

Fall Series: “Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith”

Series Text: Jesus says, “Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.” -Luke 12:48

Sermon #3: “The Incredible Hulk - Controlling Our Anger”

Scripture: Ephesians 4:17-32

Sermon Text: Proverbs 19:11 “Wise people restrain their anger; their glory is to ignore an offense.”

Source: Drawing from *Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith*.

Theme: Biblical teachings on controlling your anger. Anger is in itself not a sin, and indeed God is angry about some important wrongs, and calls His people to be angry about sin and injustice. Yet, the Bible teaches self control is required not to sin in your anger.

Blurb: When brilliant scientist Bruce Banner gets angry, he transforms into the mean green monster known as The Incredible Hulk. The Hulk is one of the most identifiable fantasy characters in popular culture. But is he a superhero or supervillain? His anger fuels his strength, which he can use for either good or for harm. The Hulk can be a vivid image of the visceral power of our own anger. Does our anger make us stronger? Does our anger make us lose control? Don't miss this Sunday as we explore how God's Word teaches people how to handle our own ambivalent relationship with anger.

Gathering Song

Welcome - Pastor David

Worship Songs - Sanctify

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Kid's Invited to Kid's Church - Andrew

Missions Moment:

Pastor David introduces Soul Hope (brief)

Soul Hope Video (Andrew will chose)

Pastor David talks about ways to give:

- 1) Money to Soul Hope (\$10 per kit)
 - 2) Time after worship to assemble kits for Soul Hope
 - 3) Shoes to Soles4Souls
- Walk up and give shoes you are wearing
 - Bring other shoes you have in hand
 - Bring shoes from home during the week ahead

Offering

- Soul Hope slide show
- Offering plates up front on the altar table
- People walk up front with their monies and shoes to donate

Prayers

I lead prayers of blessing over the shoes donated and the kids receiving them

Video Clip: *Note: In stead of the series opening video clip, use this one in stead!*

“The Incredible Hulk - A Minor Problem (Part 5)” 6:08 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc-QraD3gEc>

Fade at 2:01 minutes, after Hulk roars, runs down hallway, and turns the corner

PP#1: *Images from the TV show of Bill Bixby as David Banner and Lou Ferrigno as the Hulk*

This is how an entire generation came to know The Incredible Hulk. Stan Lee and Jack Kirby had created the icon back in 1962, but for nearly 20 years the character was confined to comic book readers. Then, in 1978, actors Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno made him mainstream by every week bringing him right into our living rooms, as a popular television series.

Brilliant scientist David Banner—in the TV show his name was David, in the comics it was Bruce—accidently gets zapped by gamma rays. It doesn’t kill him. Instead, it causes a change. Whenever his anger flies out of control, the gamma radioactivity triggers a change in his body. His eyes turn green, and then the scrawny scientist transforms into a big, green monster, reminiscent of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. And the monster’s super strength saves the day. Or does it?

PP#2: Christians are called to live heroic lives!

1. We are sent to help make the world better
2. We are given the special power of the Holy Spirit
3. We are called to live for truth, justice, and the way of Jesus

We’re looking at some of Marvel’s superheroes for a few weeks as a way for us to think about how we can live heroic lives. The struggles and problems of these superheroes help us see more clearly the troubles and struggles we face. And, we’re placing them in dialogue with the Bible, the greatest superhero book of all time. Now, we don’t have super strength, can’t fly, or turn invisible, but we learn that we have been given special powers to live in heroic ways. When we give our lives to Jesus and decide to follow Him, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, that empowers us to live differently. That power within us makes us able to live the way God calls us to, to be in control of our own lives, and to be able to do for others more than our own strength allows. That power equips us to make the world a better place. That power equips us to live heroically.

PP#3: “Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith”

“The Incredible Hulk - Controlling Our Anger”

“Wise people restrain their anger; their glory is to ignore an offense.” -Proverbs 19:11

“Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith.” “The Incredible Hulk - Controlling Our Anger.” Proverbs 19:11 “Wise people restrain their anger; their glory is to ignore an offense.”

Is The Incredible Hulk a superhero? This question is open for debate. He is called a superhero, he’s an ally of other superheroes, he serves on the Avengers. But the problem with the Hulk is that he is often more problem than good. And that comes from his basic cause of power. Hulk is driven by anger. It’s his anger that makes him strong. And when he’s angry, he has incredible power to smash and destroy. Now, if that can be channeled into doing good, then it’s helpful. But the problem with the Hulk is that it is so difficult to control that anger, and he is often more of a destructive menace than a help.

