

Angry Like Jesus? Craig Groeschel

So do any of you know anyone right now, that's a little bit angry? Raise your hand. It's crazy out there, right? If you don't know anybody that's angry right now, the good news is you're not on Facebook, and you're not on Twitter, because this is probably, would you agree, maybe the angriest time of our lifetime? I'm curious, are any of you battling with feelings of anger? Are you easily agitated? I know I am. What do we do with these feelings of anger? We've been looking at the emotions of Jesus, and when you think of Jesus, you often think of Him being loving, and compassionate, and full of grace. Jesus also got angry, but when He did, He got angry in a way that honored God. And so the title for today's message is, "Angry Like Jesus".

Father, we ask that by the power of Your Word, You would empower Your church to show Your love, and God, when we do get angry, may we be angry like Jesus, in a way that changes lives and honors You. We pray this in Jesus' name, and everybody said? Amen. Amen.

Disclosure, I know this message is risky. It's risky because I could make some of you mad at me. The reason it's risky is because when I talk about this, you're very likely to hear what I say through your own filters. If I can be politically incorrect for a moment, you're very likely to hear what I say through your political filters, because have you noticed today that everything, unlike any other time in history is politicized? Same with school. If you go back to school or if you don't go back to school, it's controversy and politicized. Same with opening up churches and businesses, same with wearing mask and not wearing mask. Everything is political. So what I want to do is just tell you in this message on anger and I hope you'll take my word. It's like, I honestly do not have an agenda. You may think I do, because you're very likely gonna be tempted to hear what I say through your filter.

And I just want to ask you to take me at my word, to tell you that I don't honestly have an agenda except to speak to you about a very relevant subject from a spiritual perspective, as we talk about anger. So if you do get really angry at me, I just want you to know clearly, this message is for you in particular. It really is so, so let's just do this for fun. Those of you online, let's just smile. Smile. Have you forgotten how to smile? Here's what you do. You just take your little, your little cheeks, and you just do this, so everybody smile. If you're online, type it in, type it out, "I'm smiling". Put a smiley face, put in the chat your favorite smiling emoji. Just smile. Can you like, just like chuckle? It can be, it can be fake, I don't care. If it's fake, just, just kind of chuckle, okay?

What I want you to do is remember, it may be rough out there, but there are a lot of reasons to still find joy. There are lot of reasons to still smile and be grateful, and I want to be grateful that we have an example in the Son of God, how to be angry in a way that does honor God. So as we talk about it today, one of the questions that people will often ask about anger is this, "Is it a sin to be angry? Like if I get angry, is God angry at me, because I broke His law. Is it a sin to be angry"? And the answer is very clearly, it's not a sin to be angry. Anger can very quickly lead to unproductive and very destructive sin, but the emotion of anger in itself, isn't a sin, unless it leads you to do something that is wrong. I think you'd probably agree that there is a lot of sinful anger in the world today, but we learn from Scripture, Ephesians chapter four, that it's not actually a sin to be angry.

The Apostle Paul said this, he said, "In your anger, do not sin. Don't let your anger lead you to do something that would be inappropriate". And then he says something that might speak to some angry people today. And he said this, he said, "In your anger, don't sin. Don't let the sun go down while you're still angry. Don't Harbor bitterness in your soul". You know anybody that's doing that? Don't point at 'em right now, but this is happening everywhere. He goes on to say this, that hey, "Don't let the sun go down while you're still angry and do not

give the devil a foothold". That word in the Greek foothold, it means a place or it means a room.

If you can imagine that you're trying to keep evil out of your house, but you leave the door cracked. That's what anger does. And the devil can come inside that crack and just put his foot inside the door, so that he can have access to what's in your house. And that could be part of the reason why many marriages are struggling because they've left a foothold for the devil, with some anger in their marriage. It could be that's why so many friendships today are hurting because people are letting their anger drive them to sin. It could be that if you're not careful, your unrighteous anger could actually compromise your witness, and then your effort to make a difference for something that really does matter, your anger might lead you to sinful behavior that ends up compromising your ability to make a difference in the very thing that you care about the most.

In your anger, don't sin. Be very careful not to give the devil a foothold. So what we're gonna do is we're gonna actually look at Matthew's Gospel. Matthew chapter 21, at a time when Jesus did get angry. Let me give you the context. Jesus was entering into Jerusalem right before Passover. Now, if you don't know about Passover in the first century, essentially every Jew in the Roman empire would travel to Jerusalem for the massive celebration of Passover, where they would make sacrifices.

