

## A Time To Get Angry

Exodus 20:1-17, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 & John 2:13-22

St Paul's Memorial United Methodist Church

1001 W Colfax Ave, South Bend, Indiana 46616

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Pastor Tom Thews

### Exodus 20:1-17 (NIV) (The Ten Commandments)

<sup>1</sup> And God spoke all these words: <sup>2</sup>“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. <sup>3</sup> You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup>“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup>“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.

<sup>8</sup>“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.

<sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. <sup>12</sup>“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup>“You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup>“You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup>“You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup>“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup>“You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

### 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (NIV)

<sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” <sup>20</sup> Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom

of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

#### John 2:13-22 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple courts He found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. <sup>15</sup> So [Jesus] made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> To those who sold doves [Jesus] said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

<sup>18</sup> Then the Jews demanded of Him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." <sup>20</sup> The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"

<sup>21</sup> But the temple [Jesus] had spoken of was His body. <sup>22</sup> After [Jesus] was raised from the dead, His disciples recalled what He had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

#### A Time To Get Angry

In the spring of 1894, the Baltimore Orioles came to Boston to play the Boston Beaneaters. Yes, that is what they were called back then — the Boston Beaneaters. The game heated up when Boston third baseman Tommy "Foghorn" Tucker slid into third base and the legendary third baseman John McGraw of the Orioles kicked Tucker in the face. Within minutes all the players from both teams had joined in the brawl.

The warfare quickly spread to the grandstands. Among the fans, the conflict went from bad to worse. Someone set fire to the stands and the entire ballpark, considered one of the most beautiful ballparks of its time with striking twin spires rising from each corner of the Grand Pavilion, burned to the ground. Not only that, but the fire spread to 107 other Boston buildings as well. The Boston Globe reported. "It was a hot game, sure enough!" All that destruction took place because one player got angry with another.

One of the questions we all have to deal with from time to time is what to do with our anger. We are aware of the negative results of anger. Anger can cause us to do some really dumb things!

Recently I heard a ridiculous joke that tickled my funny bone. I normally don't tell bar jokes from the pulpit, but the story perfectly illustrates the problems we can cause for ourselves — and often times for others — when we get angry.

It is about a man who walks into a bar and says, “Bartender, give me two shots.” The bartender asks, “You want them both now or one at a time?” The guy says, “Oh, I want them both now. One’s for me and one’s for this little guy here,” and he pulls a man only 3 inches tall out of his pocket.

The bartender asks “Can he drink?” The guy says, “Oh, sure. He can drink.” So the bartender pours a shot and sure enough, the little guy drinks it all up.

“That’s amazing” says the bartender. “What else can he do, can he walk?” The man flicks a quarter down to the end of the bar and says, “Hey, Jake. Go get that.” The little guy runs down to the end of the bar and picks up the quarter. Then he runs back and gives it to the man.

The bartender is in total shock. “That’s amazing” he says, “what else can he do? Does he talk?” The man says, “Sure he talks.” Then he turns to the little man and says, “Hey, Jake, tell the bartender about that time we were hunting in Africa and you called that witch doctor an idiot!”

People do stupid things when they are angry — like calling a witch doctor an idiot. Before that guy went from being 6 feet tall to being 3 inches tall, he should have read the words of Jesus that we should never call anyone a fool (Matthew 5:22) which I believe would be about the same thing as calling them an idiot.

Seriously, think how often real damage has been done because someone could not control his or her anger.

Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr were two of our most prominent founding fathers. What most of us remember from our school days about Alexander Hamilton is how he died. Hamilton was the former Secretary of the Treasury and Burr, believe it or not, was the sitting Vice President of the United States. And yet at Weehawken, New Jersey on July 11, 1804, these two men fought a duel. You think politics are bad today. Politics today are a cakewalk in comparison.

The duel was the culmination of a long and bitter rivalry between these two men. Tensions reached a boiling point when Hamilton defamed Burr’s character in a New York political campaign. In the duel Burr shot and mortally wounded Hamilton, who died the next day. Burr survived the duel, but the harsh criticism and animosity directed toward him following the duel brought an end to his political career.

Aaron Burr is an instance of a gifted and able person who permitted hatred and anger to get the best of him. Later he confessed that it would have been wiser for him to have taken the sensible view that the world was big enough for both Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton.

What a tragic waste of human life. But it happens all the time. I saw some statistics that revealed that, over a seven-year period, road rage alone resulted in 12,610 injuries and 218 murders on our nation’s highways. When we lose our temper we are in danger of hurting others as well as ourselves.

One of the ways we hurt ourselves when we get angry is the psychological as well as physical damage we do to our own minds and bodies.

For example, famed psychotherapist Sigmund Freud taught us that depression is anger turned inward. That’s an important concept — depression is anger turned inward. You will remember all the hatred and

violence that filled Northern Ireland just a few years ago. And yet a British psychiatrist noted that the suicide rate in Northern Ireland showed a steady decline during the bloodiest years of the strife between Protestants and Catholics. He surmised that, if you can express anger toward somebody else, you are not as likely to express it at yourself. Consequently, the most peaceful county in Northern Ireland had the highest suicide rate.

This phenomenon applies particularly to so-called “nice people.” Nice people get depressed, because they don’t know what to do with their anger. They don’t want to strike out at someone who has hurt them or offended them, and so they turn the anger inward on themselves.

There is much evidence that turning anger inward is a serious health hazard in terms of such things as high blood pressure, ulcers and some forms of cancer. Studies show that angry, cynical people die young. Men who score high for hostility on standard tests are four times more likely to die prematurely than men whose scores on such tests are low.

