

2 Samuel 6:1-11

David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

When they came to the threshing-floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God struck him there because he reached out his hand to the ark; and he died there beside the ark of God. David was angry because the Lord had burst forth with an outburst upon Uzzah; so that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day. David was afraid of the Lord that day; he said, 'How can the ark of the Lord come into my care?' So David was unwilling to take the ark of the Lord into his care in the city of David; instead David took it to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite for three months; and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

1 Samuel 3:1-9

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

**“Deal With It: Anger”
Rev. Charles Schuster
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This morning I would like a word with you, and the word is Greek, and the word is *metanoeo*, and that often is translated “repent” but more accurately translated “turn around.” *Metanoeo*, turn around. That’s what we will want to do when we become angry with someone. When someone gets on our nerves. And that’s what we will want to do when we get angry with God, or frustrated, which we do. It’s easy to become angry, frustrated. David Holloway is a Scottish bishop in the Anglican church. He tells the story of two men at an all-night diner, 2:00 in the morning. A discussion ensues between irritation, anger, and rage. One of them said, “I’ll give you an example of irritation.” He picked up his cell phone and made a random phone call. A sleepy voice answers. “I’d like to speak to Albert.” “There’s no Albert here,” and the phone is hung up. “That man is irritated.” An hour later, 3:00 a.m., “Now I’ll show you an example of anger.” He dials the same number. “May I speak to Albert?” “I told you before, there’s no Albert here,” and slams down the receiver. That’s an example of anger. An hour later, 4:00 a.m., he dials the same number. “This is an example of rage.” The person answers the phone. “Hello. This is Albert. Have there been any calls for me.?”

On some level this sermon will hit every one of us. Irritation, anger, rage. What makes us angry? Do people get on our nerves? Do they annoy us? Do they anger us? Do they irritate us? An irate customer calls a newspaper office, demanding to know where the Sunday paper is. The circulation clerk answers the phone and says, “Don’t you know, it’s Saturday? The Sunday paper doesn’t come until tomorrow.” There was a long pause at the other end of the phone, followed by a moment of cognition. “So that’s why there was nobody in church today.” Do people ever get on your nerves? Men and women? Judge Judy is right, some would say, when she says, “There are two kinds of men in the world, there are those who don’t get it, and those who get it but they get it wrong.” Someone else was somewhat right when he said “There are two times when a man doesn’t understand a woman. One time is before marriage, and the other time is after.”

Do people get on your nerves? Church members get on your nerves, people at the office get on your nerves, people at school, preachers get on your nerves, people in general get on your nerves? Did you hear about the church that got appointed their first woman senior pastor? The bishop appointed her, there were protests, but it was time. It was July. A member of the congregation wanted to take the new pastor fishing. One of the congregation members that had so opposed that appointment most strongly agreed to go along and allowed them to use his boat, and they’re in the middle of the lake, when they realize they’d left their bait on the shore. The new pastor said she’d go back and get it. She stepped out of the boat and walked across the water to the dock where it was. The old grump said in a loud voice, “I told you we should never have accepted that woman as our pastor. She can’t even swim.”

Do people annoy you? They get on your nerves and make you angry? I think there was this time in Jesus’ life when it was said he looked at the people and had compassion. *Metanoeo*, he turned around and he saw. Jimmy Carter wrote a poem, it’s in his book, *Always a Reckoning*. He writes, “We take lives in times of peace for crimes we won’t forget, claiming some have forfeited the right to live. We justify our nation’s wars each time with words to prove we kill in a moral cause. We’ve cursed the names of those we

forget. Later, they become our friends, and habits live in memories, and now when others disagree we hate again, and with our might, war by war, name by dirty name, we speak to prove we're right." John the Baptist said, *Metanoeo*, turn around, and in Paul the Apostle, he held the coats to allow the killing of Stephen, and then on the road to Damascus the light came on and he turned around, and he saw what he was doing. *Metanoeo*, turn around.

People who get on our nerves. You look around, "Did you see that jerk who cut you off in traffic? *Metanoeo*, turn around, did you see she's a single mom who worked nine hours that day and was trying to get home to cook dinner and help with homework and do the laundry and spend a few precious moments with her kids? Did you see that old couple walking slow, down through the grocery aisle, blocking your shopping progress? *Metanoeo*, turn around. They're savoring the moment, and everywhere they go is slow, these days, because they know, based on the biopsy report she got back last week, this will be the last year they'll get to go shopping together. And you know that boss at the office, did you hear what he said? Did you see what he did? Does he think it builds morale to increase the pain? Who does he think he is? *Metanoeo*, turn around, he's been told the company has a bottom line and one month to reach it, or decisions will be made that nobody wants to make.

It's a hard time just now. People act out because they're afraid to do things that annoy us, and sometime they make us angry. I know many in the congregation knew Maury Albertson. He died last Sunday. We'll have a celebration of his life on Valentine's Day, February the 14th, here at the church. He would have enjoyed the fact that he died on the Sunday we celebrated Native American ministry in the church. He died that day. An amazing man, really, founder of the Peace Corps, renowned professor, community leader, church leader, Sunday School teacher, humanitarian. Last time I saw Maury he was in the hospice in Loveland and we were visiting and I asked him, "What do you want me to tell the people, the friends of yours and church members, as to how they should remember you?" He raised his head off the pillow and gave that smile that you'd know, and he said, "Tell them to remember the Sermon on the Mount, because sometimes I don't think they quite got it." The Sermon on the Mount, that's where Jesus said you see the speck in your neighbor's eye but what about the log in your own? Where he said you are the salt of the earth, you're the light of the world. If people annoy you, get on your nerves, *metanoeo*, turn around, see what's happening in their lives. Forgive them, and understand them if you can.

