

VICTORY OVER JEALOUSY

John 21:20-25

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Today we are going to wrap up our study on the Gospel John. This is the 65th sermon. We began this study on August 9, 2020, almost two years ago.
2. John tells us that he wrote this gospel so that we may “believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (Jn 20:31).”
3. And John did a masterful and truly inspired job at this task. He wrote about the seven signs (great miracles) of Jesus, beginning with turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana. He wrote about the seven “I am” statements of Jesus, such as “I am the bread of life; I am the light of the world; I am the good shepherd.” He gave us the most intimate and in-depth account of the Last Supper and Christ’s Upper Room Discourse with His disciples.
4. John gave us many of the most memorable verses in Scripture:
 - i. **John 1:1** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
 - ii. **John 3:16** “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”
 - iii. **John 10:10** “A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.”
 - iv. **John 11:25** “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live.”
 - v. **John 14:6** “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
5. So, it is curious that the very last passage in the gospel of John is a lesson warning us about jealousy.
6. In John 20, Jesus rose from the grave and appeared several times to His disciples. In John 21, Jesus tells Peter that if he truly loves Him, then he must feed His sheep – take care of His church.
7. Then Jesus told Peter that he would die a martyr’s death; that he would in fact be crucified like Jesus.
8. Then in this last passage, we are given a lesson about battling jealousy.

II. TEXT: John 21:20-25

1. *20 So Peter turned around and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them, the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and asked, “Lord, who is the one that’s going to betray you?” 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about him?”*

- i. Remember, Peter and Jesus had just had a conversation in which Jesus told Peter that one day he would die as a martyr by crucifixion.
 - ii. Peter saw that John was following them, and Peter asked, “What about him?”
 - iii. What was the motive behind this question? It could have been one of two things:
 - 1. Genuine concern. Peter loved John and wondered if John too was going to be executed for Christ.
 - 2. Jealousy. “What about him? If I have to suffer, then what about him? Shouldn’t he have to suffer as well?”
 - iv. I believe Christ’s answer reveals that Peter’s motive was not genuine concern but jealousy.
- 2. *22 “If I want him to remain until I come,” Jesus answered, “what is that to you? As for you, follow me.”*
 - i. If Peter’s motive was genuine concern, then I think Jesus’ would have had a gentler, kinder tone. He would have said something like, “Don’t worry about John. I’m going to take care of him, just like I will take care of you.”
 - ii. Instead, Christ’s command came in the form of a rebuke. He basically said, “What about John? Just because my plan is for you to suffer as a martyr, that has nothing to do with John. In fact, if I want John to live until I come back, that’s none of your business.”
 - iii. Peter was jealous.
- 3. *23 So this rumor spread to the brothers and sisters that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not tell him that he would not die, but, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?”*
- 4. *24 This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.*
- 5. *25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which, if every one of them were written down, I suppose not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written.*
 - i. As a side note, it is important to remember that the gospels are not biographies. Their purpose is not to tell us everything that Jesus said and did from birth to ascension. Their purpose is evangelistic. Their purpose is to give us the necessary information for us to believe in Jesus. This is why there is much information about Jesus, especially His life before ministry, that is left out.
- 6. It’s curious isn’t it? The last story in the book of John is about jealousy. Peter was jealous of John. He didn’t even know if John was going to have it easier than him, and he was already jealous. He was jealous that John might not have to suffer. He was jealous that John might get to have all the fun while Peter has to go to the cross. This is the last story in the book of John.

7. Perhaps there is a reason this story is placed here at the end. Perhaps there is something about jealousy and envy that is especially hazardous to the church. Perhaps there is something about jealousy that can derail the church and hinder it from its mission.

III. UNDERSTANDING THE SIN OF JEALOUSY

1. What is jealousy?

- i. Jealousy is the feeling of disappointment when someone else gets something that you want.
- ii. Jealousy is when you get sad, angry, and/or mean when someone gets something that you want; when someone gets a new toy; when someone gets a new house/car; when someone gets a promotion; when someone gets in good shape or loses a lot of weight; when someone kicks a bad habit; when someone inherits a lot of money; when someone gets a lot of attention; when someone gets a lot of praise; when someone gets a good grade; when someone wins a competition.

