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4

Reflection

- What examples of anger have you experienced or expressed that you feel are inappropriate?
- What examples of anger have you experienced or expressed that you feel are appropriate?

BE BRAVE

5

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it. (Mk 11:12-14 ESV)

BE BRAVE

6

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

15 And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 16 And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." 18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. 19 And when evening came they went out of the city. (Mk 11:15-19 ESV)

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7

The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree

20 As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. 21 And Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." (Mk 11:20-21 ESV)

BE BRAVE

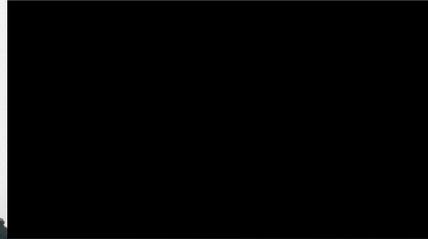
8

13 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."
(In. 2:13-17 ESV)

BE BRAVE

9

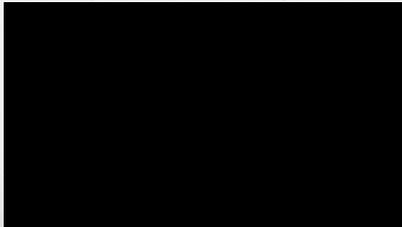
The Fig Tree and the Temple [Video (4:26) - Justin Taylor]



BE BRAVE

10

The Temple Incident [VIDEO (8:48) - Amy-Jill Levine]



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11

Reflection

- What, if any, are the differences in your mind between anger and zeal?
- What has triggered Jesus' anger/ zeal?
- What is meant by Jesus calling the temple a "cave/ den of robbers"?

BE BRAVE

12

In point of fact, however, none of the Synoptic accounts attributes any emotion whatsoever to Jesus in connection with this incident. A clue to this silence is suggested by Mark's account which alone indicates a day's interval between Jesus looking around at everything in the temple (Mark 11:11) and his cleansing of the temple (Mark 11:15-17). This interval leads Richard France to conclude, "The day's delay mentioned by Mark suggests...that it was less a spontaneous outburst of anger than a planned act of defiance and public demonstration of the Messiah's authority."³ So perhaps Matthew, Mark, and Luke deliberately underplay Jesus' anger in what is often regarded as his clearest expression of the emotion in the New Testament ...

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13

... Far from being an expression of uncontrolled rage, Jesus' actions in the temple are well thought through and carefully premeditated. In John there is no reticence to attribute an emotion to Jesus in connection with the temple cleansing, but the emotion specifically mentioned is not anger, but zeal. "His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me'" (John 2:17). John's description of events is more vivid than the Synoptic Gospels'; he adds more details. He alone mentions the whip and the fact that all the sheep and cattle are driven from the temple area, as well as the challenge to those selling doves, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" (John 2:15-16). These words and actions are very aptly described by the word zeal (Stephen Voorwinde)

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14

The healing of the man with the withered hand in the synagogue at Capernaum is recorded by all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:1-11), but only Mark reports Jesus' emotional reaction. "He looked around at them in anger...deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts" (Mark 3:5). These emotions are more understandable in their context. They come toward the end of Mark's first controversy section (Mark 2:1-3:6). The religious leaders' antagonism toward Jesus has been mounting steadily. Finally it culminates in the Pharisees' plot with the Herodians to kill him (Mark 3:6). For the first time in Mark's narrative the conflict has become deadly. The immediate context throws further light on Jesus' intense feelings at this point. They set the scene for the healing and come in response to the Pharisees' stubborn refusal to answer Jesus' simple but well-targeted question, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" (Mark 3:4) ... (Stephen Voorwinde)

