

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

James 1.19-25

“Ever heard, “Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all.”
Do you remember the stepmother in the story of Snow White.
She had a mirror and she would ask,
“Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all.”
The mirror would always answer, “Oh you are.”
Then one day the mirror tells the truth.
The stepmother isn’t the fairest of them all.
And the stepmother gets angry when she hears the truth.

Well, you and I might get angry too if we’re told
something about ourselves we really don’t want to hear whether it’s true or not.

James talks about the Bible being a mirror.

James 1.23-24, *Anyone who listens to the word and does not to do what it says is like a man who after looking in the mirror and after looking at himself, walks away and immediately forgets what he looks like.’*

Does that ever happen to you? You read something in the Bible or hear something the preacher preaches and it sounds unbelievable, and it feels uncomfortable.

What we see in the mirror might seem unbelievable,
that’s because we’re not always thinking God’s way.
And what we feel might be uncomfortable,
and that’s because we don’t always do what God wants us to do.

If we see, hear, and know something that needs to be changed and don’t change it,
spiritually that will create more struggle and stress, more shame and pain for us.

Looking in the mirror is good; it can cause us to change what needs to be changed.

So let’s begin, let’s look in the mirror and ask some questions.

1. MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL, WHY TALK ABOUT ANGER, WHY TALK ABOUT IT AT ALL

James 1.20, *“for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.”*

As the people of faith we want to live a good life, a righteous life-Right?

What do you think when you see people speak and do angry things?
Is it attractive? Do you want to be like them?
It is usually not a good witness, is it?
Proverbs 29.11 says, **“Only a fool gives full vent to his anger.”**
Anger just doesn’t bring about the God-intended life.

The Hebrew language has a couple of picture words for anger.
One has to do with the nose. The word means “pregnant nostrils.
When one becomes angry the nostrils enlarge,
then when breathing there is a snorting sound.

I use get angry very easily.
I used to snort and Char that would get upset.
Then one day she figured out it was my problem.
After that she would ask me if I was angry, remind me that I’m snorting,
smile her sweet little smile, and walk away.

God doesn’t have “pregnant nostrils”, at least not at first.
God doesn’t snort, at least not to start with.
God is long of nose, that means God is patient and slow to anger.

Exodus 34.6 tells us that God passed in front of Moses and proclaimed,
**“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, is slow to anger
(long of nose), and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,
maintaining love to the thousands, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.”**

There are other reasons anger is not what God desires.
Anger can be depressing, devastating and deadly.

Unresolved anger messes with our chemistry and can cause a huge host
of health problems, both physical and emotional.
Depression is often the result of anger turned inwards.

And anger is truly deadly to the soul. In Matthew 5.21-22 Jesus taught,
**“You have heard it said to the people long ago,
“Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.
But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.”**

Sometimes people feel good when they are angry, it's just wait, I'm going to tell them. Anger drives revenge. At first that may look good, sound good, feel good, and we even think, UMMM!!!...it tastes good-Right?

We might think of revenge as sweet, but Fredrick Buechner says it's a deadly feast, *"of the seven deadly sins, anger could be the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll your tongue over the prospect of bitter confrontation still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel, both the pain you've been given and the pain you're giving back-it's like a feast for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself."*

The Eskimos coat a knife with whale's blood and let it freeze. Then they coat it with blood again and again and let it freeze again and again. Finally they stick the knife in the snow blade up. A wolf finds it and begins to feast on it, licking away.

Eventually the feast becomes a frenzy, The wolf eventually cuts his tongue on the knife blade and continues to feast, now on his own blood. He feasts until he dies. Friends, if we feast on anger, we'll die in anger.

Another reason anger doesn't bring about a righteous life is that it creates strife. Proverbs 29.22 tells us that, *"An angry man stirs up anger."* And Proverbs 30.33 adds, *"so stirring up anger produces strife."*

God creates community and we know anger can devastate relationships. Often a person subconsciously uses anger to create connection and build relationships but the results are just the opposite, anger creates distance, disturbs trust and breaks down relationships.

Proverb 22.24 advises us, *"make no friendship with an angry man."* Anger usually doesn't bring about the God-intended life.

Now, me say here that anger is not all bad. It can even be good. It is God given. God given anger is called righteous anger.

God was often angry with the people in their rebellion and sin, Slow t anger-long of nose, but angry never-the-less.

Jesus was angry with the temple officials.

He overturned the tables in the temple because the moneychangers cheated the people.

Jesus had some choice words for the Pharisees and teachers of the law, because they oppressed, abused, misused, and manipulated the people.

When we see people being abused and misused, neglected and not treated so nicely, an appropriate response is righteous anger.

So when we look into the mirror and see anger, Whether it is righteous or self-righteous anger, We see someone who needs to change something about themselves, or we see someone who needs to change something in our world.

