

The Burning of Anger

[21] “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ [22] 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. [23] So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. [25] Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are 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. [26] Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

-Matthew 5:21–26

Well good morning fam. What's good? If I haven't had the chance to meet you my name is Marcus and I'm one of the pastors here at City Church. Go ahead and turn with me to Matthew 5. If today is your first day coming around City Church, first off welcome, we're glad you're here. We are going through the book of Matthew slowly and methodically. And last week Jesus began to show us that the laws in the OT weren't meant to just be rules that we sort of check off by obeying them, but rather that they were meant to set us on a path towards the kind of life we were made to live all along. And what he's going to be doing for the next few weeks is showing us how that works in specific areas of our life. And for today we will be talking on anger, but more on that in a little bit.

Before we get started and because I haven't taught in a while, I wanted to take the time to mention that if you feel like anything I say resonates with you and if the Spirit is leading, feel free to say amen. I grew up in a church environment where people really got into the sermon. Like they really felt it. So I want to give you that freedom today. To get into the sermon. Don't worry about who's watching you or whatever. If the Spirit is leading, follow his lead. And the reason I say that is for a couple of things. 1. When you get into the sermon, you are freely expressing what the Spirit is confirming in the sermon. And for me, that helps me in knowing that ok, what's being said is actually worth saying. 2. And when you say amen, or clap, or snap your fingers, I see you art majors, it signals to others around you, especially newer than you people, that this is some good stuff you need to pay attention to what's being said. So yah, feel that freedom fam.

All that to say today, like we said at the top, we are going to see what Jesus has to say about anger. Which might not be the most “get in your feelings” sort of sermon but I still think it’s a good one to say amen to [amen?].

Now as a quick aside, I’m gonna confess first so when you go to your LifeGroups this week you have the gift of going second. So for me, anger is something I know all too well. I feel the tug towards it more often than not. I often describe it to my wife and LifeGroup as a warm hug that I never want to let go of. Which is just as weird as it sounds. There was an instance with LifeGroup where we had a few people over for board games, and I can’t fully remember what happened but one of the guys played a joke with me, it was a joke, but he messed with my milk. And I know it’s silly, but no one, no one, messes with my milk. And I was so upset for the rest of the night that I couldn’t think straight. And hear me say I was in the wrong. After hours, I texted all that came and confessed how upset I was and how I was in the wrong and such. Now again, that’s a silly example but that’s one. So I work full-time at UT as a graphic designer, Go Vols. Anywho, I work at UT and often get feedback on my designs, and one such feedback left me in a tussy. I was in my feelings towards my boss and coworker and after some prodding by the Holy Spirit, I confessed to my boss and coworker about it. Now that’s short, but let me tell you the struggle was real on that one. I was upset. Now let me say, the Lord has done considerable work in showing me where I am off and helping me to repent of anger but be that as it may, because of my tendency towards it, I know I have more room to grow. Just ask my wife Melanie or feel free to hit me up and I can talk in more detail about it. So hearing what Jesus has to say on the topic of anger has my attention personally, and my hope is that if you are in a similar boat as me, that he will have your attention as well. With that being said, let’s kick it off with [Matthew 5 v21](#).

[21] “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ [22] But I say to you that everyone [somebody say everyone] who is angry with his brother [How many of you have ever been angry at your brothers?] 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.

So Jesus starts off with *“You have heard that it was said to those of old,* which is a typical intro when someone wanted to quote the Law and the Prophets of old, what we call the Old Testament today, and he goes on to say, you shall not murder, and that whoever does so will be liable to judgment. So this first part you shall not murder comes directly from [Exodus 20 v13](#) where God gives the Ten Commandments to Moses.

Now I don't think Jesus is throwing anyone in his audience for a loop. They all knew and we all know today that murder is not a good look. Even for someone who has a tendency towards anger, like myself, I'm like, *hey Jesus, I'm tracking with you. I'm on board.* Like I don't want those kinds of problems. So Jesus starts out with something that everyone could get on board with. And then he continues, *But* [you gotta love Jesus here] *I say to you everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.* So Jesus just tells them, hey, it's great that you don't murder. I'll give you a golf clap on that one, but I'll go one step further and say if you are angry with your brother then you will be liable to the same judgment as if you had murdered someone. Did yall catch that.