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15

... The implications are clear: by healing the man Jesus is saving life and doing good, and by plotting to kill him the Pharisees are doing evil. With superhuman insight Jesus reads their minds and knows their hearts. Mark's account provides a penetrating insight into Jesus' psyche. His anger and distress complement one another. It would be tempting to conclude that his anger is tempered by his grief. But this is not entirely correct. More accurately, anger is the outward emotion and distress the inward. His anger is felt by all who sit under his wrathful gaze during that tense and hushed moment in the synagogue. His distress lies deeper, in the inner recesses of his soul. With perceptive insight into human nature, Benjamin Warfield has observed that "the fundamental psychology of anger is curiously illustrated by this account; for anger always has pain as its root, and is a reaction of the soul against what gives it discomfort."⁵ The hardness of the Pharisees' hearts deeply hurts Jesus and his anger rises in response to the cause of his pain (Stephen Voorwinde)

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16

As was the case with the healing of the man with the shriveled hand, the periscope of the blessing of the children is found in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17). Once again Mark is unique in recording an emotion of Jesus. When he sees the disciples rebuking people who are bringing little children to have him touch them, Jesus is indignant (Mark 10:14). Including this detail in his Gospel is clearly a bold move on Mark's part. It appears that he is attributing a rather unpleasant emotion to Jesus. The other contexts in which he mentions indignation are never positive. The ten other disciples are indignant with James and John for asking Jesus for special places of honor in his coming kingdom (Mark 10:41; cf. Matthew 20:24). At the home of Simon the Leper the disciples are mistakenly indignant at the woman who anoints Jesus because they think it is such a waste of money (Mark 14:4; cf. Matthew 26:8) ...

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17

... By noting Jesus' indignation, Mark seems to link him to his disciples at times when they are obviously not at their best. The remaining New Testament references further underscore the unpleasantness of this emotion. Matthew notes the indignation of the scribes and Pharisees when the children in the temple are shouting, "Hosanna to the son of David" (Matthew 21:15). Luke observes that a synagogue ruler is indignant because Jesus heals a crippled woman on the Sabbath (Luke 13:14). Jesus' indignation therefore does not place him in the best of company. Why is Jesus so aroused and angry when the disciples prevent children from being brought to him? Why this strong, negative emotion? There appears to be two reasons. First, by their actions the disciples are failing dismally to put into practice Jesus' earlier teaching that to receive a child in his name is to receive him (Mark 9:37) ...

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18

... The second reason comes from the immediate context: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Mark 10:14-15). The disciples are hindering from coming to Jesus the very kind of people to whom the kingdom of God belongs. These children are such suitable candidates for the kingdom not because of attractive, childlike qualities they have to offer, but—in sharp contrast to the rich young ruler in the preceding periscope—because they have nothing to offer at all. Entry into the kingdom is by grace, and by grace alone. Therefore what really incenses Jesus is not just the fact that the disciples have such a tenuous understanding of God's grace but that they manage to stand in its way. (Stephen Voorwinde)

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19

Jesus' statement that "everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment" (Matthew 5:22) must of course be read in context. In the same verse Jesus speaks of that brother being called "Raca" and "a fool," both strong terms of abuse that carry overtones of insult, derision, and contempt. Clearly Jesus never expresses his anger in that way. His is never the kind of anger that, according to his teaching, would have been in violation of the sixth commandment not to murder. Although expressed strongly, and on occasion even violently, his wrath always falls within the category of sinless anger or righteous indignation. Jesus' behavior clearly exemplifies the later instruction by the apostle Paul: "Be angry [an imperative!], but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26). Jesus' anger is always well controlled, precisely targeted, and short-lived. But not only is Jesus' anger expressed differently than sinful human anger, it also is generated differently. His anger is not an instant response to provocation, but a function of his impeccable holiness. Although often sourced in his foreknowledge, and at times best understood in the light of his coming Passion, the way Jesus handles his anger still provides a model for Christians today. He knows how to be indignant, irate, and even furious, but without the slightest trace of derision, contempt, or abuse. (Stephen Voorwinde)

BE BRAVE

20

Reflection

- When you think of Jesus as someone who acted out of anger, is that a positive or negative experience for you?
- What might God be inviting the church to be angry / zealous about?
- What might God be inviting you to be angry / zealous about?

BE BRAVE