2. Why is jealousy so dangerous?

- i. It makes you miserable.
 1. Remember, you are a walking advertisement for Jesus Christ. If you are filled with joy, then you will attract others to Jesus. If you are unhappy, then you will push people away from Jesus.
 2. Jealousy is one of the main reasons that some Christians lack the joy and peace of Christ. Instead of counting their blessings, they are counting the ways that others have it better than them.
- ii. It hurts your relationships with others.
 1. The most important command in the Bible, after loving God, is to love your neighbor as yourself. Jealousy prevents you from doing this. You cannot love someone if you are jealous of them.
 2. Jealousy is more than being disappointed; it is a feeling of resentment. You start resenting, and despising, and getting angry at the person who has it better than you.
 3. This is why jealousy can destroy a marriage. It can destroy a friendship. It can destroy a church.
 4. I hate to admit it, but our church has been attacked a number of times by jealousy. These weren't attacks from the devil. These weren't attacks from unbelievers. These were Christian brothers and sisters in the church who were overcome with jealousy against one another and allowed it to divide them.
 5. How can the church fulfill its mission when we are divided by jealousy?
 6. Think of all the one-another commands in Scripture that Christians are supposed to apply to one another: Honor one another; live in

harmony with one another; build up one another; accept one another; have concern for one another; serve one another; carry one another's burdens; be kind and compassionate to one another; forgive one another, etc. It is impossible to treat someone like this if you are jealous of them.

7. Jealousy can also damage our relationships with unbelievers. It can hinder our witness to the lost. Believe it or not, sometimes Christians are jealous of unbelievers – of their possessions, and money, and status, and fame, and success, and health, and prosperity. How can we witness to people if we are jealous of them?
 8. Think about how ridiculous it is for Christians to envy non-Christians. That a poor Christian who is heaven-bound can envy a rich sinner who is hell-bound is both a tragedy and a profound mystery. This is how you can tell that a Christian has taken his eyes off of things above.
- iii. It hurts your relationship with God.
1. Jealousy is often expressed toward God when we get angry with God for treating someone else better than us; for allowing someone else to prosper more than us. “Why God? How could you? That’s not fair! You’re not fair! You have wronged me!”
 2. Jealousy is the feeling that one is the victim of injustice or inequity. “Why he but not me? Why didn’t you recognize me like you did her? Why didn’t you applaud me like you did her? Why didn’t give me a gift like you did her? Why didn’t you visit me like you did him? Why do I have to do the job and he doesn’t? Why did you give her more attention than me? Why did you spend more on him than on me?”
 3. And often this anger and resentment and meanness is expressed not only toward others but to God.
- iv. It leads to other sins.
1. Jealousy gives birth to meanness. It leads to cruelty.
 2. Jealousy begins as a negative feeling about someone, and then it turns in to a negative attitude toward them, and then to negative actions toward them.
 3. When we are jealous others, we naturally try to take away what they have; to steal what they have; to prevent them from enjoying what they have.
 4. Consider how jealousy led to sinful actions in the Bible:
 - a. Cain was envious because God approved of brother’s offering but not his own, so he murdered his brother (Genesis 4).
 - b. Sarah so envied Hagar because she could bear children that she had Abraham kick them out of the family, leaving them to die in the wilderness. Gen 28:18-21

