

Mark 2:23-3:6

June 3, '18

“WHAT ANGERS YOU?”

NEARLY 50 YEARS AGO – MAY 1ST, 1969 – ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS IN TELEVISION HISTORY TOOK PLACE.

IT CAME IN THE FORM OF A SPOKEN PRESENTATION OFFERED BY A PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER.

IT WASN'T A SERMON & IT WASN'T A SPEECH.

THAT PRESENTATION WAS AN APPEAL MADE BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION & WAS AN EFFORT TO DEFEND PUBLIC TELEVISION FROM FEDERAL BUDGET CUTS.

THE PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER MAKING THAT APPEAL WAS THE REVEREND FRED ROGERS, KNOWN TO ALL OF US AS MISTER ROGERS.

NEAR THE END OF HIS REMARKS, MR. ROGERS MADE A REQUEST

–
“COULD I TELL YOU THE WORDS OF ONE OF THE SONGS ON OUR PROGRAM WHICH I FEEL IS VERY IMPORTANT?

THIS HAS TO DO WITH THAT GOOD FEELING OF CONTROL WHICH I FEEL THAT CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW IS THERE.

AND IT STARTS OUT, ‘WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE MAD THAT YOU FEEL?’”

HE THEN RECITED ITS WORDS:

“WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE MAD THAT YOU FEEL? WHEN YOU FEEL SO MAD YOU COULD BITE.

WHEN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD SEEMS OH SO WRONG, AND NOTHING YOU DO SEEMS VERY RIGHT.

WHAT DO YOU DO? DO YOU PUNCH A BAG? DO YOU POUND SOME CLAY OR SOME DOUGH? DO YOU ROUND UP FRIENDS FOR A GAME OF TAG OR SEE HOW FAST YOU GO?

IT'S GREAT TO BE ABLE TO STOP, WHEN YOU'VE PLANNED THE THING THAT'S WRONG.

AND BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING ELSE INSTEAD — AND THINK THIS SONG —

“I CAN STOP WHEN I WANT TO. CAN STOP WHEN I WISH. CAN STOP, STOP, STOP ANYTIME ... AND WHAT A GOOD FEELING TO FEEL LIKE THIS! AND KNOW THAT THE FEELING IS REALLY MINE.

KNOW THAT THERE'S SOMETHING DEEP INSIDE THAT HELPS US BECOME WHAT WE CAN. FOR A GIRL CAN BE SOMEDAY A LADY, AND A BOY CAN BE SOMEDAY A MAN.”

AS FRED ROGERS FINISHED RECITING THE LYRICS OF THAT SONG, SENATOR JOHN PASTORE, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE, WAS VISIBLY MOVED.

HE'D NEVER SEEN MR. ROGERS IN PERSON AND HAD NEVER SEEN HIS TELEVISION SHOW.

SEN. PASTORE'S NEXT WORDS WOULD CHANGE TELEVISION HISTORY – “I THINK IT'S WONDERFUL! LOOKS LIKE YOU JUST EARNED YOUR 20 MILLION DOLLARS!” – THE AMOUNT NEEDED TO KEEP PUBLIC TELEVISION ALIVE.

I THINK IT'S INTERESTING THAT MR. ROGERS CHOSE A SONG ABOUT ANGER TO MAKE HIS CASE AND EVEN MORE INTERESTING THAT IT WORKED!

AT THE TIME, THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A THOUGHT THAT THE WORLD WAS IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE IN LEARNING HOW TO DEAL WITH ANGER.

MR. ROGERS, SEN. PASTORE, OTHERS WHO WERE PRESENT & THE TENS OF MILLIONS WHO HEARD ABOUT IT ON THE NIGHTLY NEWS MAY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT A MESSAGE ABOUT ANGER WAS JUST WHAT THE WORLD NEEDED TO HEAR.

NOW REMEMBER – THIS WAS MAY 1ST, 1969 – 49 YEARS AGO.

AS THEY SAY, “*THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME,*” BECAUSE I THINK WE WOULD ALL AGREE THAT WE ARE NOW LIVING IN A VERY ANGRY TIME – IN OUR NATION & IN OUR WORLD AS WELL.

THE QUESTION IS, “*WHAT ANGERS YOU?*”

THIS IS, PERHAPS, ONE OF THOSE TIMES WHEN THE REAL SERMON WILL BE – NOT THE ONE YOU HEAR THIS MORNING – BUT THE ONE YOU PREACH TO YOURSELF IN COMING DAYS & WEEKS.