In fact, the historian, the Jewish historian Josephus, said that normally in Jerusalem, there might be about 40,000 people or so. During Passover, if you can imagine, there'd be a quarter of a million people or so in Jerusalem. To understand Jesus' mindset, this was the last week of His life, and He knew it. This was like five days before He was going to give His life, so if He's a little bit uptight, I'm gonna understand. 'Cause He knew what was coming, and Jesus, the Son of God who never ever sinned, walked up to the temple, and what He saw broke His heart, and made Him righteously angry. He saw greed, He saw hypocrisy, He saw abuse, and He saw misuse of His Father's house.

So Jesus did something that's out of the ordinary for Jesus. In His righteous anger, not a sinful anger, but in His righteous anger, Jesus turned over a table and I'm gonna read to you straight from Matthew's gospel, what Jesus did. Verse 12 says this, "Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves". And then He preached a little mini sermon to 'em. He said, "It's written". He said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you're making it into a den of robbers". Then Matthew gives us this odd little sentence that seems completely out of context in the middle of Jesus, turning over tables, and turning over benches, and preaching a sermon about what they were doing wrong, Matthew tells us, "The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple and He healed them".

A weird little hanging sentence, almost as if Matthew's like combining two stories into one. Jesus is righteously angry. He's showing 'em this is wrong in a very unusual expression for Jesus, and then He's healing people all at the same time. What did Jesus do? He actually turned over a table. It's kind of dangerous for me to tell you this, but I kind of wish He didn't do that, 'cause I'd like to preach this sermon without that, because some of you turn

over too many tables. And what I want you to recognize is Jesus was not characterized by His anger. He did get angry, but it wasn't often. It wasn't like Matthew saying, "Yeah, this was the fourth table He turned over this week, and you should have seen what He did with this Pharisee who mouthed off to Him. Like, Jesus had this Jesus jujitsu stuff, and he..". No, no, no, no, no, Jesus wasn't characterized by His anger. In fact, what we know about Jesus is Jesus is known for His love, not for His anger.

When you think about Jesus, the first thing you think about isn't, "Oh my gosh, He's righteously angry". The first thing you think about is that He loved the outcasts, that He touched the lepers, that He forgave the sinners. And so my goal just so you'll know, is not to inspire you to go home and turn over your kitchen table, and look straight at your spouse and say, "That'll teach you to criticize my driving". No, no, that's not my goal. What we want to do is when we are angry, we want to be angry, but not in a way that discredits our witness, not in a way that hurts our relationships, not in a way that dishonors God. When we're angry, we want to be angry, but we don't want to sin.

So what I want to do is I want to show you three very specific things that we can learn from Jesus, and how to be angry in a way that does honor God. The first thing we're gonna see about Jesus' anger is this, notice Jesus wasn't angry about what others did to Him, but Jesus was angry on behalf of those who were mistreated. Check this out, Jesus wasn't like offended at what somebody said about Him or did to Him, but His heart was breaking on the mistreatment of others. So let me ask you a question, and those of you online, you can just, you can respond in the chat if you want to and just play along with us. Just type "yes", if you agree this to be true.

Do you think Jesus was ever betrayed? What do you think, say it loud. Was He ever betrayed? The answer is yes. Yes. Type that in. Do you think He was ever criticized? The answer is yes. Yes. Do you think anybody was ever hating on Jesus? The answer is yes. Do you think He was ever unjustly persecuted? The answer is yes, but if you'll notice He never got angry when someone criticized Him, He didn't get angry when someone disagreed with His views. If I can contextualize it moderately, He didn't get angry when somebody posted something that He didn't like, okay? I'm meddling, I'm coming for you, don't worry, I'm gonna get to you, just hang with me. Jesus got angry when others were hurting.

It might be wise, and I've done this, to do what we might call an anger audit. It's really easy to think someone else needs this message, but maybe look into your own heart and ask yourself, what is it that makes you angry nowadays? Where is it that you're carrying a grudge? Where is it that you're easily agitated? Where do you find yourself on the inside, being extra critical of maybe some group of people, or maybe even a little bit hateful when you should be loving? Maybe do a little anger audit. And let me just be really, really clear, when someone hurts you, let's say they lie about you, they mistreat you, they gossip to you, they betray you. It's obviously very natural to get upset. It's a natural response to get angry.

