

PROPER CHRISTIAN JEALOUSY

October 11, 2009

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Epistle Lesson; James 4:7-12

Gospel Lesson; Mark 9:38-50

Sermon Text; Numbers 11:16

Numbers 11:24-29

“I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

That is what God told Moses, when He wrote the Ten Commandments and gave them to Moses on Mt. Sinai to share with the people.

“I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God.”

In our text for today we hear Moses telling Joshua, “Are you jealous for my sake?” What does it mean that God is a jealous God and what did Moses mean when he asked, “Are you jealous for my sake?” Today in our sermon we are going to be talking about just that. I am going to come back and talk about that in just a moment, but I want to continue or begin by sharing this.

You have probably have heard the phrase, “Be careful what you ask for.” When I was a youth growing up, it was the children of the faculty at Bethany Lutheran College, that would serve the banquets for the college students. We would set up the tables and chairs, set the tables, and help to serve the food. One of the things that my friends and I were jealous for was the dessert, the cheesecake that

the students got to eat. After the banquet was over, we got to enjoy that cheesecake! Now, one piece of cheesecake is good. Two pieces of cheesecake is really good. But, sometimes, we would eat five, six, even seven pieces of cheesecake! You can imagine how sick our stomachs may have felt! 😊

In our text for today it was the Children of Israel who were jealous for food other than manna. They began complaining against God and against Moses. “We want meat to eat.” They had set out, as a group, from Mt. Sinai, on their way to the Promised Land, and they were grumbling and complaining. God was providing Manna for them to eat, but they were sick of Manna and wanted meat.

Right before our text, it even talks about a rabble (a group of people, who were complaining) – wanting meat to eat. Moses came before God and said, “*This burden is too much for me to bare. I can't do this anymore, by myself.*” That is when God told Moses to choose seventy elders in Israel, seventy people who would be leaders of the people. These 70 men would not diminish the leadership of Moses. They would not diminish his fame, glory, and honor of being the leader of God's people. Rather they would help him and assist him. We might think of it in these terms. If a person were to turn seventy years old and you were to light seventy candles, as you light the candles, the light of the first candle is not diminished as you continue to light the candles, rather they work together. Those leaders were to work together with Moses to lead God's people. After God gave Moses assistance through the 70 elders, God told Moses to tell the people, “*You want meat to eat? You will get meat to eat. You are not going to eat meat just one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, but you are going to eat meat for a whole month. You are going to be so sick of eating meat that it is going to come out your nostrils. You are going to be so sick of eating meat that you are going to loath it and you are going to detest it. But, that is what you asked for. That is what you are going to*

get.” (Remember that phrase – Be careful what you ask for?)

After our text for today, we see God giving them their meat to eat. But, it was Moses who said, “God, our people, the number of people that I am leading is six hundred thousand. How can you possibly provide enough meat for them to eat?”

God said, “Is my arm too short? Moses, do you think that I am not able to help you out, to help these people out, when they are asking for meat?” Certainly He could. Certainly He did. And it is after our text that we see God providing that meat. It was quail. They would eat that quail, along with the manna that God had provided for them. It was those seventy elders who helped to share the burden of Moses. Those elders were to go to the Tent of Meeting, outside of the camp, where God would meet with the people. God would come down to the Tent, as a pillar of cloud. Those leaders were to go out to that cloud, to that Tent of Meeting. But, there were two who did not. Eldad and Medad. When it came to Joshua's attention that they were not at the Tent of Meeting, but they were prophesying just like the rest, Joshua was jealous. Joshua wanted that fame, honor, and glory of being the leader of God's people to be Moses' and Moses' alone. But, Moses was not concerned about the glory. He wasn't concerned about the honor and the fame. Rather, he said, “I wish that all of the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit on them!” He was not concerned about the glory, but he wanted all of God's people to have God's Spirit in them.

What does it mean that God is jealous? It means that He doesn't want to have any rivals.

The Children of Israel, in a sense, were married to God. We are married to God. And, God doesn't want to have any rivals. And yet, dear Christian friends, how often have we broken our marriage vow with God because of our jealousy?

- You are jealous of another person's friendship and so you slander them, even though our Epistle Lesson for today says, “Brothers, do

not slander one another.”

- You are jealous of another person's spouse, so you desire them.
- You are jealous of an object that another person has, and so you covet that in your heart, which may even lead to stealing.

