

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *You make me so angry*

**SERIES:** *FATAL - Anger*

**SCRIPTURES:** *Matthew 5*

**SPEAKER:** *Shaun Kipe*

**DATE:** *2020 - 9 - 27*

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*\*Credit to Scott Scruggs series from "Sanctuary"; Tony Campolo "Seven Deadly Sins"*

Well good morning, it so great to worship with you. Want to say welcome to all of you in this room and to so many gathered on-line, at home, tuning in to the live stream.

We are in the fourth week of our series called fatal (**SERIES GRAPHIC**), talking about 8 vices that are a common condition in the human heart. They have been since the beginning of time. Characters in the Bible struggle with them, Jesus talked a lot about them and you will find them lurking in your heart and my heart. Jesus said...

**Mark 7:21-22 - <sup>21</sup> For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup> adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. <sup>23</sup> All these evils come from inside and defile a person."**

This morning we want to talk about anger. You and me, humanity, has an anger problem that needs dealt with. In fact, human anger is responsible for most of the devastation we see in our world today. Anger fuels the hatred between neighbors who don't get along. Friends and family members who are now estranged. Spouses who split apart. Anger fuels the hatred between co-workers, countries, nations.

If we could find a solution to the anger problem of the human heart we would solve a lot of issues in our world.

**Matthew 5 – You have heard that it was said, “You shall not murder. And anyone who murders will be subject to judgement.” But I say to you, that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgement.**

Jesus equates anger with murder. Jesus is saying, anger is the heart condition that leads to murder. And since I’m concerned about your heart the anger has to go.

First, let’s just clarify a little bit about what we mean when we say “anger”.

### **I. What it is?**

Because I don’t think a lot of times we even recognize our own anger.

First,

#### **A. Anger is an emotion.**

Just to show you how quickly anger can pulse through our veins we’re gonna do a little experiment this morning.

I’m just gonna put some images of everyday circumstances up on the screen and all I want you to do is to pay very close attention to your emotions. I don’t want you to say anything, and that’s really important because as we’ll see this morning our anger is often hardwired to our mouths. So don’t say a word. I just want you to pay attention to the emotion you feel...

Image of:

**Image of glass of water**

**Image of Hardboiled egg**

**Image of bananas**

**Image of traffic.**

Alright...so maybe the images bothered you a little, but what about the audio. How did that make you feel? Someone is chewing loudly within earshot. You feel that emotion begin to bubble up. That's how quickly it happens. Anger is first of all an emotion.

The initial emotional experience is not necessarily wrong.

Emotions are not sinful or wrong they just are.

But when it comes to anger it's the immediate next step that becomes significant "what do we do with the emotion?"

### **B. Anger moves to our will.**

And it is that choice that makes anger either fatal or not.

Do you choose to partner with that emotion, to embrace that emotion, justify that emotion? Do you choose to act out of that emotion?

I'm now choosing to feel **"ill-will or bitterness toward something or someone else."**

You begin thinking about how they have taken advantage of you? How wrong, even evil those other people are? You begin thinking, of all the ways their evil is way worse than your evil. God must be very upset with them also.

You begin thinking about things you'd like to see done to them? You'd like to see them, fail, embarrassed, set straight. You'd like for someone to step up and teach them a lesson so they will be humiliated or embarrassed.

That's embracing, it's harboring, it's choosing anger.

You actually see this concept play out one of the greatest films series ever produced Star Wars (**PIC OF LUKE SKYWALKER VS. DARTH VADER**). There is this really powerful scene where the evil Emperor watches as Luke Skywalker, who represents GOOD, is fighting against his father Darth Vader, who represents EVIL.

And while they fight, the question that hangs in the air is ...how will Luke handle his anger?

The evil Emperor stands encouraging him, **“Strike me down with all of your hatred and your journey to the Dark Side will be complete.”**

He’s saying, “Embrace your anger. Partner with it. Act out of your anger.”

**The difference between GOOD and EVIL is: “will you embrace the anger or not”?**

Jesus is saying if you choose to embrace your anger, if you choose to indulge yourself in that emotion, it becomes like murder. And this is why so many of us try to excuse our anger by calling it...