So let's take another peek in the mirror and ask our second question,

2-MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL,

I'M ANGRY, WHAT DO I DO LESS I FALL?

There is an assumption that we will get angry.

God knows that we'll get angry and anger is a God-given emotion.

The NIV translation of Ephesians 4.26-27 tells us to,

“Be angry but sin not, don't let the sun go down on your anger.”

In the Message we hear it this way, ***“Go ahead and be angry.***

You do well to be angry, but don't use your anger as revenge.

And don't stay angry. Don't go to bed angry. Don't give the

Devil any kind of foothold in your life.”

That is great advice for families isn't it?

That's great advice for moms and dads, parents and children,

“Don't go to bed angry.”

That's great advising for everyone.

Brother James has a formula for us,

“My dear brothers, take note of this; everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry...

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.

Do what it says. James 1.19, 22

BE QUICK TO LISTEN

How did you learn to deal with anger?

Most of us learned to stuff it, or we learned we were supposed to stuff it?

We **weren't supposed** to say angry words or show angry ways.

Be “quick to listen” sounds a whole lot like stuffing it, keeping mum-right?

Well the pendulum has swung in our day and age.

The contemporary solution for dealing with anger is “to let it all hang out.”

We see and hear daily the result of anger played out in our world,
the workplace, in schools, and homes.

There are wars all over the world, drive by shooting, and shootings in schools.

There are people killing their children, their spouses, and themselves.

We hear vicious and violent language on TV, in movies, and other media.

We hear cursing and cussing condemning others when we sit in cafes and walk in malls.

We hear angry words that blast ballplayers, policemen, politicians, diners and drivers

We know that people might become angry when they are hurt, they're afraid,
and they don't get what they want, what they deserve, or what they expect.

A little boy falls down, gets up hurt, starts to cry,
and is angry with everyone, especially “the one who pushed him.”

Sissy wanders away in the store. Her parents finally find her.

Then from fear to relief they hug her and scream, “don't you ever do that again.”

The teenage hasn't called, misses curfew, and finally shows up two hours late.

His parents are frustrated and afraid and they shout in anger, “Where have you been?”

You see when James says be quick to listen, he doesn't mean to suppress you anger.

He meant we need to be sure to hear the whole story, hear and see what is really said.

We're “to read between the lines” so to speak.

James doesn't want us to jump to any hasty conclusions and create more conflict.

Now implied in “QUICK TO LISTEN” is that we listen to God, too

We're to take this information we've seen and heard, and take it to God.

Then we listen to what He has to say about it.

A Christ-centered person is a Christ controlled person.

BE SLOW TO SPEAK

We know “*a harsh word stirs up anger*” (Proverbs 15.1) and usually makes the situation worse.

Have you ever said anything in anger you’ve regretted? I didn’t think so. For some of us it’s easier to tell the other people person why they made us angry, but it is harder thing to do in a helpful tone of voice.

I know you’ve heard the old clique; you have two eyes, two ears, and one mouth. **First** we look and listen. **Second**, we process. And **Third**, we speak.

Well maybe you can speak first, but first to the Lord.
Pray...Lord, help me say and do//what you want said and done//
in the way that you want it said and done.

You try it with me.

**Lord, help me to say and do//what you want said and done//
in the way you want it said and done.**

We want to have the Lord’s perspective, the Lord’s power,
and the Lord’s patience, we want to be “long of nose” before we reply.

There is a time and place for anger to be suppressed and for anger to be expressed.

AND BE SLOW TO ANGER

“Better a patient man...who controls his temper.”

The other word picture for anger means “to burn” or “to grow hot”.

Have you ever heard anyone say, “he’s a hothead or she’s boiling **mad**.”

But when James says be slow to anger he is implying that we can manage anger.
That is easier said than done-right?

We need someone to manage us.

Guess who?

Let’s ask the mirror,

3. **MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL,**

IT’S SEEMS HOPELESS, I FEEL HELPLESS, ON WHOM MAY I CALL?

And the mirror screams back, **ME**

Verse 21, “*Therefore get rid of all moral filth and evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.*”

The word **humbly** here could also be translated, meek. That is a difficult word for us to handle but it is a beautiful godly word. It doesn't mean weak; it means to be receptive, teachable, and leadable.

The attitude allows us welcome and even desire to have the implanted word in us. The implanted word is Jesus.

Thus the presence, the purpose, and the patience of God is actually within us; growing within us; absorbing for us the anger created by things said and done to us; (*he endured the suffering...*) and healing our hurt, our hostility, our hate (*by his stripe we are healed*), and guiding our thoughts and actions towards others.

As we accept and allow the implanted word within us to work, we'll be moved to invest energy and effort, time and money in bringing about God-intended lives.

Oh one more question-**MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL,
WHO IS...THE FAIREST OF THEM ALL?**

Let's stand and sing I Surrender All.

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