

He Gets Angry

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Date: 07 February 2021

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[0 : 00] In our evening services just now, we are working up through a series called Flesh and Blood Jesus. And our aim in this series is to think through the different ways in which Jesus's humanity is revealed to us in his words and actions. And in that we want to remember that not only is Jesus God the Son but also that he is the perfect human. In Jesus we see the glory of God revealed but we also see everything that humanity was meant to be. Our title this evening is He Gets Angry and we are going to look at two or three different passages but we can take as our texts the words that we just read in Mark chapter 5 verse 3 and he looked around at them with anger, grieved at the hardness of the hardness of heart and said to the man, stretch out your hand and he stretched it out and his hand was restored. We're going to start with a little game. The game is called Good Word or Bad and basically how it works is I am going to write down three or four words and after each one I want you to ask yourself the question whether you think this whether instinctively you think that this word is referring to a good thing or a bad thing. So very simple game, Good Word or

Bad. So here's the first word, Grace. Good Word or Bad. What about Peace?

Good Word or Bad? Mercy? Hope. Good Word or Bad? I think all of them we tend to think would be good but what about this word?

Anger. Do you tend to think of a good thing or do you tend to think of a bad thing? I think for many of us if not all an instinctive thought is of anger as a bad thing and I think the reason for that is because many of our day-to-day experiences of anger are nearly always negative. So if your boss was angry with you at work this week it makes for a rubbish day. If you've had to deal with an angry partner or angry parents or even angry children then it's horrible and so often when we get angry ourselves we come away with a deep sense of regret.

All of this means that thinking about anger in relation to Jesus and means that we're coming to something that I think is a bit of a neglected topic maybe even a controversial one. I don't think that you find many fridge magnets or wall plaques with Mark chapter 3 verse 5 written on them and I think some people might even feel that we shouldn't associate anger with Jesus at all.

[3 : 27] But of course the truth is passages like Mark 3 are making it really clear to us that there were times when Jesus was angry and so the gospel narratives are making that plain. Coupled to that though is a crucial truth that we keep highlighting in this series the fact that Jesus was without sin. So when he did get angry that anger did not have all the negative stuff that we display or that we experience in expressions of human anger. In fact what I hope we will see tonight is that when we see Jesus getting angry we are seeing something amazing. So as we look at that we're going to ask four very simple questions there they are on the screen. What made Jesus angry? What does this teach us about Jesus? What effect did his anger have? What should we do in response?

However before we go into these questions there's one more crucial introductory point that we must highlight. On your screen just now are 10 moments when Jesus interacted with people. Number one, Nicodemus a religious leader who didn't understand even basic theological truths. Number two, a bleeding woman who was too afraid to speak and just wanted to secretly touch Jesus's garment even though she was unclean. Three is the woman at the well who had five failed marriages and now was living with a man who was not her husband. Number four, the Canaanite woman who begged Jesus to help her even though she was a foreigner and I had no real right to his concern. Five is the disciples in Mark chapter 6 when they were exhausted, burnt out. Number seven and number six is again the disciples this time in John 10 when they were confused and that happens in many other places they couldn't understand what Jesus was saying. Number seven is a notorious woman who wiped Jesus's feet with her hair. Number eight is Thomas who doubted the resurrection. Number nine is Peter who failed spectacularly by denying Jesus and number ten is the whole betrayal, arrest and trial of Jesus when he was falsely accused, mocked and beaten. In these 10 moments Jesus was confronted with people who failed to understand even simple things, people whose lives were a mess, people who made huge mistakes, people who were broken and vulnerable, people who had let him down and even people who were aggressive towards him and yet all these moments have one thing in common, Jesus didn't get angry. And that is reminding us that when we think of the times when Jesus did get angry, God forbid that we forget the times that he didn't. And that of course means that when we are faced with the same kind of people, people who are difficult or broken or slow to understand or who let us down or even those who are aggressive towards us, if we are seeking to be Christ-like in these situations then we need to strive to control our anger as well. Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. In so many of life's most annoying situations, Jesus is a model of not getting angry and we must never forget that ourselves. But Jesus is also a model of good anger and so as we consider that tonight we can turn to the first of our four questions, what made

Jesus angry. I'm going to briefly highlight seven occasions in the gospel narrative when Jesus' anger is revealed. Sometimes it says directly that he was angry, other times it's implied. We'll just go through these really quickly. So Mac 1.5 we read and there was this man with the withered hand. The leaders were watching to see whether Jesus would heal him or not, they were trying to catch him out and Jesus looked around them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart. So what made Jesus angry here? He was angry at the cold indifference of the religious leaders to the suffering of this man. He was angered by the fact that they were more interested in catching Jesus out than they were in helping this man. Example number two is from Mark 10 when people were trying to bring children to Jesus but the disciples rebuked them and stopped them as if to say don't waste Jesus' time with these little children.

