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6th Sunday after Epiphany
13 February 2011
Grace/Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Matthew 5:21-37

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

The way we treat each other is telling of how our Lord treats us.
And it's the same way with children.

Think about it, how do your children learn to talk?
They don't simply come out jibber-jabbering!
No, they need to *hear* us talking with them.
That's why we read them books—over and over and over again!
That's also why we talk to them, even when we have nothing really to say.
Simply by talking, we teach them to hear the sounds of words,
and they repeat them back.

And how do our children learn to treat others, when they first go off to school?
By watching us—the way we treat them and one another.

As children learn from their parents how to live in this world,
so parents learn from their heavenly Father.

And yet, judging by the way we act, this isn't always the case—
there seems to be another influence that's snuck in.
There seems to be someone like that kid in school who taught our kid the foul
language.

In today's portion of the Sermon on the Mount we hear that not only is murder forbidden
(everyone knows that one),
but so is *anger*:
“**But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to
judgment**” (Mt 5:22).

What's the big deal about getting angry, you might ask?
It's just a natural reaction to things not going your way, right?

Here's the key:
if you're ever wondering whether something is good or bad,
permissible as a Christian, or not,
ask yourself if you can find it in the Lord.

Is our Lord angry?
No.

When Christ hung on the cross, all of God's wrath and fury poured out upon *Him*.
Yes, God *was* angry—He was furious over our rebellion and constant sinning.
He hated all our false gods,

the way we took His name in vain,
 our laziness and lack of desire to hear His word,
 He hated the way we disobeyed our parents and failed to learn from them,
 our hatred for our neighbor,
 our lust for what's not given to us,
 our steeling and gossip and coveting.

God was *very* angry with us and had plenty of good reason for it.

But the event of the cross brought us reconciliation.

It took His wrath and anger away, forever.

What happened at the cross wasn't simply a convincing argument for why God
 shouldn't be angry,

but rather, it let Him be as angry as God could be!

His fury struck down His own son.

His hatred and terror were unleashed—

God lashed out, and struck Jesus.

And *that* meant reconciliation for us.

Reconciliation is what happens between enemies.

It's two opposing sides, opinions, desires, and personalities coming together and making
 things right.

It's a settling of accounts, going away at peace.

For you to be reconciled to the Father means

No more anger,

no more wrath,

no more fury or terror or hell or death.

God spent it all on Christ,

who has now reconciled us with the Father.

And so, for the Christian to be angry he must have learned this anger from somewhere else!

Someone *else* must still have wrath or be upset about things not going his way.

Someone *else* must still have some anger left to teach us—

because our Lord has no anger left.

Our Lord isn't angry.

But there is someone who's angry—

Satan.

Things *didn't* go his way.

And Satan will do whatever he can to make you angry too.

He wants you angry because then you'll forget about this whole reconciliation bit.

You'll forget that your Lord forgave you in a much worse state.

Satan wants you angry so that you'll forget about what your Lord is like,

how He bore your sins and the wrath of His Father for you.

But Jesus says that the one who's angry is liable to the judgment.
 If you're angry, then you've rejected reconciliation.
 If you're angry, you've still got unsettled business,
 something's not gone your way,
 something still needs to be made right and whole,
 something needs to be forgiven.

And that's why Jesus speaks so harshly against anger,
 because anger is of the devil; it runs against forgiveness.

That's also why the Lord isn't angry—
 everything that would anger Him, our sin, has been forgiven.

Our accounts have been settled,
 wrongs have been made right,
 debts have been paid.
 You are forgiven.

And now, as one who stands forgiven,
 whose God is no longer angry, no longer upset or wrathful in the least,
 learn from His forgiveness.
 Treat your neighbor the way your Lord treats you—
 without any coercion or force,
 without deceit or manipulation,
 with pure joy in heart, and gladness on your face.

And if you find yourself angry,
“Go, leave your gift at the altar and first be reconciled to your brother” (Mt 5:23-24).

Because at this Altar there can be no anger.
 At this Altar there can be no unsettled accounts, or unfinished business,
 at this Altar there can be no sins left unforgiven.

Come to this Altar with pure joy—
 joy of sins forgiven, accounts settled, debts paid, and anger undone—
 and learn from the Lord who comes with His own Body and Blood.

The same Lord Jesus who took the Father's anger away now comes to take yours away, too.

He takes away your anger, your lust, your brokenness, your hatred, your deceit, and your lies.
 He takes away your self-reliance, your pride, and your own attempts to make things right.
 And when He's taken it all away—everything you trusted and relied on—
 He gives you Himself—His Body and Blood—
for you, for your forgiveness and life.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit