**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 our neighbor’s 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 the whole world’s gone mad!

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 surmise that we’re even angrier now![[1]](#footnote-1)

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 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 all of 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 today we’re starting off with **“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 in downtown Chicago. 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 at 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. I try not to think about them. But as I was preparing for this message, 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. And at the time, I felt justified.

The truth is we all get mad at 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.

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

* *(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.
  + 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.
* Forgiveness we withheld.

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. Raise 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 we’re going to give you a few quiet moments to reflect on an area of your life where you feel regret – 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 we all can be honest with ourselves. 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”**

I thought we just needed a moment to smile. ☺ But seriously, how do we get unstuck? 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?

**Reality #1: God’s grace erases our guilt.** 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 has them. 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: *(Emphasize “grace”)*

**“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 how so many people live consumed by shame. Understand, shame 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 bad decisions and turning to God…God wipes away our past.

*(Hold Etch-a-Sketch)* It’s kind of like this… Anybody have 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. Our guilt is gone, history, over and out. Paul says that if I have a lingering sense of regret or shame for something I’ve been forgiven for, that’s not from God.

Know this reality today… **God’s grace erases your guilt**.

Here is the second reality…

**Reality #2 – God’s grace defines our identity.**

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 Jesus calls *(“…he is a liar and the father of lies.” –John 8:44)* ***“The father of lies”*** – wants us to let our failures define us.

Understand, 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.” –Oscar Wilde**

Though I like the quote, the second part is a bit sketchy theologically.

Did you know that a Christ-follower is NEVER called a sinner in scripture? Never! Sure, 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 offered to you in Jesus, your identity is never that of a sinner. You are not known to God by your greatest mistake or your worst decision.

Do you want to know your true identity?

Listen to these amazing words from the Apostle Paul: *(emphasize “glorious grace”)*

**“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.” -Ephesians 1:3-6 NLT**

Do you want to know the answer to the question, “Who am I?” If you are a Christ-follower, the primary answer is not found in…

* What you have accomplished or left undone.
* Whatever you have accumulated or lost.
* Whether you have achieved or fallen short.

In fact, there’s really nothing you can do to define the most important thing about you except to embrace it. Because as Christ-followers, our primary identity is not built on anything we do or don’t do, but on something that’s already been done.

Through the glorious grace of Jesus Christ, you have been adopted as God’s son, as his daughter. You are a child of God.

Think about what it means to be adopted. Adoption bestows on a child a new name, a new legal standing, new family relationships. That is what has been given to us in Christ. We have a new name as God’s child. We stand before him holy and blameless in his sight. We are part of his family.

Our identity is not based on something we do or don’t do, but on something that’s already been done.

This is the unique message of Christianity! Pastor and theologian Tim Keller describes it this way:

**“A gospel is an announcement of something that has happened in history, something that’s been done that changes your status forever… Other religions say, ‘This is what you have to do in order to connect to God forever; this is how you have to live in order to earn your way to God.’ But the gospel says, ‘This is what has been done in history. This is how Jesus lived and died to earn the way to God for you.’” -Tim Keller, *Jesus the King***

God’s grace defines your identity. You are God’s adopted son. You are God’s adopted daughter. You are a child of God.

Our failures don’t define us. 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 – God’s grace guarantees our 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*.

* Perhaps 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.

I can't change what I’ve done or what has happened. You can’t change what you have done or what has happened. But because of God’s grace, we have a future.

Listen to this life-giving reminder from Paul: *(emphasize “grace in which we now stand”)*

**“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.” –Romans 5:1-2**

Think of the image Paul is painting here. We *stand* in grace. Imagine yourself standing in a place full of light, love, and belonging. A place flooded with God’s presence where you feel his acceptance. That is the grace in which we stand.

And because of his grace, we have hope. Hope that can turn our eyes away from the regret of the past to the promise of the future.

I love how Paul says to the church in Philippi:

**“I focus on this one thing***(which is funny because he then gives us two things)* **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 it no attention. We treat it with thoughtless inattention.

What failure from your past do you need to start treating with thoughtless inattention?

**Challenge: Embrace Grace**

**Response Card (Need pad or music behind this moment).** *(Slide with all 3 Realities)* I want you to take a look at this card again. My hunch is that over the past several minutes, you’ve thought about an incident or an area of your life that is steeped in regret. Maybe it is something you have done. Maybe it is something you have not done.

I’m going to give you just a few moments of quiet reflection, and I want you to circle one of these categories that best represents the area of your life where you’re mad at yourself…or if it’s not listed here, you can write it in. This stays between you and God - no one else unless you want to talk to someone about this later. Take a moment now, get honest with yourself, and circle a category on your card.

*Give 30-60 seconds for quiet reflection.*

Author Max Lucado once said:

**“The wasted years of life. The poor choices of life. God answers the mess of life with one word: Grace.” –Max Lucado**

As you look at that category you circled, remember…

* **God’s grace erases your guilt.**
* **God’s grace defines your identity.**
* **God’s grace guarantees your future.**

My challenge to all of us today is to **Embrace Grace.** To no longer allow what happened or didn’t happen have power in your life. To release any anger you have towards yourself in order to fully embrace the grace offered to you through Jesus.

In fact, look at that card in your hand once again. Whatever you have done or not done, I want you to take a pen and as boldly and emphatically as you can, I want you to write the word “grace” on top of it all. *(Give a moment for this)*

God answers the mess of life with one word: Grace. Grace covers everything. So today, let every one of us let go of the anger we have towards ourselves and embrace the grace offered to us through Jesus.

**Communion Idea**

Communion is a time of when 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.

As you receive the elements today, may they remind you of the “grace in which you now stand.” Your failures are gone. You are a child of God. Your future is secure.

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