

Well, in this Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' most famous sermon, it's about to get serious now.

Instead of just the Beatitudes, right, those attitudes, that the character of the heart, and general righteousness to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus is now getting into specifics.

So today, anger.

Next week, adultery of the heart.

The week after that, generosity versus greed.

So Jesus is starting to ramp it up.

Why?

Because he wants us to be the real deal.

He doesn't want us to play religion.

He wants our faith in Him to have an overflow of true kingdom righteousness, something that He can bless, something that He'll bless other people through us.

So today we're talking about murder in the heart.

Well, that's what Jesus calls it.

We're talking about anger today.

I heard a really funny story about a man who was being tailgated by a woman driver.

It could have just as well been by a male driver.

And this woman was just stressed out.

She was late going somewhere and she was on a busy Rd.

and this guy was driving too slowly.

She couldn't get around him so she was already ticked off and then the light turned yellow and he took it literally.

I don't understand that.

That's not my wife.

Never mind.

The light turned yellow just in front of him and he did the right thing.

He stopped.

In fact, stopped before the crosswalk, you good drivers.

And even though he could have beaten the red light by accelerating through the intersection, this woman then who was tailgating him hit the roof and hit the horn.

And she started screaming at him in frustration, making some gestures even.

And because she missed her chance to make it through the intersection, and as I said, she was already

on the side window and it was a police officer.

And he looked pretty serious at the police station.

He did that.

She was searched, fingerprinted, photographed, and asked her to escort him back to the booking desk where the arresting officer was waiting for her.

And he said, ma'am,

Your vehicle, the Choose Life bumper sticker, the What Would Jesus Do bumper sticker.

Actually, I assumed you had stolen the vehicle.

I don't want to know if you can relate to that.

But really the big idea this morning is this, it's about anger.

Unresolved anger in the heart kills peace, it kills any joy that you're going to have in your life, and it just destroys, it kills relationships.

So if you have your copy of scripture, let's turn back to the Sermon on the Mount.

We're still in Matthew 5, beginning in verse 21.

Matthew 5, 21 through 26.

Jesus says this, you have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.

But I say to you, Jesus is positing himself there as the authority.

And we're going to see him do this throughout the Sermon on the Mount.

And of course, he did it throughout the Gospels.

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council.

And whoever says, you fool, will be liable to the hell of fire.

Sounds to me like Jesus is serious about this topic.

Maybe we need to listen in and lean in today.

Well, let's look at some background material about this regarding this murder thing.

Anybody listening would say, no, I haven't murdered anybody.

So let's see what Jesus was talking about.

We see the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, and by Genesis 4, there's already the first murder.

Who killed who?

And envy.

We know from Genesis 1 that people were created in God's image, and so murder

Huge, huge deal to God.

You're taking away the life of someone that God created in his image.

By the way, no matter who you have a tendency to dislike on earth or maybe get a little bit judgy with on earth, understand this, you have never looked eyes with anybody that is not made in the image of God, that is not an image bearer.

And so we lead with love, don't we?

We lead with grace.

I'm glad this is a church of love and grace.

Well, one of the Ten Commandments states, you shall not murder.

And although a ransom or a payment of money could be used for other sins that were committed, there was no payment for murder.

The Old Testament describes it as an eye for an eye and a tooth for the tooth.

It was a big deal.

In fact, it carried

the penalty of what we would call capital punishment, death.

According to the law of Moses, the person who was responsible for then carrying out capital punishment, the death of someone who had committed a murder, was their closest relative.

In Hebrew, it's the goel, or you know it as the kinsman redeemer.

He was the able-bodied male most closely related to the person who had been murdered.

And the normal means of execution is, well, it was normally stoning.

And then the body was hung on a tree because scripture said anyone hung on a tree was under a curse.

Makes sense.

You can look at that in Deuteronomy 21.

Now, there's caveats in the Old Testament.

War,

is not murder.

Capital punishment is not murder.

Of course, the killing of animals for food or sacrifice is not murder.

Murder was and is the intentional taking of a life for selfish, jealous, unjustly evil purposes.

And there were six cities of refuge, you Bible students, three on one side of the Jordan River, three on the other.

In case there was a mistake,

in case there was false accusations.

And so those accused could run to these cities of refuge and be in a safe place until decisions were made.

And if there was any uncertainty, they could stay there until the high priest died and then they were free to go back, if you remember that from the Old Testament.

Now understand this, that we know that murder is a sin

We also know murder can be forgiven.

In a former congregation, we had a church member who was a murderer and he was convicted.

He came to Christ in prison, served many, many, many years in prison, and was let out and started a new life in Christ.

King David was a murderer, forgiven.

We know that Saul, before he came to Christ,

put to death Christians.

