

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Feb 16th 2015

When I was a novice in the Society of Jesus, I remember the words of my novice master saying “Compare and despair.” I was always so quick to hear someone talking about the deep experience that they had in prayer, or the graces that they felt from God, or various other things I compared myself to—only to be surrounded with the sickening feeling of jealousy or envy. Unfortunately, when we try to measure ourselves up to others, we can be led into this very serious sin.

Why do they get that?!? They shouldn't have that! I want it! Why can't I have what they have?!?

Jealousy destroys. It is not only destructive to our own heart and being, but it can lead to destruction in relationships. Jealousy can take the form of bitterness, resentment, gossip, malicious actions, and many more ugly appearances. But often we feel helpless to these feelings of jealousy, and that is when envy destroys siblings, families, friendships, and relationships. We hear many stories of envy and jealousy in the bible, from Joseph and his brothers, Jacob and Esau, and Saul's jealousy of David all the way to Judas' envy and the many stories of the Jews or Pharisees being envious.

In today's first reading we hear that the Lord looked with favor on Abel, but on Cain he did not. Like anyone with a bit of jealousy, he became resentful and depressed. So the Lord said to Cain that if he does what is right, he would be accepted; but if Cain refuses to do what is right, then watch out! The Lord says that sin is lying outside Cain's door, ready to attack. Therefore, like any jealousy—it wants to control and consume, but we must be its master and rule over the jealousy—this is the lesson that the Lord tried to teach to Cain.

Ridden with jealousy, Cain killed Abel.

Ever since that first murder in history, jealousy has always been among the top killers in our world. It might not be a “killing” in the physical sense like a murder, but rather a killing of relationships, a destroying of families, and a massacre of love. Jealousy harms our inner most being, it eats away at us, and kills us slowly.

Jealousy continued throughout history to be a deadly sin that leads to murder. In fact, the greatest murder of all time, the crucifixion of Jesus was out of jealousy. We hear that “it was out of jealousy that they handed Him over.” Jealousy led the Pharisees to continue to put Jesus to the test. In today's gospel, the Pharisees are arguing with Jesus and ask for a sign from heaven to test him. It was out of jealousy that they challenged Jesus, it was jealousy that caused them to plot against Jesus, and it was jealousy that led to their handing Him over.

Our God is a loving God, a kind God, and a generous God. He gives us all that we need. So how can we be freed from the jealousy that makes us greedy and wanting more? Love is what frees us from jealousy and envy. It is love that shows us that our generous God desires for us to be with him. We don't need to be jealous of or compete with our fellow brothers and sisters for God's attention or God's love. God loves us, each one of us, in a very special way, unconditionally. The Father loves us so much that He sent his son to us, to die for us, so that we might live. What more could God do to prove His love for us?!? And isn't God's love and His grace all that we need? So let us put envy and jealousy aside and bask in the glorious love of the Lord, knowing that we already have all that we need.

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