

Love Is...Not Envious

Mark 15:6-15

A week and a half ago we began this series called, "Love Is" It's based on 1 Corinthians, chapter 13. Lots of people know this part of the Bible because its read often for weddings and anniversaries, but its not usually associated with Lent. Lent is 40 days that began on Ash Wednesday, and the highpoint is Good Friday when we remember the incredible sacrifice that God made for us. Jesus gave His life on a cross to save us. Why? Because He loves you and all people. And if you think about it, this whole chapter on love in 1 Corinthians 13 is exactly right for us to focus on this Lent season. Jesus said, ***"God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*** John 3:16

So, we are seeking to understand this perfect love of God. This love of God moved Jesus to give His life for us. And the perfect love of God takes root in our hearts and minds so that we reflect God's love to other people.

As a refresher, and to be sure we are on the same page, let's all read these words of 1 Corinthians 13 together, out loud. ***Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.*** 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Today we are looking at these words that describe God's love by saying, ***"Love does not envy."***

Envy is when someone is upset because they want something that somebody else has. They want to do something that somebody else does. They want the success that someone else is experiencing. Envy is powerful.

The Greek word the New Testament uses for envy means "to boil." It is out-of-control heat and energy building up inside because we want what someone else has.

Envy is part of our old sinful nature. It goes all the way back in time to the Garden of Eden. Envy is what motivated Eve to want more than perfection, she wanted to be God. So did Adam. Today, you and I have inherited this nature that gravitates toward envy.

We've all seen envy in little kids. One kid is playing with something. And another kid has a million other options. There are rooms and closets full of stuff, and outside there's more, but the ONE thing he wants is what THAT KID has. And they will throw a temper tantrum to get it.

We know that about kids. But the thing is we don't outgrow envy. It sticks around, and it grows with us. It grows more complex and becomes deeper rooted, and it becomes more complex and more dangerous.

What we're going to see today is that envy is the root of the deadly plot on the part of the religious leaders. It is envy that leads to Jesus' death.

When Jesus spent 3 years going about His ministry, He started out in obscurity. As He continues, He becomes famous. Everybody knows His name. Everybody knows about His teaching. Everybody has heard about His miracles.

The religious leaders do not like Him because He's threatening to them. He is challenging everything that they hold dear. So, the religious leaders are trying to derail him. They set up different situations and they ask questions they try to pin him down. It's like a chess match, but Jesus always wins every time. He's always got the brilliant perfect answer that not only evades their deceptions, but puts them on their heels. Then something happens that changes all of that. Do you remember the story of a man named Lazarus?

Lazarus is well known. He is a religious leader, he's a prominent person -- he's a Big Whig. Lazarus gets sick and he dies. He lived only 2 miles outside of Jerusalem, the capital city. So, the whole community of movers and shakers from Jerusalem

come out to Bethany to grieve with his two sisters. It was like an “A list” of celebrities there to mourn. Everybody shows up.

By the time Jesus shows up, Lazarus has been dead and in the tomb 4 days. People are wailing and grieving. And what He does is Jesus ruins the funeral by raising Lazarus back to life, right before the eyes of all these influential people. They see it actually happen. Many, many people are so excited that they start telling everyone!

Suddenly the chess match that the religious leaders were playing to discredit Jesus, just exploded in their faces. They realize that if Jesus continues with this kind of thing, with this kind of power, the people are going to flock to Him. The people are expecting a Messiah to come and they will make Jesus their king. Then Rome is going to come crashing in and the Roman Army will not only crush the people, they will also ruin the power and celebrity status that these religious leaders enjoy.

So, suddenly the religious leaders are convinced that Jesus has got to die. They are good at strategizing and conniving. They set up a plan and begin to put that plan into action.

In today’s Gospel reading Jesus has had the Last Supper with His disciples. He’s been in the Garden praying with His disciples. He’s been betrayed by Judas. He’s been arrested. He’s been taken before the Sanhedrin the court of the religious leaders, and they have found him worthy of death. But those religious leaders who hate Jesus and they condemn Him to die, they’ve got a problem. They can’t carry out capital punishment. It’s against the law for them to execute someone. Only the Roman government can do that. So, that’s why they take him to the governor, Pilate.