The good news is we're not just bound to a natural world, but we follow a supernatural God who invites us to do something that goes beyond that, which is natural, but instead, what is supernatural and Scripture's actually really clear to those of you who are followers of Christ, that

when someone wrongs us, we're called not for revenge, not to hate those who curse us, but to bless them, and to forgive. Let's not forget that. How do we forgive those who wrong us? Believe me, I'm just like you. I get people take shots at me, hurt me, and everything in me wants to stand up, and fight back, and be angry, and I feel justified in my anger. How do I forgive someone who hurt me?

Well, Scripture teaches we forgive just as Christ forgave us. And I don't know about you, but I've been forgiven of so much, so if I find myself angry for weeks at a time, months at a time, years at a time, over something someone did to me, or didn't do, or said to me, or didn't say, if I'm a follower of Christ, at some point, I may want to ask God for healing in my heart, and let His Holy Spirit do a work to help me forgive, as I've been forgiven. When we look at Jesus, He wasn't angry about what people did to Him, said about Him, He wasn't angry at entire groups of people. All those republicans are blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. All those liberals are blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. He didn't do that. He was angry at those who dishonored His Father's house, and mistreated some people.

If you don't know the details of the story, I'll tell you. He went in and He turned the tables over, the money changers. The money changers were the people that would exchange the currency, so you'd have the proper currency at the temple. If you, like if you ever travel internationally, and you exchange your currency for foreign currency, they'll often charge you more, and they'll mark it up, so I mean, that's kind of generally fair. What the money changes would do is, they would mark it up a lot, and Jesus didn't like that. What most scholars say He really disliked was not just that, but what they did with the doves. When you went to the temple to make a sacrifice, you would bring a couple of doves, a pair of doves, and it's a little bit like, how many of you remember concerts and sporting events? Anybody remember that?

So if you buy a soft drink on the street, it might cost you a dollar. If you go to a concert or a sporting event, it might cost you \$8 at some places, they mark it up. Well, this is exactly what they were doing with the doves, but it was much, much, much worse. One commentary described it this way, that two doves on the street might cost about four pence. When you got inside the temple, they would raise the price up to 75 pence. Highway robbery. So that those who were marginalized, didn't have the resources to take a sacrifice into the temple and Jesus didn't like that. Why was He upset? Why was He angry? He wasn't angry over what someone did to Him or said about Him. He was angry on behalf of the mistreatment of other people.

Thought number one, He was angry over how others were mistreated. To quote my friend, Pastor Albert Tate, number two, notice this, "When Jesus got angry, He flipped tables, but He didn't flip people". Somebody needs to hear this. He flipped tables, but He didn't flip people. He didn't flip anybody off, He didn't punch anybody, He didn't cuss anybody out. My friend, Pastor Albert, he said, "At the table, that the table in many ways could have represented the system that supported the hypocrisy or the mistreatment". It was on the table that the misdealings were consistently hurting those that didn't have the resources to go into the temple and worship. In other words, when He turned the table, why did He do this? He flipped the table, when Jesus turned the table, He disrupted the system that perpetuated the injustice. He flipped the table, but He didn't flip people.

Now somebody hears going, "Hey man, preacher, now you're preaching flipping darn tables over or whatever". Now again, let's be careful. Again, Jesus followers, led by the Spirit of God, and not led by our flesh, let's be wise and let's be careful, because the truth is whenever we feel strongly about something, it's so easy to translate our perspective into a righteous posture, because this makes me angry that I must be righteously angry. But just because we feel strongly about something doesn't necessarily mean that we're right.

Some of you're thinking, "Oh, so and so needs to hear this". Maybe we need to hear this! Let me just give you an example, just kinda for fun. What I'm gonna tell you is some people are angry at me, do you know that? Some people get angry at me, and what I'm gonna tell you is not to be defensive, I have no emotion toward this, but I'm gonna give you two different extremes of people who feel like they are right, righteously right to be angry at me. There's one group who on one extreme would say, "Pastor Craig, you should have never ever opened up the church during a global pandemic. You're being reckless and dangerous. You're evil, you're putting innocent lives at risk". And their righteously angry. You go to the other side and those are gonna say, "Pastor Craig, you should've never ever closed the church building, you're caving into the liberal agenda. I can't believe you're allowing people to wear a mask. The next thing you know, they're gonna put chips in your hands".

The funny thing is, some of you are like on one side or the other, "Yeah, tell those other people they're wrong". Those sides feel righteously right. But obviously both sides aren't. It's impossible. What happens? I'm right! Please hear me. So many people in their effort to be right, have forgotten to be loving. It was the Apostle Paul who said, "And now these three remain, faith, hope, and being right. And the greatest of these is being right". No, no, no, no, no. He said, "And now these three remain faith, hope, and Love". love. And the greatest of these is? Love. Let's make sure that when we're angry, we don't let it convert to unrighteous anger that justifies unloving behavior. Our goal as Christians is not just to be right. Our goal as Christians is to always be loving. Jesus flipped tables, but He didn't flip people.

