

There's an App for that – Dealing with Anger!

1 Kings 21:1-16, Micah 2:1-4

Friends, what is it that makes you angry? What causes you to lose your cool? Blow your stack? See red – or as Bart Simpson would say – “Have a cow!”

Well I know what makes my administrator get angry – a slow computer! I'll be nicely working away in my office when all of a sudden I hear a cry of frustration and anger from the admin office ending with – oh this computer is so slow!

Friends, isn't that often the case with technology – even though it claims to make our lives easier, allows us to communicate faster and print off color reports – it often wastes a great deal of our time as we try to figure out why it isn't working right, or having to learn a whole new operating system or figure out how to use the latest smart phone.

It's frustrating, it wastes time and that makes us angry. I can relate with this Garfield comic from time to time and I know my administrator certainly can too

Friends isn't it interesting that while technology can do all sorts of amazing things, we're basically left on our own when it comes to dealing with anger. As I mentioned last week we can get all sorts of apps – short for applications or programs that we can download to our smart phones to help us do daily tasks, but in the daily task of dealing with our anger....

Well, often technology is the problem and not the solution☺

But, friends – God is good – for over 2000 years the answers to life's problems and the solutions to the issues we face every day have been available to us in a very low tech source- the bible! And when it comes to dealing with anger the bible can be extremely helpful to us.

First – the bible tells us that anger isn't the problem – in fact anger is a normal part of being a person, even God gets angry – and friends, we were created in God's image.

As we get to know God in the story of the scripture one of the ways he is introduced is "*The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, **slow to anger**, abounding in*

love and faithfulness, (Ex 34:6) It doesn't say, here's God and he never gets angry! Instead he is slow to anger, he's got a long fuse but it does have a limit, as the nation of Israel eventually found out.

Psalms 106:29 states – *"they provoked the LORD to anger by their wicked deeds"*

Israel continually provoked God to anger by breaking their covenant agreement with Him, and worshipping other gods, they were disloyal to Yahweh, they ignored and disobeyed his commandments and even killed his prophets! So God became angry with them and punished them – these were the consequences they were warned about.

So learning that getting angry is a part of being human as created in God's image may free us up from some false guilt, because perhaps we thought anger in and of itself – and that is good news.

However the bible also carries plenty of warnings about anger, here are a few...

Eph 4:31 *"get rid of anger"*

James 1:20 *"man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires"* Proverbs 22:24 *"Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered"*

Proverbs 29:11 *"A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control"*

So the second thing we learn about anger is that as part of our human make-up it is affected by sin just as much as any other part of us and that can have disastrous results.

Take for example the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. Cain is angry and upset because God wasn't pleased with his offering of fruits and veggies - God would have rather have had a V8©, just kidding...they weren't Cain's *first or best* fruits and veggies - so God says 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 master it."

Notice God doesn't say resist your anger – but instead do what's right – give me some good fruits and veggies because you love me and you'll resist sin. But Cain doesn't, and so sin masters him and look at what happens when it warps his anger.

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

And ever since then human anger has been twisted and warped by sin – in fact Jesus used it as an example to teach ordinary people that they were affected by sin too – even though they might never have done anything as drastic or terrible as murder

²¹"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' ²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. (Matt 5)

So this is why James 1:20 says “*man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires*” Our anger is affected by Sin – so now anger can control us, it can blind us to reason,

make us do things we regret. Or we can become angry at the slightest provocation, overreact to something minor. We can even misplace our anger – kick the dog because we're angry at our boss. We may be angry at our father but we're taking it out on the whole world – anger can become the dominant emotion in our daily experience and the basis for how we relate to everyone around us.

And we see this playing out in a subtle and sophisticated way in the story about King Ahab and Naboth's vineyard.

King Ahab is angry – he's angry when he shouldn't be. We might think he's got reason to be because his neighbor is being unreasonable in not selling him his vineyard at top dollar, but we may not realize that Israelite real estate was sacred – God had divided up the land among the tribes of Israel and you couldn't just sell off your land for a deal.

In Lev 25:23 God says *'The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants'- even the king! (makes you wonder about all these claims about who the land in the middle east really belongs too)*

So Ahab is angry about something he shouldn't be – he's doing something wrong by trying to buy the land, Naboth is a God-fearing Israelite who's doing right. So King Ahab goes home lays down on his bed and sulks.