- c. The Philistines were envious of Isaac's wealth, so they stopped up all of his wells with dirt and forced him to leave the land (Gen 26:12-16).
 - d. Joseph's brothers envied him because he was the object of their father's favoritism, so they decided to kill him, but changed their mind and sold him into slavery (Gen 37).
 - e. When Saul heard the women of Israel sing, "Saul killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands," his heart was filled with envy and from then on he hated David and tried to murder him (1 Sam 18).
 - f. Envy was ultimately the motive that led the Jewish leaders to have Jesus crucified (Mt 27:18).
 - g. Envy was also the driving motive behind the persecution of the early church. The Jewish leaders saw the huge crowds flocking to hear the apostles, and they were "filled with jealousy" (Acts 5:17).
5. Jealousy leads to all kinds of other sins: theft, murder, violence, gossip, division, etc.
 6. One of the ways that jealousy leads to other sins is with our words. When we are jealous, we criticize and minimize the achievements of others. "He only got that new truck because he inherited a bunch of money when dad passed away. Yeah he has big muscles, but he's probably on steroids. He got the promotion because he sucks up to the boss all the time." When we are jealous we try to tear others down with our words. We minimize their achievements.

3. Jealousy is a revealer.

- i. Jealousy reveals our foolishness.
 1. Often the people we envy are our closest family members and friends. Husband envies wife; wife envies husband; siblings envy one another; church members envy one another; teammates envy one another; coworkers envy one another.
 2. Why is this foolish? Because when your closest family and friends prosper, you prosper. When your loved ones and teammates and coworkers rise, you rise. To be disappointed with their prosperity and to wish for their demise only hurts yourself!
- ii. Jealousy reveals our selfishness.
 1. Christlikeness means loving others genuinely from the heart.
 - a. When we are disappointed by another's prosperity, success, victory, ascension, it shows that we lack love.
 - b. True love means rejoicing with those who rejoice, and mourning with those who mourn. But jealousy is the

opposite. It means grieving when others prosper, and rejoicing when they struggle.

- c. The jealous person shouts, "That's not fair! That's not equal!" But they don't care about equality. They only care about inequality when they are on the wrong side of it.
- d. The jealous person is so foolish that he would rather you both be poor than he be less rich than you.

2. True godliness means loving God.

- a. But our jealousy often reveals that all we care about ourselves.
- b. When one church member is jealous of another having a bigger, more successful ministry.
- c. When one pastor is jealous of another for having a more successful church.
- d. This shows our heart isn't for God, but only for ourselves.

iii. Jealousy reveals our faithlessness.

- 1. Faith is the confidence that God is in control, and that God is good.
- 2. Why did that person prosper? Because God wanted it to be so.
- 3. Why are you not prospering in the same way? Because God wanted it to be so. If God wanted you to have it, to get it, to experience it, then He would give it to you.
- 4. He gives and He takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.
- 5. To be angry about the situation is to show that you don't trust that God is good and in control. He made a mistake. He is unfair. He is unjust. He is letting things get out of hand.

4. So, let's look at the conversation between Peter and Jesus and learn some lessons about how to have victory over jealousy.

IV. GAINING VICTORY OVER JEALOUSY

1. Don't compare yourself to others.

- i. This was Peter's mistake. Jesus told him that he would die a martyr's death, and immediately he saw John and asked, "What about him?" Jesus was focused on John. He wanted to know if John would have it as bad as him. He wanted to compare fates; to compare God's plan for each of them. Jesus said, "Don't worry about him. Mind your own business."
- ii. Jealousy is the result of comparing ourselves to others. They have a nicer car; a nicer house; a nicer spouse; more kids; less kids; nicer toys; they went on a better vacation.
- iii. But it's not fair to compare.
- iv. Why?
- v. Everyone is living in dual seasons. They may have what you want, but they also have what you don't want. They may have money, but not peace. Kids,

but no money. A nice car, but a broken marriage. A good-looking wife, but a destructive addiction. Wealth, but no loved ones to share it with. A bigger office, but more hours and bigger headaches. Jealousy fails to take this into account.

- vi. It's not fair to compare because you have it better than many people. Many people envy you. Many people would love to trade places with you.
- vii. The next time you envy the neighbor because he is having a crawfish boil while you are eating ham sandwiches, think about the family down the road envies you because all they have in the pantry is PB&J.
- viii. If you want to compare yourself to others, compare yourself to those who are less fortunate than you. That will shake you out of your self-pity.

