

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 41 Sunday 14 October_2018.

Marks of a human: ANGER

Text *Matthew 5: 13 – 16 and 21 - 26. READ.*

(PP2) Some weeks ago, we began looking at Jesus' teaching on human thriving and wellbeing. (Partly because we are running the Happiness Course locally. Allegory of the fruitful vine: *John 15*).

Last week we returned to JESUS talking to his Disciples – his Followers about:-

(PP3) Supreme blessedness: *Matthew 5: 3 -11.*

Without a doubt this condition or experience of blessedness (human happiness – which is coveted by others) is not simply achieved through aspiration and effort. God's grace is needed – to enter and experience this depth of blessing (other faiths talk of baraka (Islam – Arabic word for blessing) or even the karma spoken of in Hinduism and Buddhism. Karma is to do with cause and effect – a Sanskrit word).

Each of the 8 or 9 beatitudes is like a proclaimed proverb: *Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully.* (v6)

JESUS in his teaching is surely correcting many of the false understandings that have arisen in many cultures and over many generations about the God and Human relationship. Hence his use of the phrase: *You have heard it said BUT I say to you...* (5:21) Religious systems and philosophies (like the Jewish Law) because of human nature become corrupted over a period of time – there is a constant need to go back to discovering what is really pleasing to God to keep what is pure – so that we might move forward as people. What is Jesus really saying in his claims to be the Way, the Truth and the Light?

5: 13, 14 Jesus calls upon his followers to be like SALT for the human race and LIGHT for the whole world. Something that should make us cry out for grace and help from God.

Call of JESUS: to live prophetically (VV11 and 12) – speaking the truth about God and people, and living the truth. This is the reason why many have chosen to follow Jesus – seeking to live genuinely counter-cultural lives. **He spoke about living prophetically in the world (vv11 & 12) – as he himself Jesus did.** This counter-cultural living would challenge the people of the world but would (as in his case) result in opposition: insults, persecutions and evil lies being spoken against those who live this way (live righteously). He said that there would be later reward but without a doubt he was not and is not offering an easy way of life or an opt out of the world.

JESUS in what he said and how he behaved exhibited and demonstrated what it is to be truly human – ***Blessed are the peacemakers – they are the true children of God (v9)***. (Truly human).

To his disciples (followers) Jesus spoke about living a blessed life – a life of fullness and wellbeing based on a deep inner conviction and set of values – with an outer way of behaving in the world.

Jesus is describing a way of being and living in community.

This is a call to follow, a call to lifestyle, and a way of being individually and in community. Jesus' call is to be God's people – living among all the peoples of the world but distinctive and holy (set apart for God's use).

Matthew 6: 8 “Do not be like them”. Be different from the Pagans but also the Scribes and the Pharisees.

Here in Matthew 5: 21 – 26 Jesus talks about anger.
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Anger is not always negative – but used wrongly anger can be destructive. Do you experience anger? Do you do anything with your anger? Who is in control - you or your anger? Does your anger make you aggressive? Could you handle your anger better?

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/about-anger/> Useful questions on an NHS website: *Quotes from this in italics.*

Why am I so angry? Anger tells us we need to take action to put something right. It gives us strength and energy, and motivates us to act.

But for some people, anger can get out of control and cause problems with relationships, work and even the law.

Long-term, unresolved anger is linked to health conditions such as high blood pressure, depression, anxiety and heart disease.

It's important to deal with anger in a healthy way that doesn't harm you or anyone else.

How common are anger problems?

In a survey by the Mental Health Foundation, 32% of people said they had a close friend or family member who had trouble controlling their anger.

Even though anger problems can have such a harmful effect on our family, work and social lives, most people who have them don't ask for help.

Sometimes people don't recognise that their anger is a problem for themselves and for other people. They may see other people or things as the problem instead.

Well – you say – that's the NHS' opinion – I'm in church and I want to hear what Jesus has to say on anger. Do we?

Well here is Jesus saying that long term, destructive anger needs to be resolved because it interferes with our experience of wellbeing, our relationships with other people and our relationship with God. **Within a faith community...**

We may not consider anger as serious as the sin of murder, but Jesus says it is serious and can not be ignored. Uncontrolled anger which results in us condemning and writing off our brothers and sisters is a matter for the “Council/ Sanhedrin” to deal with ie the religious leaders should not just ignore it.

If you or I have given our brother or sister in the community cause for them to be angry with us, then it’s our responsibility to make the first move – as soon as we remember and recognise this. If we are even ready to make an offering of worship “at the altar” we must stop. (Only altar for Christians is the Cross). This will not be true worship. We must go and ask forgiveness. (“*Around the Table*” today this is also true – if our worship is to be true and spiritual).

Jesus also mentions lawsuits (Jew v. Jew) – if I am taken to Court then it makes total sense to deal with it out of court if I possibly can. To go to Court will cost money, time, energy and if there is a conviction maybe even jail.

This is not always possible but certainly between brothers and sisters it must always be attempted. (Blessed are the peacemakers – they are the true children of God). **This is significantly about matters and relationships within the faith community not necessarily about Civil matters.** If we make a start in the community of faith then it will also cause us to think about anger we may feel more generally. “*Do not be like them?*” Bearing grudges, retaining anger, going to religious court over matters that can be sorted outside of religious court.

How we react to anger

How you react to feeling angry depends on lots of things, including:

- *the situation you are in at the moment – if you're dealing with lots of problems or stress in your life, you may find it harder to control your anger*
- *your family history – you may have learned unhelpful ways of dealing with anger from the adults around you when you were a child*
- *events in your past – if you have experienced events that made you angry but felt you couldn't express your anger, you may still be coping with those angry feelings*

Some people express anger verbally, by shouting. Sometimes this can be aggressive, involving swearing, threats or name-calling.

Some people react violently and lash out physically, hitting other people, pushing them or breaking things. This can be particularly damaging and frightening for other people.

Some of us show anger in passive ways, for example, by ignoring people or sulking.

Other people may hide their anger or turn it against themselves. They can be very angry on the inside but feel unable to let it out.

People who tend to turn anger inwards may harm themselves as a way of coping with the intense feelings they have. Young people are most likely to self-harm.

Anger or aggression?

Some people see anger and aggression as the same thing. In fact, anger is an emotion that we feel while aggression is how some of us behave when we feel angry.

Can Jesus help me with my anger?

The simple answer is yes. Jesus as the one fully, truly human being experienced anger. **“Be angry and sin not”**...Ephesians 4: 26, 27. (Do everything we can to maintain unity in the bond of peace that unites us. Ephesians 4:3)

If our anger has become unmanageable then we may need to seek external help from a counsellor or pastor. Sometimes it is worth listening to a friend who has challenged us about our obvious anger. Most of all we are unwise to do nothing. Anger unmanaged is destructive of self, and of relationships with others and God. Anger can be a means of growth and forward movement if it is examined and actions taken.

These are issues for the Christian Community – these are not just personal problems but to do with being church and community. Jesus calls us to love one another as he demonstrated. How do we respond to anger when we feel it in ourselves, experience it from others and witness it in others and in the community? We must not “overlook it”. Begin by discussing it with Jesus and maybe some others we trust.

We are called in Jesus – to take a **reality check**.

There is healing and forgiveness because of the Cross of Jesus Christ.