In our text for today, Joshua was jealous of the fame, glory, and honor that he wanted Moses to have. Again, it was not Moses' concern.

In our Gospel Lesson for today, we see that it was John and the disciples who were jealous of other people who were driving out demons in Jesus' name. And so, they told Jesus about it. “*Lord stop them.*” But, Jesus said, “Do not stop him.”

Early in Jesus' ministry the disciples of John the Baptist were jealous of Jesus. As John the Baptist's disciples and other people were going to follow Jesus, (remember, John's ministry must decrease and Jesus' must increase) John's disciples were jealous that people were going to Jesus. John's disciples told John the Baptist, “*Stop them. They are your disciples. Have them follow you.*” John's disciples were jealous that people were following someone other than John.

In college, I once was jealous of my best friend's girlfriend. I loved spending time with my friend and now she was taking over! How awful that was of me. I should have been thankful for my best friend's girlfriend and fiancée. I am not jealous anymore. We are good friends. But, how awful that was. How sinful that was at the time to be jealous of his new relationship with his girlfriend, fiancée, and his wife. You see, too often our jealousy is misguided.

In catechism class when we get to the end of the Ten

Commandments we come to the conclusion. There we learn:

“I the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love and mercy to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.” Martin Luther

added to that and said this:

What does this mean? “God threatens to punish all those who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear His wrath, and do nothing against these commandments. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should love and trust in Him, and willingly do according to these commandments.”

You see, God in His righteous jealousy hates those who sin against Him.

- God in His righteous jealousy destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire.
- God in His righteous jealousy destroyed the world with water.
- God in His righteous jealousy destroyed the Egyptian army, as they were buried in the waters of the Red Sea.

In His righteous jealousy God threatens to punish, in time and in eternity, those who sin against Him. And that should terrify us. On the one hand, that should be very terrifying to us.

But, dear fellow redeemed, we need to see the other hand of God. We need to see the other side of God. It is God who also promises grace, mercy, and blessing to all who love Him and keep His commandments.

He promises you His mercy.

Have you ever played the game, 'Mercy' with somebody else? You take your hands and interlock them with the other person. You try to manipulate your hands and your wrists, until you put someone else into submission. In order to stop the pain do you remember what they are supposed to say? They are to say, “Mercy.” That is when you relent. That is when you stop and you spare them. That is what God, in His mercy, has done for you.

As we have gathered together for worship today, we have come to God and we have said, “*God, I have sinned against you. I have been improperly jealous, once again, this week. God have mercy on me, a*

sinner.”

God has had mercy on you. He sent His Son. Jesus was never improperly jealous. Certainly, He had righteous jealousy, wanting His Word to be proclaimed. But, He has never been sinfully jealous. Jesus took that life of perfection to the cross, where He died to pay for all of your sin, including your sins of jealousy.

- God, in His mercy, has spared you.
- God, in His mercy, has forgiven you of all of your sin.
- God, in His mercy, has restored you onto everlasting life, with Him, in Heaven.

Before Jesus was born, His mother knew the greatness of what Jesus was going to accomplish. She said,

“His **mercy** extends to those who fear Him.”

Later, in the New Testament, it is Peter who said “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great **mercy** he has given us new birth into a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in Heaven for you.”

What therefore, then, is proper Christian jealousy? Well, it is not this. It is not being jealous for the things of men. It is not being jealous for the things of people, here on this earth.

But rather, proper Christian jealousy is being jealous for the things of God - not desiring who gets the credit for when people hear about Jesus as their Savior, or come to faith to believe in Jesus as their Savior.

Proper Christian Jealousy is to say, “To God alone be the glory,” and to thank God and to praise Jesus, our Savior, that God is glorified, through them.

Let us close in prayer.

Dear Heavenly Father,

Once again today, we are so sorry that we have been sinful. We

have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed and that also includes the sin of jealousy. We thank You for Your mercy and Your willingness to spare us, to forgive us, and to restore us by sending your Son, not only to live a perfect life but also to suffer death on the cross for our forgiveness and for our salvation. Help us not to be jealous of other people, but to have a proper Christian jealousy toward You and others, as Your Word is extended, that others, too, may come to rejoice in that joy of salvation that You won for all people.

We pray this in Jesus, our Savior's name.

Amen.