

Necessary Sins Week 4 – Anger

St Peter's Lutheran Church, Loxton

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Introduction to topic

Photos of angry people

Anger is very easy to justify and rationalize. It may be that we say or think:

- "Hey, if you hadn't done that, I wouldn't have gotten mad."
- "If this didn't happen, I wouldn't have lost my cool."
- "I mean, this is just the way God made me. I'm kind of hot-headed."
- "This is just how I deal with things."

In the previous weeks, we have delved deeper into the root causes of these necessary sins, and we're going to do the same today. But it's important for us to remember that not all anger leads to the wrong outcome. To feel angry is not sinful, feeling upset about something isn't where the sin occurs. It's how we respond to anger, that matters.

Do we respond in a healthy way or a hurtful way? Is our response from a place of love... is it Spirit led.

The Apostle Paul wrote the Christians in Ephesus (4:26,27) and said:

"In your anger, do not sin."

"Don't let the sun go down on you while you are still angry."

"And do not give the devil a foothold."

The Greek word that's translated as foothold literally means "location" or "a room".

I hear this and think, in your anger don't give the devil a guest room in your heart. Don't let anger live unchecked and unguarded without bringing it before God and asking him to do what's right in our heart.

Perhaps you remember the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis Ch. 4. This is a story of how unchecked anger leads one brother to sin.

The story goes that Cain's offering to God is not as good as Abel's, which births jealousy and produces anger... the story even has a conversation between the Lord God and Cain, he says, "Cain, why are you so angry?" "Why is your face downcast". Anger and the feeling of rejection. God knows where this is leading...

God says, "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?" Cain, you have a choice, your response can lead you to do what is right or wrong.

(God continues) "But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door, and it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

This word crouching is connected to ancient world mythology, to a demon of the Mesopotamian world, who would linger around doorways and ambush his victims. God is teaching Cain with a real-world example, he is saying, sin is like a doorway demon waiting for its victim to enter in and pounce on its victim.

God knows the human heart. Cain is invited to give his anger to God, but he can't control it, it controls him, and it leads him to sin, and he takes the life of his brother, the victim of Cain's sin.

Proverbs 29:11 says,

Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.

There are some people who openly show their anger. They don't hold it back. But they let others have it. We might call these people spewers.

You are diligently working away on a project. And something goes wrong.

Maybe you are building something in your shed, or knitting a jumper, or working on an assignment; and something breaks, or you notice a mistake, or you forget to save your work and the power goes out... the time, energy, even stress invested is too much... so you throw the hammer across the shed, you grab the scissors and hack the wool, you smash your keyboard with your hands... maybe a few expletives exit your mouth into the far-reaching corners of the space you are in...

I've been there, and I'm sure many of you have too – both males and females! Adults and teenagers, even kids.

The quick temper takes hold –

perhaps you're known for your temper – you have even been given a nickname? Short fuse Freddy, temper tantrum Teddy, fiery Frieda.

Maybe a dinner plate that went flying across the kitchen, smashed into little pieces.

Or that unfortunate native bush couldn't stand tall under the momentum of your kick

Maybe a child looked at you with fear as you revealed a side that scared them.

Or a work colleague reported you?

The Bible says it is foolish to vent anger. We often end up looking like fools when we lose it in front of others.

Have you ever heard someone say, it's best to just stay away from Dad, from mum, stay away from the Boss, from grandpa... for the moment, they best not be bothered...

Perhaps what King Solomon was thinking Proverbs 14:7 is true: Stay away from fools, for you won't find knowledge on their lips.

When people are angry, they reveal a foolish side, and they say things that are foolish. There would be many of us, including me who have revealed a foolish side through an anger fuelled response...

How many of you would honestly say that when anger takes hold, you react quickly...

We could say, you're a spewer, letting out your anger quickly. You might feel better, but those on the receiving end don't feel better. They may feel abused, belittled, devalued...

There is collateral damage to anger. Collateral damage beyond what spewers think, when they vent their anger; other people are hurt.

God has called us to be people of self-control. He has given his Holy Spirit who bears the gift of self control.

So there are spewers there are also stewers.

If spewers express it, stewers suppress it.

Stewers push anger deep deep down. The feeling of anger may be the same as the spewer, but instead of releasing the valve, a drama will play out in the mind.

You will rehearse every moment, you will justify, tear the other person down, you may even create a masterpiece story... Now, if it's a person you know, or have to work with, or live with... and that person walks into the room... the anger bubbles... you perhaps fold your arms... have an angry face, cold body language, short answers... you want the person to know something is wrong, but you won't tell them... But there are also those who hide it well... can push it so deep... they are super friendly, but they hold the anger...

In the bible is another story of two brothers, this is a parable Jesus tells.

The young son gets his share of the inheritance, goes off, blows it all on parties and the like, meanwhile, the older brother works hard on the farm, is dedicated, and respectful...

the young son returns home, and the Father welcomes him with open arms, now in the time Jesus, this young son would've lost his identity and place as a son, he would be seen as a servant. But the Father reinstates him and throws a huge party. This is a fantastic story of God's grace.

But there is the brother that didn't ask for his share of the inheritance. It's the brother that stayed home and did all the right things. And he sees his younger stupid brother get all this special treatment... it's not fair!