As we look at the theme of the Sermon on the Mount, we see it's about true righteousness of the heart versus external righteousness of all these religious professionals in Jesus' day.

Jesus, because He's talking about character, not conduct, He takes it to the heart.

And it's the emotion of anger that He's equating to something very dangerous, and that is murder.

and teaching that the external act springs from internal conditions.

We know that's true today, that most murders are crimes of passion, we call them.

Anger with friends, relatives, or neighbors.

Most murders are committed against someone that one knows.

It's all about what's in the heart.

And that's why keeping the Sermon on the Mount's teaching is harder than keeping the Ten Commandments.

because Jesus boils it down to your heart and mine and what is going on there.

So Jesus is not talking about literal murder here.

He's talking about a deep-seated unjust anger.

Is it always wrong to be angry?

What about righteous anger?

Well, let's talk about that.

The main word for anger in the Old Testament comes from a funny word.

It's op, and it means, anybody know?

It means nose.

It means nose.

People noticed that the nose would become red or inflamed when somebody was really ticked off, really angry.

And so that became the word for anger.

In fact, God Himself is described as being literally in the Hebrew, long in the nose.

He's not easily angered.

You might think He is.

He's just waiting to get back at you for something.

Scripture says it's opposite.

He is slow to anger.

He's willing to forgive.

You can turn to him with no matter what stuff you did last week or thought or said or the attitude of your heart.

You can turn to him and ask forgiveness.

He's for you, not against you.

He's long in the nose.

Alternatively, to get angry in Hebrew is being described as someone short in the nose.

But it's a myth that all anger is evil.

It's not.

God has a righteous anger.

Number 32, we can read, it says, the Lord's anger was aroused that day and he swore this oath, because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of the men 20 years old or more who came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised, except for Caleb and Joshua.

What are you talking about?

These people that he had redeemed from Egypt, they were slaves.

And he did miracle after miracle.

The pillar of fire by night, the cloud that would lead them in the day.

And he had done the 10 plagues, all these things he was going to do, the 10 plagues that he did do, all those miraculous deliverances by God and judgments on Egypt.

And they didn't trust that he could lead them.

They wanted to go back to Egypt.

He said, okay,

You're going to stay.

You're going to die in the desert.

And the Bible says that God was angry with them.

What about Jesus?

Jesus had a perfect anger, you know this, in Mark 3.

Jesus said to the man, he's in the synagogue, and I described it before, small, everybody saw what happened, and this man had a shriveled hand.

He said to the man, stand up?

And Jesus asked,

them, the religious people, what's lawful to do on the Sabbath, to do good or do evil, to save a life or to kill?

And they sat there and didn't say anything.

Wow, you're pretty confused when you say that God can't do a good thing just because it's in their day is Saturday, the Sabbath day.

So Jesus, it says, looked around at them in anger.

I would too.

and deeply stressed that their stubborn heart said to the man, stretch out your hand.

He stretched it out and his hand was completely restored.

What did the Pharisees do?

It says they went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Man, that's a hard heart.

I never want to get there, do you?

That is a hard heart.

Jesus had a righteous anger.

There's a healthy anger.

Would you agree that anger sometimes motivates us?

Maybe, you know, Jesus' example was he cleared the temple.

He saw the injustice.

He saw the hypocrisy.

He saw that religion had become big business, and it angered him.

And he went in, and with that whip, he turned over tables.

He cracked his whip and he disrupted the money changers and the sellers of those animals of sacrifice.

So anger can motivate us to do something good, to make a change.

Anger can be for a cause.

You're angry about the trafficking of young women or young men.

and it causes you to take action like some in our congregation are involved in that rescue ministry.

Thank you for that.

There's anger at an injustice.

Whether it's here in America or over in South Sudan where I've got friends and there's so much injustice going on, there's reasons to be angry.

But what is murder in the heart?

It's an unholy

anger against someone that causes one to be unforgiving, condemning, judgmental, oh, I could never do that, and rage.

It's insulting, it's defaming, it's critical attitudes and words.

It's treating or talking to someone as if to make them feel worthless.

It's

lack of conviction about these attitudes that reveal lostness.

I mean, if that's the way you treat people, according to the New Testament, you must not be a true born-again believer with the Holy Spirit directing your life.

And the word that Jesus has used

He's using here in Matthew 5.22.

It means a settled anger, a malice that is nursed inwardly.

You're starting to steam, to stew, to feud over this inwardly, and it causes this anger.

And first, it might be a causeless anger, then

According to the story here, it explodes into words like raka, which means empty-headed person.

In other words, like you're worthless.

These words add fuel to the fire and the person eventually say, you fool.

Anger is such a foolish thing itself.

It makes us destroyers instead of builders.

It robs us of freedom to forgive and makes us prisoners.

Was anger caused by hurt?

Offense.

I mean, you tell me in your story.

