

Anger

Good morning everyone.

I'd like to start off this morning in almost the same way that I always seem to do any time I preach. Normally I ask how you're doing but today I'll start by asking, "how are you feeling?"

So I'm going to ask, how you are all feeling, but I want you to be honest with me now. We're not simply doing the typical British thing of exchanging pleasantries for the sake of small talk with one another.

You know, where you ask how are you and then hope and expect not to get a real answer because you didn't actually want to initiate that kind of conversation.

Give me some real answers other than "Good".

I want you to be like this pirate crewmate from Peter Pan.

Smee walks out all jolly and proclaims "GOOD MORNING CREW MATES!" only to be throttled and met with the reply

"AND WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT, MR SMEE?!"

So give me some real answers and perhaps try pretending this is actually a Monday morning rather than Sunday, if that helps you connect with this pirate a little more.

Lets give this (point at picture) a go.

"GOOD MORNING CHURCH" ...

(Wait reply) (WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?!)

The same as every morning. We can wake up knowing that Jesus died, defeated death and rose again to take on our sin and grant anyone that should believe in him, eternal everlasting life! That's what's good about it.

Okay, great.

So how are you really feeling? Lets have some actual answers.

(get responses)

How about angry? Is anyone feeling a little angry this morning? Or have you even felt angry at any point this morning?

Did you pick up the news paper? Did your children take their sweet time getting ready when you were already running late?

Well if you haven't felt any sort of anger this morning, I might well be about to change that (particularly if you're working on the AV desk at this moment)... how? You might ask. It's time to add some technology to the sermon.

So, those of you who have mobile phones that are capable of internet access (That includes those of you who are watching from home) I would like for you to go to Menti.com. Do feel free to do this as groups if you would like.

You can either do this by scanning the QR that is currently on the screen, search www.menti.com (M E N T I)

Once you're on the page, enter the 8 digit code xxxx xxxx

Brilliant. Well I hope levels of anger haven't risen too much through that exercise. I know just how frustrating technology can be.

(Begin)

Now that we're on here, you'll see you have a few boxes for typing, and I want you or your group to give us some different synonyms for Anger or various different levels of anger that people might feel at times. Once you've typed your answers down into the boxes, press enter and you'll see them appear on the screen behind me.

(Briefly comment on most common answers given)

Great. So we all get the Idea of how this works.

Next, I want you to give us something that makes you angry.

Don't worry, just as before, the answers are completely anonymous, so If you want to put down, "Joshua making me use technology" or "Joshua making me think about the day to day horrors of life that I'm either trying to escape or manage better by being here on a Sunday morning", that is fine (apart from those examples probably won't fit the character count you have to adhere to). Only you, God and possibly the people sat next to you are going to know what you've put.

So, what are some things that make you angry?

Have we got any wives writing "husbands"? any husbands writing "wives"?

This last one might be a bit harder because it will require some self reflection, but how do you typically show your anger?

I think it is fair to say that there is plenty in this world that can drum up these emotions in us, even seeing some other people answers up on the projector might have gotten under your skin a little. It seems to be a very human, natural response.

But what of Anger? What does the Bible have to say about it?

Is it wrong for us to ever get angry?

Are we in the wrong and in need of repentance at any slight sense of anger that we experience at any given point in our lives?

No. absolutely not.

Let's read the verse from Ephesians we've had this morning one more time:

²⁶ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

Does that verse say to us, never be angry, if you get angry, you're a dirty sinner?

No. It says "IN your anger" "WHILE YOU are angry". It's essentially telling us that at some point in our lives, we are bound to feel some sense of anger in one way or another.

As we heard from Simon when he preached on terminal illness a couple of weeks back, our anger might even be directed towards God Himself, and that it okay.

But we don't only have to look to ourselves to see examples of anger.

I invite you to turn to John 2:13-16

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and

overturned their tables. ¹⁶To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!"

You see, even Jesus acted out of anger here. But the thing is, His anger was Godly anger, Righteous and it was fully justified.

Let's examine it further so I can explain to you just how right Jesus was in doing what He did:

So we see in verse 14 that He found in the temple courts that people were there selling cattle, sheep and doves, others were exchanging money.

