

An angry young man  
What makes you angry?

We all get angry. It's very normal.

Last week I read about Richard Keedwell who spent £30,000 trying to overturn an unjust speeding fine of £100. He was angry. He wanted justice.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hereford-worcester-49641063>

Two or three years ago, Katherine or I (and it wasn't me!) drove out from the vicarage in Nottingham and as the car approached the crossroads drove into the bus lane. Just the last bit of it before it disappears. It IS legal to drive in the bus lane, but only after 9:00am and it was 8:50am or something like that.

The camera flashed, it was a fair cop.

We got a letter saying that because we hadn't responded to the first letter, our fine was now £120. But I hadn't had a first letter. If I'd had a letter, I would have paid the fine because there was no doubt about the offence. So I got in touch with them.

I agreed there has been an offence, I agreed I should pay a fine, but I didn't get the first letter.

I then discovered that to prove I didn't get the first letter would cost MORE than the £120 fine. So I paid the fine.

**BUT I'M STILL ANGRY ABOUT IT!!!!**

I get angry about people in positions of authority taking advantage of others. It might be bullying, or abuse, or oppression but it's wrong.

I get angry when the freedom given and won for us by Christ is manipulated and restricted and quashed. Lots of things can make me angry.

And the bible is full of people who get angry, not least, Jesus.

Terry did a terrific introduction for us last week to our series on Moses (it's on-line if you want to read it) and we now know Moses grew up in luxury in the Pharaoh's palace. His Mother was his nurse; we are not sure to what age and Moses knew the people to whom he belonged. He knew he was a Hebrew he identified with his own people. I'm not sure what relationship he had with God, but I think we can say he knew about the Hebrew God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well as the Egyptian gods.

Looking again at the story, how do you interpret the violent scene?

1. Moses sees the forced labour. He sees his people as slaves, mistreated, worked hard, oppressed. It makes him angry. I think he'll have seen this many times – I think the anger has been growing. He's not wrong to be angry.
2. On this specific occasion he sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. Due to his status as a Prince in the palace, virtually all Egyptians will have been considered as lower beings. Servants. Of no consequence. People whose lives the Pharaoh can snuff out on a whim. I believe Moses had an arrogance bred into him from being in that position.
3. Verse 12 – he looks this way and that and seeing no-one – he kills the Egyptian. Is he pleased with himself? Horrified at what he has done? It seems a very deliberate act. It doesn't seem to be a flash of temper but an anger that has boiled up over time. He hides the body.

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Before going on – how many of us have tried to hide the outcome of our anger?

I once kicked a hole in a door, the only excuse being that I'd just banged my head. I couldn't hide the evidence particularly when someone asked about it and the kids told them "Dad did that when he was angry".

4. The next day, Moses witnesses two Hebrews fighting and, we are not sure how he knows, says to the one in the wrong "why are you striking your fellow Hebrew"? The reply he gets bursts his bubble. He's basically told "who do you think you are?" "what right have you got to speak to us that way"? And then realises the cat is out of the bag. "Are you going to kill me like you killed the Egyptian?"
5. The Pharaoh hears of it and in his anger wants to see Moses put to death...so Moses has no option but to run away.

It wasn't wrong to be angry.

It was folly to try and fix things in his own strength in his own way with an arrogance that led him to think he could kill "for the greater good". When has our anger ever made things better?

This very violent story is then contrasted with another scene, this time far away in the land of Midian. Sitting by a well, Moses observes that a group of girls, sisters as it turns out, are bullied by a group of shepherds and driven from the well. He stands up for them and helps them water their flocks.

The rest of the story is condensed in the way you get in the bible, so it seems as if he is invited to the home of the girls father, who turns out to be a priest and he gives one of his daughters to Moses in marriage. I don't think it all happened on the same day. The

mans name is Reuel meaning friend of God. Even in this distant place, God is present through the priest of Midian.

So our hero, Moses, the focus of this sermon series is a murderer.

A very simple basic lesson is that God doesn't write us off because of our faults and failings.

Moses the Lawgiver was a Murderer.

King David an adulterer and murderer

Elijah the prophet suffered from a severe mental health problem.

All those who play a part of the Salvation story are flawed people.

Our Gospel bears this out.

The story is one we know well. Jesus is teaching in Simon's boat, they push out into the deep, the miraculous catch of fish and in that moment Simon is overwhelmed with a sense of his own sinfulness and inadequacy.

Go away from me Lord I am a sinful man.

Jesus response is to say – do not be afraid. Do not be afraid.

Simon was ashamed and afraid of who he was and Jesus re-assured him.

The gospels tell us of the times Jesus got angry. Once he was in a synagogue and there was a man with a withered hand. Everyone waited to see what Jesus would do. He asked them "is it lawful to do good on the sabbath"? and they wouldn't answer and he was angry at their hard hearts. What did he do?

He healed the man and then said to the Pharisee, eat my shorts.

I made that last bit up.

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Getting angry is normal however uncomfortable we feel about it. We may be afraid of what we might say and do because of our anger. What are we to do?

In Ephesians chapter 4 in a section entitled rules for the new life it says

<sup>26</sup> Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and do not make room for the devil.

Our anger is something we can offer to God, which seems odd, but far better to offer it to God and be guided into righteous action, then to flip your lid and make everything much, much worse.

In the moment and rage of our anger, the discipline is to NOT send the text, NOT make the phone call, NOT confront the other person. Take it honestly to God. Rant and rave at and with Him. Share it with a sympathetic friend who is comfortable around anger, seek the Spirit's guidance as to the right way to respond.

AND – find a physical way of working out of your body the effects of anger.

Out of interest, I scrolled forward to see how the Brick Testament handled the next part of the story. They continued to see Moses as the angry man. We don't have to stay angry or subject to anger – it's a work of the Spirit to re-direct, handle and make 'holy' our anger.

By Holy, I mean something that serves the kingdom and doesn't destroy others. Let us pray.

(NB – For those reading on-line. The Hymn I chose to follow this talk is 268 in our regular hymnbooks and I'll copy the lyrics here.

Written by John Bell and Graham Maule (from the Iona community) I particularly liked verse 2. I also like how they can see that our loneliness, anger, pity, triumph and fears can all serve God's purpose when we walk in step with the Spirit.

Jesus Christ is waiting,  
Waiting in the streets;  
No one is his neighbour,  
All alone he eats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I am lonely too.  
Make me, friend or stranger,  
Fit to wait on you

Jesus Christ is raging,  
Raging in the streets,  
Where injustice spirals  
And real hope retreats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I am angry too.  
In the Kingdom's causes  
Let me rage with you.

Jesus Christ is healing,  
Healing in the streets;  
Curing those who suffer,  
Touching those he greets.  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I have pity too.  
Let my care be active,  
Healing just like you.

Jesus Christ is dancing,  
Dancing in the streets,  
Where each sign of hatred

An angry young man  
He, with love, defeats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I should triumph too.  
On suspicion's graveyard  
Let me dance with you.

Jesus Christ is calling,  
Calling in the streets,  
"Who will join my journey?  
I will guide their feet."  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
Let my fears be few.  
Walk one step before me;  
I will follow you.