What causes you to get the most angry?

Is it frustration?

Is it waiting when you don't want to wait?

Is it sinful attitudes and desires?

Is it you projecting on people you know their attitude when they do stupid things?

That it's all about you, they're trying to hurt you personally?

I mean, what is it that causes anger?

So many things do.

But what does the Bible say about anger?

That's what I want to focus on this morning.

And the Bible tells us that there's a warning because uncontrolled anger results in senselessness.

I mean, it just doesn't make sense.

Why would you want to damage your own life with that?

Proverbs 29, 8, mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger.

Proverbs 29, 11, a fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.

The Bible says that uncontrolled anger

results in senselessness.

It results in strife.

Proverbs 30, 33, for as churning the milk produces butter, and as a twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife.

It also produces sin, the Bible says.

Proverbs 29, 22, an angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot and tempered one commits many

sins.

Sins.

So that's what the Bible teaches.

What does it say then?

It says, get rid of it.

Colossians 3.8.

But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these, anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Now, we know that anger is a couple of things at least.

It's learned, you know, maybe you learned

from your mom or dad or grandma or grandpa.

You grew up in a home that was an angry home and you learned that that's how you express yourself through anger, uncontrolled anger.

But the other truth is that anger can be controlled by the individual.

A lot of people will say, you've heard this, right?

You make me so mad.

Was that really true?

Nothing can make you get angry.

Instead, we've got to learn to say I'm responsible for my anger.

I had some response cards

They were given to me one time.

Just honesty.

This one reads, I need God's grace in dealing with a difficult non-family member that has torn my family apart.

I'm wanting to not hold bitterness from this, to truly forgive.

That's an honest card.

Here's another one.

I'm dealing with a husband with anxiety, depression,

and anger, anger towards God.

Help me to be more grace filled.

Here's another one.

God, let me see today that even though I've been hurt by my friend multiple times emotionally, that I have the power to forgive, to release them.

to God and not hold on to it.

I like that.

So how do we deal with murder in the heart?

Well, we gotta do it biblically, biblically forgive.

I did a message on that not too many months ago.

An attempt, if there's a possibility of reconciliation, if it's within our power, sure, work towards it, doesn't always work out.

But let me give you just some strategies since we're talking about this.

And these are scriptural.

The first one for overcoming anger is just slow down and listen to understand the situation.

So that's what James, in James 1 we see, James 1, 19-20.

My dear brothers, take note of this.

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God deserves.

I mean, this is elementary counseling stuff, right?

But just stop, slow down a bit,

and try to listen to understand the situation second one biblical principle speak gently and read just plain refuse to use hurtful words Proverbs 15 1 is great memory verse anybody memorize that one a gentle answer turns away wrath but a harsh word stirs up anger that's a great verse Proverbs 15 1 it

It's using the I statements that counselors tell you to use.

Instead of you, you, you, I feel this way.

It's refusing to provoke others to anger.

The third biblical principle is this, resolve not to let anger smolder.

You guys know this one, right?

Ephesians 4, 26 perhaps.

In your anger do not sin, do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.

You choose positive outlets for anger.

Hey, how about this?

Just talk to God about it.

Tell God you're angry.

He can handle it.

Tell God if you're angry with him.

Now, make sure it's not a cursing.

Make sure it's not wrath.

Make sure it's like what David did or many others, a lament.

See, a lament is biblical.

Shaking your fist at God and saying, I'm so mad at you, I could.

That's unbiblical.

Talk to God.

Give yourself time, a timeout, walk away.

write down on paper what angers you the most pray over it give it to God give that person to God then tear it up what about those things for which we have no control you know what I like about our God is our God is the perfect loving and just God he's going to take care of the stuff I can't take care of Bible says vengeance is mine declares the Lord I will repay

I don't have to repay.

I can let God do that.

Galatians 6, 7-8, do not be deceived.

God cannot be mocked.

A man reaps what he sows.

Psalms 96, 10, the world is firmly established.

It cannot be moved.

God will judge the peoples with equity.

You don't have to be the judge.

He promises to take care of it.

And of course, remember this,

No matter how mad somebody makes you and they can't do that.

How often how much you get angered by someone, I guess would be a better way of saying it.

Understand this.

That person that you're against, that person that's your enemy.

Guess what?

They're not the real enemy.

You have a big, bad fallen archangel enemy named Lucifer, the devil, Satan.

He's your enemy.

No human being is in

Sacred marriage, the author Gary Thomas writes about marriage, that one of marriage's primary purposes is to teach us how to forgive.

You married couples, would you agree with that?

one of the purposes of marriage is to teach us all how to forgive our spouse.

because we need that forgiveness over and over and we need to grant it over and over.

And he writes this, at a conference several years ago, I was talking to a woman who had been physically abused through the course of her marriage.

