

The beautiful life series

Why do we hate each other so much?

(A beautiful life - Title Slide)

We are currently in our beautiful life series, where in the first week, we looked at the beautiful attitudes, last week we looked at the power of salt and light, our influence for God in the world, and today we are looking at the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 5. Please follow along with me in **Matthew 5** from verse 21;

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.

Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

I have called today’s message; “Why do we hate each other so much?”

Anger and hate is not a new problem. It has been around since the fall of mankind. In Genesis chapter 4, Cain, the son of Adam & Eve, allowed anger to

rise in his heart toward his brother Abel, and he released all that uncontrolled jealousy and hatred, by killing Abel.

While it is by no means new thing, anger and hate are more prevalent than ever before in our world today. There just seems to be so much hate toward one another.

Just think about the world around us politically, socially, think about the social media, all the angry people online, the cancel culture, all this seems to have made the anger trend worse.

And I wish I could say that us as Christians were exempt from getting on the anger train, but we're not, it would appear in fact that a lot of Christians are fuelling it. At times, I feel the spirit of anger rising up in me too.

So what is going on? How did we end up this way? Is there anything you and I can do about it?

Here with me today, I've got a blood pressure machine.

(Pull out blood pressure machine)

I hope you don't mind. I'm going to stick it on and do a quick test.

As many of you will know - High Blood Pressure, is something that a lot of people battle with, and it is known as the secret killer. Why? Because you don't see it.

You might look all good on the outside - but deep inside - you could be like a ticking time bomb.

Anger is a bit like that. You can't always see it, but it is like a silent killer. It could be killing you in the inside and you may not even know it.

Well, in the sermon on the mount, I find it really interesting that Jesus deals with the issue of anger. If you remember, Jesus started this teaching by going through the Beautiful Attitudes – the attitudes that we should try to develop as his followers, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Now Jesus' teaching moves to the extreme – murder. Killing someone is a prime example of anger that is completely out of control and mismanaged. And we would all go - yes! This is so wrong. But then Jesus takes it to a deeper level, and he says, "Just like murder is wrong, even harbouring anger in your heart is also wrong." And he calls us as his followers to live to a higher Kingdom Standard, that is counter-culture, and different to those in the world around us.

You see, the law given to Israel very clearly said “Do not Murder.” And part of the Pharisees job in the New Testament time, was to help people to understand the Law of Moses and explain in detail how to live it out.

The problem however, was not in their understanding the Law, but in their understanding of the heart of the Law.

A culture had developed in Jesus’s time, of examining the Law, by basically looking for the minimum they could do to still keep the law. And so they said; “You are ok as long as you don’t kill the person!”

Imagine that in our church family - you can hate someone as much as you want to, as long as you don’t kill them! I think you see the point. That’s not okay.

It’s not always about the action, but it is also about the heart and the intention.

So first point today, and we need to start here;

- **Not all anger is bad (Eph 4:26)**

God’s has a righteous anger towards sin. That’s not bad. Jesus himself got angry in the temple towards those who were preventing Gentiles from worshipping, and they were ripping people off by trying to sell overpriced animals to sacrifice. Jesus had a righteous anger about that. That’s not bad.

So if you don’t get angry when you hear about corruption, or gender based violence, or rape, or child trafficking, there is something not quite right with your ethics and emotions. Not all anger is bad.

The fact is, that anger is a real emotion, and God has created us with a full range of emotions. Emotions themselves are not bad, but it is how we handle those emotions that is really important.

Not all anger is not a sin, but it can quickly lead to sin. Ephesians 4 says;

"In your anger do not sin." (Ephesians 4:26)

This verse implies, that there is a way to become angry and not to sin. Is all anger sin? No! God gets angry. But there are right ways to get angry and there are wrong ways. There are appropriate ways to get angry and there are inappropriate ways. Obviously, you need to learn to express your anger in appropriate ways because nothing ruins a relationship quicker than anger.

Now hear me here, although not all anger is bad, let’s face it, for the most part, I’m pretty sure that most of our anger is not coming from a place of

righteousness- more often it is from a place of hurt, jealousy, embarrassment or frustration.

The writer Mark Twain said:

“Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.”

Our mission here at King of Kings is to love God, love people, and to make disciples. In order to achieve our mission, our purpose, anger is not going to help us get there. Not all anger is bad - but we are more about love, than we are about anger.

