



Mark 3:1-6
The God of Anger and Grief

Summary: Does my anger aim to hurt others, or help them?

Is anger a Christian emotion? We often associate Christianity with love, joy, and peace, but is anger also a Christian emotion? Is it OK to be mad?

The answer is, it depends. It depends on what you're angry about, why, and how you express your anger.

This morning we'll see anger from two perspectives, one righteous and one unrighteous as we watch conflict continue to unfold around Jesus.

It's been a while since we've been together, so let's do a quick review of where we left off in Mark before Easter. It's early in Jesus' ministry but we see tension building between Him and a group known as the Pharisees. In fact, Mark Chapter Two is made up of four separate events that highlight the tension.

The chapter opens with Jesus healing a man who had been paralyzed – you remember, his friends brought him to Jesus, lowered him down from the roof, and Jesus said, 'Your sins are forgiven, rise up and walk.' That freaked the Pharisees out because they said only God can forgive sins.

Jesus said you're right. But, it's also easy to *say* your sins are forgiven – there's no immediate evidence - so let Me do something else to prove it's true, and He told the man, 'Rise up and walk.' So, the man did, and people were astonished.

And then we learned about Jesus calling Levi, the tax-collector to follow Him. Tax-collectors were treated like the scum of society because they were Jews who collected taxes from their fellow Jews for the Romans. But Jesus called one of them to become His disciple. And when He did, the man, Levi – also known as Matthew, threw a party so all of His friends could meet Jesus. And the Pharisees flipped out because Jesus actually went and had dinner with all these terrible people.

Next, we learned about the time the Pharisees questioned Jesus asking why His disciples didn't fast like they did. For the Pharisees, fasting, or skipping meals for religious reasons, was an important part of life – it was how they showed how spiritually serious they were. And they wanted to know, Jesus, if You're really serious about your faith, why don't You do what all the rest of us do? And He told them, because it's not time for all that. God is doing something new through Me, right now and it won't fit into your old ways of thinking and He used that whole analogy of putting new wine in old wineskins.

And then the chapter ends with yet another conflict. This time it's about doing work on the Sabbath and the ridiculous definition the Pharisees had come up for what constitutes work. Jesus' disciples had plucked some grain as they walked down the road and ate it. There was nothing wrong with that in principle, but it happened on the Sabbath – and according to the Pharisees you couldn't do any work at all – not even grab a little roadside snack on Saturdays.

Now that's a lot to say by way of review, but it's been a while and I need you to have all of that in your mind so you can understand where we're going because what happens next doesn't happen in isolation, it's the next link in a long chain of events. This conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus has been steadily building.

So now read with me,

Mark 3:1 And He entered the synagogue again,

Remember the synagogue is like a Jewish church.

and a man was there who had a withered hand. 2 So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

Remember the Sabbath is the Jewish day of worship and they've already had conflict with Jesus over what you can and cannot do on the Sabbath according

to the complicated religious rules they had made for themselves, stringent additions to what God originally commanded. And now they're waiting to see if Jesus will honor their rules, or disregard them.

3 And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward."

Now it needs to be said, this puts the man in an awkward spot. I mean, sure you'd like Jesus to heal you, but can feel the tension in the room? Could you blame the guy for maybe waving Jesus off, like, "It's cool, we can do this later." But he doesn't, he steps out so everyone can see him.

4 Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"

Notice, Jesus doesn't avoid the conflict. He cuts right to the point. He's not ignorant. He knows exactly what they're focused on. Here they are in the synagogue on the Sabbath, it's the day and time for corporate worship, only they're not here to worship, they're here to watch. To see what Jesus will do. Will He break their rules again or not?

So Jesus asks them, you tell Me, is it against the rules to help someone in need on the Sabbath? We're all looking at this man who obviously needs help and you know I can give it. You know I can heal him. But tell Me: is OK to help him or not? Do your rules give Me permission, or not?

The situation and the options are perfectly clear. But the men will not answer. They won't commit either way. Who wants to say, no don't heal him? But, according to their own rules, you could only help someone with a medical issue on the Sabbath if it was a matter of life or death. So, what would they do?

(vs 4 cont.) But they kept silent.

