

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 19 Mar 2023

Sermon Title : Love is Not Irritable Nor Resentful

Speaker : Rev Eddie Ho

Text : 1 Corinthians 13:5

INTRODUCTION

So far in our “Love Is...” sermon series, we have covered “Love is patient, kind, not envious, not boastful nor arrogant, not rude and does not insist”. These are precise definitions of what genuine love is, and also a detailed description of God, since God is love. (1 John 4:8) Hence, God is patient (2 Peter 3:9), God is kind (Psalm 145:9). God does not envy or have discontentment or longing for somebody else’s achievement because God made everything and everything belongs to Him. (Psalm 89:11) God is not arrogant or boastful because even though Jesus is God, He made Himself nothing, took on the nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, humbled Himself and became obedient even unto death on the cross. (Philippians 2:6-8) God is not rude and in fact, Jesus is the gentlest person. (Matthew 11:28-29) God does not insist but pours out His love for us and shows us what is true, yet, gives us the choice to either love Him or defy Him. While the Kingdom of Heaven is open to all, He does not force anyone to enter His Kingdom. (Revelation 3:20) While we are clear on what love is, let us meditate on each aspect of love so that we can be more like God.

1 Corinthians 13:5c – Love is not Irritable or Resentful (ESV)

If love is not irritable nor resentful, is God irritable or resentful? God is definitely an angry God even though He may be kind and patient, does not envy, boast or is arrogant, not rude, does not insist. The wrath of His anger is terrifying (Isaiah 5:25) and our God displays His wrath every day! (Psalm 7:11) 1 Corinthians 13:5c may also be translated into: “It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs”. How do we explain this when God is an angry God?

Anger

Since God created us in His image and God is an angry God, we all have anger. It is alright to be angry but in our anger we must not sin (Ephesians 4:26), and we are to be angry at what God is angry at:

- godlessness and wickedness – “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people.....” (Romans 1:18)

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- ungratefulness – “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (Romans 1:21)
 - When people exchanged His glory for images – “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.” (Romans 1:23)
 - People who defiled the temple ground – 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. (Matthew 21:12-13) Jesus was provoked when people were acting dishonestly and unscrupulously.
- ❖ If God is provoked by injustice and angry at evil, so should we.

Anger – an emotion

God gave us emotions, e.g. anger, as tools to help us make decisions in various situations in our lives. We all have emotions but we must not confuse emotions with response. Anger is an emotion, not a response.

- Emotion is like a sensation such as pain. If we have a stomachache, something has caused that pain. It could be the level of spiciness of food taken earlier being too much for us. The pain is a signal for us to decide on our response: whether to go to the toilet; or to continue eating the same level of spiciness and run to the toilet the next day; or to avoid spicy food altogether; or start training our body to accept a higher level of spiciness.
- Emotion being a sensation, is not the cause. Similarly, anger is a sensation, not the cause. We get angry because something has caused us to be angry; usually because something has fallen short of our expectation. God is angry because we have fallen short of His expectation, His glory.
- Anger can be good or it can be bad. It is the response that we choose that determines whether it is good or bad. Being angry when we see injustice is good, but when our response is being vindictive, it becomes very bad because we are playing God. We want others to suffer the wrong they had committed by taking justice into our own hands.
- Even though we are made in the image of God, we are not God. When we take justice into our own hands, we are playing God – that is a very serious sin. We are only made to have the emotion of anger, but we have to choose our response. We need to trust God to administer justice to the wrong doings in the world. God administers justice in the world by assigning authorities to the world and also, through the last judgement.

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King James version brings out the translation very well – “Love is not easily provoked” – ‘provoked’ here carries the connotation of action. What are we going to do when provoked or angry? Anger is like fire – a good servant but a bad master. We use fire to cook things and purify things. But when out of control, it is a bad master/tyrant as it burns and destroys. Similarly, anger is a good servant when we tame it but a bad master when we are tamed by it. How do we tame it? Since we are made in the image of God, God is our best teacher and example for us to look to and imitate.

