

St Nicholas, 0800

Year B, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018

### Responding to Anger

Proverbs 14:29,30, 15:1,18, 16:32, 19:11,19, 24:28,29, 25:21,22.

Psalm 103:15-22

Romans 12:9-21

Matthew 5:21-26. 39-42

Proverbs 14:29, 30 (NRSV) Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly. A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh, but passion makes the bones rot." And

Matthew 5:22 (ESV) "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."

### 1 Introduction

a) "Stop, stop!" the cyclist screams...but "no". The middle-aged businessman, apparently, hadn't looked as he went through the stop sign, right into the cyclist's front wheel. He stops, gives a surprised look, then a glare, indicating it was the cyclist's fault. He smiles patronizingly. "you're OK, right?" The cyclist, all churned up, replies, "That was scary." Another condescending look, this time tinged with boredom, and repeats: "you're OK, Right?"<sup>1</sup> A wonderful scenario setting the scene, potentially, for "anger", and asks, "how would we respond, deal with it, as it occurs?"

b) Paul writes: "**Be angry and do not sin**; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."<sup>2</sup> **What triggers anger, rage, bad temper, disgruntlement?** How does it emerge? But before that we need to clear up something.

The Bible talks about God being angry, jealous. Jesus in healing a leper was “moved with pity.”<sup>3</sup>, which some would translate as “moved with anger” - a response to the terrible disease of a leper! Such a response is called righteous anger, indignation, compassion. suggests a “right” response under the circumstances.. Could this be a metaphor for God’s indignation, even abhorrence at what we do to each other, and so much more?

James: “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?”<sup>4</sup> Everyday anger emerges from the sinful, fallen nature. the old self, self-centredness. Recall the Bourke Street massacre in Melbourne, a deliberate act of malice, extreme anger. Responses can be mixed - applause, indifference, or appalled horror that stirs the emotions - that is righteous anger! We can see why God is angry when His people disregard His ways, play games with Him, lose respect, worship idols! “Oh my people you are playing with fire!” Righteous anger, which is really God’s ἀγάπη- love, compassion!

c) Today we are talking about the selfish, even explosive, anger that comes from being hurt, annoyed, displeased, hostility, frustrated, impatient, a wounded spirit, a bitter root, a broken heart. rejection, the desire for revenge. It comes from the person who explodes, heatedly reacts rather than coolly responding. Such anger is every day, dangerous, often lethal, in stark contrast to the Romans passage we heard! “Let love be genuine...Rejoice in hope, be patient...bless...do not curse”<sup>5</sup>

“Responding to anger”, has two facets.:

your response at anger directed at you, and  
your response to your own anger directed at another!

## 2. First: Our Response to anger directed at us.

a) Proverbs tells us that “a soft answer turns away wrath”.<sup>6</sup> Ecclesiastes goes further: “Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word...let your words be few...a fool's voice (has) many words.”<sup>7</sup> Listen rather than talk. Take hold of the connection with forgiveness, a balanced personality (pure in heart) the love for neighbour, ἐν Χριστῷ. A peaceful mind responds calmly, does not blow up. “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread... give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.”<sup>8</sup> The biggest temptation is to explode, but Jesus says, “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.”<sup>9</sup> Strong stuff! The good news is that we can be healed of such a temperament! Alleluia?

William Temple, World War 2 Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote powerfully: “Christians do not think about different things to non-Christians. We think about the same things differently.”<sup>10</sup> That is, must be, our standing-out point - we think and act in the light of Christ. we see through God’s eyes!. That is what makes us Christians! Paul reminds the Corinthians: “we have the mind of Christ”<sup>11</sup> and that is the crunch point, that is what we are called to have, to be. That is maturity ἐν Χριστῷ.

The heart of Jesus’s work on cross and in resurrection is that we are rescued people, from disobedience to obedience, and that means, really demands, that we are open to, can change, in our habits, our reactions, our behaviour as well as our thinking. We can grow, mature- into the likeness of Christ - our calling!

b) When responding to another’s anger we either react - a nuclear reactor, or we respond appropriately. A play on a Beatitude -

**“Blessed are the pure in heart for they always respond and never react.”<sup>12</sup>** Remember it, call it to mind often!

### **3 Where does anger come from?**

a) Jeremiah helps with a parable: "Moab (a tribe from Lot) has been at ease from his youth and (like wine) has settled on his dregs."<sup>13</sup> Sour, bitter! If you want decent wine you must separate the wine from the dregs (lees) - the good stuff from the sediment. If you don't you end up with sour wine.

Jeremiah describes why Moab is sour, putrid, for she is: "not poured from one jar to another"<sup>14</sup> - i.e. to get rid of the dregs, the rigours of disciplined change.. The process is used today. The wine is only bottled when all dregs are drained off, and then you turn the bottles from time to time - so I'm told.