It's maddening, isn't it? The answer is so clear, so obvious. But their commitment to their rules is so deep, they won't say it. So,

5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched *it* out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.

Jesus heals the man, but how does He react to the Pharisees? I’m looking for two words here. He looked at them with anger being grieved by the hardness of their hearts.

So let me go back to my opening question this morning – is anger a Christian emotion?

Well, if one major ambition of the Christian life is to be more like Christ, and Jesus was angry, then it must be safe to say yes, anger is a Christian emotion, just like joy, peace, and love. But hold on to that thought for a moment and let’s see how the rest of this turned out, because what happens next is important:

6 Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

Looks like they were angry too. In fact, Luke, in his gospel, tells us they were “filled with rage” over what just happened.

Why?

It all comes down to this: Jesus and the Pharisees had competing visions of the world.

The Pharisees were religious fundamentalists. They took Scripture seriously. They took religious rules seriously. They took themselves seriously. Because, and this is important, they thought this was going to be the key to get their country back on track. This would be the way to gain their freedom from Rome.

The history of the Jewish people involves a series of invasions, captivities, and oppression. From the Egyptians, to the Assyrians and Babylonians, the Philistines, and lately the Romans, Israel was always being invaded or taken into captivity, often because they drifted away from putting God at the center of their lives. He had given them a place to live and a way to live captured in a set of laws, represented by the Ten Commandments, and He promised that as long as they put Him first, He would watch over them and take care of them. But they, just like us, constantly wandered away from Him and His way of life.

So now they were living under the rule, *and the rules*, of the Romans. And I think that's an important point to make – either you're going to live by the laws of God's Kingdom or you're going to live by the laws of some other government. No one just gets to do whatever they want. So now, every day they walked down the street, the Jews saw evidence of the fact that they were not a free people. They had been conquered. They paid Roman taxes, they obeyed Roman laws, they avoided Roman soldiers.

But, the Pharisees said, we know how to fix this. We know what to do. We need to get back to our traditional values. We need to remember who we are as a nation. We need to do the right things, the things that make us, us. And if we do that, God will drive out the Romans like He drove out the Assyrians and Philistines before, and we can be a free people. So, they studied the Scripture and they not only tried to do what it said, they tried to ratchet things up and show how serious they were about doing what was right and they tried to compel others to follow their example.

The problem was, they were using a religious formula to gain their freedom and that's different than actually seeking a close relationship with God. You see, you can pursue God under any circumstances. You don't need national independence for that. But relationship with God wasn't their ultimate goal, freedom was. Religion was a tool that could be used to get what they wanted and they came up with all kinds of additional rules to make sure it worked, to make sure they were doing religion 'right' including rules for the Sabbath.

Now you need to know: God gave them the Sabbath, it's actually one of the Ten Commandments, it's number four. It's anchored in the account of Creation – God created on six days and on the seventh He rested.

The Sabbath was meant to be an act of worship and instruction for the Jewish people, a day off, commanded by God. One day every week they were to stop their work and remember Him. Unfortunately, the Pharisees had turned this gift into a heavy burden.

And to be clear – not all Jews celebrated the Sabbath with the same intensity as the Pharisees, but in the eyes of the Pharisees, that was the problem. They needed everyone to get onboard so that God would be happy with them and kick out the Romans.

If only Jesus had seen things their way, He could have been a great addition to the team. Instead, they see Him a threat. An obstacle. A problem that needs to be solved.

So, they turn to the Herodians. Which is interesting, because that's a name you might know from the history of Christmas. Remember the wisemen come following a star looking for Jesus and they stop in to see the regional king, Herod the Great who later orders the death of every male child under the age of two in Bethlehem. His son Herod Antipas is now ruling the area for the Romans. The Herodians are the people who support him.

In other words, the Pharisees who want to establish religious purity and see the Romans driven out are suddenly conspiring with people who work for Rome. But in a convoluted way, it all makes sense. They're mad because Jesus is obviously not doing things their way and they're worried He's going to mess up their plan for liberation through religious renewal. So, they're willing to do whatever it takes to get rid of Him, including handing Him over to the government they're trying to escape. It's a way of saying, if you're not with us, then fine, we'll hand you over to them then maybe you'll understand what we're trying to do.

