

Are you Angry?

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[0 : 00] Well, I'm going to ask you a couple of questions. The first question is how have your relationships been going this week with your spouse with your children with your parents with your neighbors with your work colleagues.

! How have your relationships been going? Have you murdered anyone this week? I mean, it says Glasgow after all so may as well ask a question. Okay, okay, maybe haven't. Have you? Have you been angry?

Have you been angry with anyone this week? Have you insulted anyone this week in any of the sphere of relationships that you have? Have you said something that you realized afterwards? Probably that is not what you should have said to that person.

Somebody in the past week, maybe even today. And so from what Jesus says, murder does take place without knives, without guns, without poison, and without punches.

And so it might have seemed funny to ask if you'd murdered anyone this week. I mean, you did laugh after all. But what Jesus says here is actually no laughing matter. It is serious.

[1 : 41] And it's radical. And it's radical. Radical because irrespective of whether we have physically murdered anyone, Jesus' words apply to each one of us. Because Jesus not only addresses the universal human problem of anger, but he forces people like you and me to face up to our own anger.

And especially when it comes to our close and personal relationships. I wonder if you notice that from the reading. Just look down again. Look at the language that Jesus uses. It's family language. He speaks about being angry with a brother or sister. He says that twice in verse 22. He says it in verse 23. And he says it again in verse 24. And so whether it's our own family or whether it is the family of faith, in other words, the church, we are well aware that anger is never far away.

And we are probably angry. And we are probably angry most with those who are closest to us.

Husbands, wives, parents, children, people in the church. We will all experience anger either within us or anger towards us.

And that's why our title for today's message is really the question. Are you angry? Are you angry? And so we're going to consider three things this afternoon from this passage.

[3 : 12] First of all, the result of anger, verse 21 to 22. Secondly, the response to anger, verse 23 to 26. And then thirdly, the remedy for anger.

The result of anger, the response to anger, and the remedy for anger. So first, the result of anger, verse 21 and 22. Let's just read those verses again. 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. Anyone who says to a brother or sister, raka, is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, you fool, will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Now, before we focus on what Jesus says here about anger, we should see the wider context in the Sermon on the Mount. Because Jesus repeats the same basic phrase six times in Matthew chapter 5, verse 21 through to 48.

The phrase is, you have heard that it was said, and then, but I tell you. So it's there in verse 21 to 22, verse 27 to 28, verse 31 to 32, verse 33 to 34, verse 38 to 39, verse 43 to 44.

[4 : 33] Six statements about the law, and they all have the same format. So Jesus is drawing a contrast between what people have heard said and what he says.

But what does he mean? Does Jesus mean the Old Testament law says one thing, but I'm going to tell you something different? Or secondly, does Jesus mean the Pharisees and the scribes say one thing, but I'm going to tell you something different?

Or thirdly, does Jesus mean the Pharisees and the scribes taught you the Old Testament law says this, but I'm going to tell you what it really says, which is a mixture of one and two.

Because while it might sound like Jesus is contradicting the teaching of the Old Testament law, he is definitely not. And that's why it's important to get what Jesus is saying here.

Jesus is not saying what the law says is wrong. Right before this, in chapter 5, verse 17 to 20, Jesus said he didn't come to what? To abolish the law, but he came to fulfill it.

[5 : 47] Jesus has also mentioned the Pharisees and the scribes or the teachers of the law before. And so the contrast Jesus makes here is not between what the law says and what he says, but between what the law says and how the Pharisees and how the scribes wrongly interpreted that law and wrongly applied that law.

Jesus is drawing the contrast between that and Jesus giving the correct explanation and application of the law. And I think that's why Jesus says, you have heard that it was said, rather than what Jesus usually says, which is it is written when he's speaking about what is in the Old Testament.

So I think that's significant. So Jesus is drawing a distinction between the written law of God, verse 18, and the man-made teaching of the religious leaders.

And so Jesus is in no way contradicting what the law says. And what he says, what he's actually doing is deepening the application of the law.

Because God's law requires more than just some outward conformity. God's law requires a radical inward obedience of the heart.

[7 : 09] And so when it comes to the subject of murder, there is more to keeping the commandment, you shall not murder, than just not killing somebody. It's probably quite easy not to kill anyone in your day-to-day life.

Maybe you have. But it's generally quite easy. It's something we're able to do. We can keep those words, you shall not murder, pretty well. But what Jesus is saying here is that commandment, the sixth commandment, goes further and it goes deeper.

From the fruit, which is the outward act of murder, right down to the root, which is the inner anger of the heart.

Where the underlying principle of that commandment is basically the sanctity of life. Because every human life is valuable, precious, special, important.

And so the commandment is not simply against the destruction of life, murdering somebody, but against anything that diminishes the life of another human being.

