

Jealous or Zealous?

Pentecost

Pastor Josh Frazee

Numbers 11:24-30

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

It can be hard not to be jealous sometimes. Have you ever been jealous? Has your neighbor got a larger house than yours? Or a cleaner one? Are his crops coming along better than yours? Does it seem like your neighbor gets more time off from work? Maybe your neighbor has prettier hair than you—or maybe just the fact that your neighbor has hair makes you jealous? Maybe your best friend got her driver's license first, or got a new car to drive while you are stuck with a hand-me-down. Do you feel like your neighbor has more talent than you? Or, what is more, that your neighbor has the same talent as you, but you feel that he does it better than you ever could?

We already know that jealousy is a sin. We are commanded to be content. Several of the commandments show this. You shall not steal; you shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Believe it or not, anything that belongs to your neighbor does include faith. As we learn from the Gospel of Mark, the disciples were able to be jealous for Jesus' sake. “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.”

Likewise, in our Old Testament text, Joshua, the son of Nun, became jealous for the sake of Moses.

Verse 1

“Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied.”

Moses, as you may recall from his chats with his father-in-law Jethro, had a hard time bearing the burden of the entire nation of Israel on his shoulders. He did have Aaron and Joshua with him, but his father-in-law well suggested gathering men full of faith to help him serve. Of these men, seventy met at the tent with Moses on this particular occasion. With that, the Lord took some of the Spirit and placed it on these men, showing this with a sign of prophesy.

This type of event would be seen again at Pentecost, with God the Holy Spirit visibly manifesting Himself on the apostles while they prophesied in the tongues of those around them. While those gathered around at Pentecost were not jealous for the sake of their leader, they were not very zealous for the work of God either. Rather than acknowledging the sign that God was permitting people from every nation to hear His Word and rejoicing with zealous faith, they crudely joked about the apostles getting drunk.

Are there times in your life where God is at work and you are missing it? Granted that Pentecost was one of the last great signs before the signs which would mark the End Times, but God is still at work. Are you zealously proclaiming and celebrating the ways in which God is at work today, or are you too busy making jokes and missing what is going on right before your eyes? Today, God is still at work reaching out to people of all nations—His Word being translated—as we no longer have the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues—being translated into all known languages, and immediately beginning to be translated as we learn of new

languages and dialects. Like the sacraments, the Word is one of the few great means through which God still works today.

Verse 2

“Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested upon them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, ‘Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.’ And Joshua, the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, ‘My lord, Moses, stop them.’”

Of all the things to be jealous about, Joshua, the son of Nun, picked being jealous for the sake of his leader Moses. It seemed that Joshua was afraid of an authority competition. This would happen later in Moses’ service, but at this time, Joshua was missing the point, like those gathered in Jerusalem at Pentecost. His fellow Israelites were prophesying! They were speaking God’s Word with power.

Do you ever have the same jealousy? Do you compare pastors and become jealous that another pastor might draw someone to faith rather than your own? Or do you become jealous of how another church may be receiving more members than your own? Even if that church is of another denomination?

The Scriptures tell us that the Spirit blows where He will. And they also warn us to stay away from false prophets. False prophets come in sheep’s clothing, but are inwardly wolves who will take you away from God’s pure Word. It may appear that they preach and teach the same things as we do, but do they really? If they do, why are they of another denomination than us? Why don’t they change their denominational identity and become LCMS?

Again, the Spirit blows where He will, and I, like any other good LCMS pastor, do not—let me repeat, do not believe that there will only be LCMS Lutherans in heaven. I do believe, however, that Scripture warns us of the dangers of false doctrine. While a church that teaches using the means and the Scriptures can allow for the Spirit to create faith, the false doctrines can—and sadly in cases do destroy the faith that was being created.

So again, you shouldn’t envy other denominations, or even other LCMS congregations. Instead, you should be zealous that the Word of God is taught in its full truth and purity in those LCMS congregations and congregations in Scriptural unity with us throughout the world, and that congregations who seem to recognize these true doctrines would leave their current denominations with its false teachings and be united with us in the Word of God.

Verse 3

“But Moses said to him, ‘Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!’”

Moses had seen that the Lord God was good to fulfill His promises. God had delivered the Israelites and him from Pharaoh and Egypt, as He had promised. And the Lord God remained with Moses and the Israelites, and the Israelites with all their following leaders from Joshua on until the time that His first Gospel promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth to be born, to live, to die for the sins of all humanity, and to rise again. In Him were and are all sins forgiven—even the sins of jealousy. Not just the jealousy for a leader or pastor, but all forms of jealousy.

But just as God did not abandon His people in Egypt but rescued them for His purposes, God has rescued you for His purposes. He has called you through His Son Jesus Christ and through the washing of Holy Baptism and the hearing of His Word. He has numbered you with all the saints of old so that you may no longer be jealous, but zealous.

In Christ Jesus, and the Holy Spirit at work in you just as it was in Moses and the apostles at Pentecost, you can strive to overcome jealousy and all forms of sin. But not just to overcome them, but to live the commandments out in love of God and love of your neighbors. This is especially true that you might not steal, but help your neighbors to keep and improve their possessions.

So, dear friends in Christ, may the Spirit continue to work in you that you might be zealous rather jealous, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus' Name. Amen.