So let's bring anger back into the picture now. Remember, both Jesus and the Pharisees are angry. But they're experiencing that emotion in different ways, taking it in different directions. I have four things I want to point out to you including a few questions you can use to evaluate your own anger.

First, to answer our opening question, yes, **Anger is a Christian emotion**. Jesus was angry. There is such a thing as righteous anger, there can be a positive side to wrath: it's the appropriate reaction to seeing something that's horribly wrong. But you've got to get your definition right.

It's OK to be angry over someone maliciously or ignorantly causing harm to your child. It's not OK to be angry at that same child for doing something childish when you're tired and frustrated from a long day at work.

It's OK to be angry about someone mistreating or insulting your spouse. It's not OK to be angry at your spouse because you're just out of patience or so stressed out.

It's OK to feel anger when it provokes a reaction to protect, to defend, to correct, or make right. It's not OK to lash out because you're tired or fed up or because you can since you're bigger, stronger, have more power, or control the check book.

So, if you're trying to determine, is this Christian anger or not, point 2 will be helpful for you, **ask yourself, what am I angry about?**

Jesus is angry because the Pharisees won't admit they're wrong. He's been trying to tell them and show them in clear and certain terms that something incredible is happening in their midst, that *Someone* incredible is here. And they see the proof. They never deny the fact that He's performing miracles. But just like Pharaoh in the Exodus, seeing doesn't lead to believing. Experience doesn't lead to acceptance. They persist in their resistance.

And to a certain extent, OK. I get that - make your own choices. But with both Pharaoh and the Pharisees, *their choices affect other people*. Pharaoh won't release the people. The Pharisees want the guy with the withered hand to just

suck it up for another day or two. In each case, on different levels, someone else is suffering because you just won't believe, and God is doing miracles, literal miracles to get your attention and affirm what you're seeing and hearing.

So Jesus is angry *at the hardness of their hearts* AND the effect that has on others.

The Pharisees meanwhile are angry *because they can't get their way*. They know Jesus has some degree of power, but they're not willing to say why, they haven't got a good explanation for how He does these things, except, maybe, as we'll see later, they'll say He's doing it by the power of Satan.

The Pharisees experience the kind of rage that you and I are much more familiar with – it's the kind of tantrum that comes from not getting what we want, or being blocked in our attempts, especially by someone with more power or authority. It's what we feel when those stupid politicians just a passed a law. Or when that judge just made that decision. Or when my boss won't, or when my parents say I can't. I want what I want and I can't get it or have it, so I'm angry.

But if I just had the power or the opportunity, or the promise that I could get away with it, I'd do whatever I want anyway. In fact, I might just try, even if I have to partner with the Herodians. Which brings us to point number three.

Yes, anger is a Christian emotion. But you've got to ask, what am I angry about, and, point three, you need to **ask yourself who is affected by my anger?**

The Pharisees are mad and who do they want to hurt? Jesus. When you and I are mad, who do we often want to hurt? The person we're mad at.

And that might involve actual physical violence. You take what you want. Or you lash out in anger. Maybe you lash out with your tongue. You disrespect. You cut down. You inflict. You spew anger and energy, emotion and words and objects at people. It might be loud and violent and chaotic or it might be quiet and simmering, but the thoughts in your mind, the feelings in your heart, the

tension in your muscles, the squint of your eyes, the pounding of your pulse are saying to someone else shut up! Stop it! Do it my way!

Compare that with Jesus. What did He do when He was angry? He healed a man. He stood up in front of the very people He knew His actions would offend, the people He knew would conspire against Him and He what was right anyway. He made His own life more difficult.

And consider this: who benefits from Jesus did? Well, obviously, the man whose hand was healed. And the people who witnessed what happened and were encouraged by the work of God. But what about the Pharisees? You see, I would say they were meant to benefit too. There was always the hope this would get under their skin, help them see, and lead them to change. Just like each plague with Pharaoh.

Look with me at verse 5: [when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.”](#)

Who does Jesus care about? The man, obviously. But also, He cares about the hardness of the Pharisees’ hearts. He is grieved by it.

