

More About Jesus, Week 19: Jesus got angry

(Mark 8)

One of the most impressive aspects of Jesus' character in the gospels is his patience in trying to teach spiritual concepts of the kingdom with people who were constantly limited by their inability or unwillingness to understand them.

But it shouldn't surprise us that in many cases, those efforts led to frustration and even anger on Jesus' part. The gospels make it clear that Jesus was not necessarily a mild-mannered rabbi who never responded with harshness or outrage.

Mark 3 describes an early conflict with the Jewish leaders, who had been growing increasingly critical of Jesus' activities. Their resistance to his ministry had reached the point where they were planning to accuse Jesus for healing on the Sabbath day.

As Jesus saw the man with the withered hand in v. 4, he calls him forward and then asks the assembly,

"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart ... - Mark 3:4-5 (ESV)

Jesus' frustration at the hypocrisy of the Pharisees resulted in some of his harshest criticisms, including the seven "woes" pronounced on them in **Matthew 23**, where he calls them *"serpents, you brood of vipers"* (v. 33).

Jesus even expressed frustration at his own disciples at times when they seemed unable to understand the implications of his miracles, or unwilling to fully accept all that he taught them about his own mission and purpose.

In **Mark 8**, following a string of impressive miracles, Jesus tried to warn the apostles about the influence of the Pharisees, calling it "leaven." The apostles, who apparently had food on their minds, became troubled that they didn't have bread with them.

Having just fed 4,000 people with seven loaves and a few fishes, Jesus responded in apparent frustration:

"Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?" - Mark 8:17-18.

Immediately after this, Mark records Jesus healing a blind man – but Jesus heals him in stages, which was highly unusual. Jesus restored part of the man's sight, and when he asked

the man what he saw, the man looked up, presumably seeing the apostles with Jesus, and said, *“I see people, but they look like trees, walking”* (v. 24). There seemed to be plenty of instances where Jesus may have felt like he was speaking to trees, and not men!

Just a few verses later, we read Peter’s great confession that Jesus is the Christ, followed immediately by Peter rebuking Jesus for predicting his death and resurrection on the third day. Jesus responded to Peter in the harshest words imaginable: *“Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man”* (**Mk 8:33**).

Jesus’ frustration and anger - even to the point of flipping over the moneychangers’ tables at the temple (**Mat. 21:12**) – reflect his humanity and remind us that there are times when we’re going to feel angry and frustrated as well. But Jesus’ anger always rose up in the context of trying to do God’s will and meeting either resistance or continued misunderstanding. Jesus never lost his temper or lashed back at personal insult or offenses.

Jesus seemed to absorb abuse on a daily basis (as in **Mark 3:22**) leading up to the cross, where he called for forgiveness for those who were crucifying him (**Luke 23:34**). When he was reviled, he did not revile in return (**1 Peter 2:23**). His anger and frustration were rooted in his zeal for God’s house (**John 2:17**), and not in response to personal insults.

It’s a good reminder for us to do as Paul wrote in Eph. 4:26: *“Be angry, and do not sin.”*