Pilate hates the Jewish people so much he mistreats them, he abuses them, he murders them when he can get away with it.

The religious leaders come to Pilate, and they have Jesus whom they hate so much they want him killed. Pilate hates those religious leaders even more than he hates the Jewish people. Pilate doesn’t love Jesus. He doesn’t follow Jesus. It’s just if

these religious leaders hate Jesus that much, then just to gall the religious leaders, he doesn't want to do anything to Jesus.

Pilate is pretty good at scheming too. He knows that the person the Jewish religious leaders hate the most is Pilate. The second most hated person to them is King Herod. Herod is Jewish but he doesn't follow any of the religious rules and he kisses up to the Roman way. So, Pilate decides the way that he can really stick it to the religious leaders is to send Jesus to Herod to decide, instead of doing what the religious leaders want him to do, which is execute Jesus. As Pilate sends Jesus to Herod you can bet those religious leaders are absolutely irritated beyond belief!

But the problem is that Herod sends him back. Now, what's Pilate going to do? But again, he's pretty good on his feet. Mark 15:6 says, ***At the festival Pilate used to release for the people a prisoner whom they requested.*** *Mark 15:6* When the Passover comes every year, as part of this big festival for the Jewish people Pilate releases one person from his prison as a goodwill gesture. Most of the people he has locked up haven't been convicted of a crime, they are just like hostages because Pilate hates the Jews so much.

Well, Pilate has this brainstorm. He can use this tradition to try to slip out of his tough spot! Mark chapter 15 tells us, ***There was one named Barabbas, who was in prison with rebels who had committed murder during the rebellion. The crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do for them as was his custom. Pilate answered them, "Do you want me to release the King of the Jews for you?"*** *Mark 15:7-9* He gives the Jews at Jesus' trial a choice. He says, You can have Barabbas, who is a murderer, or Jesus, the gentle teacher whom the religious leaders hate. On its surface, it's not even a choice.

Pilate is a smart man. And yet, he has no idea who he is dealing with. Remember, the religious leaders started this plan way back. They've been working all the scenarios in their plot. They've anticipated even a move like this. And they have a way

to checkmate old Pilate. They have calculated that if Pilate should do this, they have a way to force the hand of the governor. The religious leaders have stacked the deck by filling that courtyard with a crowd of people who work in the Temple. These aren't ordinary folks in that courtyard. No, these people have been ordered ahead of time, "You better shout that you want Jesus crucified, or else!" "Or else you'll lose your job." Today we call it jury tampering.

Pilate knew it was because of envy that the chief priests had handed Him over. Mark 15:10

Do you ever struggle with envy? Have you ever wanted something that someone else had?

That's what the religious leaders are doing. Jesus came around and He is preaching like nobody's preached. He's teaching that nobody's ever taught. He's performing powerful miracles. The crowds that the religious leaders thought *should* be following them, are following Jesus instead! And they will NOT put up with that! Envy takes root in their hearts and they want Jesus dead. So they concoct this plan. They've schemed.

When the people are asked, do you want Barrabas the murderer, or do you want Jesus? The Bible records: ***The chief priests stirred up the crowd so that Pilate would release Barabbas to them instead. Pilate asked them again, "Then what do you want me to do with the one you call the King of the Jews?" Again they shouted, "Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Why? What has He done wrong?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him!" Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them; and after having Jesus flogged, he handed Him over to be crucified. Mark 15:11-15***

As shrewd as Pilate was, he can't beat the envy of the religious leaders. Regardless of how hard Pilate tries, this crowd wants Jesus dead. Pilate gave in – all because of some envious religious leaders. Jesus is crucified. Envy is that dangerous!

So much of what happens in our world is motivated by envy! Envy arises out of our old sinful nature.