How, as followers of Christ, can we be righteously angry? First of all, we're not gonna take things personally, we're gonna be angry on behalf of others. We're not gonna flip tables, we're not gonna flip people, we're going to flip tables. And the third thing we're gonna notice is this, when Jesus got angry, He loved and healed those who were hurting. Let's remember and think back to our story. Who was it that could not get into the temple to worship? The answer is, it was the poor, it was the marginalized, it was the blind, it was the sick, and it was the lame. They didn't have the resources. Jesus, didn't just flip tables, but what He did is He helped the hurting, and He healed the sick. Right there, in the middle of His righteous anger, wasn't just a table flipping moment, but it was a people loving moment.

Look at that little part that I said was kind of hanging. Matthew made sure that we understood in the middle of His righteous anger, the Son of God still healed people. The blind and the lame came to Jesus at the temple, and what did He do? He healed them. In fact, if you look carefully at the four Gospels, every time you see Jesus get righteously angry, you won't see Him yelling, you

won't see Him, like typing a critical post. He never says, "I'm leavin' the church. Bless God, nobody's gonna treat me that way". Every time you see Him get angry, you see Him help or heal someone, every time. Look at it. What do we do when we get angry? We love and we heal those who are hurting. How are we doing? You guys okay? Do we need to smile again?

Let's do something for fun. I like to often pretend like we're in the Bible, or I like to pretend like the Bible's happening now. Just kind of fun. Let's pretend like for a moment that this story is happening now. Imagine what happens in our culture today when Jesus exposes the corrupt money changers, using this wrongly for their profit. Here's what's gonna happen, you know it. It's gonna be a big news story, exposing the corruption. It's gonna trend on Twitter. #TheyKeptTheChange or whatever it is, I don't know, okay. And then in our culture today, do you know what we're gonna do as a society, we're gonna do what those evil money changers had coming to them, you know what we're gonna do? We're gonna cancel them. That's what we're gonna do. We're gonna cancel them, why? Because we love God and we're gonna cancel those evil and corrupt people.

Now, for those of you that don't know what the cancel culture is, some don't. This is any time, it's generally a well known person, like a celebrity, or a politician, or an athlete, or a pastor, it could be a business, or a corporation, or whatever, anytime someone says something that goes contrary to popular view. It could have been what they said was an accident. They might've misspoken, they might've been uneducated, they might've been just dead wrong in an area, but the moment someone famous or something big, or even someone that's not necessarily famous does this now, what we do is we cancel them. It could be that they were faithful and did good for 20 years, two decades, but one statement, one misstep, one wrong and sinful perspective, and we cancel everything about them.

Think for a minute about Jesus. Think about those who hurt Him and mistreated Him. I'll give you the short list: there was the Pharisees, there was Pontius Pilate, there was Herod, there was Judas, there was even Peter, who all wronged, hurt, betrayed, lied about, misjudged Jesus, or whatever sinful treatment they had of Jesus, and Jesus didn't cancel any of them. He didn't cancel any of them. The Pharisees were wrong, Pilate was wrong, Herod was wrong, Judas was wrong, Peter was wrong, but just because you're wrong, doesn't mean you're canceled. I'm so thankful for a God who didn't cancel me. I'm thankful for a God who didn't cancel me, when I did something wrong, when I sinned against Him. I'm thankful for a God who canceled my sin, but He didn't cancel me. He forgave me, even when I sinned against Him, and He continues to forgive me.

I don't know about you, but I am evidence of the faithfulness, and the love, and the grace, and the mercy of a God who has every right to be angry at my sin. But instead He poured out His anger on His Son, who was innocent, on a cross and judged sin, when Jesus defeated, paid the price, defeated death, hell, sin and the grave. I'm so thankful for a God who canceled my sin, but didn't cancel me. Paul said it this way in Colossians two, he said, "For God forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and He took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross". God canceled my sins, but He didn't cancel me.

