**The World’s Gone Mad – Week 1 – Mad at Me**

**Message Big Idea**: God heals our internal conflict when we embrace grace.

**Scripture:** James 1:19-20, Romans 3:23-24 (NLT), 2 Corinthians 7:10, Ephesians 1:3-6 (NLT), 2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 3:12-14 (NLT), Romans 8:28 (NLT)

**Note:** Etch-a-Sketch and Response Card needed in this message.

**Introduction: The World’s Gone Mad**

**Video: Montage of Angry People**

*(Picture of angry people)* Have you ever seen so many angry people?

* We are angry at the news and angry at opposing views.
* We are angry on the roads and angry at final episodes.
* We are angry with those we know and angry at how much it snows.
* We are angry at gas prices and angry at the loudest voices. vices
* We are angry at the polls and angry with Internet trolls.

We ‘re even angry at the face we see in the mirror.

It seems that anger is in the air!

How many of you can remember getting angry at least once in the past week? …the past day? …the past hour? If so, you are not alone.

NBC News and Esquire Magazine surveyed 3000 Americans and found that half of us say we are angrier today than we were one year ago. Nearly 70% of us say that we get angry at least once a day over something we hear or read in the news. And do you want to know the crazy thing about this study? It took place in January of 2016…before the last election. I can only imagine that we’re even angrier now![[1]](#footnote-1)

It seems the whole world’s gone mad!

But maybe, just maybe, there is a better way.

James, the brother of Jesus writes:

**“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry…” –James 1:19**

Everyone should be slow to become angry. You’ve likely heard that verse before. We’ve used it here often. But in the very next verse James explains the reason for this command:

**“…because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.” –James 1:20**

What James is saying is that if we really desire is to see God’s purposes realized in this world, we shouldn’t fool ourselves into supposing our bursts of anger (which will likely have all sorts of nasty bits to them) will somehow help God do what needs to be done.

There is a better way. And over the next three weeks, we’re going to do our best to discover it.

**Series Introduction**

*(Series Graphic)* Today we are starting a new series called, **“The World’s Gone Mad.”** Our hope is that during this series we’ll learn to release our anger and find the peace that God offers to us. And to pursue that peace, we’re going to look at three places we direct our anger:

* In week 3, we’re going to talk about **“Mad at Them”** as we look outward at the things in our world that make us mad.
* In week 2, we’ll talk about **“Mad at Us”** and get honest about how we sometimes find ourselves angry at one another as Christ-followers.

But we’re going to start off today by talking about **“Mad at Me”** because let’s face it… sometimes the person we are most angry at is ourselves.

**Mad at Me**

We all have done things or said things that make us mad at ourselves. Sometimes they are small things. For example…

*(Share a light-hearted example)* A couple weeks ago, I put the wrong license plate number into a parking app when I was downtown. Came back to my car… $50 parking ticket. Dumb mistake. Expensive consequence. And I know what some of you are going to say… you can contest that! But don’t say it because that will just make me madder. I was going to contest it, I really was. But I called the City of Chicago and got put on hold. The bad hold music broke me down. After waiting beyond my threshold for patience I said, “Forget it!” and hung up and just paid the ticket. So now I’m mad with myself for not putting up a fight!

There are lots of small things we beat ourselves up over. However, sometimes we are angry at ourselves over much more significant things.

*(Be appropriately vulnerable with a deeper example)* I don’t know about you, but I can push those things down into the far recesses of my mind. I try not to think about them. But as I was preparing for this message today, I tried to let some of them come into the light. Without turning this into a personal counseling session, among other things, I realized I am mad at myself for burning a bridge in a friendship a number of years ago. I handled an ugly situation by getting really angry and putting up a wall between myself and another person. At the time, I felt justified. But as I think back, even then, deep down I knew that’s not the person I want to be. ~~I did not walk in the way of Jesus in this situation.~~ Frankly, I’m disappointed in myself.

The truth is we all get mad ourselves over our failures. Sometimes we live with those failures present in the forefront of our minds. Sometimes we become experts at ignoring them. But every one of us carries regrets.

Most often, our personal failures fall into one of two categories. Either they are things we’ve… *(Heading: “Two Kinds of Failure”)*

* *(add)* **Done** – those things that make us smack our foreheads and say, “Ugh! I wish I’d never . . .” I’m talking about:
  + Lies we’ve told.
  + Relationships we’ve torpedoed.
  + Dumb choices we’ve made.
  + Rage we’ve unleashed.
  + Money we’ve blown.
  + Addictions we’ve fed.

Or maybe we feel more of our failures in the category of things we have…

* *(add)* **Not Done** – When we didn’t do something we or someone else expected us to do. These could be things like:
* Opportunities we missed.
* Time we wasted.
* Risks we didn’t take.
* Love we left unexpressed.
* Words not spoken.
* Forgiveness we withheld.

