

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
June 7, 2015**

Jonah 3:10 – 4:11

Eight Deadly Sins: ANGER

- 1. *Jonah's anger***
- 2. *Our anger***
- 3. *Christ's righteousness***
- 4. *God's guidance for the forgiven***

**Hymns: 181 – 182 – Distribution: 423, 311 –
Closing: 185**

Jonah 3:10 – 4:11 – When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

But the LORD replied, "Have you any right to be angry?" Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city.

Then the LORD God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?"

"I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die."

But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

We can be sure of this: People are certainly unique. This is certainly true of people's physical makeup. Tall and short, blond or brunette, skinny as a rail or with some "insulation," perfect vision or poor eyesight, straight teeth or needing orthodontic work, every single person has a unique physical makeup.

Also, every person that God has created has their own personality and combination of likes, dislikes, talents, and interests. Music, computers, photography, sports, cooking, sewing, traveling, eating, hobbies, car preference, and more – All people have a unique combination of interests.

Unfortunately, we could say the same about sinful natures. Everyone has a unique makeup of sins that entangle and temptations that they struggle with. To be sure, we all struggle with many of the same temptations to a point, but every person has their own pet sins that they personally struggle with.

We are starting a sermon series today that will identify some of the "deadly sins" that plague many Christians in our day and age. Over the next weeks we will examine:

- Envy
- Pride
- Lust
- Gossip
- Greed
- Apathy
- And more

We will do this by looking at a Bible account that clearly shows an individual who struggled with a particular sin, and then apply it to ourselves and our walk of faith. Today we begin this series with a look at ANGER. May God bless us in the weeks ahead as we identify these sins and pray for God's guidance to avoid them!

This morning, we will look at Jonah 3:10 – 4:11.

1. Jonah's anger

We don't have time today to give a lengthy review of Jonah's ministry that led up to this, but some review would be helpful to understanding this account:

- At the beginning of the book, the Lord called Jonah to be a missionary to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, 500 miles north of Palestine. This actually was an enemy nation.
- Instead of going, Jonah fled the opposite direction, on a ship that was headed toward Tarshish (Spain).
- In a memorable part of the book, the Lord then caused a tremendous storm to threaten the boat. The sailors threw Jonah overboard, and he was swallowed by a large fish that finally vomited him back onto the shore after three days.
- Then Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and made the trip to Nineveh to proclaim God's message of repentance.
- After he did this in their streets, the king and all the people of Nineveh miraculously believed his message and repented in sackcloth and ashes. And the king proclaimed, *"Let everyone... give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."*

Then we hear the first verse in our reading today: *"When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened."* We truly wish the book ended here. Wouldn't that have made a great ending to this account of missionary work and God's grace?

However, we read one more chapter about a flabbergasting attitude that Jonah has and a shocking exchange that he has with God. Jonah truly had a problem with anger. Jonah 4:1 literally reads, "But it was evil to Jonah, a great evil, and his anger burned."

Let's note some things about Jonah's anger:

- What makes it especially sad is that this attitude was more of a **decision** than a rash action that he fell into. I think we've all seen anger that is of both those types – Rash, hasty anger or measured, deliberate anger. Jonah decided for days that he was going to harbor this anger!
- Jonah's anger was the **exact opposite of God's attitude**. How did God feel about those people – even the animals – of Nineveh? He was concerned about them! He had worked behind the scenes repeatedly so that Jonah would be forced to go preach the Word to those people. In fact, God had had grace with Jonah himself as well. He worked behind the scenes of his pouting prophet with a vine, a worm, and a wind to try to bring him to his senses and let go of his anger.
- Jonah's anger **consumed him**. It affected his actions, and he seems to have become completely obsessed by his anger. It clouded his whole perspective. He accused God of being gracious – "I knew this would happen! I knew you were loving and forgiving!" He was angry with God for that, and sat on a hill to await the fireworks.
- Jonah's anger was **self-centered**. All he could see was himself and his people. It is true that these Assyrians were enemies of God's people. But Jonah only wanted to look out for himself and Israel. In fact, he was more concerned about the vine, which served as his shade, than he was about their eternal welfare.
- Jonah's anger led to an **irrational mouth**. "I want to die!" Anger can often do that.

Was there hope for Jonah? Would there be a change in his attitude? We don't know. One evidence of hope might be the silence at the end of the book, no more talking back to God. Another hope might be that Jonah may have

written this book. If so, perhaps it came after a change of heart and recorded for posterity this book of warning against the attitudes he himself had had. For this was a dangerous situation. It was an angry attitude that was leading him away from God and could potentially lead him to eternal death.