Here we see when Jesus saw it he was indignant and said to them let the children come to me. What was Jesus angry about there? He was angry about the discrimination that the disciples were showing towards people who seemed insignificant. He was angered by the fact that children were seen as unimportant.

Example number three is three different texts. Some apologies that you can't see the bottom one. Let me just get rid of myself. There we go. So here then in a storm at the sea Jesus rebuked the wind. Matthew 17, Jesus heals a demon-possessed boy. He rebuked the demon. Luke, he visits Simon's mother-in-law who is unwell. Jesus rebuked the fever. In all these examples what made Jesus angry?

[9 : 45] The causes of human suffering. He rebukes that which causes pain, distress and fear. Next example is in Matthew 23. I won't read it all. This is when he was pronouncing woes on the Pharisees. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites.

What made Jesus angry? It was the hypocrisy of these religious leaders. He was angered by their false piety and their lack of integrity and the way in which that had caused so much difficulty for others. Next example, John 2. This is example number five where Jesus cleanses the temple. What made Jesus angry here?

Commercialization and exploitation. The temple had been turned into a market place. It was full of money changers selling oxen sheep and pigeons. And for Jesus the building that was supposed to be a house of prayer for everyone had become a house of profit for the select few. Then example number six is an interesting one in Matthew 9. Here we have two blind men who came to Jesus asking to be healed and he said to them, do you believe that I'm able to do this?

And they said, yes Lord, he touched their eyes and healed them. But then it says their eyes were opened. Jesus sternly warned them. And the language there is strong. Jesus was giving them a very strong angry rebuke. See to it that no one knows about it. What was it that made Jesus so angry here? Well, what made Jesus angry here was the fact that he was, they were at risk of spreading a false gospel. Because the common view of the Messiah in those days was that he was going to be a military leader who was going to come and basically drive the Romans away from the Jews. And because of that false expectation, that's why Jesus repeatedly told people not to spread the news about what he was doing in order not to feed that misconception. And he gives this really stern warning about spreading a message that would make people think that he'd come as some kind of nationalist revolutionary who was going to drive out the Romans. Because that wasn't the truth. And Jesus gave him a stern warning not to spread a false message. In all six of these examples, we're seeing two main things emerging.

We're seeing the fact that Jesus is anxious to defend people. And he is anxious to defend the truth. His anger is provoked when he sees people suffering and when he sees the truth being twisted. Can you just imagine what he must think of our society today? But the place where Jesus' anger is seen most clearly is in the passage we read in John 11. Here we read that Jesus saw Mary weeping and the Jews who'd come with her. He was deeply moved in his spirit. And then when he came to the tomb, he was deeply moved again. Now this is an example where the translation of the Greek word here in ESV is not really capturing the word. Because it's one word for deeply moved and it's the same word here for deeply moved there. And what it actually means is outraged.

[13 : 42] It's not an expression of kind of like sympathy where you're moved to sorrow. It's a word that means anger. Jesus, when he sees the horror of death, when he sees the agony of separation, when he sees the fact that humanity has been torn apart by a brutal enemy, he is utterly outraged.

That leads us on to your second question. What does this teach us about Jesus? Well, to answer that I think it's good to think about where anger comes from. What are the triggers that prompt us to anger? And I think there's probably lots we could say here but I think there's three main triggers for anger. Number one is pain. So as you know I'm quite tall that means I quite often hit my head on things. In my parents house there's quite low doorways and I often hit my head in the doorways and even in houses with normal ceilings and normal doorways I can sometimes hit my head on light fittings. I also when I eat I quite often bite the inside of my mouth because I chew too quickly and when these things happen it's blooming sore and for just a split second you could feel anger just flame up inside you. I don't know if any of you watched the film Inside Out where you have the wee anger figure who kind of explodes in fire. When you hit your head or bite your tongue or stub your toe or hit your finger with a hammer while you're nailing it in, when you get pain it's like that. Anger just flares up very quickly but it's not just physical pain and psychological pain can have the same effect. That's why we get annoyed if we're interrupted or when people around us are noisy or when something we hope for fails to materialize pain gives rise to anger. Second trigger for anger is our sense of morality or if you like our sense of right and wrong. So when we see something that we think is wrong it provokes us to anger. That might be in regard to big ethical questions so things like the plight of refugees, the drug deaths situation in Scotland, the inequalities in our society. When we see something that we know is wrong it provokes us to anger but this can also apply to much smaller issues. So for example in football when a refereeing decision goes against our team, when we're out in the car, if someone drives in a way that fails to meet our expectations or when we're watching the news and a politician says something that we don't like, we feel wronged and we get angry. And the third trigger for anger is love.