~~Researchers say~~ in the short term we tend to beat ourselves up over what we’ve done; but in the long term, we’re more likely to regret the things we’ve not done. It’s what gave us the famous poem:

***“For all sad words of tongue or pen,***

***The saddest are these: ‘It might have been!’” –John Greenleaf Whittier***

Today we’re going to challenge one another to get honest about the ways we are **“Mad at Me”** well, not mad at me, but mad at yourself. Hopefully you’re not all mad at me!

**Response Card.** When you came in today, you were given this “Mad at Me” card. Raises your hand if you didn’t get one and our ushers will make sure you receive one. On this card you’ll see a number of categories from relationships to health to finances. Later on as we conclude the talk, we’re going to give you a few quiet moments to reflect on an area or areas of your life where you feel like a failure – something you did or didn’t do. You don’t need to do anything with it right now, but I am praying that the Holy Spirit will work in these moments, so you can be honest with yourself, just you and God, and identify any areas of your life where you are mad at yourself. I know this can be really hard, but I really do believe the path to peace lies ahead if we will open ourselves to God in these moments.

**Three Anger Releasing Realities**

We all know what it can feel like to be stuck in the stuff we have “Done” and “Not Done.” It can feel like this…

**Video: Humorous “Stuck”** (We need a moment of levity here. Maybe a dog with a stick that impedes him from moving forward (like we used in “Releasing Your Regrets” message). Maybe a compilation of kids getting stuck like this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k43y740T5dc>

I thought we just needed a moment to smile. ☺ But seriously, how do we let go of being mad at ourselves and move forward? Today I want to share three anger-releasing realities that can help us let go of the things we’ve “Done” and “Not Done” and find a better way forward. Ready?

Here is **Reality #1: God’s Grace Erases our Failures**. In his letter to the church in Rome, the Apostle Paul reminds us:

*(add both v.23 and 24 NLT) “***For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.**

Before you beat yourself up for all your failures, remember that every one of us has sinned. Every one of us is in the same boat. Every one of us has done things we shouldn’t have done and has not done things we should have done. But, Paul continues:

**“Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” –Romans 3:23-24 NLT**

In his grace, God makes us right in his sight. Our greatest sins and biggest failures are not too big for God's grace.

I’ve had a lot of conversations with people over the years, and something I hear over and over again is just how so many people live consumed by guilt. Understand, shame (use this word instead of guilt) guilt is not from God. It has never been. What is from God is sorrow over things we have “Done” or “Not Done,” but again, Paul encourages us:

**“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.” -2 Corinthians7:10**

When we choose to repent…which is turning from our sin and failure and turning to God…God wipes away our past. Paul is saying that if I have a lingering sense of regret or guilt for something I’ve been forgiven for, that’s not from God.

The truth is we have a very real spiritual enemy who would love for us to tread water in an ocean of regret over what we have “Done” and “Not Done,” because guilt paralyzes us. Guilt gets us thinking and feeling, *“I'm never going to get past this, I'm never going to get over this failure, so why even try?”* And the more we stew in guilt and regret, the more we stay mad at ourselves.

*(Hold Etch-a-Sketch)* Ever seen one of these? Anybody ever had one of these as a kid growing up? The Etch-a-Sketch. In Arkansas, this is called an “iPad.” ☺ You know how it works. You draw lines and shapes by turning these little knobs. But what’s great about the Etch-a-Sketch is that if something goes wrong or if you don’t like your picture, what do you do? Yeah, just give it a little shake. And just like that, it’s gone.

Understand, this is exactly what God does for us. When godly sorrow leads us to repent, God, in his grace, wipes away our past. It’s gone, history, over and out.

If you look back at the things you circled on your card, know this today… **God’s grace erases your failures**.

**Here is another Reality…**

**We lost “grace” in this and the statements about grace**

**Reality #2 – You are not what you ‘ve done; you are who God says you are.**

Ok here’s the second reality: ***You are not what you have done, you are who God says you are.***

We live in a war between good and evil, right and wrong, love and hate. And one of the greatest battles in that war is waged right here (point to your head) and right here (point to your heart). The evil one – who is called ***“The Father of lies”*** wants us to let our sins and failures define us.

We have to repeatedly ask our heavenly Father to help us recognize that there is a world of difference between failing and being a failure. There is a famous quote from an Oscar Wilde play: **“*Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future*.”** Though I like the quote, the second part of it does not hold water theologically.

Did you know that a Christ-follower is NEVER called a sinner in sripture? Never! Followers of Jesus sin – we mess up, we pursue stuff that puts distance between us and God. But when you choose to embrace the grace and love of Jesus, your identity is never that of a sinner. You are not known to God by your greatest fault or your worst decision. That sin or that failure does not define who you are…Jesus does.

**Do we want to talk about sin as the breaking of shalom? Sin is an *event – it is a time when…whatever happened.*** It is never, ever a *person*. For those of you who have been in chains to the past and to your failures, I pray that by the power of the God’s Spirit you will recognize how God sees you today. Look what the Apostle Paul wrote: ***“Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone and a new life has begun.”*** *(2 Corinthians 5:17.) Phrase this a better way.* And remember, Paul’s “old life” included taking the lives of innocent people.

