

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

March 3, 2024 • 3rd Sunday of Lent • John 2:13-25

Anger

It is the Passover, and Jesus goes to the temple for quiet and prayer. When he reaches the temple area he sees table after table of merchants and moneychangers. The sight and sounds must have been incredible. Jesus is angry because they are making a mockery of God's sacred space.

Jesus' anger is certainly evident in this story of his cleansing the temple, but this wasn't the first time we see Jesus displaying his feelings. At various times in the Gospels we see Jesus sad, happy, frustrated, afraid and, yes, even angry. He cried, laughed, was honest about his fear and his anger. Jesus was comfortable expressing his feelings, and he expressed them in appropriate ways.

Psychologists tell us that feelings are neither good nor bad, they just are. It is what we do with those feelings that really matters. We need tears and laughter to help us heal not only emotionally, but sometimes even physically. Fear helps to get the adrenaline going when we need to protect ourselves and move fast. Expressing our anger justly is also appropriate in the right settings.

A priest once told me that sometimes children should see their parents angry to help them understand the seriousness of a situation. He cautioned, however, to make sure the response was nonviolent and appropriate to the wrong-doing. Never respond unless you are certain you are in control of your feelings. If need be, take a long walk. Anger must never lead to physically or emotionally abusing a child or anyone else.

Some people need to get help in finding healthy outlets for their anger. The experts agree: Suppressing our feelings can be dangerous. Anger will find its own way out, too often in unhealthy ways. We may end up letting it out at the wrong person, or we may unintentionally hurt another or ourselves. Like everything else that is difficult in life, anger is best mastered when we realize we can't handle it alone, and we ask for God's help.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Read the story of Jesus cleansing the temple, and then ask everyone to talk about what makes him or her angry. Discuss ways of handling anger.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Name the trigger points that cause you to get angry with your children or spouse. Since you cannot control another person's behavior, only your own, what can you do about the situation? What do you want to remember from last week? What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?