PP#4: *Images of the Hulk over the years, including the big monster-type ones from the movies.*

The monster personifies anger: he's green, he's hulky, he can't think deeply or clearly, he's animalistic, and he lashes out and smashes everything around. It's an anger tantrum. What does Hulk always say? "Hulk smash!" The core issue of the Hulk is for Bruce Banner to learn how to control his anger. It's about control. When he doesn't control his anger, he turns into a monster.

You know, if ever there were a sermon using a superhero, isn't this it? I mean, don't we identify with this? We struggle to control our anger! And we have seen how when we don't, our actions get away from us? We say things and do things we regret. We lash out and smash everything around us. We let it destroy even what we love most. Tragically, Banner is perpetually stuck alone and scared. He can't control the Hulk, and because of it, he has to separate himself from everyone and everything he loves. Anger, and The Hulk, control him, and he lives in constant regret.

PP#5: *Cover of The Incredible Hulk #130, where the Hulk is attacking Banner*

This particular comic issue captures this tension. Somehow the Hulk has been separated from Banner, and Banner has to face the Hulk himself! The Hulk attacks Banner, and Banner is terrified at being destroyed by the anger inside himself that he now sees in front of him.

What a great image for what we can let our anger do to us. Are there parts of your lives that your anger has smashed? Do you have relationships that your anger has destroyed? Is controlling your anger a struggle? Do you live in fear of your anger, and in regret for what you have done when angry?

PP#6: *Image from the movie of Hulk smiling.*

Now, more recently the Hulk character has morphed into more glorifying the violence: the smashing, the uncontrolled anger. It seems our culture likes to justify this kind of behavior. We have an anger issue, as a people. There seems to be a growing urge that we could just get angry and "Hulk out," simply smashing our way through problems. We see this with the growing violence in the news, the lashing out against others, the lack of self-control displayed in public, even the viciousness of the responses that are posted on social media. Uncontrolled rage, unleashed and let go, seems to tap into a deep longing we have. We feel like that...like this...

Video Clip: "Hulk Screams Too Much" 36 seconds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8jKZrLfpg8>

PP#7: *Closing image from Hulk movie, when Banner has green eyes, and is smiling, captioned "Days without incident: 0"*

There is something within us that resonates with this. We can feel like this. We just want to scream and smash things. There are even times we just want to have an anger tantrum! We may even justify that anger, telling ourselves we need to let it out, not keep it suppressed. We want to indulge in that anger, "let it go." And it can feel good. Bursts of anger can get our adrenaline rushing. In the 2003 film of the Hulk, Banner tells Betty, "You know what scares me most? It is when it happens, when it comes over me and I totally lose control, I like it." We are in danger of justifying our rage, normalizing it, becoming addicted to it.

So, what are we to do with our anger, then? How are we supposed to manage it in healthy ways? What can the Bible tell us about God's way for His followers to live heroically with anger?

PP#8: Controlling Our Anger

1. Acknowledge our anger

"Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise hold it back." -Proverbs 29:11

The first step is to acknowledge that we have anger. It is natural. It's part of the way God created us. And in fact, God created it for good. Anger is not a sin; uncontrolled anger is. There is righteous anger. God gets angry. When God sees injustice and abuse towards His people, God gets angry. Jesus got angry when He saw sellers gouging people in the temple markets. So, we all have the emotion of anger. But it is only bad when we let it grow uncontrolled, when it comes in unhealthy ways, or when we express it harmfully. We need to discern the difference. Psalm 4:4 says, "In your anger, do not sin." So, you can be angry and not sin! The control part comes in discerning it. We need to evaluate the source of our anger and see if it is healthy. If it is because I'm not getting my way, or because I'm transferring it from frustrations in other areas of my life, or because I've used up my patience for certain people, then I may need to control it closely. If it is because someone is being picked on, or mistreated, it may mean acting on it. If I don't discern the source of my anger, or simply deny it, I may stuff it all inside, where it can turn into depression or venting it in unhealthy ways. Control means to discern. "Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise hold it back."

PP#9: Controlling Our Anger

1. Acknowledge our anger

2. Let Jesus change you

"Wise people restrain their anger; their glory is to ignore an offense." -Proverbs 19:11

Secondly, we need help. We really don't do a good job of controlling our anger on our own. Yes, we must practice those techniques of de-escalation: breathing, counting to 10, cooling off, releasing angry thoughts, and so forth. But we also need more help than that. We need to invite Jesus into our hearts and change us from the inside out. When we choose Jesus, we are given super powers to control our anger.

