

March 26 – Is It OK to Be Angry With God? A conversation in two internal voices
Psalm 88

God, where are you?!!! God, I need you!!! God, you're not there, here!! Where are you?!

(Cringe, furtively looking around)

What if God zaps me for what I just said? What if God is really, really angry with me?

God won't zap you....

Uh, why not? Maybe if I say I'm angry with God, God will be angry toward me! God will hate me!

Do you know God always knows what you're thinking?

But I'm angry with God!

My life is a mess!

Didn't you create me God? How can you allow such terrible things to happen in my life? Haven't I worshiped you? Been your child?

Job 7:7-21 Why are you picking on me?

Leave me alone! Why do you test us every moment?

Why have you made me your target? Why have I become a burden to you?

Why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity?

For now I shall lie in the earth; you will seek me, but I shall not be for what's next? If you aren't with me, only death is left

I plead with you. Why do you ignore me except to torment me?

God IS with you—even in your darkest moments

Psalm 13:1-6

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? The illness doesn't go away. I've tried medications; I've been to therapists. This is my enemy—my anxiety, depression. How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death; my enemy will say, "I have

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overcome her," and those who thought my illness was "only in my head" will nod their heads, believing they were right all along.

God IS with you, even in your darkest times

Where are you? This is the shape I'm in. I've dealt with this for lots of years.

Psalm 28:1 I cry out to you God, my Rock. I beg, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning?" When I tell people that you are my strength, they ask "Where is your God? Why hasn't God healed you already?" They say, "If you have faith, you will be well." That just makes everything worse!

What do I say to them? Maybe you really aren't there. Maybe you really have forgotten me. Why don't you answer, God?!

I feel so alone God. Where are you, for I so desperately need you!

Psalm 22:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent.

God IS with you, even when you feel so alone

And God, it's not just me, look around at this world, at **Your** creation. The world is in terrible shape!

People take advantage everyday. There's always a new scheme to deceive me and get money from me. Why do you let the wicked prevail?!

There is so much anger in the world. Look at this nation! Whoa! This nation is so full of hatred and division. And even those who claim to be your children, your people, contribute to the division. It's like the Pharisees and scribes all over again. There is abuse in what should be a safe place: in our own homes. People live in bondage—in this nation of freedom!—working in conditions like those of slavery, sex trafficking; drug abuse and addiction are everywhere!

How can you let people be so cruel to one another? You created us. We are the works of your hands! Violence strikes innocent people – why should innocent children have to die in bombings of their homes. Why should they die as they and their families flee war?

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It's too hard to listen to someone tell me about her village being burned by the army as the government seized their land, of living in the jungle for weeks, almost afraid to sleep. It is horrifying to hear her tell of women being forced to be porters for the soldiers—carrying the soldiers' packs was the easy part of that life!

We say we love you God; we tell the world you are in charge. And other countries sneer and demand to know "Where is your God?"

What do I say? Where are you?!

Intervene God! Psalm 83:1

O God; do not keep silence;

Do not hold your peace or be still, O God!

These are YOUR people! WE are your people.

God? Maybe if I just try harder....maybe if I promise to read my Bible more....maybe if I promise to do good deeds, maybe then you'll answer me?

Is that what it takes to get your attention? I just have to be better, I just have to do better....

Psalm 74:1,11

Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel. In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed. But I am a worm and not a (man), scorned by men and despised by the people. (Psalm 22:1-6)

When I read the Bible, I read the story of how you took care of the Israelites. They were Your people; they believed in You. We are your people. We believe in you. But where are you now? How can I put my trust in you when you aren't present?

Psalm 77:1-10

But I cry aloud to you Lord. I cry out loud just so you will HEAR me! In my days of trouble, I have sought you God; at night I stretch out my hand toward you. My soul refuses to be comforted.

I think of you God, I moan; I meditate and my spirit faints.

I am so troubled, I cannot speak.

I remember that once upon a time You were with me but then I ask, Will the Lord turn his back on me forever? Will God never again be favorable to me? Has God's steadfast love ceased?