Jesus said in **John 13**;

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

It’s amazing to think, that according to Jesus, the depth of our love for one another, becomes the most likely way for a lost person to be saved, not the depth of our anger for all that is wrong around us. And here’s the thing about real love;

- **Love is not easily angered (1 Cor 13:5)**

In the famous passage on love in 1 Corinthians 13, we are taught that **“Love is not easily angered.”**

Anger is a legitimate emotion, but I want you to notice that the bible does not say; “Love is never angered.” But, **“Love is not easily angered.”** Or as the King James version puts it, **“It is not easily provoked.”**

You see, it’s easy to not get angry when everything is going your way. But what happens when you get offended? What happens when you get provoked? What happens when you get cut off? What happens when the right buttons get pushed? Am I poking the bear too much? Love is not easily angered.

Here’s the thing, we are all different, and we all experience anger to some degree in our lives. People vary in how easily they get angry and how they express it.

Styles of anger range from Blamers who deal with their anger by pointing their finger and finding fault. Stuffers suppress their anger and avoid dealing with it. Withdrawers who find a quiet place to remove themselves from the frustration. Trianglers who love to draw other people into their drama. And Exploders.

Well, I'm sure you all know one of those! They are like a bomb going off when triggered. We won't ask you to reveal which style you or your spouse is today!

And although there is a funny side to it - let's remember that anger is serious. Just like a volcano explodes, there is always damage that is left behind. Anger has consequences;

- **Anger comes at a cost (Mat 5:22)**

You may think no harm was done, but there is often a price tag attached to anger. You say and do things you can't take back. You hurt the ones you love, and these things do not go unnoticed by God.

Jesus points out in Matthew 5, that just like murder has consequences, so does anger. He said;

“I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” (Matthew 5:22)

People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing. We will be judged before God on how we deal with other people. How we speak to people, and how we treat people. One day, we will have to stand before God and give an account, and that could be a pretty horrible situation for most of us. Thank the Lord for his grace that forgives my mess ups!

This passage shares an example of the harsh insults people can speak in anger. Biblical scholars say that the word ‘Raca’ is an Aramaic word meaning ‘empty headed.’ Scholars are unsure of how bad an insult it was. While ‘More’ in the Greek is pretty clearly translated ‘fool.’

We can have fun working out English equivalents, but then we would probably be missing the point – insulting anyone out of anger is not ok with God.

Anger is dangerous. Take away the letter “D” from the word ‘danger’ and what do you get? = anger. When you are angry, you are on dangerous ground.

If the heat and fire of anger is living in you, the smoke it generates will cloud your mind, defile your conscience, and you will start thinking and doing dumb things.

So, what is Jesus' top anger management tip? When anger comes, deal with it immediately;

- **Deal with your anger quickly (Mat 5:23-25)**

Anger gets in the way of relationships, and it also gets in the way of worship to God, so deal with it quickly. Don't let your issues drag out and be played out to the last consequence – nip it in the bud.

Jesus said; **“Settle matters quickly”**

Nowhere here does Jesus say that you must never be angry, but rather that you should deal with your anger quickly. Don't pretend that all is ok. Settle it quickly.

Most of us are familiar with Ephesians 4 which says;

“Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.” (Eph 4:26)

Just like a wound that is not properly treated can quickly lead to infection, so too, anger that is not dealt with quickly, can lead to sin.

For this reason God commands us not to carry anger into the next day. We deal with our anger before we go to bed. If you get angry just before you go to bed - stay up till it is sorted. Because if we allow our anger to consume us, we will fall into a pattern of sin.

Jesus dealt with a so many people that could have made him angry. So how did Jesus deal them – here are some more practical anger management tips from Jesus' life;

- **Know when you need to withdraw (Mat 16:4)**

Time and time again the Pharisees came at Jesus and tried to get him to trip up, it must have been so frustrating. Sometimes Jesus dealt with them then and there, and at other times, his tactic was to just walk away!

In Matthew 16 some Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and were testing him with questions and asking for signs from heaven, and once it got a bit too heated, our bibles just say;

“Jesus then left them and went away.” (Matthew 16:4)

There are times, when you just need to walk away. I'm not talking about sulking here. Which some people are really bad at. Sulking is cowardly. But there are times in my life when I wish I could have just walked away sooner - before I said or did something I regretted.