Now if you're like me when I was growing up, for a long time, I had just thought of this as some Jewish guys that were busy doing business, earning a living. Simply selling stuff like they do round the corner at the market down next to the leisure centre. So I always thought, well yeah. Drive them out. What do they think they're doing? You're supposed to worship in the temple, not do your shopping there.

But, no. It's far worse than that!

You see, these animals, the cattle, sheep and doves were being sold to use as sacrifice in the temple and they were a complete con.

Jewish people would turn up with their own animals for sacrifice but the people who were selling in the temple court would not only insist that the quality of the animals brought to sacrifice weren't satisfactory, but would also confiscate those animals from the people that brought them and then they would continue by forcibly selling them their own cattle, sheep and doves which just so happened to be of "acceptable quality".

How bad is that?

But not only did they do this with the animals, you might also be wondering what was the need was for money changers in the temple?

Well, they would claim that any currency other than the "super high quality" Tyrian shekels were idolatrous and not anywhere near good enough to purchase the animals for sacrifice, let alone pay the annual temple tax, and so anyone visiting had no choice but to exchange the money that they had with them. Of course, this would be done at awful exchange rates and then the prices would always be inflated too.

It's a bit like when you go to the arcade at Hollywood bowl. You pay your real money in to play the arcade game that they provide and then you start to earn these prize tickets. You set your eyes on what it is that you want to get from their glass cabinets and see that you need to earn yourself a mountain of tickets to purchase this thing. So you crack on with your gaming and winning tickets and by the time you've earned enough tickets, you don't really know how much you have spent and you're unable to have any sort of educated guess at what each ticket is worth in pounds, but you know full well that whatever it is you're getting is worth nowhere near what you spent to get it, but there's no option of trading the tickets back in for cash and so you just go right ahead and get the prize.

So this is what was happening to affect the Jewish people that were coming to visit and worship in the temple. But there was even more than this that would have seriously disgruntled Jesus as he entered His house.

What do you think God thought of the Gentiles (that's the non-Jewish people)?

He loved them. You see, God has always been fond of giving Gentiles the opportunity to change their ways and follow the faith and law of Israel in worshiping Him, YHWH. And we see this all throughout the old testament.

All the way back in Joshua, we see a lady who was an Amorite prostitute. Guy's who were in GRID last week, can any of you remember her name?... Rahab. And what was it that Rahab did?... She helped the spies of Joshua at Jericho and she was not only spared but became a direct ancestor who? Jesus.

Likewise, there was Ruth who was a Moabite woman. She showed loyalty to Naomi (who had ended up being her mother in law after having come across from Bethlehem with her husband and sons to escape famine in Israel).

When Naomi went to travel back home, Ruth refused her pagan Moabite culture and returned to Bethlehem alongside Naomi and again, a lady who chose to devote her faith to YHWH ends up in the lineage of Jesus and king David.

But it wasn't only individuals that received this grace, it was entire nations of people.

The Babylonians in Daniel were shown the might and power of God. King Darius was so taken by Daniel that his faith grew, even before he saw that Daniel was safe among the lions.

Before he had seen that Daniel was safe and well, his words in Daniel 6:20 were: "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" and after seeing that Daniel was safe, not only did he pronounce personal faith but in Verse 26, he sent out a decree to all his royal dominion that they were to "Tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for He is the living God, enduring forever: his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.

We also see the entirety of Nineveh (much to Jonah's dissatisfaction) saved from certain destruction as they turn from their ways and praise the LORD God almighty.

So God always had a door open for the Gentiles to come and worship Him.

When we look at the temple, we see it split into sections. To help you see why this area of the outer court (where all this conning was going on) was so important, I'll quickly talk you through the temple:

We'll start and work our way from the inside out to illustrate, just how important the outer court was.

I'm going to need some volunteers to help visualise this. We'll start with just 1.

We begin in the centre of the temple behind the curtains with the Holy of Holies.

So, (person number 1) you are the High Priest. Only the high priest was allowed to enter into this place, and even then, that was only once per year on Yom Kippur.

God is right there in that room! So person 1, please can you enter? (Stand in the doorway)

I'd like 2 or 3 more victims/ volunteers now.

Next we move out to the priests court (**the stage**).

Who do you think was allowed here?

You guessed it, only the priests and the high priest were allowed to this point of the temple. This is where they would sacrifice the animals that had been brought by the Jewish people.