If I would have been in the audience, I would have been like, hold up Jesus. You're telling me that if I'm angry with my brother it's the same as murder?!?! No, surely not. That had to be a typo in the scriptures or something. I mean, I get angry, but murder? Really?!? And Jesus is like, actually yes, I said what I said. Alrighty then, looks like we have a lot of unpacking to do.

And on the front end of this unpacking, let's go ahead and define anger so we're all on the same page. For us we would say that anger is a *feeling that comes over our minds and bodies when from our perspective, something is not as it should be.* Now there are all types of anger both good and bad. I'm sure many of you have experienced some form of these.

There is the anger of a wounded ego. *"How dare you say that to me."* There's anger towards injustice; like the verdict this week on the killing of Breonna Taylor, or where we get angry over those who don't have a voice or those that have a voice and are oppressed or treated differently because of it. There's anger when you find out someone is talking behind your back. Maybe it was someone you thought was a friend. Maybe it was a family member. There's anger at yourself. Maybe you made a mistake on a paper that you just turned in and you're kicking yourself about it. Or maybe you really messed up on something important at work. There is anger from triggers of emotional pain. There's anger when you think your professor is treating you unfairly. There's anger when you think you deserve something someone else got. Parents in the room, there's anger when your kid does that thing that you asked them not to do to which they said I'll raise you a few more times. But again, all of those are emotional responses we have when something, from our perspective, is not as it should be.

So there are all types of anger, and while some of us in the room tend to gravitate towards anger more readily, I want you to see that anger is something that we all experience on some level or another. And to drive home the point, so you don't try to weasel yourself out, thinking, oh that isn't me, I don't really get angry, time to play some Pokemon Go; let me give you two opposite but equal ways people deal with these types of anger we talked about.

Now for some of us, our anger is external and obvious. When we get angry, everyone knows we are angry, our voice gets louder, anger is written all over your face. Our anger is v obvious. For others of us, our anger tends to be more silent. Sometimes you don't even realize you are angry. And oftentimes that can lead to bitterness and resentment if we don't actually confess it. It can also come out in a more passive-aggressive and sarcasm kind of way. And then still for others, we honestly do both depending on the situation and how angry we are.

So there is obvious, apparent anger, and there is sneakier, internal, resentful anger. And for today, Jesus is warning against any and all of that.

Now, If you've been in church world for any amount of time, you know that Jesus himself gets angry. And if you are new to church and that doesn't sound like Jesus, like, 'Jesus got angry?' Yes fam he did. But he never got angry for selfish reasons, he was always anger towards some type of injustice or slight towards other people. On one such occasion, don't try this at home, Jesus goes WWE and decides to flip a table because he's so angry at some injustices being done in his Father's house, in God's house.

So how could Jesus say that anger is wrong, when he himself got angry? Well let's dive a little deeper. There are two words in the greek that are translated "anger" in English. The first is thumos. [Can everyone say thumos?](#) Think a quick flare up. It's when you're cut off in traffic. Or when a friend does something to annoy you. Now this isn't the type of anger that Jesus is talking about here. There's real anger associated here, yes, but it's there for like a few minutes tops. The second word that translates to greek for us is orgosethi. [Can everyone say...joking, I'm not gonna make you say that word.](#) So orgosethi is when you have residing anger. And **this is the type of anger that Jesus is talking about here.** You're either staying angry or you're always angry. It's less like a one time event and more like someone who likes to keep receipts for days or weeks. If that's you, you probably tend to replay events in your head over and over again. Maybe like me you hang on to anger like a warm hug. Or you could be the nursing a grudge type. Either way, as you can imagine this type of anger, this orgosethi, can be toxic.

And both groups of people, those who show outward and inward anger, can lean this way. So in many ways you can read this passage like this:

But I say to you everyone who holds grudges, or everyone who harbors anger towards his brother [those inside your community] will be liable to judgment.