When we know Jesus and receive His forgiving love, then love produces fruit in our lives. But envy also can bear fruit. Envy also is more than just an attitude. Envy has practical, concrete results.

Envy damages others. It hurts other people. Envy is what got Jesus murdered on a cross. How many people have hurt others because they envied them?

In 1936, Vienna Austria was 90% Catholic and just 9% Jewish. For centuries the Jews were not allowed to own land, so the Jewish people took up other jobs – and they *excelled* in those other jobs!

In Vienna, the Jewish people were only 9% of the population, yet they were 60% of the city's lawyers, more than half its doctors, 90% of its advertising executives, and Jewish people held the prominent places in banks, the universities, and in art. In Berlin, it was the same.

The result was that the Germans HATED the Jews. The hatred was fueled by ENVY. Jewish success led to awful brutality from the Germans and Austrians who tortured them. The Germans weren't just jealous, they HATED the Jews. That's the power and EVIL of ENVY! It's clear that envy damages others.

The story of envy isn't over. It's going on today. Envy is behind extra-marital affairs. Envy is the cause of most wars. Corporate take-overs that put people out of work are driven by envy.

Remember, we said the word "envy" actually is the same word for "boiling" in the Bible. When you are holding a pan of hot boiling water, sometimes it splashes on another person and scalds them. But most of the accidents with boiling water are when it splashes on the person holding the pan. Envy damages others, AND envy hurts you, yourself.

Envy makes you miserable. The problem with envy is that it doesn't appreciate what you have. It only wants what you don't have. That will make you miserable. You'll have no contentment. You'll have no peace.

One problem with envy is that, a lot of times, we don't even envy good things! You've heard the saying, "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence." That's about envy. And many years ago, Erma Bombeck wrote a book entitled, "The grass is always greener ... over the septic tank." That's true too. It means that a lot of times, we don't envy good things, but just junk.

Psalm 37 in the Bible says, ***Do not be agitated by evildoers; do not envy those who do wrong. For they wither quickly like grass and wilt like tender green plants.*** *Psalm 37:1-2* Bad people can sometimes do well in life and sometimes we envy that they do well. We envy that they get to live luxurious lives while we do not. Luxury is not worth anything if it comes at the cost of doing wrong. Because envy is a bad thing, it tends to make us desire bad things.

Love is the opposite of envy. While envy is the desire to get what someone else has, love, on the other hand, serves. **Love serves others.**

The ultimate example of this is Jesus. He said about Himself, ***"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."*** *Mark 10:45* Envy looks at what someone else has and complains, "Why can't I have that?" Love looks at what you have and asks, "How can I give? How can I share? How can I serve others?" We are called to be servants out of love for others!

Jesus said, ***"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant."*** *Matthew 20:26*

The prayer in our heart and mind every single day is that God's love would work its way into our lives so much that we are thinking about opportunities to serve the people around us all the time. Imagine if Christ lived in us so much that you and I saw people and we thought "What can I do for him? What can I do for her? How can I bless them? What can I do for the people in my family? How can I serve my spouse?" Instead of being consumed with what we don't have, love is consumed with what

we can give away and what we can do for somebody else. That's how it changes our world, overcomes misery, overcomes pain.

Instead of envying and grabbing what wasn't His, Jesus gave up what IS His. He gave up His life. Jesus was crucified not because the religious leaders won the chess match. Jesus was crucified because He submitted Himself. Out of love – great, great love for you, Jesus chose to go to that cross.

On the cross, His life was the payment for your envy, and all your wrongs, all your sins. The only innocent One who didn't deserve death, chose not to hang onto His life for you.

His LOVE is just the OPPOSITE of our envy. And Jesus' death has killed that green-eyed monster. As a free gift of His love, He offers you FORGIVENESS, and a complete new life. He offers you a new heart of love. Through Jesus, a heart that envies is changed. In envy's place in your heart, Jesus' works LOVE. Love for God and love for others.

Love, Love is not envious. How we praise God for that!
AMEN.