

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

a 10 minute daily devotional | week 3

thursday | prayer

Take 10 minutes to pray that God will help you to remove anger. Here's a prayer to get you started: "Loving Lord I confess that there is much bitterness and anger in my heart and I come to You knowing that there is nothing that I can do to rid myself of this suffocating handicap in my life. Search me within Lord and expose all that is not pleasing in Your sight and help me to find a closure to the deep rooted anger which seems to be rooted in a deep-seated un-forgiveness.

Forgive me Lord for the pain for I know my anger has hurt so many people – yet I realize that my sin of anger is directed against You and it is against You alone that I have sinned in this way."

friday | application

| Make a list of personal strategies for dealing with anger.

saturday | journaling

Spend 10 minutes recording your thoughts/feelings from your week immersed in Matthew 5:21-26.

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Matthew 5:21-26

monday | devotional

I have an old acquaintance who is in prison for murder. He's been in prison since 1999 and has a scheduled release date in 2030. We will be almost 50 years old then.

I hadn't seen this acquaintance for many years before he was arrested, but if you could go back and ask me about him in middle school, I'd tell you he was people. What happened? Honestly, I don't know the details, but in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gives a glimpse into where it might have started.

Before we turn to Jesus' sermon it is important to look at one of the first passages in the Bible. In Genesis 4 we are introduced to brothers named Cain and Abel. Perhaps you know their story. As you read it now notice the question God asked Cain (I've italicized it for you).

"Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, '*Why are you angry?* Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.' Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him."

Cain is mainly known for the action of murdering his brother, but before he did this, God called into question his anger. If Cain would have removed his anger he wouldn't have killed his brother. Without anger there would have been no murder.

In Matthew 5:21-26 Jesus says, "... anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment." Without the backdrop of Genesis 4 we might chalk this up to hyperbole. But when we consider how God connected anger and murder in the story of Cain and Abel, the meaning of Jesus' words become more clear: If we allow anger to remain, we run the risk of doing things that will get us punished.

What follows explains this further. Jesus points to two things we might do out of anger, calling people "raca" or "fool." These two words are closely related to two childish putdowns we use in English, "dummy" and "moron." If you're over the age of 12 you probably haven't used these words in a while, but perhaps you've said things out of anger that make people feel stupid or devalued—this is what Jesus has in mind. Saying mean things to people is a natural effect of anger and puts you at a greater risk of judgment.

1 John 3:15 helps us see how this progression might continue, "Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer..." Why? Perpetual anger leads to hatred and hatred manifests itself in a desire to have something cease to exist. The term "hate crime" illustrates this well. A hate crime is a crime, usually violent, committed by the perpetrator because of a bias against a specific group of people. Hate crimes are often motivated by a desire to devalue, or even remove, those in that group through intimidating them into a different way of thinking/living or killing them. These crimes are not thought up in a day, but motivated by years of deep seated anger against a group of people.

So here's the biblical progression: Anger leads to hatred and hatred leads to murder. Thus, allowing anger to remain puts you at risk of doing things you might currently find unthinkable.

I don't expect most who are reading this to run a major risk of committing murder, but if we don't heed Jesus' warnings, it will lead to bad things. I have only ever hated one person. I'll spare you the details, but it came from a prolonged and deep anger, and was connected to me saying and acting in ways that are embarrassing to think back on. I acted in ways that I never thought possible; anger is dangerous.

So what is the application of all this? Simply stated, stop being angry. Paul's words in Ephesians 4:26-27 are important here. He says, "'In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." Anger happens. When it strikes, avoid sinning. Even when you are mad avoid slander, gossip, quarreling, fighting...and murder.

Beyond not just sinning in your anger, Ephesians 4:26-27 shows us that we shouldn't let anger last. If we do, we give the devil a foothold—pretty scary. The phrase "let the sun go down" shouldn't be taken literally—you might get angry at night. Instead this phrase calls us to get rid of our anger. We shouldn't hold onto it. We shouldn't let it linger. We should remove it. Man, I wish I could go back in time and tell my acquaintance that now lives in a state penitentiary to stop the anger.

Anger is the first step in a progression that leads to judgment. Don't sin in your anger, and better yet, get rid of your anger as soon as you can.

Reflect on this: How is anger currently affecting your decisions?

*Need help knowing how to get rid of anger? Make sure to watch or listen to the sermon that corresponds with this sheet and consider checking out the series Quiet Wrath (Wilsonville.Church/QuietWrath).

tuesday | commentary

Below are seven snippets of commentary. After you've read them write a short statement explaining how it helps you better understand Matthew 5:21-26.

"You have heard suggests that the multitudes listening had for the most part not studied the Law of Moses for themselves but had only heard the teaching on the Law, most likely from the scribes and Pharisees."

"...the danger of anger was that it was expressive of a murderous intent in the heart and such a one was in danger of the judgment."

"Raca" was an insult meaning, "senseless, empty headed man, worthless..."

"Jesus' point is that anger and hatred affect our relationship to God. As long as there is internal sin, outward acts of worship are not acceptable to God."

"Be reconciled" refers to being "restored to normal relations or harmony with someone."

John MacArthur, "Obviously we cannot change another person's heart or attitude, but our desire and effort should be to close the breach as much as is possible from our side..."

wednesday | questions

1. Read James 1:13. What does anger reveal about our relationship with God?
2. What are the things that most cause you to be angry? What truths can help you find peace in those moments?
3. Is there anyone you need to be reconciled with? What would help the attempt for reconciliation go well?
4. Share one thought from this passage that you find most meaningful and why.