

Serm. Series: "Christian Life - skills for every age"—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield—6/3/2001

Title: "Anger and Reconciliation"

Text: Matthew 5: 21-26

Introduction: **Illus.: Anger Can Be Contagious**

Theme: There are several practical reasons why Jesus calls us to reconciliation with those we are at odds with. However, put in the context of our own unconditional reconciliation to God through Jesus we have no good reason not to be.

Common-sense reasons to reconcile your differences

- **Because contrary to common opinion one sin is not worse than another**
 1. Throughout history people have justified their sin of anger by comparing themselves to the sins of others
 - a. The rabbis and Pharisees taught that it was O.K. to hate as long as you "did not harm" (**Print/read vs 21**)
 - b. **ILLUS.: LEVELS OF ANGER**
 - c. We operate with "no blood no foul" rule but hurt/destroy others by politically correct retribution, words, emotion
 - d. *"With the measure you use, it will be measured to you--and even more. Mark 4:24*
 2. Jesus sets the record straight—anger is just as bad as murder—no exceptions
 - a. *"For the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23*
- **Because even the smallest seeds of anger can lead to being consumed and destroyed by anger**
 1. It begins with letting bitterness take root
 - a. **ILLUS.: HEALING OLD WOUNDS**
 - b. *"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold...Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Eph4:26-27,31*
 2. It plays itself out in the verbal missiles which we launch (**Print/read vss. 22**)
 3. It bears the bitter fruit of blinded rage which lets emotions drive our actions which lead to destruction
- **Because unresolved anger will lead to dreadful consequences**
 1. Jesus gives the practical application of a lawsuit in the context of unresolved anger (**Read/print vss. 25-26**)
 2. Biblical record shows that anger is one step away from murder
 - a. The story of Cain and Able in Genesis 4 and how smoldering hate led to murder out of passion
 - b. **ILLUS.: statistics on homicide—most are done by people who know each other**
 - c. Road rage, School/Post Office shootings, Fishers Soccer League gag rule, airline incidents, etc.
 - d. Understand hate deserves the highest judgment of highest court and fires of hell to stop short moment of anger
 3. Jesus came to give us life and to give life through us not to have us destroy life by taking it from others
 - a. *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10*

Eternal-redeemed reasons to be reconciled to others

- **Because you are *not able* to come into the presence of God with the sin of unresolved hate**
 1. The holiness of God will convict the darkness of your heart in its sin of anger
 - a. **Print/read verse 23**
 - b. *"Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous." 1 John 3:12*
 2. The mercy of God will humble the self-righteousness of your heart reminding you that **you** need mercy, too!
 - a. **ILLUS.: ZERO-TOLERANCE TOWARD ANGER**
 - b. When we come to God with our offering, we admit that we are sinners in need of his salvation (**Print/read vs. 24**)
 - c. When we understand depth of God's mercy/grace to us, we will not be able to withhold it from others who need it
- **Because you will reap the blessings in your life and relationships by living in reconciliation**
 1. Jesus says "**you be reconciled**" (vs. 24)—not our job to change the other; let God do that through our humbleness
 - a. **ILLUS.: MAKE UP QUICKLY!**
 2. You will realize peace and quietness in your life which only the forgiving love of Jesus **THROUGH YOU** can give

Matthew 5:21-26

"You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.²³ If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.²⁵ Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.²⁶ Truly I say to you, you shall not come out of there, until you have paid up the last cent. [NASB]

