

Can you identify with any of these phrases? “I’m as mad as wet hen.” “I’m as mad as wet hornet.” “I am fixing to blow a fuse.” “I’m fixing to blow a gasket.” “I’m about to have a conniption.” “I’m about to have a cow.” “I’m about to flip my wig.” “I’m all bent out of shape.” “I’m about to hit the roof.” “I’m about to skin you alive.” “I’ve got a bone to pick with you.” “That makes my blood boil.” “I’m fixing to see red.” “That makes me burn with a low blue flame.” If you can, then I don’t have to try hard to apply the Word of God to your life today, do I? You already know what I’m going to deal with before I utter another word from this pulpit. That’s correct. I’m talking about that emotion that can make us go from David Banner to the Incredible Hulk at the snap of a finger. And that emotion that makes you go from the bull in the pasture to the one in the China shop in the drop of hat. You know it as anger. I know it as “burning with a low blue flame” and “seeing red.” “The low blue flame” comes as natural to us as breathing. That’s why the Bible has much to say to us about it. If I had a dollar for every time my grandmother hit me with Ephesians 4:26 in the King’s English, “let not the sun go down upon your wrath,” I’d be a wealthy, wealthy man. If I had gained an ounce of wisdom every time the Lord led an angry Derrick to Ecclesiastes 7:9, “do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools,” then I’d be a wise, wise man. And if I had remembered Proverbs 15:1 while in the middle of a confrontation, “a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger,” then I would be stronger, stronger man. But the fact of the matter is this: we may know anger comes as natural to us as breathing. But what we don’t often do a good job of is handling our anger in a manner that is befitting of someone who calls Jesus Christ “Lord.” We surely know how to be angry for the wrong reasons. And we surely know how to deal with our anger in the wrong way. But what we don’t know is how to be angry for the right reasons. And deal with our anger in the right way.

In the passage before us today in the Gospel of Mark, you are going to see two approaches to anger. One approach would eventually turn deadly. And the other approach to anger was the impetuous for a healing. One approach to anger comes to us courtesy of the deeply religious people who became so offended by Jesus they “saw red” and started plotting to kill him. And the other approach to anger comes to us courtesy of Jesus himself, who became angry for the right reasons and used that anger in a constructive way to bring healing to a man with a shriveled hand. Here’s why this message is a very important one for you to listen to this morning: We have a choice to make every time anger knocks on our door and takes up residence in the tabernacle of our souls. We can either (a) seethe in it and let it mobilize our hands and feet to behave and do things in a manner that is destructive to others and to ourselves. Or we can (b) examine those things in our lives that make us angry and channel appropriate anger in a constructive and Christlike way that can be the impetuous for bringing life to others, just like Jesus did for the man in church on the Sabbath with a shriveled hand. So today, people of God, I want to show you from the Gospel of Mark (1) when anger becomes sinful and deadly and (2) when it becomes valid and constructive. Now, we face a lot of things in our lives that make our blood boil, and our souls burn with a low blue flame. And when that barges into our lives and take up residence, it is paramount for the people of God to deal with it in a constructive way. To learn how to that, please turn with me to Mark 3:1-6.

Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. ² Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. ³ Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” ⁴ Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. ⁵ He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. ⁶ Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

When Anger is Sinful and Deadly:

1. When it goes hunting (1-2)

- **First Time at a Rodeo:** (1) The first time I went to a rodeo, I was in my mid-twenties. (2) It was an experience I’ll never forget because the location was Angola Maximum Security State Prison in Louisiana. (3) I guess they figured that the best way to reform criminals is to let them ride bulls. (4) I looked on one side and saw a bunch of big ole boys getting ready to ride a bull against their better judgment. (5) On the other side, I saw ole Red Rock himself in the warm-up pen getting loose. He was huffing, puffing, rubbing his foot in the dirt getting ready for a fight even though the bull riding part of the rodeo hadn’t even happened yet.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Rage inside that makes its way outside looking for a battle like a bull at Angola prison is the surest path to destructive behavior, both towards yourself and others. Be very careful with internal rage for it often goes looking for trouble, just like those who raged against Jesus in the synagogue
- **Main Textual Emphasis: The “if” Clause:** (1) The most theologically significant word in verses 1-2 isn’t Sabbath or Synagogue. It’s the word “if.” It introduces a conditional clause that hasn’t even happened or might not happen: one about whether Jesus would heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. (2). These individuals had eyes and ears on the ground because they knew this man would be in the synagogue (and that Jesus would too). So, they showed up for a showdown. (3) Not “what is the Lord going to speak to me about today?” But a showdown, like a bull at Angola prison looking for a fight. (4) Mark is making the point that they couldn’t see the goodness of God – and what he was about to do – because they came for a showdown. One that had not even happened, yet.
- **App:** Anger isn’t a sin. Handling it wrongly is. And when we are so overcome by indignation, it clouds our ability to act, to see, and to anticipate the mercies God demonstrates to all of us each day. That’s what happens when our anger gets channeled like a bull’s.