Learning from God’s anger

God is extremely slow to anger – 3200 years ago, the Israelites were enslaved by the Egyptians. God sent them Moses to set them free. After God had saved them from slavery, He parted the Red Sea with a spectacular miracle and led them to Mount Sinai to show them His glory. (Exodus 19:16-18) The presence of God was overwhelming. They could see it, smell it, feel it and hear it. In the midst of it, the people could hear the voice of God telling Moses to go up to the mountain and leave them at the foot of the mountain. While Moses was conferring with God up there, after experiencing such as breathtaking experience with God, instead of honouring Him, the people collected all the gold among them, melted it and crafted out a golden calf and worshipped it. It was an unbelievable response from the Israelites who had experienced firsthand the power and presence of God. God was certainly angry. However, Exodus 34:6 tells us that God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithful. Likewise, we are to be very slow to anger – quick to listen and slow to speak. (James 1:19)

- ❖ Love is not easily provoked, does not mean that we cannot be angry but rather, it is about how we should respond when we are angry. We are not to play God but to be like God – slow to act on our anger.

Love and Forgiveness

Love is not easily provoked nor resentful. The original Greek word in this 2nd part of the verse is an accounting word – love keeps no record of wrongs. (NIV)

- If anger is an emotion caused by something which falls short of our expectation, then love is to forgive that person.
- Love is not resentful and keeping no record of wrongs is the core to forgiveness.
- To err is human, to forgive divine. Forgiveness is the center of God’s love for us. God sending His Son to die on the cross is driven by His desire to forgive. (John 3:16) It is the definitive act of Love. (Parable of the 2 Debtors – Luke 7:36-47)
- ❖ Forgiveness is a definitive act and mark of love. One can be patient, kind, polite etc. but if one does not forgive, he/she does not have love. So, if we are harbouring a disdain, a grudge with a family member, a classmate, a brother or sister in Christ, or even a loved one, we are not loving genuinely.

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CONCLUSION

We are made in the image of God with the emotion of anger because God is an angry God. However, we are not God and we are not to play God by taking justice into our own hands. Instead, we are to be like God, practicing forgiveness. So each time our emotion acts out, let us pause – be slow to anger, then pray for a clean heart that we will not want to play God, that we will have the capacity and the desire to forgive because love is not easily provoked and keeps no record of wrongs.

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?

1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2a. Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 aloud slowly.

2b. Have you been living out the image of God in these verses?

Consider your response when others fail to meet your expectations. Count how many situations there had been when you paused and prayed for God to give you the capacity and desire to forgive?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 3a. (i) Make a list of 5 things that make you angry and another list of 5 things that make God angry.
- (ii) How many things are the same on both lists? Why?
- 3b. How does knowing that anger is an emotion and not a response help you better tame it?
- 4a. (i) Do you have a keen sense of justice and would like to bring punishments to those who have been unjust?
- (ii) Why is it a sin to take justice into your own hands?
- 4b. (i) Is there someone in your life you need to forgive for falling short of your expectation and release any resentment you have towards him/her?
- (ii) What is one thing you can do to apply the principles of “love keeps no record of wrongs” in 4b(i) above?
- 4c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 4b(ii) above, in the following week(s), till your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your testimony on how the Holy Spirit enabled you to respond appropriately in a situation where you were provoked to anger, so you did not sin.

OR

Give thanks to God for being compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithful, keeping no record of your wrongs.

6. Take time to pray for each other to be like God, not irritable or resentful, even in your anger. Seek the Holy Spirit's empowerment to be willing to forgive any grudges held against another person.

Pray for healing in our church that we may be loving, forgiving and model Christ-likeness in our relationships with one another.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Hosanna – Hillsong <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMRGi1fEdB0>
2. How Marvelous – Chris Tomlin <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ue8ZCAc9xQ8>
3. Create In Me A Clean Heart – Maranatha Singers
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fVliokreqE>

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