Just outside of this, we have the court of Israel. Who do you think would be allowed here?

Men. **Great. Can we have some men please?**

Men, the priests and High priest would be permitted to enter up to this area so that they were able to witness their animals being sacrificed.

Further back, we pass through the impressive gate of Nicanor, down the 15 steps and into the women's court.

And so who do we think would be allowed here?

Not just the women, but all of the above mentioned so far, so no volunteers needed for this bit, you're all in the women's court.

In the women's court, we find the 4 lamp stands that were exactly half the height of the temple and we would also find Shofar horns which were for donating money and you could choose specific areas to donate to such as buying wood for the fire for the altar. Most importantly though, the women's court was named as such, because this was as far as the women would be permitted to go into the temple.

A little further back we have the eastern gate **I now need 2 more people please**. The Eastern gate would have been used for entry and so these two guards here are our Levites and they would have taken your sacrificial animal from you at this point and make sure that you had been ceremonially cleansed in the Mikvah before being allowed to enter.

Finally, here looking at the outer court, this is where the gentiles (the non-Jews) would be allowed in the temple. This is where we would have seen the selling of animals for sacrifice and the changing of money into Tyrian shekels. You've come up these stairs and been welcomed by the busy hustle and bustle of all going on. Behind you, you have this grand portico or royal court where wealthy friends of Herod would have been able to rest out of the rain or more likely, harsh sun.

Now, you see this little gate here, the low wall surrounding this entrance was known as the soreg

and would have had inscriptions in Latin and Greek to let them know that entering this area would be met with the punishment of death. So this outer court truly was the only part that the gentiles were permitted in.

And so now, when we look at it all as a bigger picture as I've tried to illustrate to you here, it all works as stages and how close you would be permitted to get to the Holiest of Holies.

We have The high priest all the way over there

Then the priests

Then the men

Then the women

And finally, the Gentiles

And so at this point, the closest point that the Gentiles were permitted to Gods dwelling place on earth, it had been turned into a true den of thieves where people were conning others and severely hindering the Gentiles from worshiping or coming to know God.

Thank you, you can all sit down now.

So, Jesus got understandably angry at this situation and He was most certainly wholly justified in not only being angry but acting out in righteous anger to put these wrongs to right. Yet Jesus didn't instantly lash out. He laid out the example for us that is then reflected in the writings of James in James 1:19. Jesus remained slow to speak and slow to anger as he took his time to first fashion a whip before going up, asserting his power, flipping the tables and driving out the traders who had been committing such acts.

He didn't rush in blindly in a fit of rage without first taking all facts onboard as we so often do. The line of righteous anger can be a very easy one to cross and sometimes, we don't even know that we're doing it.

In 2010, there was a young lady named Joanna Yates.

Jo is described as vibrant, talented, and caring person with a promising future, a "lust for life" and positive, bubbly personality.

With a masters in landscape architecture, She had moved to Bristol and at 25 years of age, she was working as a landscape architect at the Building Design Partnership and was about to spend her first Christmas with her boyfriend.

However; Incredibly sadly, this beautiful soul was found on Christmas day, ingloriously dumped at the side of the road.

Who was to blame for this atrocity?

Well, of course, the media were ready with the "facts" immediately.

Her landlord who lived in another flat in the same building was a peculiar looking man. A loner who lived with no one but himself, and was reported to have been a “peeping Tom” who was constantly leering at tenants in his flats and would peep through key holes.

The media told us all of how he fit every profile of the kind of person who would be a killer. 30 years previously, and only 15 minutes from Jo, another woman was found and her case never solved. Who lived in the area at the time? The very same landlord.

They told us of how he had been imprisoned for inappropriate acts with underage boys, he would hold hands with young pupils as they read poetry and he was obsessed with death.

This disgusting human, they said must have been guilty of murdering the daughter of our nation who was so easy for us all to relate to. She reminded us of the lovely girl next door, our beautiful friend who we imagine having gone to school, college or university with.

Him. The Landlord. He had taken this precious life away and must face punishment for his actions...

People were in a fit of rage. They wanted nothing but the worst for this man who they were being told, must be the culprit, and seemingly, based off of these “facts” that I’ve just given you, this anger toward the murderous landlord was righteous and justified... yes?