Let's take a closer look at a passage in Ephesians 4. Paul is talking to Christians who are struggling with their emotions and patterns of life. He tells them to let Jesus change them. Paul first reminds them of the way that people live who are not Christians. He calls that living like Gentiles.

PP#10: Ephesians 4:17-32

17 So I'm telling you this, and I insist on it in the Lord: you shouldn't live your life like the Gentiles anymore. They base their lives on pointless thinking, 18 and they are in the dark in their reasoning. They are disconnected from God's life because of their ignorance and their closed hearts. 19 They are people who lack all sense of right and wrong, and who have turned themselves over to doing whatever feels good and to practicing every sort of corruption along with greed.

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hearts. They are people who lack all sense of right and wrong, and who have turned themselves over to doing whatever feels good and to practicing every sort of corruption along with greed.”

So, here is the way we do it when we do it ourselves. Our thinking is pointless, our reasoning is not helpful, and based on darkness. It’s being closed off to God’s affect on the heart. We can’t make good decisions because we make them based on wrong things, like what feels good.

PP#11: Ephesians 4:17-32

20 But you didn’t learn that sort of thing from Christ. 21 Since you really listened to Him and you were taught how the truth is in Jesus, 22 change the former way of life that was part of the person you once were, corrupted by deceitful desires. 23 Instead, renew the thinking in your mind by the Spirit 24 and clothe yourself with the new person created according to God’s image in justice and true holiness.

Verse 20: “But you didn’t learn that sort of thing from Christ. Since you really listened to Him and you were taught how the truth is in Jesus, change the former way of life that was part of the person you once were, corrupted by deceitful desires. Instead, renew the thinking in your mind by the Spirit and clothe yourself with the new person created according to God’s image in justice and true holiness.”

When we follow Christ, we have a new way of looking at things. He brings a change on the inside. We put away faulty thinking and our selfish desires. The Holy Spirit becomes a power of renewing our minds and clothes us with holiness. We can live differently!

PP#12: Ephesians 4:17-32

25 Therefore, after you have gotten rid of lying, each of you must tell the truth to your neighbor because we are parts of each other in the same body. 26 Be angry without sinning. Don’t let the sun set on your anger. 27 Don’t provide an opportunity for the devil. 28 Thieves should no longer steal. Instead, they should go to work, using their hands to do good so that they will have something to share with whoever is in need.

Verse 25: “Therefore, after you have gotten rid of lying, each of you must tell the truth to your neighbor because we are parts of each other in the same body. Be angry without sinning. Don’t let the sun set on your anger. Don’t provide an opportunity for the devil. Thieves should no longer steal. Instead, they should go to work, using their hands to do good so that they will have something to share with whoever is in need.

Use your new superpower of speaking words of truth and life. Stop yourself from sinning when you are angry. And even when you do, don’t let anger continue long, as it can grow. Limit it to a day. Put your hands to doing constructive things. Don’t keep them idle long!

PP#13: Ephesians 4:17-32

29 Don’t let any foul words come out of your mouth. Only say what is helpful when it is needed for building up the community so that it benefits those who hear what you say. 30 Don’t make the Holy Spirit of God unhappy—you were sealed by Him for the day of redemption. 31 Put aside all bitterness, losing your temper, anger, shouting, and slander, along with every other evil. 32 Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, in the same way God forgave you in Christ.

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How do you not sin when you are angry? Don’t let your mouths—now speakers of words of life—to be corrupted into speaking foul things. Only allow what is good and helpful to come out of them. Do this even when you are angry! If you’re not doing that, then you are sinning in your anger. Don’t limit the Holy Spirit’s power within you. Stop all those desires to yell and lose your temper.

How? How can we have those strong feelings of anger not well into rage? The key is in the last verse. Remember always that you need patience, forgiveness, a second chance. Usually we lose our temper with people who get on our nerves. Somehow we frame it that they are stupid and we are not. The best way to curb this is to continually remember that we were stupid first. Grace and understanding and compassion come when we acknowledge that God has had to forgive so much in us. We can then forgive others in the same way God forgave us in Jesus. Every time you want to smack someone, remember that you deserve to be smacked first.

PP#14: *Image of Jesus dying on the cross, sobering and helping us remember Jesus died for us.*

Even still, there are times that rage just burns inside. It can get beyond our ability to control. What do we do then? Well, at this point, it may be beyond us and our ability to cope. The only answer is to give it over to Jesus. Only He can handle this kind of pain and emotion. Run away from whatever you are angry at, or whomever you want to smash, and run to Jesus. Tell Him you need help. Tell him this anger inside is too much for you. Ask Him to take it away. Ask Him to replace it with His peace. You see, Jesus said that He came to give us His peace, peace from the inside out. It is not peace like the world gives. It is His peace. Jesus can take our anger and give us peace.