In Luke 15 we're told "The older brother became angry."
"He refused to go into the welcome home party." He walked away. He pushed the anger down... he refused to deal with it. Perhaps he felt he was in control... by pushing those emotions deep down, he was showing self-control.

Here's the thing, by holding it in, and as hard as we try, it starts to cause damage inside. If we remain stubborn... it can start to negatively impact other aspects of our lives, our

physical health, emotional, spiritual, and relational health... it can grow and create bitterness in us...

Maybe we know people are cranky, bitter, hurt... there is much anger and pain planted deep in their hearts...

Some stewers can also hold on to anger for only so long, and like a volcano, they erupt, and the hurt can spread and cause damage...

So spewers and Stewers: what do we do with our anger?

The bible draws on analogy to illustrate anger - anger is like a fire.

Fire has the potential to cause extreme devastation, and as Australians, we know firsthand the destructive power of fire. Yet, on the other hand, fire provides warmth, it cooks the sausages on the BBQ, it boils the water when we're out camping.

Fire is productive and necessary, but it is also destructive.

Anger is the same.

Destructive anger, or sinful anger, is a fire that needs to be put out. We need to extinguish that anger before it gets too big to control. If your anger is like a destructive fire, and causing you to sin, you need to find ways to douse it, and learn to become a person of self-control.

Now, if you are thinking, I'm just a hot-headed person, I'm just passionate, it's who I am, I can't change...

Let me challenge that thinking:

"I'm sick to death of my dinner being cold all the time, when I get home, I expect it to be ready and hot; and by the way, I noticed that you went and spent more money online shopping, how many different handbags do you need, we're meant to be saving money! Grrr...

RING RING RING

"Hello. Hi Bishop David, how are you?

Yes, definitely, praise the Lord! I'm so glad...

Yeah, I'm sure they are trying their best, I will pray for them, yes...

You heard about my sermon series, you would like me to lead the anger one at the pastor's conference... I'd love to... No worries... Yes, my wife has just cooked me dinner, so I better go..."

"Now, where were we!Online shopping!"

How we deal with anger is learned behaviour.

We have the ability to control it. To change it. To rewire our brains.

This is where we, by God's grace, make a choice to change, to see our circumstances from different perspectives.

If you're driving, somebody cuts you off. Before you accelerate and flip them the bird

What if you thought to yourself, " I wonder what's going on in their lives? There must be something important going on for them to be in such a hurry."

What if we gave people the benefit of the doubt?

What if the person in the office next to you who can't stop talking ever, and the frustration and intolerance are building internally or you just want to tell her to stop talking; what if you just stopped and thought to yourself, "She's a single mom and these are the only adult words she'll speak all day because the rest are just toddlers."

If we learn to give human beings the benefit of the doubt and recognise there are things going on in their world (like us) that we do not know, the Holy Spirit has room to grow in us an attitude of peace and grace.

God speaks to us in James 1:19

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

Where else do we hear the term 'slow to anger'?

It's used to describe our compassionate and faithful God, who shows mercy and love to his children. It doesn't say, God

doesn't get angry, but he is patient... James is reminding the church to be patient with people, and be peace givers.

There is another anger we haven't discussed yet. Righteous anger.

Popeye is one of the classic cartoons of all time. Popeye likes a girl named Olive Oil. Odd name. But in the storyline is Popeye's nemesis, Brutus. Brutus continually goes after Olive Oil and starts making a mess of things. And Popeye gets to a point where he says,

"That's all I can stand. I can't stand no more. I'm done; it's over."

And so, he takes out the spinach, and he -- physically, I don't know how it's possible, but it goes up in the air, and it comes down. And he eats it and his forearms become tree trunks, and then he just opens up a can on Brutus, and it's all good.

Have you had a Popeye moment, where your anger burned deep and inspired you to protect, fight for and stand up for something that was not fair or wrong?

Maybe some of us need to have a Popeye moment. To discover our olive oil and when seeing a wrong, use the anger borne from our love, to bring about good.

What in this crazy world can you fight for?

Can you recall times when Jesus was driven by righteous anger?

When the disciples stopped children from coming to Jesus – Jesus was indignant. What does this tell you about God?

When religious heavies wanted to stop a man from being healed by Jesus...

When God's house was being abused, and his name used to rip people off...

Righteous anger is part of Jesus' nature and his mission, to seek and save the lost, to bring good news to those captive to sin, to restore lost hope, and change the world for the better.

Let me finish by touching on anger in our homes. I live in a home where I get angry, my wife gets angry, and guess what, my kids get angry...

At times I wrongly snap, especially at the end of the day, and it's not fair on my kids or wife... I know you have your moments too.

Remember to confess sinful anger, the unfair outbursts, and show your children, what humility and forgiveness look like...

The other thing is marriages. Our spiritual enemy works overtime to destroy marriages – why because it is a gift from God. Unresolved anger can destroy a marriage. I challenge married people to seek righteous anger and be passionate about your marriage and fan the flame of righteousness to protect and sanctify the gift God has given you.

We need to pray each day for God's grace, the grace that is the antidote for anger, to thank God for his grace in Jesus, and for his grace to capture our hearts, that undoes sins power, that can heal our hearts.

Wind up and prayer.

