the Father loved and when those things were threatened Jesus got angry.

Darrin Patrick said once,

Jesus was a man of anger, precisely because he was a man of love.

I'll repeat that.

Understand this, when good is threatened, the right response is anger.

Here is an even crazier thing though, if you and I don't get angry when good is threatened, we are not acting like Jesus. I'll say that again, when you and I don't get angry when good is threatened, we are not acting like Jesus.

Jared Sanchez was a youth intern this summer and we were in a situation where someone was potentially being abused and mistreated. And I sat back and I watched as Jared rushed into that situation to protect that which could not protect it self. And I just remember thinking, that's Jesus, right there. Not just in the act of protecting, but in the act of standing up and with a righteous anger saying, "NO, this isn't right!" I saw Jesus all over that situation and the way Jared responded.

So anger in our lives can be a good thing. But if we stop here and think, 99% of the time you and I get angry, it is not a righteous anger.

And it's this 99% percent of the time that Jesus is looking to target this morning in my life and your life.

This morning we will be in Matthew 5:21-26, where Jesus confronts Anger head on in the lives of his followers. And this message to his followers is not just relevant to those of biblical times, it is relevant to us today.

Matthew 5's context is one of Jesus' greatest times of teachings called the Sermon on the Mount. And if you zoom out from Matthew 5, in the greater context of Jesus teaching the Sermon on the Mount, you see Jesus painting this picture of a people that do things differently.

A people who live their lives differently, a people who pray differently, a people who do sex differently, a people who give differently, a people who do money differently, a people who prioritize differently, a people who react to hardships differently, and a people who do anger differently.

This is the context of Matthew 5. Jesus, making for himself a people who are different. Here's a detail that's really important to understand

about the sermon on the mount, Jesus raises the bar so high, all the way to perfection, that Jesus knows you can't attain these things on your own. The whole point of the sermon on the mount is for you to see how sinful and inept you are, and your need for a savior.

So when Jesus paints this picture of a people who do things differently, he is painting a picture of people who live a life set apart in his power and by his grace, and his spirit, not in their own power.

And this is our hope for Baxter Road Bible Church. That when the city of Anchorage looks at BRBC, they would see a people who are different. They would see a city within a city, a group of people who love, give, act, do money, react, pray, and prioritize their lives differently.

With that let's go through the passage today, and see how Jesus is calling his people to do anger differently. Let's read Matthew 5:21-26:

*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.*

In this passage today you will see Jesus say something to the effect of 'You have heard it said, but I say'. It's easy here to get his idea that Jesus is correcting the Old Testament.

But what you have to understand here is that Jesus is not correcting the Old Testament, rather he is correcting the prevailing interpretation

of the Old Testament. And mainly seeking to correct the interpretation as laid out by the Pharisees, the religious elite of Jesus' day.

And before we harp too much on the Pharisees and separate ourselves from them, understand that the Pharisees were deeply religious people. And we can connect with them in that we are religious people.

And we, just like the Pharisees tend to misinterpret, misunderstand, and misrepresent God and his word just as the Pharisees did. So as we unpack what Jesus is saying, let us not separate ourselves from those Jesus is speaking to and against.

Jesus in verses 21-22 is about to drop a bomb on his listeners. He is about to show the people that they are murderers and they don't even know it.

Verse 21-22:

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You see the prevailing understanding among the people listening was that as long as I am not killing anyone, I'm ok with God.

As long as I'm not thrusting the blade to deliver death to my opponent, I am ok. If there isn't blood on my hands, then I am good with God and his Law.

Crazy enough, this understanding of anger seems to be all over our lives as well. We think that just because we don't act on our anger, that that gives us a free pass to feel whatever we like about those we have conflict with in our lives.

We are no different than the Pharisee's of Jesus' day. You know when you're just texting up a storm to your bed friend about that co-worker that is just a jerk, and you wish you could just get your hands....I'll stop there.

And if someone were to come up to you and confront you on that, and say, "Hey man, that's not right."

What would your reaction be? You'd be like, "What are you talking about?"

And you and I are just like the Pharisees, because we too think, that just because we didn't turn our thoughts into reality, that somehow, we aren't guilty.

But the principle that Jesus is getting at here is that when you murder someone, all that is, is a visible manifestation of the attitude within the heart.