If you have anger issues, you will also need to seek out therapy techniques to help cope with your anger. Seek professional help, a psychologist, or a psychiatrist. They can help you maintain a rhythm of dealing with your angry thoughts.

PP#15: Controlling Our Anger

1. Acknowledge our anger
2. Let Jesus change you
3. Anger as an Ally

“Don’t be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good.” -Romans 12:21

And thirdly, we can turn our anger into doing good. It can be a good motivator to doing something about what we see is wrong. We are given anger so we can be angry about injustice, and then act to do something to fix it. It doesn’t mean repaying evil for evil. We must let God pay revenge. But it means letting our anger fuel doing good.

PP#16: Romans 12:17-21

17 Don’t pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions, but show respect for what everyone else believes is good.

18 If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people. 19 Don’t try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath. It is written, “Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back,” says the Lord. 20 Instead, If your enemy is

hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. By doing this, you will pile burning coals of fire upon his head. 21 Don't be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good.

"Don't be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good." This is where the Hulk is the hero. This is why he is on the Avengers. His anger can be directed as strength against what is bad and to defeat it. We can learn to do that, too.

Take a look at a scene from the 2003 Hulk movie. Here Hulk is very effective against an attacking force of powerful tanks. And, it's just excellent Hulk footage. Enjoy.

Video Clip: "Hulk (2003) - Beats Up The Tanks" 1:29 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wrNMPRriwc>

That's Hulk at his best, and even pretty good special effects for 12 years go.

And when we act heroically, we, too, can use our special strength to fight evil and injustice in whatever forms they present themselves.

It may be tempting to simplify our lives and want to just get rid of our anger. But we are created to feel. Our goal is to control it, not let it rule us.

PP#17: Controlling Our Anger

1. Acknowledge our anger
2. Let Jesus change you
3. Anger as an Ally

We are called to live heroically, and a key part of living that way is controlling our anger. That means acknowledging it, it means letting Jesus change us from the inside out, and it means leveraging our anger to do good. We each have a beast within us, fueled by anger. It can so easily smash and destroy what we don't want it to. *But it doesn't have to.* We have been given the special power to control it. We can live heroically with our anger.

I've got one more short movie clip you have to see. I think it's my favorite of all the Hulk footage. It's an action scene from *The Avengers* 2012 movie. Hulk and Thor are smashing an attacking alien ship, flinging the aliens like bugs. Hulk tears off a piece of the ship and cleaves it into the ship through its armor. Thor then uses his hammer to smash it down into the ship, destroying it's engine. The ship crashes to the ground, and the battle is won. Watch closely to what happens when Hulk and Thor are standing together after the battle.

Video Clip: "The Avengers (2012) Hulk Punches Thor - True " 29 seconds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrDXseJRJlk>

See? Hulk just has so much anger, that even though the battle is over and the enemy are smashed, Hulk just has to take one more shot. And so he punches out his ally and friend, Thor. He can't help it. His anger is just too much to control.

This is a hilarious clip, but let it serve as a constant reminder to us that like the Hulk, we will never effectively control our anger if we do not rely on God to help us. Incredible!

Amen.

Closing Song - Sanctify

Announcement & Benediction - David

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SEPT. 27, 2015

Fall Series: “Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith”

Sermon #3: “The Incredible Hulk - Controlling Our Anger”

Scripture: Ephesians 4:17-32

Opening prayer

Introductions:

Introduce yourself and share about a time when it was good that you got angry.

Context: Look at Ephesians 4. What is going on, especially the last part of the chapter?

Read: Ephesians 4:17-32

1. Verses 17-19. What do you think Paul means by “living like a Gentile?” Are you tempted to do this? How?
2. Can people “living like a Gentile” trust their own judgement? Why or why not?
3. Verses 20-24. What are people who listen to Christ supposed to do?
4. How do Christians do this? Pull from your own life experience as a Christian. How do you do it?
5. Verses 26. What does it mean to be angry without sinning? What does that look like?
6. What does it mean when Paul says to not let the sun set on your anger? Why do you think he says that?
7. Tell about a time you were able to follow Paul’s teaching here.
8. Verse 29. Share from your own life experience how to do this effectively.
9. Verse 32. How does remembering that God forgave us in Christ help us to be kind, compassionat, and forgiving each other?
10. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?