ASK YOURSELF THE QUESTION – “WHAT ANGERS ME?” - AND, EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, OBSERVE YOUR BEHAVIOR TO DISCOVER YOUR ANSWER.

DON'T GET TRIPPED UP BY WHAT YOU WANT THE ANSWER TO BE.

BE HONEST ENOUGH WITH YOURSELF TO TRULY DISCOVER WHAT IT IS THAT ANGERS YOU.

AS WE LOOK AT THIS PASSAGE IN MARK, IT'S THE GOSPEL LECTIONARY READING SUGGESTED FOR TODAY.

IT SEEMS A BIT STRANGE TO CONNECT THE PASSAGE AT THE END OF CHAPTER TWO WITH THE ONE AT THE BEGINNING OF CHAPTER THREE.

THESE ARE TWO ENTIRELY SEPARATE EVENTS.

THERE IS ONE THING, HOWEVER, THAT UNITES THEM.

BOTH ARE FOCUSED ON THE SABBATH.

I HAVE SAID BEFORE THAT I THINK MORE OF SOCIETY'S PROBLEMS AND MORE OF OUR OWN PERSONAL PROBLEMS CAN BE TRACED TO OUR VIOLATION OF THE COMMANDMENT TO KEEP THE SABBATH THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE SOURCE.

I TRULY BELIEVE THAT & I THINK A STRONG CASE CAN BE MADE TO SUPPORT IT.

BUT THAT'S NOT WHERE I WANT TO GO TODAY.

IN FACT, I WANT US TO FOCUS ENTIRELY ON THE SECOND OF THESE TWO EVENTS – THE HEALING OF THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND, IN THE SYNAGOGUE, ON THE SABBATH.

IT'S HERE THAT WE FIND A CONNECTION TO WHERE WE BEGAN – WITH THOUGHTS ABOUT THE EMOTION OF ANGER.

IT'S HERE IN THIS STORY THAT WE FIND THE ONE AND ONLY TIME IN THE ENTIRE GOSPEL OF MARK WHERE JESUS IS SAID TO HAVE EXPERIENCED ANGER.

WHEN WE THINK OF JESUS BEING ANGRY, THOUGH, THIS ISN'T THE EVENT THAT COMES TO MIND, IS IT?

PROBABLY 99 OUT OF A HUNDRED PEOPLE, IF ASKED WHEN JESUS WAS ANGRY, WOULD SAY *“THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE - WHEN HE OVERTURNED THE TABLES OF THE MONEYCHANGERS.”*

THAT'S A STORY THAT APPEARS IN ALL 4 GOSPELS & YET, NOT ONCE, IN EITHER MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE OR JOHN IS JESUS REFERRED TO AS BEING “ANGRY.”

IT DOESN'T MEAN JESUS WASN'T ANGRY – JUST THAT THE GOSPELS DON'T HIGHLIGHT IT.

BUT IN THIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND, MARK TELLS US THAT JESUS EXPERIENCES ANGER.

LISTEN TO HOW EUGENE PETERSON TRANSLATES THIS IN “THE MESSAGE” –

“THEN HE SPOKE TO THE PEOPLE: ‘WHAT KIND OF ACTION SUITS THE SABBATH BEST? DOING GOOD OR DOING EVIL? HELPING PEOPLE OR LEAVING THEM HELPLESS?’

NO ONE SAID A WORD. HE LOOKED THEM IN THE EYE, ONE AFTER ANOTHER, ANGRY NOW, FURIOUS AT THEIR HARD-NOSED RELIGION.

HE SAID TO THE MAN, ‘HOLD OUT YOUR HAND.’ HE HELD IT OUT—IT WAS AS GOOD AS NEW!

THE PHARISEES GOT OUT AS FAST AS THEY COULD, SPUTTERING ABOUT HOW THEY WOULD JOIN FORCES WITH HEROD’S FOLLOWERS AND RUIN HIM.”

A MOVIE DIRECTOR WOULD HAVE A BLAST WITH THIS SCENE, WOULDN’T HE?

IT’S GARY COOPER IN “HIGH NOON” OR BRUCE WILLIS IN “DIE HARD” OR SIGOURNEY WEAVER IN “ALIENS.”

IT’S ONE SOLITARY SOUL STANDING FIRM IN THE FACE OF SEEMINGLY INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS & REFUSING TO BACK DOWN.

WHAT IS IT, THOUGH, THAT MADE JESUS ANGRY?