And just when you thought Jesus was done. Like bruh. That's a tough say'n Jesus. Let me sit on this for a minute. Lemme see who I need to apologize to real quick. My brother, my sister, my other brother. And as you're thinking, Jesus is like, hey, I'm gonna let you finish, but...second half of v22

; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

So Jesus continues with whoever **insults his brother** or whoever says **you fool** will be liable to council and to the hell of fire. Now what he's getting at here is that our language is often really revealing of our anger. So anytime you use language that insults, slanders, or denigrates another person out of anger this is what he's talking about. Today it would be like saying something like you; I can't stand them. They are **so** frustrating. Or you scale it up a lot with something like you "f'ing idiot" or "you're such a dumb-a." But I don't need to worry about y'all right, no one says that here.

So as followers of Jesus we are being called to not do these things. We say this often around here but each of you are human beings with souls. There is inherent dignity bestowed on each of you because you are image bearers of God. So Jesus says don't reduce someone down to an insult. And here's why, because the more you reduce someone down, tear someone's rep down, the more you do, the more you are stripping them of value and stripping away the image of God from how you view them. I don't know if you've ever thought about it this way, but our country is divided as it is because people have gone down this route and have refused to actually deal with their bitterness and contempt. See when you get to a point where you are calling people names, there is a certain bitterness and resentment that accompanies your language. You use biting language to express an inner contempt. And Jesus says, don't go down this route.

He also says if you allow anger to lodge into your being, if you allow anger to take a foothold into your life, you will be **liable**, or responsible, to judgment, to the council, and to the hell of fire. Now that last one, the hell of fire is a loaded statement. For today's

purposes let's check this out. Notice how he says nothing about the future. Sure there are future implications but nothing about it references the future. It's very present tense. So to me, it would seem that this is referencing more the hell in the here and now.

So here's the idea: in the Bible, hell is a literal, future reality for those that don't follow Jesus. And at the same time, it's going to insist that your eternal future, in many ways, is just a continuation of the life you've chosen in the here and now. How you run your race in this life will be a direct reflection of how life will be like after your race is done. That's why Paul says run that race fam. *Will I be about the kingdom today or will I be about Marcus' kingdom today. Will I be about what God cares about today. Or will I choose to be about what I care most about.* Now to be sure those things can overlap but that's not what I'm talking about here. I'm talking about a direct contrast to God's way of flourishing.

Here's how it connects, undealt with anger can create a living hell. And it does that because when you have this residing or burning anger, you can't stop thinking about it. If you've dealt with bitterness or resentment at all, you know this. You can't go more than a couple hours without thinking about whatever upset you. It burns within you, it consumes your entire through process. So how do we deal with this sort of anger? How do we healthily move on from our anger?

Well thankfully Jesus clues us in on this let's read v23

[23] So if you are offering your gift at the altar–

Now “Bringing your gift to the altar” was an ancient form of worship. Bringing a sacrifice of some sort to the altar was an act of worship to God. So in other words we can read it as if you are headed to a gathering or about to take communion or even going to hang out with your LifeGroup..., and...

...there remember that your brother has something against you...

So if your brother, or someone in your community, has something *against you*, if they're irritated or upset at *you*... v. 24:

[24] leave your gift there before the altar and go. First [somebody say first] be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Now pay close attention, after all of this teaching about the danger of anger, we would expect Jesus to say "so therefore, if you're angry at your brother, go and deal with it." And we are called to do that elsewhere in the Bible, but that's not what Jesus says here. He says "if you realize your brother is angry at you." He flips it around.

Why? Why does Jesus tell us here, not just to deal with our own anger, but actually to pre-emptively deal with our brother or sister's anger? Well I think it's because he wants us to be so on guard, so aware of the damaging impact of anger, that we address it even when we see it in our brother or sister's heart, not just in our own. Jesus has such a high view and value of community, that he says don't even worship if you know *your brother or sister* is angry with *you*. Instead, leave your gift at the altar and go and be reconciled. We should see our vertical worship of God as having a horizontal component.

And I would say that's our first application when dealing with anger. **1. Pursue Reconciliation.** Emphasis on pursue.