### **C. What about “righteous anger”?**

Meaning all of those times we tell ourselves, “I have a right to be angry.”

**Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances...to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations...to savor the pain you can give back — is a feast fit for a king.** (Frederich Buechner)

So I'm just gonna challenge all of us for a minute...more often than not, "righteous anger" is an excuse we use to allow something into our hearts that Jesus says is wrong.

People in Jesus day, were finding ways to excuse their anger. "*Well at least I haven't murdered anyone.*" And it allowed them to harbor anger in their hearts. And I realize this is a nuanced conversation, so I know I won't fully resolve this, but I just want to give you food for thought as we begin thinking about eliminating the excuse of "righteous anger".

First, some people say, well...

### 1. "God get's angry..."

So I'm justified in getting angry, it's called righteous anger. Isn't it a double-standard that God can get angry but I can't?

That's a great question and I was trying to think of a nice way to say this, so that you all wouldn't get angry at me. But I couldn't think of one...so sorry...I'll just quote someone else...

**Isn't that a double-standard? YES...but he's God, you're not...get over it.**

(Cavey)

Paul wrote to the church in Rome...

**"Revenge is mine, I will repay says the Lord." (Romans 12)**

Most times, just because "God get's angry" is not good justification for claiming our anger is "righteous anger."

Second, many people will immediately point a verse from the book of Ephesians

## 2. “In your anger do not sin...”

And say, “See it says, in your anger, therefore it’s giving some leeway for our righteous anger”...

Now what you need to know is that, of all the verses in the New Testament that talk about anger, and there are many of them...this is the only one that seems to give some leeway to anger.

**...rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. (Colossians 3:8)**

**Anger does not result in the righteous life that God desires. (James)**

In addition, I also think it’s important to point out that the leeway of this verse doesn’t go very far... The very next line is...**do not let the sun go down on your anger.**

Which is kind of like saying, when you feel that emotion coming on, deal with it right away. You’re not to embrace it or indulge in it. And about 5 verses later in that very same passage...Paul says this...

**<sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.**

You with me? We need to be very careful claiming that ours is “righteous anger” more often than not, we’re using that as an excuse for something Jesus says, needs to go.

And let's just talk about why it needs to go...

## **II. Why anger is fatal?**

### **A. Anger leads to physical harm.**

The emotional response we feel, if we embrace it or act out of it often leads to thoughts like... *"I want to hurt or harm something else."*

I will tell you I do not have the deftest of fingers. Things that require careful, meticulous skill with fingers, I am a failure. The other day I was trying to tie Keagan's shoe laces on his soccer cleats. They have to be tied well while he's running and kicking or they'll come undone.

I'm sitting there try to tie these things and I can't get enough lace to get them double-knotted. And they keep slipping through my fingers and the loops keep coming undone. And in my head I start thinking, "This is so annoying. These annoying shoe laces." As if it's their fault. And then I begin thinking, "there must some conspiracy about making kids athletic shoe laces as short as humanly possible, just to anger inept parents such as myself. "I start thinking things like...annoying shoes. Annoying shoe companies."

Of course poor Keagan can see my frustration, my anger and he utters the words that no 6 year old should tell a highly capable and mature father in this circumstance...he say, *"Dad, do you want me to ask mom to tie them for me?"*

*Why would you ask me something like that? I can handle this on my own. As if mom can do this. Sure ask mom she can do everything."* Alright so this an exaggeration, but you get the idea right? This how anger escalates.

This is why in anger, people punch walls, throw chairs, scream at the top of their lungs.

And then more tragically, it soon leads to not only do *“I want to hurt or harm something else...I want to hurt or harm someone else.”*

Because it turns out that things are not the number one cause of anger...people are.

According to the National Center on Domestic Violence from a number of years ago, 20 people a minute are physically abused by an intimate partner.

Physical abuse is often the result of anger and it is unacceptable. If you are being physically abused, it is not right, it is not ok, it is not your fault. It can never be justified. You need to call someone and get help and get out of that situation.

I want to be real clear about this. Physically harming another person is not ok for followers of Jesus.