[8 : 13] Which obviously includes being angry with someone. Or demeaning someone in some way by insulting them through calling them a name. And so Jesus gives the commandment, you shall not murder, it's proper application.

By stating that, there's more than one way to murder somebody. Listen to what he says, verse 22 again. 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, Raka, is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, you fool, will be in danger of the fire of hell.

So, do we get that? Even if we don't physically kill somebody, we break the commandment. And so we're liable to judgment if we're angry with somebody.

Or if we insult somebody. And the first insult Jesus mentions is this word, Raka. And it's basically a term of contempt.

[9 : 19] It's an Aramaic swear word that means empty-headed. Empty-headed. Now, I thought that was interesting. So, I went through every single one of my Bible commentaries on the book of Matthew.

And just interested to see how they translated this word. And I did all that hard work for you. So, you don't have to. So, you're very welcome. And here's what the commentator said.

This word, Raka, it means you empty-head. You blockhead. You numbskull. You imbecile.

You idiot. You're stupid. You're a fool. That's what the Bible commentators say. But the Glaswegian translation from the original Greek basically says, Ya numpti.

Or, ya rocket. So, you get the idea. It seems to be a reference here to someone's intelligence. It's got to do with their head. With their mental competence.

[10 : 22] And the second insult Jesus mentions is, You fool. And that comes from the Greek word moros. Which is where we obviously get our word moron from.

And so, again, here's how the Matthew Bible commentators translate it. They say, You fool. You jerk. You scoundrel. You reprobate. You outcast.

If you want to hear the Glaswegian translation from the original Greek, then do see me afterwards. Now, it seems more, the second insult, seems more of a reference to somebody's immorality. In addition to their stupidities. Where it's got to do, not so much with their intelligence, but with their heart, or with their character. With their moral competence.

And so, Jesus basically here is expounding all the different ways that you can break the one command, you shall not murder.

[11 : 22] And so, we haven't murdered anyone. Good. Good start. But when we insult one out of anger, do you know what we're doing?

Well, we're doing at least two things. We are demeaning someone, someone else, who is made in the image of God. We're demeaning them. But we're also taking on the role of God in insulting somebody else.

Because we, in a sense, are taking the place of the judge. We're taking God's job off of him by judging that person. And so, it's not only a massive insult to the person, we say that thing too, but it's a massive insult to the God who made us.

And so, no wonder that Jesus' words here are so strong. Sometimes said, if looks could kill. Well, according to Jesus, if those looks are accompanied by anger, if they come with an insult, then they do.

And so, the heart of the matter really is the matter of the heart. It is the source of our anger. Because when we're angry, or when we vent our anger with our tongues, then our heart's basic motive is to destroy someone else in some kind of way.

[12 : 42] And so, Jesus takes this commandment and he internalizes it. So, it applies to our hearts, which then impacts our thoughts and our lips and what we say.

And we're guilty. We're guilty of breaking this command if we are inappropriately angry. Sometimes there's a right time to be angry.

For most of us, our anger is wrong and inappropriate. And we're guilty if we insult or slander somebody else. Now, I suspect all of us probably think, well, an emotion like anger is okay as long as it stays on the inside.

Because if it's on the inside, then nobody sees it. And it's only really a problem when it bubbles over on the inside and then it explodes on the outside.

That's when anger is a problem. And so, as long as we keep our anger in check, it's really no big deal. Well, that's wrong because according to Jesus, it is a massive deal because whether our anger is hidden in our hearts or whether it is expressed in our words, Jesus says, it makes us worthy of judgment.

[14 : 05] So, you don't need to kill somebody to be worthy of judgment. So, just as murdering someone makes us liable to judgment, so does this murderous attitude that we can find in our hearts.

Our wrongful anger is sinful and it breaks God's commandment. Now, of course, a court of law can't judge us for inner anger in the way that a court can judge us for outward murder.

But Jesus assures us that we can't escape God's judgment because plenty people can hide their misdeeds, their wrongdoing from a jury in a court of law or from a judge.

But the ultimate judge, God himself, there's no hiding from him. He sees what we do on the outside. He sees what we do on the inside. And so, Jesus is saying you can't escape God's judgment and our sinful anger is a problem because it can lead us to the fire of hell itself.

Isn't that what he says in verse 22? And that's why it's so dangerous. Anger isn't simply a danger for those who face the full brunt of my anger or your anger.

[15 : 21] But anger is a danger for us too. Jesus is saying this emotion of anger and the articulation of anger, if it comes from our lips, is hellish.

It is from the very pit of hell itself. And so, it's a behavior that's no more acceptable than the behavior of a serial murderer. And so, let's never think that I'm okay or you're okay because we've never murdered anyone.