Well... that was, until it turned out that none of this was true.

And what had seemed like righteous and justified anger, turned out to be a misdirected witch hunt against a school teacher who was actually quoted by neighbours, ex tenants, a former head teacher, pupils and alike, to have been: “A dedicated teacher, a responsible landlord, an active member of his community, a man who had taught for 34 years without a blemish on his record, a man who was involved in a number of conservation programs, a part of the neighbourhood watch, and a pillar of society. The last person you would thought to be arrested by the police, let alone kill somebody.”

And so we see how finely trod this line is between whether or not our anger is righteous. These lies could quite easily have led to a member of public acting on their anger, taking drastic action on behalf of the lost sweetheart of the nation who’s story resonated deeply, only to then find out that the emotion of anger that they would have acted upon would have been based off of lies and slander.

Equally, the unfairly disgraced landlord and teacher must have felt a righteous anger at the papers for having utterly destroyed his life and could have acted in sin through many different actions. There may have been the temptation to launch personal attacks against the writers of each article or to somehow disrupt the distribution of the companies who printed the slander against him.

However; he handled the matter through court, (I think rightfully) charging liable against 8 separate news papers/publishers and tabloids. Following this, he would go on to host talks speaking of his experience and against the lack of professionalism from journalists of this day.

The story of his experience has since been dramatized by ITV and can be seen in the multi BAFTA award winning “The Lost Honour of Christopher Jefferies”.

Can I have 2 new volunteers who are good at drawing please?

Blindfold drawing – Draw 1v1. Blindfold draw 1v1 (blinded by anger)

When I say go. You’ll have 60 seconds to draw a picture. The picture that I want you to draw is some friends who are playing football but one person has been left out of the game and is angry about it.

Sound simple enough? Great!

Give 60 seconds.

Now, this person that has been left out is you. You're blinded by the anger you feel from being left out and so you're going to be blindfolded okay. (Only blindfold 1)

Okay. Now I'm going to give you 60 seconds to draw again, but this time, you've acted on the injustice and you've rectified the situation so you're all friends again and everyone is playing together nicely. No one is left out.

Give 60 seconds.

Thank you for volunteering.

What a mess, this is. You were blinded by anger and now instead of acting righteously, you've made a huge mess of the whole situation.

This picture though, is different. Sure, you might have gotten a little angry at the situation and rightfully so, it's never nice to feel excluded. But you didn't allow yourself to be blinded by the anger and you didn't act upon your anger.

See, a seemingly simple task can quite easily become a real challenge when we're blinded by anger, and similarly, we can easily miss out on facts of the bigger picture when we're blinded by anger. As was the case with Mr Jefferies. Now, I know that the media lied about him to build up a storm, but people were enraged and so most didn't even bother to research further into the story and just took the medias word for it.

We can most certainly be righteous in anger, in getting angry at things and situations, but it is a fine line and it is important that we take our time, just as Jesus did.

Let us again read the verse from James that we heard this morning:

James 1:19-20 ¹⁹“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”

So you are likely to become angry at some point, but, “be slow to anger”. Don't act with haste whether it is with good intent or not, “because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires”. Be slow to anger and thinking back to the passage from Ephesians, do not use that anger to justify sin.

Sure, get angry. Anger can most definitely be justified at times. In fact, being angry can make you a better human, for if we never took on injustices, we would be far, far poorer as a society, all for the sake of not feeling righteous anger.

But don't act blindly on that anger. Take that anger to God in prayer. As we read in 1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your cares on Him as He cares for you.

Ask with an open heart for God to calm your mind and soul. To help you see the bigger picture, not only so that if you're wrong, He corrects you, but so that you can act on the injustice, not out of anger, but in servitude to Him who cares for you.

There are many great examples of people having acted not in anger but out of anger to rectify an unjust situation, but no better example can be given than

the abolition of slavery.

The abolition of slavery really first took its proper steps in 1772 with a man named James Somerset.

Somerset was originally a boy from a country in west Africa who had been forcibly taken across to Virginia as a slave where he was later sold to a Scottish slave driver (who I won't bother honour by naming). This master (allegedly voluntarily) brought Somerset over to England.

