

Christ-Crucified on Anger Management

† Jealousy conquers greed. (vv.13-17)

† Life conquers death. (vv.18-22)

In the name of Christ-Crucified and Risen, dearly redeemed believers:

It took several years before I had to watch *Anger Management* because nothing else was on. Adam Sandler is mild mannered Dave Buznik who has trouble getting angry about anything. But one legal nightmare leads to another, and he ends up in court where avoiding jail time requires anger management therapy from Dr. Buddy Rydell. In real life Jack Nicholson was abandoned by his father in infancy and raised to think his grandmother was his mother and his mother, her sister. Finding out the truth years later from a newspaper reporter could make playing a psychotic psychiatrist too easy. In the end the strange situation proves to be a setup by Dave's fiancée to get him jealous enough to propose to her in a packed sports stadium. Humorous? Yes, but Hollywood never heals from therapy.

We laugh because we can all relate to the pain of misspent anger. But then we find Jesus in the Bible making a whip to drive merchants from the temple, and we're left wondering what's right? Jesus is the sinless Son of God. So is there a kind of anger that's okay? Let's check in with **Christ-Crucified on Anger Management**. His unconventional methods heal the heart and soul. First let's see how...

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To find out some basics about anger, jealousy and greed, we have to go back to the very beginning. There was no **Anger** when God created our first parents in His image. Adam and Eve were holy like God in their emotions, their intellect and their will. You can see God's intelligence shining through Adam when he names all the animals and realizes the meaning of loneliness because there is none just right for him. But waking up to see that gorgeous perfect "Ten" which God made from his side during the first surgery, the man feels the yearning of love and the desire of kindness and tender care that beautifully reflected the goodness of God who made man and woman for each other to glorify God.

It was the tragedy of their rebellion that changed all such joy to sadness and death. Small as it may seem to sinners now that they took of the forbidden fruit, that sin separated us from holy God in whom alone is life and health and every good. Now Adam blames Eve, and she resents him, and movie makers can't help showing us ourselves in soap operas loaded with broken hearts and violence. There is such a thing as righteous anger. We just cannot find it in our hearts where sin always corrupts it.

But the key to the question is not all that difficult with the training we WELS pastors receive in the Wisconsin Synod. I'm grateful for the schools that taught me Biblical Hebrew to see in this quote from Psalm 69:9 a connection. In English: "**Zeal for your house will consume me.**" In the original Hebrew "**zeal**" is *hanq* – what Luther Martin called God's "angry love," or "love mixed with hate." *hanq* is the *red hot jealousy* of a husband. What makes God angry with red hot jealousy is when we love other things and other people more than we love Him – because then He cannot bless us as He desires.

Human **jealousy** is little more than another form of **greed** like those merchants in the temple with animal sacrifices for sale. Jewish historian Josephus tells us they had strict orders from the High Priest Caiphas to reject any sacrifices brought by worshipers. Caiphas had exclusive rights to sell animals raised on his ranch to the east of Jerusalem near the Jordan of Jericho. And you know how easy it is to make a profit changing currencies from other countries into dollars and back again. A few percentage points here and there and *Viola!* – you've locked up a captive market, your own money making machine. No wonder Jesus got so angry that He *made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and*

cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" God had commanded all those sacrifices to point ahead to Jesus as the perfect Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. The temple was supposed to be the place where people came to hear about the coming Messiah and Savior who would free them from sinful anger, jealousy and greed. Jesus as the sinless Son of God reacts with perfect **Jealousy** that cannot stand to let God's Name and reputation suffer because sinners like us will die eternally without Him. Only by faith in Christ-Crucified can we be freed from self-destructive anger. God's love, His **Jealousy conquers our greed**, and only God's...

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When you hear the Jews' demand a sign from Jesus, don't you find yourself asking, "Where have you been?" Jesus will be healing the sick and raising the dead soon, but already He just proved Himself to be the Creator when He created carbon and other elements to change H₂O water into the finest wine at the wedding at Cana. More miraculous deeds will follow to challenge everyone to stop and realize who this man really is that can control the laws of nature itself. But Jesus skips all those lesser miracles and points to the ultimate one that proves He is not just a good teacher or a righteous man or a fine example of moral uprightness. Jesus is about to say something which proves that He is either a certifiable fruitcake, or He is unquestionably the almighty Son of God. Jesus answers their demand like this: ***"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."*** They thought He meant the massive temple in Jerusalem still under construction by Herod the Great and his successors since forty-six years before and counting. But that would have been easy compared to what Jesus really meant. John writes, ***"The temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken."***

How is your **Anger Management**? Has Christ's **life** conquered the **death** of sin in you, so that whatever makes Him angry makes you angry, and whatever makes God happy thrills you too? Or do you find as I do that no matter how cut-and-dried right you may be, our anger always gets twisted one way or another into selfishness and sin? You think it's licked, and anger kicks you back again.

Every time I feel my front teeth, I have another reminder. My coaches warned me to keep my head playing high school basketball. And I tried. But then came a game my senior year that was more of a free-for-all. Soon my anger was way past the point of management. To this day I'm convinced that if the jealous God had not intervened, I would either be in prison or in hell. No one else knew but God that I was swearing under my breath, that I didn't really care anymore. I'm quite sure I was out cold before I hit the floor. Playing point guard on defense, lunging for that pass – it seems God needed to teach me that, no, I couldn't fly, and no, I cannot live without Him either. When I came to, the referee was asking, "Are you okay?" "I am, but my teeth aren't." Half of the left, a corner of the right, and Professor Tenbrook running the clock fifteen feet away heard my tooth hit the stage. It was a cold night in South Dakota when I had to call my mother about why I needed emergency dental care.

"Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." (James 1:20 NIV) Only **Christ-Crucified** can really manage anger so beautifully that **Jealousy conquers greed** and **Life conquers death**. He carried every sin of mine and yours – all our anger, sinful jealousy and greed – to the cross where God's anger came down full force on Christ for all our sins. That precious, holy blood of His washed away every stain of sin. By faith in Jesus we have life eternal that gives us that calm, collected way of dealing with difficulties by trusting God and doing what we can under Him and inside the boundaries of His Ten Commandments. What He began, Christ will manage and complete.

Christ-Crucified on Anger Management may not be as funny as Hollywood, but this really works. ***"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.*** (Ephesians 4:26 NIV) Whatever it takes, may Christ cleanse our hearts to beat with God's love and only His healthy anger that lets God be the manager and therapist. Amen.

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