

Coastal Community Church Vision

Hope beyond our brokenness

Trust in our Risen Savior

Restoration for our city, nation, and world

Today... I choose to be changed by Jesus, I choose to seek Jesus first, and I choose to join Jesus in His resurrection work.

Ear Tug. Ask Permission

We are back in the book of Ephesians. We left off in chapter 4, where I talked about overcoming anger. And today we're going to pick right back up in chapter 4, going over the same verses again and talking about overcoming anger...again. There was just too much to say about this passage for me to only preach it once. So can I have permission to speak to your heart of hearts about your anger? Can I have permission to speak to your heart about how you respond to anger? Can I show you the heart of our Heavenly Father? Then let us **Pray**

So...last time we talked about anger I gave us some definitions and I want to remind you what anger is and what anger isn't. Anger is an emotion given to us by God. God gets angry, but not in the way you probably think. Anger was created by God to move us to protect. In God's design, anger is dangerous and harmful to evil. Anger is the energy behind us saying 'Stop that'...it's the rocket fuel that moves us

quickly to protect the innocent, defend those who are attacked, to protect that which is precious to us from being harmed or destroyed. So just to be clear...anger from God, righteous anger, is always against evil...it's never against a person. When we make people the problem rather than the problem the problem, we will use anger to harm others rather than using anger to stopping evil.

So Paul writes this passage, verses which are all connected together, to help us understand how to use anger. Paul first writes:

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

We spoke about this last time. Learning how to use anger the way God intended means we need to start speaking the truth to each other about how we feel. If you never tell the truth about how you feel, your anger will grow and grow and grow in size. What stays hidden in the darkness of unspoken feelings and unspoken hurts will turn into a decade eating monster. Paul wants us to speak the truth to each other. We are all connected, just like our own body. Can you imagine what would happen if your arm was broken and you never acknowledged it... you never dealt with it...you just gritted your teeth through the pain and tried to use your arm anyways? That's crazy, right? When people asked how you are....you just said 'I'm fine'. Liar. No, that's not helpful at all.

Speaking the truth to each other is an invitation for healing to happen... keeping silent only allows the hurt to grow. And when that hurt turns into a monster in the silent darkness, the damage done by not speaking will be greater than the wound that created the hurt in the first place. Remember, don't cover up your feelings like a cat in a kitty litter box. Speak. Talk. Connect.

Our emotions are the exhaust system of our soul. Our emotions, by God's design, are meant to be spoken. When we are hurt, sad, anxious, joyful, full of love...when we angry...we need designed to speak these emotions. When it comes to speaking anger, you don't have to yell. You don't have to scream. It's ok to have some heat in your voice. A really great tool to speak anger is called non-violent communication, seriously. And it always starts with describing an event with the words 'When you' and then it follows with how you feel. You can say 'When you speak to me that way...when you didn't do what you promised...when you made that choice...that hurt...I'm angry.' It's important to define what non-violent communication isn't. It's not insulting another person. It's not 'When you were a stupid butt face jerk...I was hurt.' Or 'Woah... who peed in your cheerios?' You actually have to describe what the person did as best you can without resorting to immature insults. Sharing your anger this way...."when you said this, when you did this,

when you didn't do this...I got hurt. I'm angry about that"...creates a space where the person you're confronting isn't immediately made defensive because you're lobbing insult grenades at them.

So, after we speak the truth to each other, then what? Paul continues: Ephesians 4:26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

Last time we talked about how sinning in our anger is making another pay. We want to make them pay by making them hurt the way we were hurt, by making them feel what we felt...that's the definition of hate. Hate is the choice to make another pay. Love is the choice to pay for another.

But that's not the only way we sin in our anger. We sin in our anger when we use our anger to control others. We get big in our anger. We raise our voices, slam our hands on the table, ball our fists up to threaten violence...and all that is designed to make the other person afraid. When we use our anger to make another person afraid, we're trying to control their behavior. God doesn't try to control your behavior by making you afraid. God woos you with love, extends mercy to pay for your failings, gives you grace you could never earn so you can try again. But God always honors your free will. Only the devil tries to control your behavior by making you afraid, ashamed, or filled with pride and power.

When we use anger to control people, we are literally doing the devil's job and he just sits back and laughs.

April and I were sharing in staff meeting about the dynamics in our marriage. April learned from her dad how to use anger to control others through fear. And as she used anger in our marriage, I was the one who was afraid. I didn't want April to explode in anger. So what did I do as she tried to control me? I tried to control her. And this is the awful flip side of what happens when you use anger to try to control others: they will try to control you. For two decades I said and did whatever I could to keep April from getting angry, to get her from angry to happy, to keep her at happy so shouldn't go to angry...I was trying to control her because she was trying to control me. How did that work out? Horrible. April would try to control me with her anger...and I didn't want to be controlled...no one does...so she would keep getting angry. And then I was trying to control her...and no one wants to be controlled...so guess what?...she would keep getting angry. I think this is the definition of insanity, right? If you hold onto your anger in the attempt to control another person, it never changes their heart. Your anger only changes your heart. You become the person who never wanted to be.

Thus Paul says **26 Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,27 and do not give the devil a foothold.** Paul using a phrase to help us, to encourage us, to command us: share your hurt, express your anger, but don't attempt to control the other person. Don't hold onto your anger...share it and in the sharing, let it go. Don't let the devil gain a foothold into your life because you're so busy getting everyone to pray with you, to agree with you...that you're right, they are wrong, and you should be able to control their behavior. The urgency to deal with your anger before the sun sets isn't the command to fight like mad into the wee hours of the morning so that every fight is finished before bed. Sometimes you need to take a break and agree to have the conversation the next day when you're not so emotional and triggered out. The point is this: **Share your anger as an act of vulnerability...to heal the hurt...to make a way for repentance and love. Don't hold onto your anger so you can control the other person with how big and scary you can get...that's the devil's presence in your heart.**

Do you want to be done trying to control others with your anger?