Jesus says, this is first and foremost before you do anything else. Don't come and worship before you and your brother are good. And then after that you can come and worship God...at the 9:30 or 11:30. That was a shameless plug for our new gathering times, but even if you're in your car trying to worship. If you are praying at night, Jesus says, no, be reconciled first horizontally and then come worship vertically.

Because burning anger is that big of a deal. Whether on your end or their end it's not good for anyone. It creates unnecessary bitterness and pain. So **don't go through the motions of worshipping God when there is something off between you and another follower of Jesus.** God would rather you make things right between you and your brother, your sister, your community than he would you ignore that situation to come and *pretend* to worship—because that's not true worship. You feel me?

Now, that's easier said than done right? Because have you ever walked up to someone that was upset with you before? Let me flip it for you, have you been frustrated with someone and didn't want to talk with them at all? Like they irritated you in some kind of way. And now you're angry / upset at them. You know what I'm talk'n about? *When my wife and I get into arguments or when she says something that makes me angry, I tend to be that way. Frustrated to the point that I will not only talk but when she asks me am I ok, I'm like I'm fine, everything is fine. It reminds me of the meme with the dog. (show this meme) That's me when I'm angry, except the flames are coming out of me based on how angry I am.* So if you are like me in that, think about how the other person might

feel. Do you think they are in a space to worship? If this were your brother, your sister, your community, this isn't something that just gets swept under the rug. If there is real beef, if there is real conflict, then worshipping God might look like how I do it when I'm angry. You try and sing but that furrowed brow still doesn't leave you.

So how do you approach someone that is upset at you? Well as I mentioned before, how when I'm angry at my wife how upset I can get, she is so intune with the Spirit that any time I'm upset she addresses it head on. She doesn't want strife or bitterness to come between us. And she does it all in humility. No matter the situation, she listens to my feelings and always, always apologizes, even if she truly only has like 10% worth of blame. She always wants to be reconciled. And I think for many of us, no matter how much wrong we feel like we have committed, even if there is none (which is never truly the case) I think for us **we should model this type of behavior and walk in humility and apologize**. We should see it as our responsibility to reconcile. Just like words and actions matter when you made your brother, your sister upset they matter on the opposite end. Truly apologizing and reconciling heals many wounds. Don't let yours or their anger go by the wayside. Don't let the sun go down as the Bible would say. Anger will consume you and the more time you allow to slip by the easier it will get to allow anger to lodge in your hearts. And the harder it will get to truly move past it. Hear me say fam, the earlier we deal with this anger the better. Because then our hearts will be pure and able to come to worship God.

So the first application is **Pursue Reconciliation**. And the second application starts in v25:

[25] Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are 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. [26] Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Here is application no. **2. Pursue Reconciliation Quickly**. Do everything possible to settle as quickly as you can. Make every effort. There are levels to being a peacemaker and I believe that this is one of them. And as we read, blessed are the peacemakers. Make peace with your family, quickly. Paul says something similar in **Romans 12:18**.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably [somebody say peaceably] with [who fam?] all.

Now hear me say I get that we are all broken sinners in need of grace. We won't get this peace thing right all the time. And also don't let that stop you from living peaceably with all. This is not the time to be proud. Oh I'm right and they're wrong. Gosh if I had a nickel for every time I felt that. Oh I'm in the right. Nope, I'm no doing it. **Don't get wrapped up in your feelings. Don't let your feelings stop you from obeying Jesus. I said it too fast, I'll say that one again; don't let your feelings, your pride, stop you from obeying Jesus.** Because your feelings can and will do that. The alternative is way more costly than if you just pursue peace quickly.

