

The Price of Anger

Sermon Notes for Feb 19, 2017 at Brentwood



Ps 119:1-8 and Matthew 5:21-37

**But I say to you that if you are angry
with a brother or a sister,
you will be liable to judgment; ...
(Matt 5:22a)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- More challenges from the Sermon on the Mount to deeply ingrained habits of our souls – this one around anger – and, as is often the case in Matthew especially, accompanied by a threat of judgement as the price of anger – ponder a few further reflections on this habit of our souls and look at a couple of ways of dealing with it as we grow into Christian maturity
- The figure on the screen is from Pixar’s Academy-Award-winning 2015 movie *Inside Out*, a wonderful portrayal of the evolving emotional well-being of a young girl – it was exceptionally well-reviewed, not only for the artistry of the story and production, but for the accuracy of the psychology – Anger, Joy, Fear, Disgust, and Sadness – what I like about this image is the way it captures how anger can take over our entire being – it is all-consuming and all-controlling
- Anger erupts when we lose something, especially when we lose something upon which we have based our significance and identity, our self-worth and self-respect – just one example – we often let anger consume us when we lose our health, whether through a sudden diagnosis or a gradual decline – anger can fill us suddenly or gradually - it infects our whole being – we lash out and/or withdraw – it can become a vicious cycle, carrying us deeper and deeper into negativity and isolation until it seems to consume us completely – that negativity and isolation, I think, is the key judgment that comes with anger – in so many ways, it is self-inflicted – we become blind to the presence and power of God’s joy and to the many ways others mediate that healing energy to us
- We also take over the role of judging from God – I don’t know about you, but when I get caught up in bouts of anger, I’m really judgmental against myself for such a failure – and if I feel others judging me for my bad behavior, it gets even worse – it took me a long time to realize that God judges differently – God judges out of love – in love, God says, in effect, “I understand your anger, because you have lost touch with who you really are, a beloved friend of mine created to bless the world. Rely on me, and me alone, for that dignity and worth. No one else can give it to you and no one can take it away. So, grieve the loss you have experienced, but do not let the anger consume and control you. Turn around and see your life being nourished to flourish in my grace and glory.”

At this point in our ponderings, then ...

As I was pondering this text this week, I ran across the writings of American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, especially her book, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, and Justice* (2016) – in short, she suggests that anger, which takes away agency, should quickly move into grief, which gives back agency – restores our significance and identity so relationships can be healed and life can flourish

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