Jesus stresses that our anger is far more serious and far more dangerous than we tend to think. One of the Bible commentators, Frederick Dale Bruner, says this of anger in his commentary.

Out of this cesspool hisses the careless or bitter word. And both the pool and its effusion poison others and in some cases lead to death.

resentment and hard words kill more people than drugs, alcohol or tobacco combined. There are more pollutants in the world than we think.

[16:26] Jesus performs a major act of public health and ecology when he bans this source of sickness and damnation from his community. thus when Jesus left the sick at the end of the last chapter and began teaching he did not cease healing he began to heal in the deep places.

So, can you see what Jesus is doing here? He is intensifying the sixth commandment because we need healing for our anger in our hearts.

And so, Jesus is forcing us to see where the seeds of murder begin. Like when we harbor a grudge against somebody else. Like when we wish harm or misfortune to come somebody's way.

When we demean someone by the things that we say to them. When we wish someone were dead. We may not physically have murdered the person.

but have you ever hated? Have you ever lost control of your temper? Have you ever insulted someone? Or slandered someone?

[17:34] Or belittled someone? Have you ever been cruel or malicious? Or unkind? Because all of this lies at the root of murder, doesn't it? And so we might not hold a gun and pull the trigger to someone's head.

We might not stab a knife in their back. but we can still cause damage and destruction and leave a whole load of corpses in our wake because of our anger.

And so that's the first point. The result of anger. The second is the response to anger. In verse 23 to 26. What is the response to anger? Well according to Jesus the response to anger is the urgent restoration of relationships.

So we must seek reconciliation with others. Like every other commandment when something is forbidden the opposite is required. That's good whenever we read any of the Ten Commandments if they speak in the negative and forbid something what they also imply is that something positive needs to be done.

And so when there is a you shall not or do not it implies there is also a you shall and a do. So if you shall not murder whether by hand or head or heart or lips the implication is that you should do the opposite by being in a right relationship with a person with all the people in fact that you know.

[19:07] So instead of physical murder and instead of character assassination we are to pursue personal reconciliation. And so in response to anger Jesus urges the need for reconciliation and also the speed of reconciliation.

So there's a need for speed in restoring our relationships. And Jesus gives two illustrations that practically apply this. And so the first one there in verse 23 to 24 is basically taken from the worship service.

It illustrates the need for reconciliation with our brother or sister. And the second illustration Jesus uses there in verse 25 and 26 is taken from the law court.

And it basically illustrates the speed for reconciliation with our enemy. So let's look at the first one verse 23 and 24. Therefore if you're offering your gift at the altar and they'll 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 back and offer your gift. So here's the point. The point is go and put that relationship right with that other person, whoever they are, before you come to church and worship God.

[20:32] So in today's terms, if we switch the temple worshiper and their gift, swap that with the Christian worshiper coming to church on a Sunday, what's Jesus saying?

Well, you can go to church to worship, you can go to church to sing songs, you can place your offering on the plate. I mean, we don't have a plate that comes around, but you can place your offering, you can give your money, you can listen to preaching and that's all good.

It's good that you're here in church, better to be in church than watching the football or cleaning your car or going to the gym. Good, you're here in church for worship. But what Jesus is implying here is don't be tempted to think that your very presence here in church excuses a broken relationship with a brother or sister in Christ.

Don't think that your worship somehow cancels out that relational breakdown. Jesus is saying it is more important that you go and be reconciled to your brother and sister in Christ and sit in church

thinking that you don't need that reconciliation or that it doesn't really matter that you put things right.

Of course, Jesus isn't saying here human relationships are up there. They're more important than your relationship with God. He's not saying that. But if we do have a relationship with God then we'll want to be in good relations with our brothers and sisters in Christ with our church family because they're our family.

[22 : 10] So, how can we think it's okay to fall out with somebody or to continue to be angry with somebody and yet join with them in worship and sit with them around the Lord's table?

The relationship needs to be sorted if our worship is to be holy and acceptable to God? Like, how can we sincerely pray a prayer of confession if there's no genuine repentance that leads to the putting right and the restoration and the reconciliation of our relationships with other people? It all just becomes a sham, doesn't it? It's hypocrisy. And so we would be better sorting out relationships that have broken down before we come to church.

Even sorting them out when we're here at church. Even during the worship service. In our worship service people are always coming and going, getting up and down.

Those are good opportunities to put right any wrong relationships. and then and only then can we fully participate in the worship of God.

[23 : 29] Jesus' words here are penetrating, aren't they? And so let's not dilute them. And so brothers and sisters, there should be not even a sniff of anger between us.

And so if you have something against somebody else, or if you know somebody else has something against you, Jesus urges the need for reconciliation.

And there's also a need for speed in that reconciliation. And that's what's emphasized in this second illustration in verse 25 and 26.