In England at that time, there was no common law to uphold chattel slavery, but a perceived notion that “England's air was too pure for a slave to breath” and so where people were still enslaved to the extent that they served their masters, they weren't chained, shackled and beaten. So now, as a man in England's pleasant pastures, Somerset was allowed the “privilege” to walk about the streets unaccompanied and interact with

others in England as any other man and woman, and during this time, Somerset got baptised and adopted the Christian name James.

Two years on, James' master, the slave driver, had some of his men follow James. When James entered a back ally they captured him as the master had planned to ship James off to Jamaica to be sold once again. So James was held on a ship, but thankfully before they were able to set sail, some of James new found abolitionist friends, Thomas Walkin, Elizabeth Cade and John Marlow invoked Habeas Corpus.

Habeas corpus (which is Latin for "you have the body") is a fundamental legal right for anyone who has been detained to be brought before a judge.

Whoever it is that has detained them must then bring their case as to why they should be allowed to imprison this person and the judge must determine whether or not the detainment is legal.

James's barrister, William Davy, argued that within England, no man can be imprisoned without lawful cause and nowhere in English law was it stated that a man was permitted to own another man.

The judge, despite the potential backlash and disruption to the economy of the Empire at the time, sided with Davy and Somerset.

Some 8 years later, a fresh faced young man, William Wilberforce joined parliament as the independent MP for Yorkshire. William had grown up in a wealthy family in Hull and the young age of 21, was elected to parliament where for the first few years in his own words

"...did nothing to any purpose. My own distinction was my darling object."

William fell into a deep depression until Spring 1786 when he gave his life to Jesus and trusted in Him alone to transform his troubled soul. He considered leaving parliament off the back of his new found faith, but one man stopped him and convinced him to use his position for good.

This man actually used to be a slave trader but when he came to faith, he felt a huge amount of guilt and a righteous anger at not just what he had done but what others were doing. He turned from his ways and became a very early abolitionist, and he even wrote an incredibly famous Hymn. That man was John Newton and he has his own story that is incredibly interesting and I implore you to explore that further in your own time.

Does anyone know what Hymn it was that he wrote?

(wait on answer)

Amazing Grace

So John convinced William Wilberforce to remain in parliament and to do good for the glory of God and this is where his battle against the injustice of the slave trade began.

Wilberforce pushed and pushed for the abolition of slavery from within parliament and directly in front of those who in the background were profiting massively from the slave trade.

By 1807 he had managed to get law passed prohibiting the transportation of slaves on British vessels. All these actions awoke the British public and a righteous anger stirred amongst the people regarding the injustice of the treatment of fellow humans. But this anger was thoughtful and correctly acted upon. The people didn't blindly act in anger and let their emotions get the better of them, they acted out of their anger, having

taken time to calm their emotions before taking steps to put this awful trade to an end.

The calls for the abolition of slavery grew and grew and in 1833 just one month after William Wilberforce's death, The Slavery Abolition act was passed in parliament and enshrined across the entire British empire with Only 16 in opposition to the bill.

Slavers ships of any nation would be classed as piracy and be taken on by the British Navy. Blockades of naval vessels patrolled the coast of Africa and took up half of the entire British naval fleet to stop.

In total, Britain spent 40% of it's entire treasury as a loan to ensure a stop to the slave trade which now taking inflation into account, equates to roughly £2.5bn and this money was finally back in 2015 after 175 years.

The British took the steps to do something that no other country in the recorded history of man had done and made it their mission to put an end to the trade of people. Not only in their own territories, but all surrounding areas in the west.

All driven by a righteous anger to live in alignment with God's will.

Sadly, although we may not see it, there are now more people than at any other time in history who are enslaved, with an estimated 38-49 million people in slavery across the world, many of whom are women and children that are trafficked for nefarious means.

Not only are prominent leaders and people of power implicated in this as we've seen recently in certain documents that have been released, but some have even been found guilty of enslavement within this very country.

This is Lydia Mugambe who was a UN judge. She was studying for a doctorate in law at Oxford University and has since been sentenced to 6 years in prison for having a young Ugandan woman enslaved as a housekeeper at her home in Kidlington.

And you know what. I believe that we should be equally as outraged by all of this as they were in the 17/1800's and we should seek to make sure that something is done about it.

But it is important that we are slow to speak and slow to anger so that the steps that we take to put an end to this, are righteous and in line with God's will.