2. Don't expect equal treatment.

- i. Peter wanted to know if John was going to receive equal treatment. "If I have to die on the cross, then John should be crucified too." Jesus said, "If I want Him to live for thousands of years, that's none of your business."
- ii. Jesus was essentially saying that "I'm God, and you're not. It is my right to treat my children how I see fit. It's my right to use my servants how I want. It's my right to utilize my creation however I want to. And I don't have to treat John the same way I treat you. I don't have to give you and John the same everything. I don't have to treat you equally."
- iii. You might say, "That doesn't sound right. Shouldn't God treat us equally?"
- iv. God treats us fairly. He treats us justly. But not equally. Why? Because we are not equal. God doesn't treat us the same because we are not the same. We are all different. We have different spiritual gifts, passions, abilities, interests, experiences, weaknesses, advantages, disadvantages, resources, relationships. We all respond to God's grace differently. Some of us are more grateful, more obedient, more faithful, more diligent, more frugal, more trusting, more loving, more kind, more Christlike.
- v. It's not fair for the teacher to give every child the same grade, even though some performed better than others. It's not fair to declare both teams victorious even though one outscored the other. And it's not fair for God to treat us all equally, because we are not equal. We are not the same.
- vi. God has a unique assignment for each of us. And this will lead to different challenges; different joys; different sorrows; different standards of living; different incomes; different lifespans; etc.
- vii. Don't expect equal treatment, otherwise you will resent others and be angry toward God.

3. Focus on following Jesus.

- i. What was Jesus' command to Peter? "Don't compare yourself to John; just focus on following me."

- ii. To avoid jealousy, we need to keep our eyes zoomed in on Jesus. Focus on Him and Him alone. Don't worry about what other people are doing. Don't worry about what God is giving them. Don't worry about how much money they make. None of that is your concern. Your only focus needs to be on following Jesus.
- iii. Spend much time in prayer. Spend much time in the word. Get busy working on the unique ministry that God has given you.
- iv. Often, we get jealous because we take our eyes off spiritual things and focus on material things. We focus on earthly, worldly, temporal things. We focus on health, wealth, and prosperity, instead of intimacy, obedience, evangelism. We focus on loving this world rather than loving Jesus. We focus on building our kingdom rather than God's kingdom. We focus on acquiring earthly riches rather than storing up eternal treasures. We focus on pleasure on earth rather than paradise in heaven. We focus on our reputation rather than God's fame. We focus on our recognition rather than God's glory. This is why Jesus told Peter, "As for you, follow me."
- v. Don't compare. Don't expect equal treatment. Don't get jealous. Don't envy. As for you, follow Jesus.

V. CONCLUSION

1. A few years ago I heard that a church down the road had died, and they had donated their building to another new church. Now, that's a wonderful gift. Of all people, I know that. We've been a portable church for fifteen years now. Getting a building, and for free, that's a pastor's dream come true! As a pastor, I should have rejoiced. I should have celebrated the good news with this church. This was a great victory for the kingdom of God. Now that church would be able to be more effective at reaching people for Christ in our area. That's great news! But I didn't celebrate. I didn't rejoice. I was upset. I was disappointed. I resented that pastor. I complained. Do you know what that's called? Envy. And pastors struggle with it all the time. We envy each other's budgets, buildings, and butts (attendance). We don't rejoice with one another, we criticize one another. We complain about one another. We compete with one another. That's how tempting, insidious envy is. If even pastors struggle with envy, then it's no surprise that envy is a huge problem in our society.
2. Do you know what Jesus is telling me this morning, "Don't be jealous. As for you, follow me." And that's the same message He has for you. "Don't be jealous. Don't compare. Don't envy others. As for you, follow Jesus."
3. He died for you so that you can be freed from a life of sin, so that you can be forgiven and have relationship with God, so that you can live a life of fulfillment and significance. Do you believe in Him? Do you trust Him? Will you follow Him?