Who is Jesus? He is the Son of God who came to seek and save the lost. He didn't come for the healthy, He came for the sick. He didn't come for the righteous, He came for the sinners. He came to show the love of God, the grace of God, and what made the son of God angry? What made him angry was anything that separated people from the love of His Father. When you get angry, and you will, don't sin. Hey, let's grow beyond being easily offended, and not get angry on behalf of ourselves. But when we do, let's use what we have to help those who are in need. So if you do occasionally need to flip a table, flip the table, but don't flip the people, because our goal is not to be right. Our goal is also to be loving.

We good? Yeah. Can I go a little deeper? Yeah. Yeah. Are you okay? Yeah. Can you hang with me? Yes. Are you gonna get angry at me? You might. I'm so thankful that as followers of Jesus, in this big global church full of very diverse people, I'm really thankful that we get angry about different injustices, and we work to solve different problems, 'cause I don't know about you, but I can't solve 'em all, but I can work to solve a few. I'm thankful for those who get angry and fight against porn, and fight for marriage. I'm thankful for those who are wise enough to fight against racism and stand for good men and women who serve and protect us every day. It can be an "and", it doesn't have to be an "or".

Come on church, grow up church, let's go, come on. I may fight for something different than you. I may use my power and I might fight for the unborn, and you might fight for those who are suffering from mental illness, and someone else might fight to free people from human trafficking, and others might fight to help people get clean drinking water, and some of you might fight for the polar bear. I've never woken up thinking about the polar bears, but man, if they need some help and you wake up thinking about 'em, go help those polar bears. And don't get angry at me if I haven't been exposed to the polar bears yet, because you're looking at things from a different perspective and God may be calling you to different calling.

Come on! In your anger, hey, don't sin. Don't sin. We live in a very divided world and a very divided world needs a united church. And so what I'm hoping, is that we can be united, that our battle is not against flesh and blood, not against people, but against the powers and principalities of this dark world. Come on. And when we get angry, let's start with our spiritual enemy who comes to steal, kill, and destroy, who wants to steal your joy, kill your hope, and destroy lives day in and day out. And so may we be unified that we can be righteously angry about some different things in a way that can help bring solutions to different things, but above all else, we are united in a mission to lead people, to become fully devoted followers of Christ.

That's our highest calling. That's our mission, to go into all the world and make disciples. Jesus, didn't say above all else, be right with all your heart, mind, and soul, and strength, but, "To love the Lord your God, with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself". So we will get angry sometimes, but we're gonna get angry like Jesus. We're not gonna be characterized by our anger, we're gonna be characterized by our love. And any time we do get angry, whatever power we have, we will use it to bring hope and healing for those who are hurting, and that is how we're angry like Jesus.

So Father, we ask that You would use us, this little portion of Your body, to make a real difference in this world.

As you're praying, watching online, praying in a physical seat, those of you who would say, "Yeah, I wanna be characterized by my love, but when I do get angry, I want to use that anger to make a difference", would you lift up your hands right now?

Father, I pray in a world where it's so tempting and so easy to let our anger, that may even start angry at something that is a real injustice, something that is real corruption, something that's not right, I pray God that you would protect us from sinning. Help us to be angry like Jesus was, not even in what happens to us, but on behalf of others, never flipping people, and always using what we have to make a difference in this world. God help us as Your church, not to be known by what we're against, what we hate, help us be known by sharing the love and the grace of Jesus.

As you keep praying today, there may be some of you, who you wonder, where do you stand with God, you might feel guilty for some things that you've done wrong. My gosh, I can just remember feeling so horrible about all my sinfulness, all the people that I hurt, and let down, and betrayed. Let me tell you about a God who can cancel your sin, but He doesn't cancel you. He loves you and He sent His Son Jesus to seek and save the lost. He came to bind up the broken. He befriended sinners and He forgave those who sinned against God. Who is Jesus? The sinless Son of God, who became sin on a cross. He died in our place and God raised Him from the dead, so that anyone, and this includes you, who calls on His name, you would be forgiven, and you would be made new.

Wherever you're watching today, those who say, "I want His grace, I need His forgiveness", just turn away from your sin, turn toward Him, call on Him when you do. God hears your prayers, He forgives your sins, and He makes you brand new. Those who say, "Yes, I want Jesus, I want His grace today by faith I give my life to Him", that's your prayer. Lift your hands now, just lift them up, online, just type, "I'm giving my life to Jesus". Just type that in. I'm giving my life to Jesus. And as we have people all over the world, meeting the grace and the love of God through Jesus, would you just pray with those around you?

Heavenly Father, forgive all my sins. Jesus save me. Make me new. Fill me with Your Spirit, so I could show Your love and make a difference, as you've changed my life. Thank you for new life. I give you all of mine. In Jesus' name I pray.