Explain what it means to belong to Christ without necessarily pointing out who does or doesn’t. ~~So the question I want to ask you is this: “Do you belong to Christ?” And if you’re here and you don’t, we’re still glad you’re here. We love it when spiritually-seeking people come here. That’s the kind of church we want to be – one for people at all points along the spiritual path.~~

But I ask that question: “Do you belong to Christ?” for this reason:

* For you to be a new person, you are called by God to enter into a relationship with Jesus where He becomes the One you turn to for forgiveness, for hope, for direction, for everything in your life.
* For **that** reality to become **your** reality, you are called to belong to him. He has already chosen you. The question is will you chose to belong to him - to follow him. If you haven’t, will you do that today?

When we belong to Jesus, we identify as one of his followers. And I can tell you when I follow closely to the one who gives me new life - the one who loves me as I am and not as I should be; that’s when my failures fail to define me, and I can remember who I really am. I am a new person, because Jesus has made me new.

I think the Oscar Wilde quote would be more accurate if it was stated this way: ***“Every saint has a past and everyone who HAS sinned has a future.***” Which is a great segue to our third reality . . .

**Reality #3 – You can’t change your past, but Christ can change your future.**

It is a sobering reality to know that you cannot change the past. And for some here today, you’re still mad about your past. Or it might be that you’re really more *sad* than *mad*.

* You lost your **marriage** and your only dream was to have a good marriage. And you are in agony over it; I ache with you, but you can't change it.
* For others, you **said something** or **did something** you so wish you hadn’t done. Or you **didn’t** say something or do something you so wish you had. And as painful as those memories may be, you can't change it.
* Maybe it wasn’t your fault at all, but someone **took advantage of you**. And that's painful beyond words – and you have every reason to be mad – angry – or full of all sorts of unanswered questions, but you still can't change what happened. It wasn’t your fault, but you still can’t change that.

I can't change what I’ve done or what has happened. But we serve a good God with whom all things are possible. And He's working in all things, even the bad things, to bring about good to those who love Him.

I love what Paul said to a church in the city of Philippi. He said, **“*I focus on this one thing*** *(which is funny because he then gives us two things, which are both about his relationship with Christ). And so how does he focus on that one thing? He says,* ***“Forgetting the past...and looking forward to what lies ahead.”*** *(Philippians 3:13-14)*

When Paul says “forget the past,” the word “forget” means “to treat with thoughtless inattention.” It doesn’t mean to have your memory erased like a file that’s deleted from your laptop. We wish it was that easy, but we know it’s not. What it means is this: We stop opening up that file - we give no attention to it.

So, here goes . . . What failure from your past do you need to start treating with thoughtless inattention?

Stop opening the file of…

Stop opening the file of…

* ~~You are not who others~~ **~~say~~** ~~you are.~~
* ~~You are not who you~~ **~~feel~~** ~~you are.~~
* ~~No sin you've ever committed is too big or too great for God's grace. And while you cannot change your past, the power of the risen Jesus can and will change your future.~~

The apostle Peter’s failures included denying he ever knew Jesus on the night before his death. And he was able to treat his failure with thoughtless inattention because he knew that Jesus loved him in spite of his failures. He spoke these words about the power of turning to Jesus in the face of failure: ***“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”*** *(Acts 3:20).* Repentance gets a bad rap, but it is the gift of a second, third, fourth or even one hundredth chance to turn to Jesus, seeking to no longer fall back in your failure, but to live forward in forgiveness.

**Response Moment and Communion**

I want you to take a look at the card again. My hunch is that over the past several minutes, you’ve thought about an incident or an area of your life where you have failed. We’re going to have a few moments of quiet reflection, and I want you to circle one of those categories that best represents the failure that you sometimes let define you. This stays between you and God - no one else unless you want to talk to someone about this later. We’ll be glad to facilitate that as well.

I think we all want times of refreshing . . . When I think of refreshing I think of…

* New life,
* A breath of fresh air,
* A drink of cool fresh water.

For some here, maybe it reminds you of your baptism. One of the most beautiful aspects of baptism is that when you are lowered down into water and you come back up it represents a new life. As Paul states, “the old is gone and the new has come.” That is a time of refreshing and this time can be too as we – repent or turn to Jesus and bring our failures to him.

Communion is also a time of refreshing where we remember the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. His sacrifice reminds us just how much he loves us – failures and all. The bread represents his body and the juice represents his blood.

So, I’m going to pray and give you some time to reflect, and then I’m going to ask all of us to pray this prayer together before we celebrate communion.

(Teaching Pastor prays out loud guiding congregation to reflect on and identify their past failure(s) and then lead the congregation in in this prayer asking the congregation to repeat each phrase after you.)

***“Lord Jesus, I belong to you. Give me your power to no longer fall back in my failures, but to live forward in your forgiveness.”***

1. <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a40693/american-rage-nbc-survey/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)