Lesson? Moab is bitter: "his taste remains in him, and his scent is not changed."<sup>15</sup> The dregs are still there, the wine is sour, awful! Jeremiah is describing people, We understand that, we have met some - "bitterness is all around us, moans, groans, anger. This smell of bitterness permeates society, but Paul tells the Ephesians "get rid of all bitterness".<sup>16</sup> Once the **poor me syndrome**, kicks in, it can, does descend into anger, possibly **revenge!**

Every one has a story or more that gives us permission to be bitter, angry, sure, but the real questions is, do we recognise that bitterness, anger within ourselves, want deal with it, or wallow in it? Does your life still taste of your pain and suffering or has the Father's love in the Risen Jesus, through His anointing Holy Spirit, been allowed, yes been allowed by you, to deal with it, so that it is now in the past - you are forgiven, healed, restored, set free. a fresh sweetness of character?

b) Hebrews says: "See to it... that no bitter root springs up and causes trouble and by it many become defiled."<sup>17</sup> He's right! Have no doubt that such bitter roots effect, must effect relationships, family, friends, and can destroy **you** - like mistletoe that sucks out the life out of a tree, so the love, the joy, the passion of being ἐν Χριστῷ, is sucked out - we are dried-out old prunes!

#### **4. Thirdly: The Aroma - dealing with Anger in ourselves.**

a) Paul recognises that when we are ἐν Χριστῷ we "are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death, to the other the fragrance of Christ."<sup>18</sup> Does this describe us? No anger, no bitterness, only an aroma of sweetness, joy, peace, love, reconciliation - healing.

b) Being "angry" can require, even demand, and becomes more intense, when we have an **audience**. It is more satisfying to dramatise to take it out on the "other", and end up with wife, kid-abuse, and can lead into sickness. Grandstanding manipulates, controls, and is, without question, of the enemy.

Angry, bitter people are disagreeable, tedious, boring, and infectious. It spreads, gathers others in negativity, criticism, gossip sessions tinged with anger. Some enjoy the game but God will have none of it. This is not the Christian life. Get rid of it. Dig out any bitter root, anger!

#### **5 Excavation - Let us do business!**

a) So how do we respond to "anger", within ourselves, how do we deal with the source of that anger, the roots of "bitterness" - that harsh disagreeable taste, that "stinks" - that can hang around Christians?<sup>19</sup> Is that too harsh? Have you smelt it?

Take God very seriously! Is it silly to say that? No, because we cannot play games with God, take Him for granted, presume that He will act without us. Take hold, with a decision, of your position ἐν Χριστῷ I-am a child of God - so vital to do that. If you are uncertain about this position, then James tells us we are double-minded “unstable in all your ways”<sup>20</sup> - a hopelessly weak position! Angry Cain discovered that after he killed Abel: “sin (was) crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but **you must rule over it.**”<sup>21</sup> Do you hear that? Who rules who? The power of sin,<sup>22</sup> the enemy, yourself or God? Paul put it like this: “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?”<sup>23</sup> Who, what, do you obey?

The good news is that we can be set free from that which appals, disappoints us of ourselves - of slavery to the habit say, of reacting, not responding. Being ἐν Χριστῷ, we are “slaves” of Christ - true freedom! “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”<sup>24</sup>

b) **Now let us dig.** The Holy Spirit may want us to change our minds but will not force us against our free-will. Our decision. We do it, now.

Come Holy Spirit minister to us. Open our minds, reveal to us what you want revealed, convict us, of any anger, bitter root, any sin. Fill us with the desire to be healed, to change, to be set free, to repent and renounce the wrong decisions we have made, deceptions we have accepted, cover ups we justify. We recognise and affirm all that is not of you:

we are a child of God, a significant person in your sight, Lord Thank you that we matter to you, that you respect every decision we

make, even though You Lord may not like it, and that you do not override such decisions. Thank you.

We ask Holy Spirit that you will guide us. that we recognise, acknowledge any anger, bitter root and anything else that comes to mind.

Father, we forgive anyone who has offended us in any way “For as we forgive so, our heavenly Father will also forgive us, “but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”<sup>25</sup>

Confess to the Lord anything you do not like about yourself, a particular mind-set - anger, bitter roots etc.. We confess any wrong decisions that we have made which are against Your will. Say it to Him: “I confess my sin of .....” and take hold of His forgiveness,

Now repent: I change my mind and renounce any decision that gave me permission, any freedom, to be angry, to sin (name any) and place them at the foot of the cross.,

Make new choices to always respond and not react, to seek the face of the Father,, to become a doer of His will not our own.

thank you Father God that we have done business with you, dug out anger, any bitter root, anything untoward and expose it to the Light of Christ. We thank you for your love, which disciplines us. and we give you permission to continue this work in us so that we may continue to grow into the likeness of Jesus.

You are free, but be aware of the temptation to take anything back, under the guise that this is who you are! Rubbish, a lie, just what the enemy would want. And as Paul tells us:, be:

“sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor

anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."<sup>26</sup> Alleluia!

**SOF 494**

Set my spirit free that I might worship Thee,  
Set my spirit free that I might praise Thy name.  
Let all bondage go and let deliverance flow,  
Set my spirit free to worship Thee.