Jesus knew when it was wise to walk away, and withdraw, and we need to learn from him. But it is more than just withdrawing at times, you also need to;

- **Find healthy ways to vent (Prov 29:11)**

Some people bottle it all up - and then the smallest thing happens - and Kaboom! I don't want any of you guys going Kaboom. You've got to learn to vent your frustration in healthy ways.

In Proverbs 29 it says;

"A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man holds it in check." (Prov 29:11, HCSB)

I have learnt, that one of the best ways for a me to release a lot of pent up frustration, and testosterone, is to do some form of exercise. Blow off some steam. Go for a run. Do a workout.

Now each of us are different, and that may not be your thing, but each of us need to find ways that help us to chill out when we find ourselves getting a little hot under the collar.

So go for a walk on the beach. Take up gardening. Work it out.

Maybe you need to download the latest version of the 'angry birds' app. Everyone loves shooting those angry little birds to break stuff! It's very therapeutic, and no one gets hurt!

Here is another practical suggestion;

- **Stop. Pray. Think (John 8:1-11)**

On one occasion, the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus into contradicting the law and his message of love, by bringing him a woman caught in adultery. They asked him if they could stone her according to the law of Moses.

Rather than reacting in anger at their attempts to get him, do you remember how he responded?

Jesus paused for a long silence, and then with great wisdom, he affirmed law and grace, by inviting whoever was without sin, to throw the first stone.

As a result, they all walked away confronted by their sins, and Jesus released the woman.

Angry people are not always wise. They just react. So before you do anything. Stop. Pause. Pray. Think. Process things first. Don't just react. Think before you rush in and do something stupid in your anger.

Processing things privately can be as simple as praying about it, and just waiting 24 hours before you do a thing. Often that's enough. Sometimes you might need to talk to a Christian friend. Get some advice from a Godly

counsellor. But trust me, reacting is always a bad idea, and the world won't end if they don't get your immediate opinion.

That Email, that WhatsApp, Facebook, or Instagram can wait a day or two. No one will die if you don't respond right away. But they might just die if you try and assassinate them in the heat of the moment!

And most often, if you sleep on it, and pray about it, or even discuss it with another person, you won't feel the same way about whatever was making you so mad.

Here is Proverbs 29 again from another version;

**"A rebel shouts in anger; but a wise man holds his temper in and cools it."
(Proverbs 29:11, The Living Bible)**

You could say, that a wise person knows how to chill out. Some of us, seriously need to chill out.

I came across this quote recently;

***"You cannot see your reflection in boiling water. Similarly, you cannot see the truth in a state of anger. When the waters calm, clarity comes."
(Unknown)***

So how do you keep your self "under control?" I know for me, I need to take some time out. I need to exercise. When you begin to feel the pressure build, take time out.

What is the best ways of correcting a child? Give them a time out session! We could all follow that advice at times.

When you don't stop and think, you will almost always do the wrong thing. It was Thomas Jefferson who said;

"When you get angry, count to ten. When you are really angry, count to a hundred."

That is good advice. Here is more;

- **Speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15)**

Both truth and love are important. Some people major on the truth - but they are just angry people.

Jonah in the Old Testament was an angry preacher. When God called him to go to the city of Ninevah, he got angry. He was hoping that God would destroy the city, and destroy all of the people of Ninevah. He felt they were wicked and deserved judgment.

Perhaps you feel like Jonah today, and you are angry. Don't forget that God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. So when you speak; Ephesians 4 says;

**“Speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ”
(Eph 4:15, NLT)**

While we are on this. I want to talk a bit about behaviour on social media. Some people behave like angels face to face, but they become monsters on social media.

As Christ followers, you and I don't have the luxury of creating a fake online profile and behaving badly in that world. We need to be ambassadors for Christ everywhere we go, even online.

It is crazy how aggressive people can be online. Do you know why? Because they are feel like they are anonymous and can hide behind their avatar.

Carey Nieuwhoff says;

People say and do things online they aren't comfortable doing in real life. Not only do you try to manicure your image so you look better than you do, but unless you work hard at it, you're more naturally aggressive, more divisive and more hostile than you are person to person.

The question is why? The answer? Because you're kind of anonymous. Even if you use a real profile pic and your user name isn't something like truthtroll82317, you still don't feel the closeness you do in real life.