Anger can be a deadly emotion. But does that mean that it is always wrong to be angry? Not at all! Anger, like all our emotions, is a gift from God. It can either be a positive in our lives, or a negative.

#### THERE ARE TIMES WHEN A CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO GET ANGRY.

Jesus was angry when He drove the moneychangers out of the temple. They had turned a place of worship into what He called a “den of robbers.”

The moneychangers were originally an answer to a problem raised by Roman coinage. Roman coins had on them the image of Caesar. Since they violated the 2nd Commandment by carrying a graven image, they were unacceptable for Temple ceremonies. The people were then forced to change their Roman coins into coins that were acceptable.

Those of you who have traveled abroad have probably traded currency at a little shop set up for that purpose. It can be a very profitable enterprise for the moneychanger. The moneychangers Jesus confronted, however, had not only brought their shops right into the Temple itself, they had brought it into the Court of the Gentiles. The only place in the Temple where non-Jews could go to pray.

They were also selling sacrificial animals right there in the temple precincts. Worse than that was the competitiveness among the shopkeepers vying for the business of the worshippers. The most sacred shrine of the Jewish people had become a tawdry, commercialized circus where people were being charged exorbitant fees to enable them to worship God.

This made Jesus mad and He wasn’t going to take it anymore. This was His Father’s house and they had desecrated it. Suddenly Jesus was turning over tables, scattering coins across the pavement. He then made a whip out of cords and forced the traders out of the temple and drove the sacrificial animals out into the courtyard.

When the dust cleared, people probably wondered what had hit them. But deep down everybody knew Jesus was right. Christ’s example tells me there are times when a Christian ought to get angry.

Anger is a great motivator. Martin Luther used to say, “When I’m angry, I preach well and pray better.” Anger sometimes is the only emotion that will get people into action to solve a personal or societal problem.

The slave trade in Great Britain came to an end because a deeply religious man named William Wilberforce became angry. He saw human beings treated like cattle, and he resolved that he would give his life to seeing that the practice was obliterated from his homeland. There are some things that ought to make you angry.

Pastor Charles Hoffacker tells about a group of farmers in Brazil. These farmers are regarded as peasants in the country with few rights and practically no political power. They are near the bottom of the social scale, and for the most part they have accepted their situation.

But finally there came the straw that broke the metaphorical camel’s back. The lands belonging to these peasant farmers have been subject to illegal seizure by national and international corporations acting with the connivance of the military and local politicians. But some of the farmers did the unthinkable. They got angry and stood up to the political and corporate powers. Subsequently, they were arrested and hauled off to town to be jailed.

But a group of their fellow farmers did something that was even more unthinkable. They also got angry. They decided that they were no less responsible than those who had been jailed, and so hundreds of them marched off to town and filled the judge’s house, demanding that they too be jailed. The judge finally sent all of them home, including the prisoners. There are times when the proper response to a bad situation is to get angry. Otherwise the bad situation is perpetuated.

Let me give you a lighter example with which most of us can relate. How do you feel about those irritating, unsolicited phone calls you get just about meal time asking you to buy some product or another — even after you have asked to be put on the no-call list? Has that ever made you just a little bit angry? How about spam e-mail?

Anger, properly channeled can be a great motivating force. Leland Gregory, in his book *Stupid History*, tells about a man named Alan Ralsky. Ralsky became a multimillionaire by marketing spam — unwanted e-mail — on the Internet.

In November 2002, Detroit Free Press columnist Mike Wendland wrote a story about Ralsky including the fact that Ralsky’s company sent up to 250 million spam e-mails a day — the profits from which he used to purchase an 8,000-square-foot \$740,000 home. Ralsky even bragged during the interview that a single weight-less e-mail paid for an entire wing of his mansion.

Well, a group of people got upset that he could prosper so by clogging their e-mail boxes and they decided to do something about it. They posted Ralsky’s home address, e-mail address and phone number on hundreds of Web sites. Soon Ralsky began receiving literally tons of junk mail, and his inbox was maxed out every morning. What was Ralsky’s reaction? He was not happy. “They’ve signed me up for every advertising campaign and mailing list there is,” he complained. “These people are out of their minds. They’re harassing me!” “Spam,” quips Leland Gregory, “is a revenge best served cold.”

Now I'm not advocating that we stoop to the level of those who make us angry. But I am saying that it is ridiculous to say that a Christian never gets angry. Jesus got angry. Anger is not a sin.

IN FACT, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN NOT GETTING ANGRY IS MORE OF A SIN.

There are times when Christians ought to get angry about some of the inequities and injustices in our world. As Melvin Wheatley once said, "There are situations in life in which the absence of anger would be the essence of evil."

How could William Wilberforce not get angry over slavery in his country? How could Dr. King not get angry over segregation in this land? How could Christian people not get angry over some of the injustices that are committed in our country and around the globe — like hunger and poverty and sexual abuse and terrorism, and the list goes on and on? Maybe the greatest sin that you and I commit is not getting angry often enough over some of the injustices that still exist in this world.

Is there some evil in the world that a voice within you keeps saying, "Somebody ought to do something about that?" Maybe that's the voice of God. Maybe it's time you went beyond anger to getting involved in solving some of the world's problems. If it was good enough for Jesus, surely you and I are not too good to get up in arms from time to time about evils that are still taking place in our world.

Of course, we are not to get angry over petty things. People do and say stupid things when they are angry. For example, we should never call a witch doctor an idiot. But there are some things that should make us angry — when the weak are trampled upon, when children are abused, when the poor are taken advantage of and the homeless are neglected. Anger is a great motivator. Sometimes the greatest sin we can commit is not getting angry over the right things.

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