When we love someone or something, if you see the object of your love being threatened or hurt or abused it prompts us to anger. Now that might be a trivial thing so someone might get angry if their car gets scratched but it also applies to much more serious issues. So we might be angry if our child is getting bullied in school or if our friend is getting a hard time at work and we might get angry when we feel that people are treating us badly. And for us as humans I think this is why anger and fear are very closely related. When something that we hold dear is threatened it can stir up our anger. So these are the three triggers for anger. Pain when we say that hurts, morality when we say that's wrong and love when we say that's precious. And the key point that arises out of all of this is that there is a crucial link between our anger and our character.

I'll never forget hearing a sermon of Eric Alexander when he said one of the most penetrating tests of our character is to ask the question what makes you angry. So if you get angry if your car is damaged then that tells you that you're perhaps too materialistic and that you care a lot about your car. If you get angry when your team loses or when you don't get top marks in an assignment it tells you that you're too competitive and you're too concerned about winning.

But if you get angry when your friend or your spouse or your child is mistreated then it tells you that you love them. If pain, morality and love are the triggers for anger then that means that your anger tells you an awful lot about what you really care about. It's always a crucial question to ask ourselves.

[19:05] What makes me angry? And the key point that I want to highlight in relation to these three triggers is that all three of them apply to Jesus as well. Jesus was angered by pain but not when he suffered it himself but when he saw it in the lives of others. Jesus was angered by wrongdoing not when it was done to him but when it was being done to the people around him and he was angered by wrong teaching because it was leading people astray and Jesus was angered by his love not love for himself or for his possessions but love for others. When they were threatened and mistreated he was angered because they are so precious.

And this is where we start to see that Jesus's anger is actually something amazing. His anger is showing us that at the very core of his character is the deepest and most passionate concern for other people and that's of course why he said that he came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. And I think this is a big help for us when we are confronted by awful things in our lives. So when we see the pain that other people suffered when we see the injustice in the world around us when we see the horror and agony of death we must never forget that these things don't just prompt Jesus to be sympathetic. They're provoked to righteous and holy anger. And this is where we see the amazing truth that Jesus is never indifferent. If I was to ask you the question what is the opposite of love what would you say? I would think of answer is usually hate and of course in many senses that's true but I think it's equally true to say that the opposite of love is not hate it's indifference.

And of course one of the reasons why there's still so much inequality and suffering and pain in the world is not because of hate it's because people just aren't bothered. And so it's a tragedy when you see a government or a society or a community confronted by the suffering of others and it prompts no reaction at all. Thank God that Jesus is never like that. And that brings us to our third question. What effect did Jesus's anger have? Well in order to answer this question I think that we need to draw a distinction between anger and grumpiness.

The two of them can feel very similar but I want to distinguish between them. Grumpiness is a state of irritation, disappointment or moodiness that manifests itself in moaning. Anger is a profound aversion to something that manifests itself in action. So if something really angers us we don't just sit and moan we will do something about it. And for us that can be good but all too often it will be for bad and that's why when you are angry about something it's important to avoid being hasty. It's important to examine yourself and to ask yourself well am I going to make the situation worse if I react according to my anger.

We have to be very careful but the key point is anger will lead to action. So if we're asking the question what effect did Jesus's anger have? The answer is that it prompted him to action. And we see that very clearly from the pages of scripture. So when Jesus was faced with human suffering he took action in order to deal with it. So he was angered by the suffering experienced by the man in Mark 3 and so he took action. He said stretch out your hand and his hand was restored. When Jesus saw the truth being distorted by the Pharisees and the religious leaders he took action. He rebuked them and corrected them for the fact that they have neglected the weightier matters of the law. And when faced with a grieving family in John chapter 11 Jesus took action. He came he saw Mary and Martha and he saw their broken hearts. He was asked to be taken to the tomb. When he got there he said with a loud voice, Lazarus come out and the man who had died came out his hands and feet bound with linen strips and his face wrapped with a cloth Jesus said to them unbind him and let him go. All of these give amazing examples of the fact that Jesus, Jesus's anger prompted him to do something about it. But the amazing thing about John 11 that you can see there on the screen in front of you is that what Jesus does there with Lazarus is just a glimpse of what he has really come to do. Jesus didn't come just to raise his friend Lazarus from the dead. He has come to conquer death itself. And when we see Jesus's anger at the grave of Lazarus we're reminded of the fact that Jesus has come to defeat a bitter enemy. He's come to conquer the kingdom of darkness. He's come to destroy the power of sin and death. That enemy, the enemy of death, is not just a body that we need to get rid of. It's not just a problem that we kind of hope will go away. Death is a hideous, vicious enemy that provokes Jesus to outrage. And that outrage drives

[26 : 12] Jesus forward from the grave, from the tomb of Lazarus, all the way to the cross. And this is at the heart of why Jesus became flesh and blood. We know how horrible death is. We are vulnerable to its attack. We are exposed to the pain and agony that it causes. Jesus has come to stand alongside us and he knows exactly how that feels. He knows what it's like to be a human facing the horror of death. And in the face of death's grip we are powerless and all we can do is surrender. But here is where Jesus is different.