Anger Can Be Contagious

In his autobiography, *Number 1*, Billy Martin told about hunting in Texas with Mickey Mantle. Mickey had a friend who would let them hunt on his ranch. When they reached the ranch, Mickey told Billy to wait in the car while he checked in with his friend. Mantle's friend quickly gave them permission to hunt, but he asked Mickey a favor. He had a pet mule in the barn who was going blind, and he didn't have the heart to put him out of his misery. He asked Mickey to shoot the mule for him. When Mickey came back to the car, he pretended to be angry. He scowled and slammed the door. Billy asked him what was wrong, and Mickey said his friend wouldn't let them hunt. "I'm so mad at that guy," Mantle said, "I'm going out to his barn and shoot one of his mules!" Mantle drove like a maniac to the barn. Martin protested, "We can't do that!" But Mickey was adamant. "Just watch me," he shouted. When they got to the barn, Mantle jumped out of the car with his rifle, ran inside, and shot the mule. As he was leaving, though, he heard two shots, and he ran back to the car. He saw that Martin had taken out his rifle, too. "What are you doing, Martin?" he yelled. Martin yelled back, face red with anger, "We'll show that son of a gun! I just killed two of his cows!" Anger can be dangerously contagious. As Proverbs puts it, "Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man ... or you may learn his ways" (Proverbs 22:24-25).

Levels of Anger

Two friends, Bill and Tom, were drinking at an all-night café. They got into a discussion about the difference between irritation, anger, and rage. At about 1 A.M., Bill said, "Look, Tom, I'll show you an example of irritation."

He went to the pay telephone, put in a coin, and dialed a number at random. The phone rang and rang and rang. Finally when a sleepy voice at the other end answered, Bill said, "I'd like to speak to Jones." "There's no one here named Jones," the disgruntled man replied as he hung up. "That," Bill said to Tom, "is a man who is irritated."

An hour later, at 2 A.M., Bill said, "Now I'll show you a man who is angry." He went to the phone, dialed the same number, and let it ring. Eventually, the same sleepy voice answered the phone. Bill asked, "May I please speak with Jones?" "There's no one here named Jones," came the angry reply, this time louder. The man slammed down the receiver.

An hour later, at 3 A.M., Bill said, "Now I'll show you an example of rage." He went to the phone, dialed the same number, and let it ring. When the sleepy man finally answered, Bill said, "Hi, this is Jones. Have there been any calls for me?"

Stats on Anger and Rage

More than three fourths of Americans believe angry behavior has increased in places like airports and highways, according to a recent *USA Today* CNN/Gallup Poll. Flight attendants and pilots report a dramatic increase in problem passengers: 66 incidents in 1997, 534 incidents in 1999

Healing Old Wounds

When my mother-in-law was first married, she was in a serious car accident that caused her to be thrown into the windshield (it was in the days before mandatory seatbelts). She told us that for years, following the removal of the glass from her face and the healing of the scars, she would periodically have a small piece of hidden glass rise to the surface of her skin. Although it didn't hurt her while it was lodged beneath her skin, the glass shard became very painful again as it moved toward the surface. In a similar way, we all have tragedies, accidents, and times when we "hit the windshield" in life. We go through the healing process and fight through the pain that accompanies our struggle. It is easy to think all the "pieces of glass" are gone, only to have an event, a person, a holiday, or the like bring another piece to the surface, and it becomes painful all over again. Complete healing often takes longer than we think.

Zero Tolerance Toward Anger

Long-time Indiana basketball coach Bobby Knight was recently fired for apparently violating a zero-tolerance policy placed on him several months ago. Knight's volatile temper has made for a stormy coaching career, bringing repeated accusations of verbally and physically abusing players. As I followed the media report of this sad story, a thought struck me: I'm sure glad God doesn't place a zero-tolerance policy on us! His amazing grace allows us to start over at any time.

Make up Quickly!

Fighting rush-hour traffic from suburban Maryland to Washington D.C. can cause its share of near misses and irritating moments. One morning, a young lady darted her compact car from a side street into the stream of traffic immediately in front of a driver just a few car lengths ahead of me, forcing him to brake sharply. He avoided hitting her by inches and was obviously furious. Within seconds, traffic stopped at a red light, and I watched him pull up behind the offender, leap from his car, and stride angrily toward hers. Clearly, he intended to give her a royal bowling out. Seeing him coming, the very attractive young lady jumped from her car and ran to meet him--a big smile on her face! Before he could say one word or know what was happening, she had thrown her arms around him, hugged him tightly, and planted a passionate kiss on his lips! Then she was back in her car and driving away, leaving her antagonist standing in the middle of the street still speechless and looking somewhat confused and embarrassed--but no longer angry!