

Living Lent | Day 9

Restraining Our Anger

Jesus said, "I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny."

Matthew 5:20–26 RSV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

It seems easy for us to get angry these days. We are impatient, on-edge, worried – it doesn't take much to set ourselves off or to be the recipient of someone's anger towards us. Even the little things that annoy us can quickly escalate into serious confrontations.

As we continue in this season of self-examination and reflection today's scripture does not pull any punches regarding anger and God's call to reconciliation. Jesus' instructions are clear. He sets a high, uncompromising, and practically impossible standard to meet on how to handle our anger and the anger of others. Are there not some occasions when anger is truly righteous; when we're permitted to let others know what we really think about them?

Jesus gives no indication that is true. As good as it feels to open the floodgates and

dump a torrent of rage on someone who's harmed us, the message of the Sermon on the Mount is straightforward - don't.

It's not sinful to have angry feelings. The real question is what we do with those feelings.

There's a wonderful word of instruction in Ephesians 4:26 that says, "Be angry, but do not sin." No one can stop anger from happening. Yet we have the power to decide to not let it dictate who we are and how we behave.

Is the only option then to stifle our anger? Not really. To do so is not healthy. It can cause emotional and physical illness. Fortunately, there is another choice between the two extremes of losing our temper or stifling it – we can name the anger and send it away. Claim it. Own it. Then, send it away. While anger sometimes has its legitimate purposes, our goal is to learn to handle it and dispose of it properly.

In our relationships with others, in our homes, communities and nation, may we choose to calmly do what needs to be done to restrain our anger while putting the greater part of our energies into building understanding.

***Challenge to Prayer and the Exercise of the Privilege of Generosity:
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Located just a few steps away from the St. Simons Lighthouse, St. Simons United Methodist Church was the first United Methodist Church erected on St. Simons Island after John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism, preached well over two centuries ago. On 14 December 1941, the St. Simons United Methodist Church sanctuary was dedicated, and today serves as the place of worship for old and young alike.

The Reverend Tom Jones is the Senior Pastor at SSUMC, leading the congregation in service to their Community, including Morningstar Children's Home, financially and through prayers of support.

*It takes a lot of everything to **create home and healing** for the foster children, our neighbors, served at Morningstar Children's Home.*

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