

Every summer the Kansas City Symphony gives a free outdoor concert on the south lawn of the Nelson Art Gallery. People bring chairs, picnics, and frisbees to listen to great music on a summer's evening. Traditionally, the concert ends with Tschaikevsky's *1812 Overture*. Everyone loves the *1812* because it ends up loud. All the instruments play, bells peal out, and they even shoot off canons. The Quaker Oats company used to shoot oatmeal to the tune of the *1812*. This year, you may have heard, the concert got rained out. Everyone showed up--the audience, the orchestra, the frisbees, and the rain. When conductor William McGlaughlin announced to the wet crowd that there would be no program, he said there was one additional problem. The problem was the canons he had prepared for the *1812*. He said once you've loaded a Howitzer, there's only one way to unload it. He called four brass players up on stage; they muddled through the big finale, and somebody shot off all the canons in the rain.

This was a minor frustration, but we often face major frustrations which make us feel like a loaded Howitzer. When people offend us, when they laugh at us, when they take advantage of us--it's like they've shoved a bomb inside us that's just waiting to go off.

You've got a choice of what to do with that bomb. I'd like to talk about three different ways you can go.

The first is to clam up. Some people never get rid of the anger. They hold it inside where it eats away at them. They remain loaded Howitzers. They might explode at any moment, or they might just rot inside out.

The second way to deal with anger is to retaliate. If somebody loads a bomb inside you, you fire it right back. These people don't stay loaded for long; they attack.

This is the solution that James and John want to take in today's Gospel. Jesus faces a climactic moment in his life. He sets his gaze toward Jerusalem and marches toward the city where he will die. James and John go on ahead to Samaria to see if they can pass through on their way to Jerusalem--Samaritans don't like foreigners. It would be like wanting to fly from Raytown to Beijing and to stop in Iran to refuel. Still, remember what the request is. James and John want to bring Jesus through Samaria--Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the World. Most people would be thrilled to have Jesus come through their town. Just think of the marketing potential. But the Samaritans say, "Nope, no way, get lost."

James and John rumble back toward Jesus like a couple of loaded canons. And they've got a great idea. "Let's say a prayer for those Samaritans," and Jesus says "Uh-huh", "that fire will fall from heaven and destroy them. Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

This is the second way to respond when you're angry: You attack.

Jesus proposes a third way: "Let it go." This is different from clamming up and exploding within. This is letting go. The best way, of course, is to talk it out. But this is different. This is a situation that talk won't cure. So Jesus says, "Let it go." They shoot the canon in the rain and go to another town, where the Gospel continues to spread.