Let me read them. 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. Okay, we've changed from the church worship service somewhere now in the law court where it applies not to relationships between Christians but to relationships between Christians and basically anybody and everybody else.

[24 : 51] And Jesus is not dishing out free legal advice here. The point is seek reconciliation quickly or else things will end up being far worse if you don't.

So speed is of the essence according to Jesus before the situation just gets out of all control. And there's so much wisdom in what Jesus says here unsurprisingly because it's coming from the lips of Jesus.

So just think, think in your head how many human relationships could have been saved if only the issue had been dealt with immediately instead of being left to somehow magically work itself out. And so rather than let the anger fester which of course leads to increasing bitterness and hardness of heart. Jesus says quickly sort things out.

It's the best way to do it. Well how quickly? Well as soon as you realise there's an issue. As soon as you sense that relations are difficult or there's a tension or an uneasiness that's when to sort things out.

[26 : 06] To seek reconciliation. That's when we should move towards the other person. where as far as it depends on us we're the ones who attempt to diffuse the anger and restore relations.

And of course it is never ever easy is it? But the sooner we act then the better. Because we may reach a point in time when it actually becomes impossible to do anything about that relationship and then we're stuck in all kinds of mess.

Far better to experience the joy of a restored relationship especially if we've taken the initiative than a relationship where anger is just left to bubble away which always leads to greater estrangement and separation.

So Jesus is clear here on the need for reconciliation and the speed of reconciliation and so I think we should never delay in restoring any relationships with anyone else.

And it's not that all our anger is wrong some anger is right. That's why we spoke of God being slow to anger in Psalm 103 but that's not what we're talking about here.

[27 : 34] We're talking about inappropriate anger or wrong anger or misplaced anger. Paul says in Ephesians chapter 4 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.

And so in Jesus illustrations here Jesus wants his people to take the initiative doesn't he? As if he's pointing the finger at you and me and he's saying you Jonathan you go and do something about it. You go to your brother or your sister and sort it out. Look at what he says there. Notice how he says always throughout these verses if you if you you go and be reconciled you go and make amends you settle matters quickly with them you do it.

As Jesus draws out the radical implications of the sixth commandment you shall not murder it is so penetrating but yet it's so practical isn't it?

And so if we are going to obey this command then as far as it depends on us we will have to take those necessary steps to cultivate healthy relationships with all the people around us why?

[29 : 02] Well for our flourishing as a human being and as a child of God and as a member of Christ's church for our flourishing but also for the flourishing of the lives of those around us whether they're family members or friends or whoever but also for the flourishing of our church and ultimately for the flourishing of human society around about us that's the response to anger that Jesus demands of his people okay so the result of anger second the response to anger and then thirdly and more briefly the remedy for anger the remedy for anger is Jesus because only the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring healing for the anger in our hearts because it can transform the gospel can a heart that is filled with anger towards other people and change it into a heart that is filled with love towards other people and how is it possible only as the gospel of

Jesus Christ sinks deeper into our hearts does it become possible because it can change our heart and when it does change our heart then it informs our thinking and it softens our speech and it impacts every single one of our relationships and it gives us the desire to go and be reconciled to others well why would we want that well because we ourselves have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ God sent his own son to die for us and allowed him to be murdered Jesus was wrongly accused unfairly arrested unjustly!

sentenced cruelly mocked brutally beaten and crucified! Peter says he committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth 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 he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness by his wounds!

you have been! Jesus died on a cross for my sins or yours and yet Jesus willingly died on a cross in our place for our sins the sins that God is angry with the sins that deserve his just punishment and condemnation and yet on the cross Jesus became subject to God's judgment and he was punished for our sins so that we can be healed that's why it's his death that brings us that reconciliation to God and so while we might think that we have not broken the sixth commandment because we have never literally murdered anyone how good are we when we're honest with ourselves we know we've wrongly been angry haven't we we have harbored anger in our hearts we have vented anger in our speech all of which makes us liable to judgment and yet

Jesus went to the cross for all the times we have murdered in our hearts those who are made in the image of God and and the one one who has every right to be justifiably angry with every one of us as he hung on the cross he said father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing and so whatever it is that you have done to someone or whatever it is that someone has done to you it can be forgiven not because sin doesn't matter it does God's anger at sin was poured out on Jesus on the cross so that justice could be satisfied which not only means that God forgives you and that's great news but he also forgives the other person who has wronged you and that's why we must make every effort to move towards that brother or that sister even that enemy and seek reconciliation wanting to be reconciled to others and seeking to be reconciled to others should flow from the reconciliation that we have with

[33 : 55] God through Jesus so let's not be slow in going to Jesus to find forgiveness and to find healing for our anger let's pray Thank you.