He should have recalled Psalm 4:4 *In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.*

Perhaps he would have then realized he was making an inappropriate request and dealt with his anger – instead he's passive aggressive about it. When his wife Jezebel comes along he sulks to her about it, so she goes and has her husbands "little problem" taken care of – the end result again...murder.

This time sin warped anger expresses itself in cold, calculated pre-meditated murder instead of a sudden fit of murderous rage.

And it's the kind of situation that the prophet Micah warns about in the passage we read

Woe to those who plot evil on their beds, who covet fields and take them simply because they can...

In fact its things like this which provokes God to anger, and Micah warns us - the LORD says: *"I am planning disaster against this people, from which you cannot save yourselves. (Micah 2:3)*

So we're back to God's anger again, and ironically friends it is God's anger which will save us from our sinful anger, because at the root of it...God is angry about Sin.

He's angry that it has warped and twisted humans – those creatures he made to take care of and develop the creation. He's angry at the consequences Sin has in their lives and its effect on the world – and I think we can understand that, just read the history books and watch the evening news.

But God doesn't act passive aggressive with his anger, he doesn't fly off into a blind rage and smash a hole in the wall or throw a pair of high heels at someone. Instead God plans, and he doesn't plan revenge – he plans redemption. And his plan is focuses his anger on Sin- where it's supposed to be focused. God doesn't misplace his anger like we can. And anger only characterizes God's relationship with us when Sin causes us to be disloyal, disobedient and disbelieving – and God always

finds a way to act on that anger to get his plan back on track – usually through someone who is angry about what makes God angry!

Take King Saul in his early days - *When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger. (1 Sam 11:6)* So Saul is motivated to gather the Israelites together and defeat their enemies.

Or the prophet Ezekiel - *The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the LORD upon me. (Ezek 3:14)* Ezekiel is angry that God's people won't listen to God message.

Finally, look at Jesus - *He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, (Mark 3:5)* Jesus is angry that the Pharisees – the religious leaders of God's people are more concerned about legalism than mercy and grace

And also there's the episode of Jesus clearing the temple... *In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵So he*

made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, 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! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" Jesus is angry that the financial interests of the Jews have taken over the gentile prayer courts where foreigners could come to worship God – the temple is to be a house of prayer for **all** nations

God's anger over sin and how it wrecks the creation, how it fights against his will always finds its expression in the people that God sends to accomplish his plan to deal with Sin – they are always angry about what make God angry.

And as I said earlier – God doesn't displace his anger – It is focused where it should be, on Sin! So that is why Jesus Christ took our Sin upon himself – God is not angry with the creation He made – he's angry with the Sin that warps and twists it and makes us rebel against him.

That's why Jesus wasn't a political or military savior, he wasn't a cultural savior, or a philosophical savior – he was an

sacrifice for Sin. Sin is what needs to be dealt with in our lives.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”*.

Friends – man’s anger, human anger affected by sin does not bring about a life that is righteous, loyal to God. But God’s anger does – it did, and if you want to deal with anger in your life you need to realize that your Sin needs to be dealt with! It needs Christ’s sacrifice to be applied to it so you can be forgiven – and transformed!

Then you will become “slow to anger”, and when you do get angry it will be about the kinds of things that make God angry, not about petty and self interested issues. You’ll be angry that people think being a Christian is just about being good, about being nice and moral, that all religions lead to God. You’ll become like the apostle Paul who says

“Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?” (2 Cor 11:29)

You’ll focus your anger where it belongs – if you’re angry with your mother – fine! Deal with your mother, but don’t make the rest of us suffer –right? You will deal with the issue you are angry about as Jesus instructed *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.”* (Matt 18:15)

And finally your anger will motivate you to do something – like Popeye used to say “that’s all I can stand and I can’t stand no more!” It will be time for action

So you begin to share the truth of Christ with people in this community, you invest your time and money and support a church whose goal is to make Disciples of Christ from all nations – starting in this neighborhood! You do something!

Friends, this is how we need to deal with anger –we need our anger transformed, and the bible gives us the truth which allows this transformation to take place

I’ve told you what that is this morning – that we need to acknowledge the power and control of Sin in our self,

especially as it relates to our anger - and to deal with that by asking Christ to forgive us, especially for how our anger can control us, and set us free through the Holy Spirit – but you have to take that step; I can't do it for you.

So friends I'm going to close this morning in a time of silent prayer – where you can take your issues with your anger directly to Christ and ask him to set you free and transform your anger into Holy Anger – to be that guide in your life which says “this isn't right, I can't stand it, I've got to take action and do something”

So friends, let's pray!