Sometimes it isn't people that get on our nerves. Sometime it's God. Did you ever get frustrated with God, or angry? I think that's what happened to David. He worked really hard trying to get that ark into the temple, the heart of his people's faith, the Ark of the Covenant, the law, into the temple. What an appropriate thing, and as they brought the cart, pulled by oxen, it started to fall. One of David's friends reached up to steady it, and he died right there. We don't know why he died right there, but he did. Uzzah died, and David got angry with God. I don't think for one minute that God caused Uzzah to die, but you know, when things go wrong and there's no one to blame, sometimes we think God did it.

Someone said, "Life is like an ice cream cone. About the time you think you've got it licked, you get dripped on." When you get dripped on, you tend to blame God. Another person said, "Just when I was getting used to yesterday, today came along," and is full of problems, and you tend to blame God for them. God didn't cause Uzzah to die. God doesn't make bad things happen. But God does frustrate us sometimes. God does annoy us, because God's trying to deploy us, calling us, luring us, inviting us, messing with us.

When Samuel was a boy, he was in the temple, but it could have been anywhere. He was trying to help the old man, Eli. God spoke, "Samuel." Samuel said, "Here I am," and Eli said, "It wasn't me." The voice again, "Samuel, Samuel." Samuel heard the voice. "Here I am." Eli said, "I didn't call you. Be quiet." Three times this happened. God's trying to deploy him. God spoke and Samuel didn't understand. It happened to Isaiah. In the temple, God said, "Whom shall we send, who will go for us." Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me, but how long?" God said, "Well, these are dull-witted people you're going out to talk to. You're going to speak and speak and they're not going to get you." "Well, how long do I have to do it?" God said, "Well, till the rivers dry up." God spoke to Mary, just a young woman. She said, "Surely, you're not asking me to bring the Savior of the world into the world," and if she understood, to watch him be brought to trial and beaten and led to his death on a cross. Mary pondered these things, and if she pondered all these things, she was frustrated, I'm sure she was. Sarah laughed when she learned she'd have a baby, and the child would grow to become the bearer of the destiny of her people. And Moses stuttered, he had a speech impediment, and God said, "I want you to speak to your people."

Martin Luther King Jr. thought he'd be a preacher like his dad, he'd have a church like his father had, till Rosa Parks wouldn't sit in the back of the bus, and Martin heard the voice of God. Toward the end of his life, Roy Wilkins said to him, "You really didn't desegregate a single city bus, with all your boycotts and protests." Martin said, "I know that. I guess the only thing I really ever desegregated was a few human hearts." When he was shot to death in the Lorraine Hotel, as he was dying in the arms of Andrew Young and Ralph Abernathy, Andrew Young cried out, "It's over, it's all over." And Abernathy shouted back at him, "Don't say it's over. It's never over." One can only hope that Martin might know what he did when he sought to cure the nation of racism and liberate his people from slavery and liberate white people from our bigotry. We can only hope that they're on some plane of being, some place of consciousness where those who felt called to racial equality can see it. On Tuesday, a man taking an oath of office, in spite of the color of his skin, but because of the content of his character.

Our frustration with God. God tries to deploy us, and that will annoy us, until *metanoia* sets in, and we turn around and look. The theologian Emile Bruner called this the Divine Imperative. I would rather be left alone. Do you call me, God, did you call me? Is there something you want me to do? No, not that, anything but that. The Divine Imperative, God is trying to deploy you. Thursday, God told a man to land an airplane in the Hudson River. We can imagine that was a strange request, but Chesley Sullenberger did it. God is trying to deploy you to turn around. God calls. Answering that call, if we listen, there's

something we know when we hear it, that is right in our soul, and if we're asked to do something that does seem a bit beyond our capacity, we find the strength somehow to do it. Discover a destiny we never knew we had, that continually tries to deploy us, to get us to do something that sometimes is against our very nature. *Metanoeo*, turn around, when it comes to God, it's all about the life we have and what we do with it. It's all about our purpose for living, and stepping into the moment to do what needs to be done. That's why people sign up to be Stephen Ministers. That's why people do what they must do to be caregivers for loved ones when they doubt they can do it, but they do it. God calls us to the improbable task, to do the impossible deed, sometimes to take the unpopular path, for the unknowable goal.

Religion, Abraham Heschel said, consists of a question from God, and an answer from us. And the task is never, do we hear it or do we not. The task is for us, since we hear it, will we respond to it? *Metanoeo*, turn around. Frustrating is God, annoying is God, angering sometimes. "Leave me alone, let me be. You must think more of me than you should, O God. Here am I... send her. Let me do my thing and live my life. Find someone better at it than I. Don't you know, God, I'm nothing special, I'm just average or below. What are you thinking, picking on me? Give me a break. Leave me alone." But is there any other purpose than the one I'm asked to do for God? Is there any better use of life, than to give it to the imperative that I call divine? Is there any other heart's desire that I can follow, more appropriately than the one I discover to have come from the Creator, the source of all creation? Yes, I'll fail and sometimes I'll be overwhelmed, and sometimes it will lead me to a cross, and sometimes to a tomb. But it's the Divine Imperative.

This morning I wanted to have a word with you, because sometimes people are going to get on your nerves, and it's good to think about why. And sometimes God will frustrate you, and it's good to reflect on how. Why people do what they do, and how God tries to help us find purpose and meaning. This morning I wanted to have a word with you, and the word is *metanoeo*. It means repent, it means turn around. Most of you know this. It's just that sometimes I forget.