She was now divorced, but she was having trouble with her ex-husband, the one who had abused her.

And I counseled her and I explained to her the biblical word for forgiveness means to abandon, to send away, to leave alone.

I explained to her that true forgiveness is releasing.

It's releasing that person to God.

I don't have to wait until I feel like forgiving, he said to her.

That may never happen.

Instead, I must choose to forgive.

God will deal with whatever else needs to be done.

If by chance there's some reconciliation in some way or not.

And he writes, as I shared it with this woman, her eyes filled with tears, and she realized that forgiving her ex-husband did not mean condoning his horrible behavior all those years.

It simply meant releasing him to God so that God could deal with him.

Bitterness and unforgiveness are two of the most difficult issues to deal with in marriage.

But if we make forgiveness a habit, even for little things, it'll be much easier to forgive big ones, because anger can become toxic, toxic, and it will suck the life out of us.

And our bodies aren't equipped to handle bitterness and anger.

Did you know that?

Every study that's been done,

In the archives of internal medicine, the editors asked physicians what specific personal characteristic causes physical illness, proven it causes physical illness, and their answer was anger.

Murder in the heart, anger.

God didn't design our bodies to carry the venom of anger, unforgiveness, and bitterness.

And so when we choose to forgive, we're just taking the person off our hook, putting them on God's hook, and we can be free.

What happens when you've been the source of offense?

Well, we're going to finish up the passage today with this very quickly.

Look at verse 23.

So if you're offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go.

First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.

Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you're going with him to court.

Lest your accuser hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard and you be put in prison.

Truly said, you will never get out since you have paid the last penny.

We don't have time to get into debtors prison and all that.

Jesus was making the point is be smart, be wise.

When you can reconcile, reconcile, but always forgive and ask forgiveness.

That's the point of this teaching here.

If someone has something against you, it might be just or it might be unjust.

It doesn't matter.

You can go to them because the worship of Holy God comes first in our lives.

And if we have this junk in the way, we can't truly worship God.

Jesus says, before you worship, reconcile.

Like stop worshiping and start reconciling.

when you can.

So it looks like this, right?

I just wanted to ask you if I've done something that offended you or hurt you.

That wasn't my intention.

Have I done something?

It's saying to somebody, maybe it's just me, but I feel like there's some distance between us and I want to know if you feel the same way and I want to clear it up.

Or listen, I value our relationship and I know there's some stuff and I just want to make it right.

Can we talk?

It's those little steps.

And if you get shot down, you get shot down.

That's not on you, that's on them.

But it's these steps of releasing anger and asking for forgiveness.

You know, many of you who are regulars here know that I got back from Africa several weeks ago.

And while I was there, I heard one of the missionaries from one of the sub-Saharan countries tell about an exercise he did with a national African man.

And if you don't know this about at least sub-Saharan Africa, sometimes mistreatment of women goes on.

It just is.

Jesus tried to clear that up, by the way.

Read the New Testament.

But sometimes there is abuse of women.

Sometimes there is the hitting of women, of wives, striking them at the very minimum, angry words and all of that.

And this missionary said, here's what I want you to do.

I want you to get your family gathered together in your house, which most of the time where we were, a hut.

And I want you to get the kids around and I want you to go in and I want you to hug your wife.

And that's very un-African in that part of Africa.

And the guy did it.

The man did it.

He went in there and he gently, lovingly just enveloped his wife that he had mistreated in his arms.

and told her that he loved her.

You know what those kids did?

The report got back to him.

You know what those kids did?

They stood up and they started clapping and laughing and running around mom and dad because they had never seen that before.

That's some pretty good marriage counseling, isn't it?

What does it look like for you to release anger towards a spouse?

towards an adult child, to a neighbor that's not very nice, to a co-worker, to a boss, to a friend that's said something behind your back.

What does it look like for you to release anger and turn it over to God?

All I can say is this, that God gives us some pretty good words in the Bible to help us with this.

Jesus gave the same words, be still.

when it rages up just be still for a little bit and let God take over if you're a believer and by that I mean if you have at some point in your life asked Jesus to take control of your life because he's Lord and he's God to forgive you of all your sins and place his Holy Spirit in your life to be your guide to be your strength your power

If you've done that, then you truly can take a step back and be still and know that He is God and know that Jesus can calm that storm if you trust Him.

So practical application.

Think through this, maybe write it down.

What lately has caused unrestrained anger in your life?

What is it?

Who is it?

Second, what deep down do you believe is your internal heart attitude behind it?

I mean, have you wandered away from the Lord a little bit so you're vulnerable to anger?

I mean, what is it?

And thirdly, have you released this cause to God and said, God, he's yours.

She's yours.

They're yours.

That issue in the world is yours.

I'm not going to carry it any longer.

So thank you for those application questions