So when your angry at this person or that person, you've got murder in your heart.

In other words, if you've ever been angry with anyone, you've murdered them.

For us, we commit murder when we have contempt for other people. We commit murder, when we get unrighteously angry with one another. We are murderers and we don't even know it.

Some of you might know a famous psychologist by the name of John Gottman. John Gottman is famous for his work and study of marriage stability and relationship analysis.

John Gottman is most famous for his studies on marriage. He is famous because he is incredibly accurate at predicting whether a couple will divorce or not. In fact, he is so accurate its scary. Over the years, with his many different studies, he has been able to predict whether a couple would divorce or not with an accuracy, depending on the study, between 81% and 94%.

In Gottman's *Four Horseman of the Marriage Apocalypse*, he identifies four areas that lead to failures of marriages. Here they are:

1. Criticism
2. Defensiveness
3. Stonewalling
4. Contempt

It's that last one that catches my eye. Contempt. Jesus says, *"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.*

Translation: If you've had contempt for someone, then you've murdered them, and you are liable. Here is the definition of the word contempt: the feeling that a person or a thing is beneath consideration, worthless, or deserving scorn. Or as Jesus says, "whoever says You Fool!"

When I think about our lives within the Church, it become painfully clear that you and I often settle for unreconciled, broken, contempt filled relationships in our lives.

You and I settle for unreconciled, contempt filled relationships and existences in our lives, which means you and I commit murder everyday.

As we read on here, Jesus hits us with an illustration in verses 23-24:

*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.*

Jesus is confronting the religious person here. He is saying, even in the middle of making an offering to God, that one should immediately stop if there is an unreconciled relationship, and go and make it better, and then come back and finish your offering.

See Jesus here is really slamming religious people. And like we identified before we are deeply religious people. Religious people can often times get so busy with religious activities, that they often use it as an excuse to not be reconciled with people.

But Jesus is saying that in the middle of worship, in the middle of that Beth Moore Bible study, in the middle of that retreat, in the middle of your small group, in the middle of a sermon, in the middle of 'you fill in the blank', go and fix your unreconciled relationship, and then come back to do that God stuff.

Here is the most convicting thing as I think about what Jesus is saying here. In telling his hearers to drop what they are doing for God, and reconcile that broken relationship, Jesus is highlighting that if you love vertically, that by very definition you will love horizontally.

What that means is, is that if you love God, you will love who?..People. And yet Jesus' biggest opponents were the religious elites who claimed fervently to Love God, but this didn't transfer to Loving People.

Jesus explicitly taught that if you Love God, you will love your neighbor as yourself.

And yet, when we look around our lives and the lives of our brothers and sisters in the church, what do you see?

It doesn't take long until we see that we settle for unreconciled relationships, we settle for relational turmoil, we settle for contempt with our brothers and sisters in christ, we settle for murder.

And this may sound extreme, it may sound like I am using this language for effect, but understand here that Jesus is saying, if you have anger or contempt or disregard or disdain towards others, you are a murderer.

Day after day, week after week, Sunday after Sunday, we settle for broken relationships, we settle for being murderers, and we don't even know it.

In verses 25-26, Jesus switches illustrations, and again hammers home his important point:

*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.*

Just as in his last illustration, Jesus is pointing here to the necessity that the follower of Christ be quick to reconcile his or her broken relationships.

As we have been talking, I know that you have had people pop into your head whom you have unreconciled relationships, whom you have contempt for, whom you are angry with.

And if you like me, you probably have been trying to forget this person as we talk through this hard teaching of Jesus.

I want to ask you to just for a second to bring that person back to the forefront of your mind.

Now if you sitting here legitimately thinking to yourself that you don't have anyone like this in your life, just ask your friends, and they'll tell you who that person is.

Here is a list of questions to ask yourself about that person. I didn't come up with these questions, a guy named Ron Edmondson did:

1. When you think of this person, is the first thing you think about the pain that they caused you?
2. If this person were in trouble and you had the means to help them, would you?
3. Do you have anger fantasies about this person?
4. Do you still think of getting even with this person?

5. When you think about this person, do you still want them to fail? Or when did you start wanting this person to succeed?

If you answered any of these questions in a negative way then you are dealing with the exact heart issue that Jesus is getting at in Matthew 5. You're a murderer and you don't even know it.