If you haven't read through the gospels, I will again encourage you to do that. You need to know what the life and teachings of Jesus actually are if you're going to model your life after his.

You won't find one example of Jesus lashing out and physically harming another person. He may have had plenty for reasons to justify it, but you just won't find it.

Many people will point to a story about Jesus turning over tables in the temple.

But two things I'll point out about that story...one, there is no indication in that story that Jesus hurt another person.

And second, you should pay close attention to the people Jesus was angry with.



It wasn't Romans, pagans or secular society. It wasn't the slow driver in front him on the highway or a shoelace. Jesus anger was directed at religious people for turning their place of worship into a show. Anger's got to go because far too often anger leads to physical harm.

Second anger is fatal because...

### **B. Anger is hotwired to our tongues.**

Your words ever get you into trouble? Ever say something you regret in the heat of the moment? Go back to Jesus statement in Matthew 5...

**Matthew 5 – anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgement. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister raca is answerable to the court and anyone who says, you fool be in danger of the fire of hell.**

It's not just that you might physically harm someone, it's that you use your tongue to tear others down.

Raca in ancient Israel was an insult. It is sort of a gruff/grating sound you make in the back of your throat, like when you're about to spit on someone. Spitting on someone is one of the most condescending things you can do to another person.

Jesus is saying the problem with anger is not just that it leads to physically harming another person, it's that it is hotwired to our tongue. Our emotion soon starts to spew out of our mouths.

And, I'll just add this...it's not just with our tongues, is it? Most of us are much more subtle with our anger. We show it with our eyes, with our tone of voice. Or maybe we won't tell someone to their face how we really feel about them, but we have no

problem talking behind their back. We have no problem posting nasty things on Facebook. “annoying shoelace”...isn’t that where our emotion goes?

Folks, as followers of Jesus we just don’t get a pass on this.

### **III. What do we do with our anger problem?**

And so first let’s...

#### **A. Turn to Jesus...**

Now if ever there was a time for someone to be righteously angry, it would have been Jesus. He was God in human flesh, coming to save the world. But instead, he was rejected by those he came to save, He was lied about. He was innocent but charged as a criminal.

The religious leaders, the Roman authorities, they all got caught up in their anger towards Jesus.

They started to revel in that anger. They enjoyed that feeling. They determined the best way to deal with their anger was to nail Jesus to a cross. For the Romans the cross was the way to deal with anger. Take your enemy and nail him to it.

And in our world often the response we have to hurt, frustration, anger...is called revenge. In fact, and we didn’t get to go into detail on this, but that is one of the reasons that anger is so fatal. It never has an ending point. You harm me. So I harm you. So you harm me worse. So I harm you worse.

That’s how it worked back in Jesus day...“an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth...”

That's how anger works in our world. And Jesus we might say, would have had every right pay back those nailing him to that cross in righteous anger.

But instead Jesus said this, **“But I say to you...do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek turn to them the other also...Love your enemies and do good to those who persecute you...if your enemy is hungry feed him.”**

Jesus is saying, I know what anger does to the human heart. I know where anger leads and I know how so many people, and communities and even nations, in the world will use their anger. But there's gonna be different group of people. A group who follow my example who choose to deal with anger differently. And so Jesus led by example...

He took that Roman symbol of anger and he turned it on it's head (**IMAGE OF JESUS ON THE CROSS**). And instead of retaliating, instead of harming them back...he put himself on the cross and laid down his life.

When they put nails in his hands, he didn't fight back.

When he was spit on, he didn't spit back.

When he was insulted, he never insulted back.

When they were shouting raca at the Messiah, he didn't return the insults.

In fact, as they shouted Raca, we're told Jesus said something else in return...do you remember what Jesus said...

“Father forgive them...”

The cross reminds us that there is a battle going on in our world between good and evil; between love and anger. Anger says, “hurt, harm, destroy, get them back.” And

many people in our world believe that's the way it is. But Jesus the Messiah, said nope there's another way.

Jesus said you can't rid the world of anger by getting angry back. You can't end violence with violence...that only perpetuates more anger and more violence.