2. When it goes recruiting (6)

- **Aaron Judge and Interrupting Football on Saturdays:** (1) For the last two weekends, college football fans in the USA have been united in their frustration at ESPN, CBS, and ABC. (2) It's not often that Florida, Florida State, and Miami fans are united in anything, but they were these last two Saturdays. (3) It's not often that Georgia, Alabama, Clemson, and Auburn fans are united in anything. But they were the last two Saturdays. (4) Here's why: at the height of many football games, the Illuminati in charge of football broadcasts figured it would be a good idea to break into the games to show everyone Aaron Judge's at bat to break the home run record. (5) It's the only time in history of football that all fans have united in their disgust of whoever made that decision. If they wanted to watch Aaron Judge, they would have turned the channel.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The surest sign of anger that is approaching sinful is when, in a fit of hostility and rage, you start recruiting like-minded hostile people to your cause. Such a mentality is not only sinful and dangerous, but it also unites destructive people to destructive.
- **Main Textual Emphasis: The Pharisees and the Herodians:** (1) When you see "Pharisee," "Sadducee," "Herodians," etc. in the New Testament, think about all the different Protestant Denominations. Some get along. Others don't. Some have similar ways of thinking. Others don't. (2) The Pharisees and Herodians were two groups of Jews who had nothing in common. Nothing. The Pharisees were conservative and heeded the whole Counsel of the Word of God (OT). They resented the Romans, and they resented Herod the Great because they saw him as a Roman stooge who happened to be Jewish. On the other hand, the Herodians held all the political power in Israel because they supported Herod Antipas and were at His service. (3) But something happens here that is scary to think about: The Pharisees and Herodians join forces. They are both united in their hatred and anger of Jesus. That's the only thing they had in common. And that was good enough.
- **App:** The deadliest form of anger is the one that begins recruiting to a cause. When enemies unite under the common bond of animosity and anger, the worst qualities of mankind are about to be demonstrated. And it all starts with the low blue flame of seeing red.

When Anger is Valid and Constructive:

1. When it is rooted in the love of God (3-4)

- **Taking a Bow:** (1) If you have noticed anything about me in the last several years, you've noticed that I am uncomfortable with public compliment or praise. (2) I never thought it was that obvious, but I'm learning that it is to nearly everyone in the church but me. (3) But the reason why I'm like that is very simple and comes from real experiences. I've seen many ministers applauded after a sermon or after singing a song and respond to that applause by taking an actual bow. (4) And when that happens, I see red quickly. Why? Ministers don't receive bows. We are the lead bowers that are supposed to show others how to bow before the One to Whom all the Glory belongs: Jesus.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Righteous indignation is appropriate when you witness the glory of God being stolen through the hard heartedness who like to bow in God's place. It certainly was for Jesus. But don't confuse it with self-righteous indignation. They aren't the same.
- **Main Textual Emphasis: The Right View of God and Sabbath Met with Silence by God's "People:"** – (1) The Pharisees and Herodians want to take the battle to Jesus. But Jesus takes the battle to them. (2) The Sabbath Laws allowed healing/work on the Sabbath when someone's life was at stake. (3) Jesus confronts them with this, and they know the answer. But they do not respond. (2) Anger from both parties is the result. (3) For these groups it was self-righteous indignation. They were mad that Jesus called their character and interpretation into question. (3) For Jesus, it was righteous indignation. He was angry at their hard heart because they refused to see that the Sabbath was designed for restful healing. It was designed for the man with the shriveled hand, and they refused to acknowledge it.
- **App:** Be careful with religious indignation. Jesus often greeted allegations of blasphemy with silence. He wasn't offended with the insults. We usually are, especially when we perceive ourselves to be very "righteous." But here righteous indignation was the right response because the Father's character as a healer was the primary issue.

2. When it is rooted in the love of neighbor (5)

- **William Booth:** (1) In England there lived a clergyman in the 19th century whose own parishioners really wondered if he had the emotional temperament to be a minister in the first place. (2) When he was young, he was combative with his parents. When he was older, he was combative with anyone and everyone in the church. (3) As a matter of fact, he was so combative that he abandoned traditional church altogether because he couldn't get along with leadership. (4) As it turned out, he had a valid reason for being angry. It was this: he noticed the church doing absolutely nothing for the poor, the hungry and the destitute that wandered the streets of England. (5) But instead of using his anger destructively, he let it motivate him. He began to preach the Gospel to thieves, prostitutes, gamblers, and drunkards. And when those individuals converted, he gave them a mission: singing in the streets with a brass band. And the Salvation Army Brass Band was born. (6) His name was William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army.
- **Main Textual Emphasis: What Makes Jesus Angry:** (1) Search the Gospels and you'll find that what makes Jesus angry is when the supposed "people of God" block others from experiencing his glory. (2) That's why he cleansed the temple: the money changers blocked people from entering worship, especially those who traveled from far places (i.e., Ethiopian eunuch); (3) And here with the man with a shriveled hand.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Anger that's rooted in genuine love for neighbor can be constructive and productive when you channel it in a constructive way to meet a need that other Christians know – but don't care – about. Jesus modeled using anger in a constructive way right here. We must also.
- **App:** The People of God block people from seeing God's glory all the time. But the response isn't raging like a bull. It's motivation to do something to so they can see Jesus. Let that be our heart's cry today also. Praise be to God.