Then pray with me.

Jesus, forgive me for using my anger to make others feel afraid. Forgive me for using my anger to control others. I'm trying to be god and that's

not even how You treat me. I reject my strategy of trying to control others with my anger now, in Jesus' name. I take back my humility. I take back my faith. Jesus, show me your way of love, vulnerability, and mercy.

Anger is designed by Jesus to stop the infection. Anger is the 'no' to the presence and destructive force of evil. You don't build anything with anger. You don't create anything with anger. If you use anger as a tool to try and build something...sure, you can control people for a moment. But all you'll do in the long run is steal the peace and joy and love God wants for your heart and then you'll be miserable around everyone you love. Thus Paul writes:

Ephesians 4:28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

Don't steal the joy God is giving you by holding onto your anger. And this is especially true for those of us who are being hurt by angry people. Paul follow up with the same idea, just phrased to illuminate another part of my heart:

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

When I'm hurt by angry people, I get people on my side. I rally the troops...see how bad I'm being treated?!?!? But I don't forgive. I don't let it go. Why? Because I don't want to admit I'm also the one holding onto my anger. I'm holding onto my anger about being mistreated...I'm building my case as to why I'm the victim. I'm holding onto my anger so I can somehow change the person who has hurt me with their angry. And strangely, confusingly, I don't want to admit I'm angry...I'll just say...I'm hurt. Why? Because I'm not the problem...THEY ARE THE PROBLEM. And then what? Now I'm attempting to control what others think about me...what others think about the person who hurt me by my anger. Sounds insane, right? It is. That's called power and control. It drives me crazy and makes me miserable to be around. I'm not building anything with this strategy. I'm not sharing anything useful with this strategy. I'm trying to steal...I'm trying to take...I'm trying to control how I feel and what other people around me think. Ask my family and friends what's the like...and they'll all tell you...it's hurtful and annoying. And what gets stolen from me? My joy. My love. My faith.

If you've been the one who has suffered from another's anger...and you've signed up for the job to try and control them...either by your manipulation or your apathy...you have made the choice over and over again to exchange your faith and joy and love for a meager and worthless

substitute: power and control. This is what I've done. And I'm all done with this strategy. So if you're willing, you can pray the prayer I've been praying a lot over these past months:

Jesus, I've been hurt by others trying to control me with their anger and my response has not been helpful. I reject and let go of my strategy to give up my faith and love and joy in order to control how others feel and behave. You don't ever try to control how I feel, Jesus.

I take back my faith that you can handle the problems and people I was never supposed to control. I take back my love and joy, for you love me and are overjoyed to have me as Your own. I surrender and release to You those who have hurt me.

As Paul ends this section, he brings it home with this amazing truth:

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Holding onto anger robs me of kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. And here's the amazing hope of the Gospel: Jesus, in response to me holding onto anger and resentment...Jesus forgives me. Again and again. Jesus never lets me go. Jesus never is fed up with me, angry with me...never bitter that I'm not better, never done with me

because I've failed or that I'm currently flailing about. Jesus loves me. Jesus wants me. Jesus chooses me, again and again. Jesus died on that cross to forgive you, to claim You as His own, not to wreck you with His anger when you failed to live into your true identity. Jesus isn't surprised by how you've coped with your life given the dysfunctional tools you learned from those around you. Jesus is always compassionate towards you, always faithful to you, never gives up on you, always redeeming you from the inside out.

So now what? It's time for us to let go of the pride that fuels our anger. Yes, I got hurt. Yes, you got hurt. So now what? Do I really want to hold onto all that anger and bitterness and poison the ones around me who are trying to love me? No. So what do I do? I forgive. I hand over the right to be the judge back to the True Judge: Jesus. Jesus sees my wounds. Jesus sees what went wrong. And since I'm desperate for his mercy and I also will trust Him with the justice I want. Jesus, You get to be the judge, not me. I let go of being the judge of everyone who hurt me...and how I judge my own soul. Jesus, I ask that you would be my judge again.

To forgive is to hand of the person who has hurt us to Jesus as well. We trust Jesus with whether or not they will change, the timing of how that takes place, their consequences, and how we can put our lives back

together. It's exhausting to manage another person, to constantly prosecute them...in forgiveness I give that person, and all that hurt, into the hands of Jesus, the only One who can heal my soul and the only One who can make things right. Jesus, I forgive them. I hand them over to you. I let go of the bitterness, the score keeping, the resentments. What they did was awful...but I don't want to hold all the hurt and anger anymore. It's all yours, Jesus. Jesus, I take back my love, kindness, and my compassion that I let go of in order to hold all this unforgiveness.

Wait, what am I asking you to do? What is Paul saying? This is the heart of why Jesus has come. Jesus is asking you to bear the weight of your wounds with you. You can let go of your anger because you're giving it to Jesus. What helium does in a balloon, that is what Jesus wants to do with the weight of your anger and wounds. Jesus is asking you to trust him with your anger towards yourself...let Jesus love you instead. Trust Him with your anger towards others and this broken world...Jesus is really good at redeeming people and situations. Jesus is asking you to draw close to him, in those tender broken places, and trust His justice, His healing, His timing...and be revived by His love for you. Our crucified Savior proved to you that he wants you at your worst. He's took the punishment we deserve so we can live forgiven and free. So turn to Him, now, and let Him bear this with you and for you. **Pray**