The great reformer Martin Luther King Jr. said these powerful words... **Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence...in a descending spiral of destruction ...**

There's only one way to end anger and retaliation...it's when someone chooses to say, "I forgive you..." "I won't harm you back..." "I will love you even in the midst of your anger towards me. I will continue to serve you. I will continue to wish goodwill on you, even when you won't."

That's what Jesus emulates on the cross. He doesn't just die for our sins, he shows us a new way of living life, and of dealing with anger.

You won't find this in the world around you, you'll have a hard time finding the motivation in your own heart and just muster up the strength to do...you find it in Jesus...which is why he is the master and savior. On that cross he's saving the world from anger and retaliation and hatred.

And then he says to you and me, **"now you take up your cross and follow me..."**

People who don't follow Jesus have no reason or motivation to forgive. In fact, to the world, Paul wrote to the early church that this way of Jesus will often "seem like foolishness." It seems impractical. But people who follow Jesus our lives look different. Our motivations are different. How we handle our anger will be different.

So in your anger, turn to Jesus.

Second...we need to

## **B. Actively deal with the emotion.**

I just want to say this clearly, in talking about ridding ourselves of anger...

We should not should ignore or deny the emotion of anger that we feel. Suppressing or denying our emotions does not actually help us deal with our emotions.

As Christians we don't do well acknowledging our anger. We often prefer to say things like: "Well I wasn't angry, I was upset. Or I was frustrated. I was irritated." We need to acknowledge and confess our anger in order to deal with it.

Let me give you two active responses to anger based on Jesus words...

In your anger, go

### **1. Seek Reconciliation...**

**If you are bringing a gift to the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar first go and be reconciled them, then come and offer your gift.**

Reconciliation is one of the most spiritual things you can do.

This is the only time I'm going to tell you it's ok skip church. If you're skipping church to make amends with someone who you've had a falling out with, you've been harboring bitterness toward, that's appropriate.

Now, this doesn't mean that if your Steelers fan and you're going to the home of Cowboys fan to watch the football game and taking a plate of hot wings for the reconciliatory efforts that it's ok to skip church next Sunday.

## 2. Do something life-giving for the person who angers you.

Jesus said it this way...

### If you enemy is hungry feed him, if he is thirsty give him a drink...

Sometimes, we are told, we should express or let out their anger by "blowing off steam" by "punching a bag" or "hitting golf balls" or "telling someone off." And that should relieve the anger.

But the truth is expressing emotions often causes us to feel the emotion more intensely. **Feelings and actions tend to reinforce each other.** Those who express anger by blowing off steam, usually end up feeling even more angry, rather than relieved.

We would do better to put our energy and emotion into expressing a different kind of emotion. **"Those who do loving acts usually feel...more love."** (Campolo.)

*There's a story about an Austrian Psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl (**PICTURE**) who was imprisoned in one of Hitler's concentration camps. He was stripped of all of his dignity, abused and tortured. He recalls that many in the concentration camps died not because they were placed in gas chambers but because they were eaten up with rage against their oppressors. Nobody overtly killed them; they gave up living. Frankl claims he found a different in the words of Jesus **"If anyone slaps you on the right cheek turn to them the other cheek also. If a Roman soldier forces you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two."** So when Frankl's captors asked him to*

*scrub the latrines with a toothbrush, he would do it twice. Once because he had to. A second time because he chose to.*

*“By his actions he turned the situation in which he was to be humiliated by his enemies and instead used it as an opportunity to willingly serve. By redefining his situation, he learned, through Jesus words, that he could overcome anger and hatred of his oppressors. (Campolo)*

A life turned over to Jesus, soon starts to live like his...it starts to look like this (**PIC OF THE CROSS**).

I just wonder how our world would look differently if there was a group of people who took Jesus words seriously about the heart condition of anger that we are suffering from. If there was a little group of people who on social media, and in their work places, with friends, and in their homes, with their spouses and with their kids, and in political conversations and at board meetings...started handling their anger differently from the way the world does.

What would that look like? How would that impact the world?

Truth is that little group should exist. It's the church. It's you and me...we have a lot of work to do in this area. So let's just close by praying and asking Jesus to help us with our angry hearts.