

XIX Trinity 2024
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Ephesians 4.17-32 St. Matthew 9.1-8



When it comes to anger management...our good friend Paul wrote the book on the subject...literally.

Paul tells us anger left unchecked can lead us into all sorts of sinful and destructive behavior. Paul tells us we should get rid of bitterness and passion. We should not get involved in shouting matches; they accomplish nothing anyway. We should not insult others and we should not have hateful feelings of any sort.

There are times we get angry for one reason or another. In the perfect world...we would all be on love and charity with our neighbor. We strive for that all the time...because Christian love is the action that counters uncontrolled anger.

The key word in Paul's teaching on anger...is management. Paul had every reason to be angry. Consider the way he was treated by certain groups in the Church who claimed to have better knowledge about Christ than he did. The key in Paul's teaching about anger...manage it...get it under control.

Paul says the Church is like a body...the Body of Christ...whose parts must work together to build itself up through love. Failure to do so...as Saint Paul poignantly puts it...makes God's Holy Spirit sad. What he is saying is we must do everything within our power to get along and not sew seeds of dissention.

Petty squabbling annoyed Paul. Anger may be justified...but it must never lead us into the sin of hatred. That...as Paul puts it...gives the Devil an open door into our hearts. Instead we must look for words and actions that repair and build up or rebuild relationships.

Paul reminds us in words that are echoed in the Church's Baptismal and Confirmation Liturgies...Our hearts and minds must be made completely new, and we must put on our new selves, and live our lives accordingly.

Jesus used anger management effectively. On the first Palm Sunday he went to the Temple in Jerusalem and turned over the currency exchange tables...a Godly display of righteous anger intended to make the point it's not OK to get rich by ripping people off.

Jesus is all about forgiveness and repairing and rebuilding lives. When some people in today's Gospel brought him the paralyzed man on a cot, he was impressed by the faith the man's friends showed. He tells the paralyzed man to be courageous and his sins are forgiven.

The religious teachers who witnessed this got angry with Jesus and accused him on blasphemy. Only God could forgive sins. Jesus claims the power to forgive sins because he is God and backs up his claim by healing the paralyzed man. Jesus' words and actions show physical healing and forgiveness of sins are connected.

In his commentary on today's Gospel in the *Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, Father Massey Shepherd writes...

...“Today we know physical health and spiritual health are intimately bound together, and that there is often nothing more healing in its power than the relief and the release that come from a consciousness and acceptance of God's forgiveness.”

Anger is a symptom of the overall condition called sin. Left unchecked it can lead to serious physical and emotional problems. Out of control anger can also lead to the sin of hate. Hate feeds on itself and can become an all consuming passion.

Instead, Paul says we should strive for the ideals of Christian behavior: We should be kind and tender hearted to one another...we should forgive one another...as God has forgiven us through Christ.

The key to managing anger is not to say we never get angry...we do. We need to ask God to help us control our anger...and not let it control us. And when it comes to forgiveness...God has forgiven us...we can't do anything less than forgive others.

