

The Gables – Anger

Opening Story:

The recent mass shootings of police officers are very disturbing. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of those three police officers killed, and three wounded, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, earlier this morning (July 17, 2016). Just ten days earlier, twelve police officers were shot in Dallas, five of whom died, while protecting citizens who were protesting against police violence. This senseless act of violence was committed by a troubled young black man, who had previously served in the military, and said he hated white people, especially white police officers. He expressed reason for murdering these police officers was that he was angry about recent white police officer shootings of black suspects in Louisiana and Minnesota. How are murder and anger connected?

Dialog:

Rick: Hey Donna. We've been glued to the TV the last week or so, haven't we.

Donna: Absolutely. It's been awful, hasn't it? And it seems to be getting worse. Over the past year or so there have been mass murders in San Bernardino, Paris, Brussels, Orlando, and Istanbul, along with Dallas last week, Nice a few days ago, and Baton Rouge this morning.

Rick: Yes. It's been terrible. Did you know there were over 3,500 murders in Chicago alone last year?

Donna: That's horrible. Things seem to be getting out of control. What's going on and what can we do about it?

Rick: Unfortunately, murder is nothing new when it comes to the human race.

- The first murder in human history was committed by Cain, Adam and Eve's first child. Cain was angry that God had accepted Abel's sacrifice, due to his God-honoring motives, rather than his own sacrifice, and murdered his younger brother. Genesis 4:9-11 states, "Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand."
- God forbids murder, as noted in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5). The sixth commandment plainly states, "You shall not murder." Many people over the centuries have ignored this commandment, to their peril.
- Murder occurred numerous times in the Old Testament, particularly by people in positions of power against their enemies.
- Murder continued into the New Testament as well. King Herod wanted to kill Jesus because the Magi told him Jesus would one day become king. Matthew 2:16 states, "When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he

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gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.”

Donna: I’m sure glad I haven’t murdered anyone.

Rick: Well, in a way, you probably have.

Donna: What do you mean? I’ve never murdered anyone.

Rick: Have you ever been angry with someone?

Donna: Of course.

Rick: Jesus links anger to murder in the *Sermon on the Mount*.

- Matthew 5:21-22 states, “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.”

Donna: I didn’t realize God views anger that way.

Rick: It’s not just the act of murder that’s sinful; the anger beneath the surface is sinful as well.

- Jesus continued his discourse on anger in Matthew 5:23-26: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”
- This sentiment is repeated by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:26-27. “‘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.”

Donna: What does it mean to “not let the sun down on your anger?”

Rick: That we should resolve any conflicts we may have with another person today, and not let them fester.

Donna: And what does it mean to “not give the devil a foothold.”

Rick: If we don’t deal with our anger, the devil may penetrate our thoughts and use our anger to control us.

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Donna: How could the devil use anger to control us?

Rick: Being angry with someone may mean you haven't forgiven them for what they've done to you. This is very serious. Later in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus says, "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Donna: I didn't realize how important it was to forgive someone who's hurt you. I definitely want to make sure God forgives my sins.

Rick:

- If you don't forgive another person who has hurt you, and let the anger fester, you're allowing them, and the devil, to control your thoughts and emotions, and damage your spirit. But if you forgive them, you're freed from their hold over you, and can move forward in life with an uncluttered mind and a clear conscience before God.
- Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus raises the bar, setting a standard far beyond the Ten Commandments. Murder is the act, but anger is the root. Anger is so serious that it can land you in hell, apart from God's saving grace.

Donna: God seems to know everything about us, not just what we do, but what we think.

Rick: Yes, he does.

- Proverbs 5:21 says, "For your ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all your paths."
- Matthew 9:4 says, "Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, 'Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?'"
- Proverbs 16:2 says, "All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord."
- Therefore, we're an open book before God, actors upon his stage. He sees everything we do, knows everything we think, and understand our motives behind all of it.

Donna: That's sobering. God knows everything about me.

Rick: He knows everything about us, and everything about everyone in the universe.

Donna: Is it ever OK to be angry?

Rick: Yes. We've talked about unrighteous anger, but there also is righteous anger. Righteous anger pertains to those things that anger God, such as sinful behavior and injustice. Here are some examples:

- Jesus was angry at the money changers in the temple courtyard because they were extorting money from their fellow Jews who wished to purchase sacrificial animals. In

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doing so, they were defiling the House of God. Jesus whipped them with cords and flipped over their tables (Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15, John 2:15).

- Mark 3:1-5 describes a second example of when Jesus was angry. “Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.”
- In 1 Kings 11:9-10, “The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord’s command.”
- In Deuteronomy 7:1-6, God commanded the Israelites to completely destroy the nations that lived in the Promised Land they were about to take over, because of their detestable practices, such as child sacrifice.
- Romans 1:18-19 states, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.”

Donna: How can we make sure that God isn’t angry with us?

Rick: Because God is a holy and just God, sin has to be paid for. It will either be paid for in hell, or paid for on the cross. (John Piper, *Desiring God* video series, 2012.)

Donna: What do you mean?

Rick: God the Father thrust all his righteous anger, for the sins of the whole world, onto his one and only son, Jesus, as he lay dying on the cross. When Jesus died, he descended into hell for three days. God then raised him from the dead. The sins of the entire world were then considered paid in full. In order to have this payment applied to our account, we must repent of our sins and ask Jesus to forgive us. He promised to take away the penalty of our sins, which is hell, if we ask him.

Donna: So if we accept Jesus as our savior, our sins will be completely forgiven, and we’ll be able to live with God in heaven forever once we die.

Rick: Absolutely.

Donna: How should we act until then?

Rick:

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- Romans 12:19-21 says, “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
- James 1:19-20 states, “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”
- So, Donna, what have we learned?

Donna:

- That if we’re angry with someone who has hurt us, we should forgive them right away so the wound won’t fester. It frees us from the hurt and enables us to get back in a right relationship with God.
- That God knows everything about us; we can’t hide anything from him.
- That it’s OK to have righteous anger, which is anger about the things God is angry about, such as injustice in the world.
- That in order to make sure God isn’t angry with us, we need to accept God’s offer of forgiveness for our sins, through faith in his son, Jesus Christ.
- And finally, as we walk through life as Christians, that we not harbor anger toward others, but allow God to take care of it.