Sermon: “**If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin**” (Ephesians 4.26)

The Mousetrap is coming to Invercargill and I am playing part of Mr Paravacini. Everyone is a suspect, so I have to convey suspicion. How? Partly through actions, and words given by Agatha Christie, but also through the way I speak them.

This last is missing in Bible – we see the actions described, we hear the words, but not how they are spoken.

Also cleverly in The Mousetrap we all have to do this in such a way as to mislead the audience.

Bible is, of course, not trying to mislead, but readers might be misled nevertheless.

In the reading you probably read it saying ‘being angry is bad’, but that is not what is written. TEXT.

I note it also says: “**Get rid of all bitterness, passion and anger**.” (4.31), but the underlying sense here is of temper and of personal attacks, whereas TEXT hints that some anger may be justified. What anger?

Often in our society, and in church, we avoid disagreement. Not because we disagree, but because it seems bad to show it. But there is a difference between using disagreement to attack a person, and using it to challenge an idea or course of action. Eg Jesus and paying taxes to Caesar, and stoning the sinful adulterer.

Healthy debate is a good thing; how else was Lindisfarne Centre built, & 3 churches unite 24 years ago?

How else did NZ different Methodist bodies come together in 1913? How else did the people of Israel decide to invade the Promised Land when faced with a large native population?

There is nothing wrong with debate as such; what is wrong is using it to attack another person’s integrity. Attacking their ideas, yes, but in a constructive and kind way, “**no more hateful feelings of any sort**” (4.31).

When we renewed our Mission Statement in Nov last year I deliberately used a whiteboard to ensure debate was around ideas, not the person with the idea. (*I don’t agree with that*, rather than *I don’t agree with you*)

Covid-19 vaccinations can lead to a few side-effects, some of which are temporarily unpleasant. What the vaccine is doing is challenging our immune system, so that it can be built up.

“**Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you”** (4.29). Helpful words include those which may challenge – how else can we be ‘built up’? For this parish to grow challenge is needed. That might be in the form of new people with new ideas, a new relationship with Methodist Mission Southern, or honest conversation at any face-to-face with a prospective presbyter.

This does not mean that all change is automatically right, and refusal to change is wrong.

All is a delicate balance. If God’s love is the heart of Parish life, then all words will be to build up, even ones that seem angry. TEXT.