Distance between people desensitizes people. Generals have known this for millennia. That's why soldiers wear uniforms and wear war paint. It not only identifies you, but it disguises your humanity. It's easier to shoot you when I can't see you.

But before you judge soldiers, think of how you behave in your car. Chance are, you're naturally more aggressive there too - Every wonder why? Because you're in an armoured vehicle. You don't see the guy bothering you as a person. You see him as a problem. So you get way more aggressive.

Think about it. Even in the supermarket, you're ruder when you have a shopping cart in your hands than when you don't. The same dynamic is at work in social media and our life online.

So what do we do friends?

We allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. We will make mistakes, sure we will, I do, but more and more, we grow in Christlikeness.

We allow the Word, and the Spirit to change us. To soften our hearts. We see our whole lives, every part, as a life surrendered to the Lord.

We keep a tight reign over our thoughts, our words, and our actions, because we want to live a beautiful life blessed by Jesus.

Before we react. We stop. We pray. We think. We run everything we can through a 'helpful filter.' We ask, is this helpful if its not constructive—don't do it! Don't say it! Don't write it! Don't send it!

Some of us need a helpful filter - Amen!

Let's start to wind this up;

- **Examine yourself before God (Ps 139 / Gen 4)**

Go with me on this if you can - use your imagination. If Dr Jesus came to visit you today, to check your blood pressure, or rather, think of it as your anger pressure, and we all had to take an anger pressure test.

What would it reveal about your heart?

Would you be in the green zone - relaxed, peaceful, joyful, content?

Or would you be in the orange zone - tense, worked up, anxious?

Or, might you be in the red zone - angry, hateful, bitter?

Psalms 139 is like a blood pressure test. It encourages us to examine ourselves before God;

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

If someone has hurt you, forgive.

If you have sinned in your anger, repent.

God knows your heart - but do you?

Examine it before the Lord.

What are your anxious thoughts?

Are there any offensive ways in you?

Are you walking in the way of Jesus, the way of love - or are you way off track in anger land?

When I think right back to Cain, in Genesis chapter 4, God asked him a simple question.

“Why are you angry?” (Gen 4:6)

And it’s a question I would like to ask you today. “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

Have you examined your anger before God? What is amplifying it? What is fuelling it? You see, it’s not just about anger management. You need to know why your anger is in the air, so you can filter it out of your life.

Anger is never the root problem. It is a symptom or a warning light on the dashboard. There is obviously something wrong deeper inside the engine of your life.

Anger is a symptom telling you that something is happening. Maybe there is hurt, maybe there is fear, maybe there is frustration.

When you are angry, you need to figure out what is causing it. You need to examine your heart before God, and you need to sort it out.

And just like the Lord says to Cain in Genesis 4 – “Cain, be careful.” If you’re in the orange or the red zone. You’ve got to be careful.

So let the Holy Spirit check you out today. And let Jesus bring healing to your heart. Amen.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank you for the example of Jesus, and the teaching of your word that brings life. Thank you for showing us the way to a blessed beautiful life. Anger will poison that.

Please would you examine our hearts today, through and conscience and the Holy Spirit, and check us out. If there is anger. Frustration. Jealousy. Bitterness. We know that you are not going to say everything is fine, because it’s not.

Thank you for reminding us today that anger is dangerous. Anger has a cost. We might be miles away from murder, but as Jesus has shown us, it is not a long drive from anger to murder. And just like those who murder will be subject to judgment, so too will those who are angry be subject to judgment.

Help us to deal with anger and hatred. Help us to repent. Help us to forgive. Help us to be quick to listen, slow to become angry, and to live the righteous life that you desire.

We are reminded, that as Jesus was crucified on the cross for our sin, he had every right to be angry, yet he chose to forgive.

Please would you forgive me, please would you forgive us, when we have allowed anger to lead us to commit sin. Forgive us for hurting one another. Forgive us for disappointing you.

And thank you for your work on the cross. Thank you that your love and sacrifice - covers our sin. Help us to walk in your love. Amen.

Footnotes:

Credit to Carey Nieuwhof:

[Why Do We Hate Each Other So Much? \(5 Reasons Anger Is the New Epidemic\) - CareyNieuwhof.com](https://www.careynieuwhof.com/why-do-we-hate-each-other-so-much-5-reasons-anger-is-the-new-epidemic/)