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God: have you forgotten to be gracious. Are you so angry with me you have locked up your compassion

You promise that you'll give me no more than I can handle. Well, let me be honest, God. We passed that a long time ago. I'm dealing with A LOT more than I can handle! Right here, it says you help the one in trouble (Psalm 9:12b) but I cry out and you don't answer And You're not here to help.

I'm exhausted. I feel angry. I feel ashamed for being angry. I feel forsaken. I feel all alone with no help. I need you God.....

Are you going to zap me for being angry with you?

Is it OK to be angry with God? I asked that question of my colleagues at Face to Face these past two days. Each and every one gave the same answer: Yes. And then I said, "Now what do I say for the other 19½ minutes of my sermon?" It's one thing to SAY it's OK to be angry with God; it's another to FEEL it's OK.

I think it is important, as one commentator wrote, to remember that anger and rage are part of what it means to be human. The person who does not feel anger has no deep investment in life, no love to protect, isn't vulnerable. But as Christians, we have this misunderstanding that we shouldn't feel anger toward God. We should never feel rejected, tormented, forsaken and alone. We shouldn't be upset when we believe the wicked thrive and good people struggle. So we pray bumper sticker prayers:

"I'm blessed so I'm not stressed.

"God is always in control"

"God works all things for good"

When we feel stressed, obviously God isn't blessing us; we've been rejected.

When a daughter suffers a miscarriage, what is the good God is working in her life? In the baby's death?

Our bumper sticker theology doesn't answer life's tough questions; can't keep us from feeling frustrated, angry.

Is it possible that by expressing our pain and anger, listening intently ourselves, God makes it more tolerable?

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Much of what you heard this morning comes right out of the psalms: a person just like you and just like me expressing pain and anger directly to God. These are prayers to God, telling God of the psalmists' outrage over the suffering he is experiencing.

The psalmists can be honest with God: this is how I'm feeling. Passages such as these in the Psalms remind us that God can listen to and handle our most violent anger. And fortunately, God responds to anger better than people usually do! Our prayers and cries of anger don't surprise God. After all, God has been listening to this kind of prayer for a long time, for ages.

So when we're angry, is it enough to simply keep on keeping on? To pray as if, to mediate, to talk with God as talking with a friend. Is this what we need to be doing? You know how you talk with a close friend: you can speak honestly, knowing your friend will listen to you. You can leave out all the details because your friend knows the details. You can be yourself with your friend: joy and sorrow, forgiveness and anger, praise and criticism. And God is an even better friend than our closest, best human friend.

Even as we share our anger with God, we also might practice sharing our trust, praise, love of God.

In almost every place in the psalms when the psalmist cries out in anger and rejection, the psalmist ends praising God.

Psalm 13:1-6

But God, I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for you God have been good to me.

Psalm 42:9-11

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed with me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

Psalm 22:22-31

I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows. The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise you—may our hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth will

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remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before you God, for dominion belongs to the LORD and you rule over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before you—those who cannot keep themselves alive. Posterity will serve you; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim your righteousness to a people yet unborn—for you have done it. (Psalm 22:22-31)

Psalm 77:11-14

I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord,
remember your wonders of old
I will meditate on all your work,
And muse on your mighty deeds
Your way, O God, is holy
What god is so great as our God?
You are the God who works wonders;
You have displayed your might among the peoples

Psalms contain the sheer variety of human life; they speak the whole range of human emotions, feelings, and awarenesses. And all these emotions, feelings, perceptions are brought before God, all of them are incorporated into a full and vital prayer life.

Is it OK to be angry with God?

Do you know God always knows what you're thinking?

Even when you're angry, God already knew you were angry.

Do you believe God really loves you?

This is the season of Lent—leading us to Jesus' death on the cross. God sent Jesus, the Beloved Son, to teach us God's ways, to show us how to be God's children. Jesus died on the cross to reconcile us—you, me—to God, so we can live in close relationship with God.

Is it OK to be angry with God?

Yes

Let's pray:

Hear now the prayers of my heart, our hearts, Lord. We bring our most inner feelings and most bitter thoughts before you, knowing that you love us anyway. Thank you for hearing us and understanding us completely. We claim and believe that we are your children. Amen.

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