So let me make this clear – when the Pharisees were angry with Jesus, they set out to hurt Him by conspiring with the Herodians. When Jesus was angry with the hard hearts of the Pharisees, He gave them yet another chance to believe by performing a very public miracle which they could not deny and which had the potential to get their attention and turn their hearts around. The Pharisees took out their anger on Jesus, Jesus’ anger drove Him to expose Himself to the risk of rejection in the hope of reconciliation.

This is the anger of the momma bear who says you can hurt me, but don’t hurt my kids. It’s the anger of the soldier who rushes the enemy to save his friends. But it goes a step further – it’s not just about the people being hurt, it’s also a concern for the people doing the hurting, and a divine desire to help them too.

This brings me to point number four, the gospel is: **God is angry about sin, but** instead of taking it out on others, He **offers to take it out on Himself.**

The Scriptures tell us:

John 3:36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

There are two things to point out there – God is angry at sin, He will judge it, but we can escape that judgment by turning to Christ.

That's what we celebrate each time we receive communion. We remember that Jesus suffered for us. He received and absorbed the righteous wrath of God – His anger over injustice and sin. And Jesus gave us the healing we need instead.

So let's talk for a minute. You have been angry. I'm not sure what it's about, but I'm pretty sure almost everyone in here has been. You've been angry. Was it righteous anger? Is it righteous anger? Is it anger like Jesus over the hardness of heart of other people? Is it anger over injustice and selfishness and the harm of the innocent? Or was it anger over not getting your own way, over people who didn't do what you wanted? Was it born out of frustration, stress, or just being tired?

Was it godly anger, or was it sin? Did it look like Jesus, sound like Jesus, did it feel like Jesus? Or was it, is it, rotting, stinking sinful flesh? Was anyone helped? Or was someone hurt? Maybe even you – you were hurt by having that anger in you. Maybe you've got new regrets now. You wish hadn't done that or said that. You wish things could change. You wish it wouldn't happen again.

Maybe you need to make a deal with Jesus this morning. Since He's capable of getting angry, maybe you ought to consider letting Him lead the way.

Maybe you should confess your wrongful anger and your wrongful reactions, and you should ask Him to help you change. Again, maybe you ask Him to lead the way. You tell Him, *Jesus, I don't want to be upset about anything that doesn't upset You*. And even then, teach me to experience and express that anger in all the right ways. Teach me, to look like you, Lord.

In a minute we're going to pray and the worship team will play for a few minutes. It will be a great time for you to talk with God about your anger, and His. A great chance to sync up with the Savior and then come receive the elements of communion – reminders of God's anger against sin and what He has done about it.

But first, we're going to recite the Apostle's Creed. We're doing that each time we celebrate communion this year because this ancient creed reminds us of what all true Christians throughout history and around the world have believed – Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Bible Church, Community Church, non-denominational and Calvary Chapel, we have important distinctions that make us unique and separate, but all true Christians also hold these very important beliefs to be true. Remind yourself and your neighbor of them with me, if you will:

Apostles Creed

Let's Pray.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Mark 3:1-6 The God of Anger and Grief

Summary: Does my anger aim to hurt others, or help them?

- What is your initial reaction to anger – does it seem Christian or anti-Christian?
- What other times can you think of Jesus as being angry?
- Is it hard for you to think of Jesus as angry? Why or why not?
 - o What do we gain by seeing this side of Jesus?
- When have you encountered rules that were more strict than they needed to be, or were intended to be?
 - o Have you had any experience with family, churches, or other groups that made things too strict? What was their motive?
 - o How do you keep from making rules that are too strict for yourself or others?
- Do you have a testimony with anger? Is it something you've overcome, or something you're fighting?
 - o Do you tend to experience hot flashes of anger or cool, seething anger?
- Read James 1:19-20.
 - o What are some practical ways you have learned to be slow to anger? What slows you down or cools you down?
 - o In Mark 3:5 we're told Jesus was angry. The Greek word used there (*orge*, think of it like an Ogre, but different) is the same as that in James 1:19-20 and Colossians 3:8. How do these verses fit together?

- What role do in helping God, loving forgiving as you have been forgiven.



the following activities play overcome anger: trusting others, patience, and