Now some of you in the room are listening right now and you're like, ok, I get all what you are saying, but Marcus, you don't understand my situation. It's more complicated than what you're saying. *I truly am in the right. And they are the worst.* To which I would say, if anyone gets that, it's me. I actually get that. But I too would also be wrong. Now to be sure there are situations where being at peace may be more of a distant peace, but make no mistake about it, Jesus still says to be at peace. So while it may be tough, it should still be a thing to fight for. *But why Marcus, why should I fight for this level of peace. why in the world should I take it upon myself to reconcile with somebody, when they were the primary (or only) ones in the wrong? Why should I make something that wasn't my fault, my responsibility?*

Because of the gospel fam. The reason we make reconciliation our responsibility even when the conflict wasn't our fault, is because Jesus made our sin his responsibility, even though it wasn't his fault. When we were enemies of God, Jesus reconciled us. We were at fault and yet he chose to leave heaven. Picture this, Jesus chose to leave the right hand of God to come down and reconcile us back to the Father. What?!?! The ultimate transgression. The ultimate wrong. And Jesus said, I'm coming to you to make peace.

Isaiah 53, one of the most *vivid* depictions of the gospel in all the Scriptures, says this:

*Surely he has borne **our** griefs and carried **our** sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But **he** was pierced for **our** transgressions; **he** was crushed for **our** iniquities; upon **him** was the chastisement that brought **us** peace, and with **his** wounds **we** are healed. All **we** like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the **Lord** has laid on **him** the iniquity of **us** all.*

If God approached conflict with us the way we so often approach conflict, there would never be reconciliation between us and God. If God sat back and said "well,

it's *their* fault—they need to come and make it right with *me*,” you and I would be stuck in our sin forever. So *instead*, what *God* did was that he took it upon himself to send Jesus to *pursue* reconciliation with us. Though it was not his fault, he *made it* his responsibility.

And so as a response to that, we are called to *reflect this in our own lives*. We are called to *image* God. When there is conflict, when there is tension or division between us and another follower of Jesus, we do *everything within our power to see it reconciled*.

So here's where I want us to close. If you've got your bibles or bulletins or journals out, go ahead and put those away. And if you have a phone I want you to go ahead and take that out. We will get to it in a minute. I want us to just spend a moment asking and honestly answering the question, *am I dealing with conflict well in my life as a follower of Jesus?* So once you've got your stuff up, except your phone, I want to just ask you to think and pray through these simple questions.

1. **Is there currently any anger between me and another follower of Jesus?** Is there any tension, any awkwardness present between us and others because of something we haven't dealt with?
2. **What am I doing about it?** Have I done everything within my power to reconcile with them, to make things right? If I have, and they're just not responding, they're just not seeing themselves clearly, this is a perfect opportunity to pray for the Holy Spirit to open their eyes. But if not, here's what I want you to do, we're going to give you the opportunity to do just that.
3. **Do I remember how God relates to me?** If you feel this massive pull to want to avoid dealing with this, what is it about the good news of Jesus that you might be forgetting?

Band you can come on up. So Just like Jesus said, if God's people are getting ready to worship—and they realize that things aren't okay between them and another follower of Jesus, they need to stop what they're doing immediately, go and be reconciled, and *then* come back and worship. Leave the altar and go. So it would be silly for us to just transition into a time of worship *ourselves* today, without examining to see if we're taking Jesus' instructions there seriously or not.

So before we just start celebrating Jesus for making things right between us and him, let's also examine whether things are right between us and others. I want us to take some time to pray through this and then I will pray for all of us in this to end. As you pray through it, if there's anyone at all that comes to mind—someone you're angry with or

someone you suspect is likely angry at you—I want you to use your phone and text them. Set up a time this week or reconcile today. Maybe it's a friend, a roommate, maybe it's your spouse. Maybe you don't need to text them because they're in the room right now, but you're nervous about people seeing you go grab them. No worries, just text them and say "hey will you meet me out in the lobby, meet me in the hallway by the bathrooms, whatever you need to do. But let's make it happen right now. Don't let pride get to you. Walk in humility and apologize for any wrong done. Don't let this moment slip away. Be reconciled. And then once you've dealt with it as best you can today, participate in worship as a celebration of the God who makes us all right with him, and with one another. Let's not be a church that celebrates the gospel in theory. Let's celebrate it in practicality. Let's take the reconciliation that Jesus has made possible through the cross, and let's offer it readily, quickly and freely to one another, and find freedom from the burning of anger.

Let's pray.