2. Our anger

Therefore, we need to talk about anger in our day and age, and anger in our own lives as well. Our tendencies toward sinful anger perhaps won't take the same form as Jonah's, but there are plenty of times we are tempted toward it and fall into it.

Proverbs 25:28 says, *"Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control."* What's the point? Danger lurks. A person that cannot control themselves are vulnerable. There are times that may occur when we might feel what we call "righteous anger," but **unrighteous anger can be felt and seen in many Christians' lives. It will be seen:**

- When the flush starts to burn under the neck and the blood pressure is noticeably rising.
- When you're on the phone with that customer service representative who is seeming rather incompetent or unhelpful, and you are ready to launch into them and give them what-for.
- When a sports fan sees his team throwing the game away and is ready to bark out his opinion at the TV, or even take his anger out on it.
- When a person is so frustrated and angry that whatever is in their hand – a pen, a racket, a computer mouse – will suffer abuse.
- When a driver is ready to scream out his frustration at that other car, or take matters into his own hands.
- When a worker has had it with their boss, the rules, their incompetent co-workers, and with demanding customers and when they wreck something in their cubicle.

- When a student has a meltdown at school.
- When a mother has "had it" with her little children who have big and urgent needs constantly, and has a meltdown.
- When a father grabs his toddler too hard, and starts to shake him.
- When a relative says they will not talk to that other relative on the phone.
- When family members at a get-together can't be in the same room together.
- When a husband loses it and strikes his wife or puts his fist through a wall.
- When a wife is so distressed at her husband being out of control that she has to shout, "Not in front of the children!"

Can these things happen in Christian homes? Can they happen in our homes?

What does such anger accomplish? Proverbs 29:22 says, "An angry man stirs up dissensions, and a hot-tempered man commits many sins."

1. Anger leads to rash action, action that would not be done by that person if they were thinking clearly.
2. Anger leads to division and dissension. It hurts relationships between people.
3. Anger hurts the person who is angry. Stress goes off the chart, and spirituality disappears.
4. When anger has subsided, it often leads to guilt and shame.

This is why we need to now look to another place.

3. Christ's righteousness

We need to look at our Savior, Jesus Christ, who served us perfectly in every way. We need to be comforted by the fact that in his perfect life for you and for me, he always displayed perfect patience and self-control.

- When he was in the high priest's court and was struck in the face for giving his truthful testimony, no hateful words came from his lips, only a simple

question: "If I told the truth, why did you hit me?"

- In Luke 9, messengers were sent by Jesus to the town ahead of him. They were rejected. James and John (the sons of thunder!) asked him, "Should we call down fire from heaven to destroy them?" Jesus, knowing this was not the proper time for that talk, rebuked them and they went on.
- When Jesus was arrested, condemned, and crucified, no hateful words came from his lips, only a prayer that his Father would forgive them because they did not know what they were doing.

Yes, Jesus did display "righteous anger" at the appropriate times in his ministry. But his life was devoid of hate and sinful anger around him as he lived for you and for me.

Not only that, but his suffering and death paid the price for our moments of sinful anger. Through his death, we are set free. We are forgiven in God's sight. **We are saints who are now empowered to live for him in perfect patience and love again.**

4. Guidance for the forgiven

So what now? How can we avoid falling into the same trap again? Scripture has much guidance to offer on the subject, too much to cover in our short time together.

Here are a few passages we can note:

- *James 1:19-20* – "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." Quick to listen. Slow to speak and become angry. When anger is rising, slow down. Take a breath. Walk away. Take some time. Don't start. Exercise restraint. There is no weakness in doing such things.
- *Proverbs 15:1 and 17:27* – "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." "A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered." A gentle answer. Calm

words. A measured tone. A patience that continues. If it is not a "righteous anger" situation that you find yourself in, a gentle answer is the high road that you need to take.

- *Proverbs 19:11* – "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense." The time will come when it will be wise for you to overlook an offense. Every matter does not need to be directly addressed. There is a time to let it go. There is a time to overlook.
- *Ephesians 4:25-27* – "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." Do not let that angry attitude fester and spread. Do not let that grudge continue to go on, as far as you are able. Deal in love with your brother and work through frustration and anger soon. Do not give the devil a foothold.

So, unique people of God, what type are you? When it comes to anger, are you a "slow burn?" Or are you a firecracker? No matter what unique characteristics you have with your short fuse (or lack of it), may God help us to live in patience and love. When it comes to anger, may we "watch and pray so that we do not fall into temptation." And may our Lord work in us an attitude similar to Christ our Savior's, who lived in love and who saved us from the deadly sin of anger! Amen.