Jesus is the same as us in that he is horrified by the damage that death causes. But the amazing difference is that he is not powerless and he is never, ever going to surrender. He has come to conquer. That's emphasized so powerfully in Hebrews chapter 2. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things. Why? That through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. All the things that cause Jesus to anger, pain, lies, suffering and death, these are the things that come from the kingdom of evil and that is the kingdom that Jesus has come to destroy. That means that when we see Jesus angry, we don't see a violent hothead who can't control himself. We see a mighty warrior preparing for battle.

We see a courageous rescuer coming to our aid. We see a conqueror ready to fight for us. We see holy, irrepressible anger at all the damage that sin and death are doing to you. And the incredible truth that all of that is telling us is that when it comes to saving you, you do not mess with Jesus. Our last question is, what should we do in response to this? I want to say three things very, very briefly. We should admire Jesus. So often when we see anger in people around us, it's a display of weakness, a short temper, a lack of patience, a selfish streak. It's never like that with Jesus. His anger is only ever good anger. In fact, in Jesus, what we are seeing are the best displays of anger that the world has ever seen. It's an anger that arises from extraordinary compassion, from his impeccable integrity, from his hatred of sin, and from his deep, deep love for sinners. We should admire him. The second thing we should do is that we should seek to emulate him. If Jesus is the perfect human, and if Jesus got angry at times, then it's showing us that there are occasions when anger is an appropriate emotion for us as followers of Jesus. There are many times when anger is inappropriate and damaging, and please, please don't use this sermon as an excuse to lose your temper this week. But having said that, Jesus is showing us that there are times when anger is appropriate and good, and that's why we need to pray, Lord, please help me to never get angry about the things that don't matter, but help me never to be indifferent about the things that do.

Please may my anger be like Jesus's anger. We want to love the way Jesus loves, to care the way he cares, to help the way he helped, and we want to be angry only ever in the ways that he was. God grant that the sight of injustice, suffering, exploitation, and twisted truth, God grant that that bothers us in the way that it bothered Jesus. But number three, and above all else, we should hide in Jesus.

Ultimately, all of reality is in the context of conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil. There's no third alternative, there's no neutral ground. That's why Jesus said, whoever's not against us is for us. We are either for Jesus or against him. There is no neutrality. Everything is in the context of that conflict, and in that conflict we have to ask ourselves, who's side do we want to be on? And surely for every single one of us, we want to hide behind Jesus.

[32 : 09] He is our warrior. He is our defender. He is our hero, and in the face of all the threat of sin and evil and death, he will take the fight to the enemy, and all we have to do is hide behind him by putting our trust in him.

And this is where I hope we've come far enough to be able to recognize an amazing theological truth, and this is my conclusion.

The amazing theological truth that I want us to recognize is this. You make Jesus angry.

Now I must explain that I think. So often in life people are angry with us, so we're on the receiving end of anger and it's horrible. That is not what I mean at all. Jesus is not angry with you, and I am not saying that you get on Jesus's nerves. That is never true. He is patient and long suffering. You never get on his nerves. I'm sure that you can think of many people who are angry with you or who have been angry with you.

The last thing any of us needs to hear is that someone else is angry with us. But what every single one of us needs is someone who cares so much that they will be angry about us. And that is what I mean when I say that you make Jesus angry. When sin tries to hurt you and destroy you and wreck your life and your relationships and your future, when sin tries to do anything like that to you, Jesus is outraged. And the reason he is outraged is because you are his.

[34 : 18] And so he doesn't get angry with you because to him you are irritating. He gets angry because to him you are irreplaceable.

His anger is not him saying to you, don't you dare come near me. His anger is him putting you behind him and saying to the kingdom of evil, don't you dare, near finger on him.

That is where the cross places you. That is the safety and security that you have if you are a Christian or that you will have if you become one.

And that is why the fact that Jesus gets angry is absolutely amazing. Amen. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we recognize that our anger is so often inappropriate and unhelpful. But your anger is amazing.

[35 : 38] And we thank you so much that this is how much you care about us. And we pray that all of this would make us just run to you and hide in you because we need you so so much.

We bow before you and praise you Lord Jesus for your holy, righteous, good anger. Amen.