

P E A C E M A K E R



WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 25TH

“Anger and condemnation like vengeance, are safely left to God. We must beware of believing that it is okay for us to condemn as long as we are condemning the right things. It is not so simple as all that. I can trust Jesus to go into the temple and drive out those who were profiting from religion, beating them with a rope. I cannot trust myself to do so.”

—Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*

READ: MATTHEW 21:12-17

What word, image, or phrase sticks out to you from today's passage?

Draw about it or write a response to God using the space below.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

This week's passage is often cited by Christians in defense of "righteous anger." What do you believe about the justification of anger in certain situations, and can anger yield peace? List some specific areas or issues where you believe this applies.

Dallas Willard defines anger as the "will to do harm," then adds, "there is nothing done in anger that cannot be done better without it." Look back at your list in the question above and consider what other redemptive tools you might use in anger's place. (For example: John Woolman, a Quaker minister, reformer, and abolitionist chose to embody his resistance to oppression and injustice in peaceful yet powerful ways - he refused to ride in stagecoaches because he believed it was cruel to animals. He carried his own utensils to other people's dinner parties, because silver was bound to the slave trade. His journals provide a stunning example of peaceful resistance that produced radical change.)



Read John 11:1-44

Just as the prophets never hesitated to approach God with their complaints, Jesus' friends don't hesitate to confront Jesus' delayed response to Lazarus' illness. But notice how their anger and grief turns into a statement directed to Jesus that has embedded in it a recognition of Jesus' power. "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." (vs. 21) Then see how Jesus responds by inviting them into the process of restoring life to their brother, instructing them to roll the stone back and remove the grave cloths. What can this teach us about transforming our anger and grief into prayers that then point us towards redemptive action?

PRACTICE:

Jesus had the kind of rock solid character that enabled him to exercise anger in a redemptive way, its unlikely that the same is true of you and me. But to deny our anger, or attempt to hide it away does nothing but repress rather than process. For instance - what would have happened if Lazarus' sisters didn't send word to Jesus or participate with Jesus after his death? What if they had just remained silent in the face of his illness and death instead?

Throughout Scripture we find the invitation to lament - approaching God with a specific complaint of something that angers or grieves us, and in doing so acknowledging God's power and requesting God's help.

Look back to your list of what angers you, and turn that into a prayer of lament.

- Begin with an address to God that includes a statement of what is wrong. Where does God feel absent?
- Next, write a bold request of God. What do you want?
- Then write an affirmation of who you know God to be.
- Conclude with a line of praise and thanksgiving.

For help in writing a prayer of lament, check out Psalm 22, 40, 74, or 85.

""Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction."