God's people are to do anger, forgiveness, and reconciliation differently than the world. In fact, this issue is really tied up in the Gospel. While you and I were still sinners, estranged from God the Father, God sent Jesus to save us. And there is this idea that because the people of God have been forgiven much, so they themselves in their day to day lives forgive much.

In Colossians 3:13 it says:

*<sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

And yet it the opposite in so many of our lives, that when we approach God, all we want is grace up grace upon grace (and God gives it to us), and yet when others approach us, all we want is judgement up judgement upon judgement.

C.S. Lewis wrote this how we are to forgive in our lives:

To excuse what can really produce good excuses is not Christian charity; it is only fairness. To be Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.

I'll read that twice, because it is such a good summation of how we are to live.

To be a christian means to forgive the inexcusable, and yet you and I hold on to dumbest of stuff.

We hang on to when someone insults us,

we hang onto when someone clashed with our ideas of the way things should be done,

we hang on to misunderstandings about what people say,

we hang on to the way people make us feel

we hang on to and separate from brothers and sister in Christ who have different doctrinal beliefs in gray areas, but we turn every theological area into a black and white.

**and in these situations and much worse God commands us to be reconcilers.**

Matthew 5 is dripping with this idea that God's people will do things differently.

When they are offended, they will do things differently;

when they are hurt, they will do things differently;

when the inexcusable happens, they will do things differently.

Does this lifestyle of forgiving the unforgivable characterize your life, or when that rolodex of people that you don't like/don't like you comes out, do you have excuse after excuse after excuse of why you can't forgive and reconcile with them.

Do you know how many times I've heard believers declare they just don't like someone and it is what it is?

What? Are you kidding me. That is the world right there coming out of their hearts. Let me tell you, if those words come out of your mouth, you need to check you heart and talk with Jesus, because if you hold contempt for people with the petty stuff, what about when the hard stuff comes. What about when someone really wrongs you. In that situation, you will wither like straw in the fire, and anger and bitterness will consume you.

Even though you don't want to, let's think again about that person whom you keep thinking of right now, but keep trying to trick yourself like you're not thinking of them. Come on, you know I am right.

I have been praying all week, and I really believe God is calling you and I today to change the way that we deal with people in our lives. To stop with the anger, contempt, and criticalness, and to forgive and reconcile just as God has forgiven and reconciled us.

I know this is tough stuff. I know this is messy stuff. But this is the kind of messy stuff that our glorious Savior calls us too.

Understand this about reconciliation. Reconciliation doesn't mean that your best buds again. Reconciliation doesn't mean that you'll work there again, reconciliation doesn't mean that you'll have the same kind of relationship or trust again.

To forgive and reconcile with that person means that the posture of your heart changes, that your spirit says, "I know this situation has a history and has pain and has had rough patches, but I want this to be as good as it can be."

And some of you are sitting here this morning saying, "Erik, you just don't understand what they did to me."

And you're right. I may not understand. I don't know all the nuances of your situation, but I know someone that does. I know someone who is able to guide you through this process of being a reconciler. But to be what Jesus is calling you to be, you have to humble yourself, and you have to let God into all the messiness of your relationships.

You have to stop justifying

you have to stop building your case

you have to stop having anger fantasies

you have to stop gathering a bunch of witnesses who agree with you

Here's the toughest but best thing you can do. Pray. Pray to God about that person or those people. Let God into the messiness of this situation and ask him, "How can I be a reconciler here?"

Here's the second toughest thing you can do:

Go to that person. Apologize. Repent of your attitude and behavior. Don't justify, don't apologize only if they apologize. Own what you can own, and do what you can.

Two examples of this in my life. One that happened to me and the other that God led me to.

Daniel Ezell story.

Phil Leboeuf story.

If you want to stop the anger, if you want to stop the turmoil, if you want to stop the justifying, if you want to stop the broken relationships, if you want to stop being a murderer everyday...Let God into the process, and ask him to change your heart and to help you. Step into that uncomfortable and courageous place of offense, and seek forgiveness from those who've offended you and whom you've offended.

I can't promise it will go well with whomever that person is but I can promise if you let God in to that process and into your heart to do what he's calling you to do, he will not disappoint.