

**Mark 3:1-6** Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. <sup>2</sup> They were watching him to see whether he would cure him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. <sup>3</sup> And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." <sup>4</sup> Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. <sup>5</sup> He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. <sup>6</sup> The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

I would like to talk about anger. If you are what you eat then a lot of folks are feasting on anger. Why? There are nefarious people that do everything they can to make you angry. When you are angry you dwell in the reptilian part of your brain and the rational part shuts down. "Keep them angry so they won't stop and think". What they get you angry about doesn't even have to be true or have anything to do with solving problems to make life better. Anger is like an addiction. What used to make you angry doesn't work anymore. Consequently, the anger makers start telling lies. You know it is true. All you have to do is stop and listen.

We gravitate more towards anger than joy, more towards people screaming about what they are against than to people talking about what they are for. The people spewing anger, rage, incessant blame and criticism, constantly shouting about being wronged and vowing vengeance do it because it works. They are master manipulators.

In the gospel verse Jesus is angry but there is good anger and bad anger. The anger I just talked about is bad anger. Jesus's anger was good anger. Michael Marsh is an episcopal priest in Uvalde, Texas. Reverend Marsh posts his sermons on the site "Interrupting the Silence". What he has to say about anger is excellent and I will read his sermon as is.

*Last week Cyndy and I were leaving the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin when a little boy who was probably two or three or years old screamed at*

*his mother, “I want to catch a dragonfly.” He was so angry and he was loud. He sat on the ground yelling and crying.*

*“But they’re really fast and hard to catch,” his mom said. He continued raging at her. We walked by and gave the mom a “we remember what that was like” kind of smile. When we got to the truck we heard them coming down the street. He was standing on the back of the stroller screaming nonstop.*

*I don’t know who that kid was but I know what it’s like to be dragonfly angry. I suppose you do too. I had some dragonfly anger while we were driving through Austin. I didn’t scream but I honked and waved at a couple of people. Cyndy said, “Mike!” We all have our dragonfly moments. I wonder what yours are.*

*When we’re dragonfly angry – when we don’t get our way or others don’t do what we want – we feel personally wronged and justified in our temper tantrum. That’s true whether we’re three, thirty, or eighty years old.*

*It seems to me that much of our life and world today are characterized by dragonfly anger. The anger we see from Jesus in today’s gospel however, is very different from dragonfly anger.*

*Jesus is in the synagogue with a man who has a hurt hand. It’s dry, damaged, withered, and shriveled. The man needs help and Jesus asks the religious authorities, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?” It’s clear he’s asking that question in reference to the man with a withered hand. The answer is obvious to them and to us.*

*The religious authorities didn’t say a word. They saw the man’s hand. They saw his need. It wasn’t a hard question “but they were silent” and “Jesus looked around at them with anger.”*

*I wonder when we’ve been silent. In what ways are we silent today? On what issues and in regard to whom are we silent?*

*Their silence reminds me of what Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote about “the evil of indifference.” He said:*

*“There is an evil which most of us condone and are even guilty of: indifference to evil. We remain neutral, impartial, and not easily moved by the wrongs done to other people. Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself; it is more universal, more contagious, more dangerous.”*

*Abraham J. Heschel, [The Prophets](#), vol. 2 (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1975), 64.*

*I wonder if that’s why Jesus is so angry with the religious authorities. They are silent and indifferent.*

*I don’t think Jesus is angry because they are committed to keeping the sabbath and the religious laws of the day. I think he’s angry because they have no compassion for the man, because they are unwilling [to commit themselves to the healing, well-being, and future of the man](#), because they refuse to speak on the man’s behalf let alone do something.*

*In some ways Jesus’ anger is also a lament. “Their hardness of heart” breaks Jesus’ heart and he grieves what has become of them.*

*What about us? What is becoming of us?*

*Here’s one way of learning what’s going on in your heart; look at your anger. Our anger says a lot about us, who we are, our view of others, who and what we most care about, our values and interests. In that sense today’s gospel is diagnostic. It raises questions about our anger.*

*What are you angry about today? And if you’re not angry, why aren’t you? What is your dragonfly anger today? What is your Jesus anger today? What are the patterns of your anger over the last few weeks, the last several months? Your life?*

- *Is your anger a deep form of compassion, care, and concern for others or is it a fight for personal gain?*
- *Is your anger controlled, thoughtful, and timely or is it a sudden outburst, reactionary, a temper tantrum?*
- *Does your anger cause you to blame, criticize, and punish others or is it empowering you to respond to injustice and meet the needs of others?*
- *Is it primarily concerned with your personal offense and sense of being wronged or with the wrongs being done to others?*

- *Is anger how you defend and justify yourself or is it a way of protecting others?*
- *Is your anger doing good or doing harm, saving life or killing?*

*I'm asking myself those questions too. Our answers to those questions won't tell us what to do but they will offer us insight and knowledge about ourselves. In whatever ways you and I might answer those questions it's just information for us to do something with.*

*We sure could use some Jesus kind of anger these days. What if you and I, St. Philip's, and Uvalde had more Jesus anger than dragonfly anger? How might we do that? What would that take and look like in your life today?*

*I don't want us to waste our time and energy on being dragonfly angry. It doesn't get us anywhere. Besides, dragonflies are really fast and hard to catch.*

*I want to be angry like Jesus for the sake of those I love and care about. I want to be angry like Jesus for the sake of Uvalde and all those who are hurting. I want to be angry like Jesus for the sake of our country's future.*

*I want to be angry like Jesus, don't you?*

Query: What are you angry about and why?

Query: If you are angry is it Dragonfly anger or Jesus anger?

Query: If you aren't angry why not?