WHAT WAS IT HERE – IN THIS EVENT – THAT CAUSED MARK TO SAY FOR THE ONE & ONLY TIME IN HIS GOSPEL THAT JESUS WAS ANGRY?

PICTURE THE SCENE – JESUS IS IN THE TEMPLE.

HE’S STANDING IN THE HOUSE OF GOD & A MAN WITH AN AFFLICTION IS THERE.

THE PIOUS RELIGIOUS LEADERS ARE LOOKING ON, JUST WAITING FOR JESUS TO DO SOMETHING THAT WILL VIOLATE THEIR LAWS.

JESUS KNOWS IT, SO HE TAKES THE INITIATIVE.

HE ASKS THEM A QUESTION.

IT WOULD SEEM TO BE A SIMPLE QUESTION – A RHETORICAL QUESTION – A QUESTION THAT ANYONE WITH ANY BASIC LEVEL OF HUMAN KINDNESS & DECENCY WOULD EASILY BE ABLE & WILLING TO ANSWER.

JESUS ASKED - *“WHAT KIND OF ACTION SUITS THE SABBATH BEST? DOING GOOD OR DOING EVIL? HELPING PEOPLE OR LEAVING THEM HELPLESS?”*

NO ONE SAID A WORD.

AND I THINK THAT MAY HAVE BEEN WHAT DID IT.

I THINK THAT’S WHAT SENT JESUS OVER THE EDGE.

THAT’S WHAT BROUGHT ON HIS ANGER FOR THE ONE AND ONLY TIME IN MARK’S GOSPEL.

NOT ONE SINGLE PERSON WAS WILLING TO SPEAK UP AND SAY *“DOING GOOD IS BETTER THAN DOING EVIL. HELPING PEOPLE IS PREFERABLE TO LEAVING THEM HELPLESS.”*

HERE THEY WERE, STANDING IN THE VERY TEMPLE OF GOD, AND THEY COULDN’T BRING THEMSELVES TO MAKE A COMMITMENT TO LOVE OVER LAW.

THEIR RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT WAS A COMMITMENT TO RULES & REGULATIONS.

THEY WERE FAR MORE INTERESTED IN HOW MANY DIFFERENT WAYS THEY COULD EXCLUDE PEOPLE FROM THEIR FELLOWSHIP THAN THEY WERE IN DISCOVERING HOW TO OPEN DOORS OF INCLUSION.

THIS IS WHAT ANGERED JESUS.

STANDING IN FRONT OF HIM WAS A MAN WHO SERVED AS A SYMBOL OF ALL THOSE WHO HAD BEEN LEFT OUT – THOSE WHO HAD BEEN BANISHED, THOSE WHO HAD BEEN VICTIMIZED & OSTRACIZED.

WHAT MADE JESUS ANGRY IS THAT IT WASN'T SECULAR SOCIETY THAT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BANISHMENT, THE VICTIMIZATION & THE OSTRACISM.

IT WAS THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE OF FAITH WERE THE ONES WHO STOOD IN SELF-RIGHTEOUS CONDEMNATION OF ANYONE WHO DIDN'T MEASURE UP TO THEIR STANDARDS OF WHAT WAS ACCEPTABLE.

THIS IS WHAT MADE JESUS ANGRY IN THE TEMPLE THAT DAY. I THINK IT STILL MAKES JESUS ANGRY TODAY.

IN FACT, I THINK THERE'S A DOUBLE ANGER THAT JESUS EXPERIENCED WITH THIS EVENT.

HE WAS ANGRY AT THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS BIGOTRY OF THE RELIGIOUS ELITES & HE WAS EQUALLY ANGRY AT THE COWARDLY SILENCE OF THOSE WHO REFUSED TO SPEAK UP TO CONFRONT THE BIGOTS.

SO – BACK TO THE ORIGINAL QUESTION.

“WHAT MAKES *YOU* ANGRY?”

IF YOU'RE LIKE ME, YOU MIGHT HAVE TO ADMIT THAT IT'S SOMETHING MORE PERSONAL – SOME SORT OF AFFRONT TO YOUR OWN PERSONAL WELL-BEING.

I MUST CONFESS THAT, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, I GET ANGRY IF I FEEL I'VE BEEN MISTREATED OR IF I'VE BEEN OVERLOOKED OR IF MY DESIRES WEREN'T FOLLOWED.

MY ANGER TENDS TO BE ABOUT ME.

LOOK AGAIN AT THIS PASSAGE & THE END OF IT.

AS PETERSON TRANSLATES IT – “*THE PHARISEES GOT OUT AS FAST AS THEY COULD, SPUTTERING ABOUT HOW THEY WOULD JOIN FORCES WITH HEROD’S FOLLOWERS AND RUIN HIM.*”

JESUS CLEARLY KNEW THIS IS WHAT THE PHARISEES – THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS – WERE DOING.

THEY WERE OUT TO GET HIM.

BUT MARK DOESN’T SAY THIS ANGERED JESUS.

NO, THE ANGER OF JESUS WAS NEVER BROUGHT ABOUT BECAUSE OF AN INJUSTICE DONE TO *HIM*.

HE WAS ANGRY WHEN HE SAW INJUSTICE INFLICTED UPON OTHERS.

WHAT, I WONDER, MIGHT THIS SAY TO US TODAY?

AGAIN, “*THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME.*”

THOSE WHO FEEL THEY’VE BEEN BANISHED, VICTIMIZED & OSTRACIZED FEEL IT FAR MORE FROM THE CHURCH THAN THEY DO FROM SOCIETY.

THAT’S ONE PART OF WHAT MAKES JESUS ANGRY TODAY.

BUT THERE’S THAT SECOND PART OF HIS ANGER.

FAR TOO OFTEN, EVEN WHEN PEOPLE OF FAITH AREN’T RESPONSIBLE THEMSELVES FOR PEOPLE BEING LEFT OUT & LEFT BEHIND, THEIR VOICES AREN’T SPEAKING OUT IN OPPOSITION.

REMEMBER THE WORDS THAT IMMEDIATELY PRECEDED THOSE WHICH TOLD OF THE ANGER OF JESUS – “*NO ONE SAID A WORD.*”

I THINK JESUS WAS MOVED TO ANGER BY THOSE WHO WEREN’T.

IT TROUBLED HIM TO THINK THAT PEOPLE OF FAITH COULD LOOK ON IN SILENCE WHEN THEY SAW THE MISTREATMENT OF OTHERS.

I THINK THE MOST MOVING MOMENT OF THIS PASSAGE IS WHEN JESUS FEELS THAT EMOTION OF ANGER AND GRIEF.

LOOK AT THE WAY HE RESPONDS.

“HE LOOKED AROUND AT THEM” MARK SAYS AND YOU CAN EASILY ENVISION WHAT THAT LOOK CONVEYED.

BUT THEN HE LOOKED AT THE MAN & SAID, “*STRETCH OUT YOUR HAND.*”

YOU SEE, THE ANGER OF JESUS WASN'T CHANNELED INTO WORDS OF CONDEMNATION.

HE DIDN'T YELL & SCREAM & STOMP HIS FEET.

NO – THE WAY JESUS RELEASED HIS ANGER WAS IN A DEED OF LOVE & COMPASSION.

JESUS LOOKED AROUND AT THE RELIGIOUS FOLKS WHO WANTED TO DO ANYTHING IN THEIR POWER TO EXCLUDE PEOPLE FROM THEIR FELLOWSHIP.

HE THEN LOOKED AT THE MAN WHO STOOD BEFORE HIM AND DEFIANTLY SAID, “*STRETCH OUT YOUR HAND.*”

IN UTTERING THOSE WORDS, JESUS WAS RISKING HIS LIFE.

I WONDER HOW MANY OF US ARE ANGRY ENOUGH TO OFFER AN ACT OF DEFIANCE TO THE WORLD.

I WONDER HOW MANY OF US ARE WILLING TO RISK ANYTHING AT ALL TO DEFEND THOSE WHO RELIGIOUS & POLITICAL AUTHORITIES WOULD LIKE TO EXCLUDE.

JESUS HAS GIVEN US A PERFECT LESSON ON “ANGER MANAGEMENT” – WHAT IT IS THAT SHOULD CAUSE US TO BE ANGRY & HOW TO DEAL WITH IT.

MR. ROGERS PROVED THAT HE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THE LESSON OF JESUS WHEN HE SAID, “*KNOW THAT THERE’S SOMETHING DEEP INSIDE THAT HELPS US BECOME WHAT WE CAN. FOR A GIRL CAN BE SOMEDAY A LADY, AND A BOY CAN BE SOMEDAY A MAN.*”

I WONDER WHAT SERMON YOU’LL BE PREACHING TO YOURSELF IN THE COMING WEEK ABOUT YOUR OWN ANGER – WHAT CAUSES IT & HOW YOU DEAL WITH IT. AMEN.

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