

Psalm 85

When reading the entirety of Psalm 85, one hears several passages about **the anger of God**: “You averted all your rage; you turned back the heat of your anger”; “Will you be angry with us forever? Will your anger last from age to age?” What does this mean to say that God is angry? The Psalmist uses this language to forcefully communicate something about God, but if we understand this description in too earthly of a manner, it’s easy to make a mistake. In human beings, the emotions are a mixture of good and bad. We love what is good, but sometimes too much! We become angry and impatient, but in a way that clouds our judgment! When speaking about God, we must remember that **in him there is no darkness** (1 Jn. 1:5).

So when we consider the anger of God, we must look at the characteristics of anger and sort them out: What about anger can be present in God, and what about anger is an imperfection and therefore not in God? Anger arises in us when we perceive some injustice done to us and are moved to take vengeance, to exact justice. Now, whereas we are sometimes carried away by our emotions, God is never so carried away, always acting with wisdom. So we must not imagine God turning red in the face or becoming unreasonable as men do when they are angry.

What is present in God is **the desire for justice** when injustice has been committed. Though we cannot harm God in anyway, we are unjust when

we fail to give him honor or do wrong to any of his creatures. God is not indifferent to injustice, but rather **he actively seeks justice**. As St. Thomas Aquinas says, “We speak of anger in God, not as a passion of the soul, but as a judgment of justice” (*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 47, a. 1).

This brings us to the most beautiful line in this Psalm: “Kindness and truth shall meet; **justice and peace shall kiss.**” The Lord, in his perfect justice, could have wiped out everyone guilty of sin. The Lord, in his merciful kindness, could have simply forgotten it all without further notice. And yet he does something far more excellent: he unites his mercy and justice in the act of sending his Son Jesus Christ to satisfy every debt of justice. Whereas humanity committed sin and became incapable of giving God something to make up for it, Jesus Christ, who is without any stain of sin, offered himself in a perfect act of love. In this act of love, he fulfills the entire law of God, which is to love God and to love our neighbor, and he does so on our behalf. Instead of carrying out judgment, Jesus teaches sinners how to fulfill God’s commands and then sends his Spirit to make them just from within. This revival of our earthly nature fulfills the words of the Psalm: “truth shall spring out of the earth”. Everytime we see a crucifix, where the love of Christ satisfies all justice, it is fitting to remember the lines of this Psalm: “**Justice and peace shall kiss**”.