

## Love Vs. Envy, 1 Cor. 13:4b, 5/10/18

If you are looking for a last minute garden addition as a gift for mom, the last plant you would ever want to pick is the Japanese Knotweed **(Picture)**. Newsweek did an article a few years ago this plant- Said this-

“It presents a pleasing appearance to the eye: heart-shaped leaves, bamboo stems and pretty, little white-flower tassels. What is less obvious is this plant’s relentless killer instinct. Japanese Knotweed may start out as an attractive addition to a garden, but it soon turns into a rapacious monster. Growing up to 6.5 feet tall and 65 feet wide due to its tireless and unstoppable army of unseen roots, knotweed spreads out underground and forces its way up through every crack imaginable, in patios, concrete paths, and even in structural foundations, walls and floors.”

**(Picture)** In fact, in the UK banks have been known to refuse a mortgage if Japanese Knotweed is found on the property. “Eradication requires steely determination,” warns the U.K.’s Royal Horticultural Society, stressing that it has cost \$120 million just to remove knotweed from the site of the London Olympic Games in 2012. Now you can see why Japanese Knotweed has earned the nickname the “Indestructible Scourge” and is a great enemy of gardens throughout 26 countries in Europe and 36 states in America.

Today we are going to talk about another a great enemy, not of your garden, but of your heart, that also earned a nickname- Shakespeare- *the green-eyed monster- Envy*. In the portrait of love that the Apostle Paul gives us in 1 Corinthians 13, we come to the first of 7 opponents of love. **v.4b Love does not envy.**

Today we want to study this weed of our hearts called ENVY and see three things:

- 1) It is a Pervasive Species
- 2) It is an Invasive Species
- 3) How to Destroy its Roots

1) **It is a Pervasive Species:** We all have it.

Now I think we all inherently know what envy is... **resentment for what others have that you don't**. Some words in the Bible you really need to study because they are unfamiliar to our modern context. This isn't one of them because it's a human experience from the beginning. I was doing a little study on examples of this in Scripture and I got to exactly 2 pages into my Bible before I hit the first example- what did the serpent say to Eve to get her to eat the forbidden fruit? “You will be like God when you eat it. Eve, there is something you don't have that God has, and he doesn't want you to have it.” And all of a sudden, she desired what she didn't have...I got to the end of the Gen. 3 and came to the next chapter, and wouldn't you know, a glaring example of envy again- Cain resented that his brother's sacrifice was more acceptable than his, and he rises up to kill him. You go a little further and you get to Abraham's wife Sarah, who resented that Hagar had a child when she wasn't able to and she banishes Hagar...happy mother's day Hagar- here's the wilderness. You go a little further and come to some brothers, and they have a particular brother Joseph who has the favor of his father more than the others and so they leave him in a pit

and sell him into slavery. And we're not even out of Genesis! Envy is pervasive, universal to the human condition.

Do we not all struggle with envy? Have you checked your heart for envy lately?

-Mothers Day is a wonderful day to celebrate, but for some it can be a battle with envy.

-Some women struggle with envy because you desire to have children but you don't currently, or you didn't have a mom that "deserves" celebrating like others.

-For you who are mothers- Do you envy moms who, according to their facebook, instagram, manage to have a full-time job, a clean house, a wonderful husband, perfect children and perfect hair?

-Do you ever secretly resent the car in front of you with 50 my children is an honor roll student stickers?

-A guy in my pastors group stood up and asked for prayer for their 14 year old who they are enrolling in college because she is a genius. Very next guy got up and said...I just got a text that my 4 year old boy just stuck his head in the toilet.

-A friend just gets married and it hasn't happened for you yet.

-Your friend who's body is built in just the right portions

-You are second string on bench while they get to play

-You are second chair in the orchestra while the other guy always gets first.

-You work harder and are smarter but the other guy gets the promotion

-For many of us we live our life from one envy to the next.

I really didn't think I had a problem with envy, but the Spirit reminded that I do. I was at a pastor's retreat a couple weeks ago in Baltimore, about 140 pastors from all over the world...these are my peers. As various pastors would speak and share there were times in my heart I wasn't really listening...just thinking, "I wish I was as articulate as them, the way they said that just rolled off the tongue. That guy is so brilliant, this guy has read so many books and knows so much theology. I'm just never going to catch up. And in between session EVERYONE wanted to get advice from this pastor, NO ONE seems to care what I think."

-I'm no different than you... This is a human condition.

It is a pervasive species of sin...

## 2) It is an Invasive Species.

Much like Japanese Knotwood, envy can start out small and seemingly harmless but it soon turns into a rapacious monster. Let me share with you some ways it is invades our lives.

-It invades our joy

Proverbs 14:30

*A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.*

Envy is miserable. I had a mentor who used to always say- comparison is the thief of all joy. Isn't this true from experience? **Pic of boy at window** You were content with your house, until you walked into your neighbor's house... You were happy with

your husband until your friend's husband filled her office with roses. You were happy with your vacation until you saw on Facebook your friend's vacation. Nothing invades our joy quite like envy.

#### -It invades relationships:

Envy is not content merely invading us, it spreads to affect our relationships. Is this not what we see throughout Scripture? Cain's envy of Abel, Sarah's envy of Hagar, Rachel's envy of Leah, the sons of Jacob with Joseph, Saul's envy of David, the Pharisees envy of Jesus's popularity...the list goes on. In every case envy results in relational destruction... It's like the Japanese Knotwood, discontent to ruin the garden, it has to also spread to ruin the neighbors property too!

It may take the form of **self-isolation**. Sarah banishes Hagar...she pushes her away. I don't want to be around those people because they remind me that I don't have what they want. Do you ever find yourself avoiding someone for this reason?

Or envy invades relationships by **creating a rivalry**. 1 Corinthians 3 Paul said that their envy was creating strife and rivalries between groups people saw themselves as followers of particular preachers- Paul, Peter, Apollos... Paul says in v.9 "We are fellow workers." Guys we are all on the same team! Are there people at work or at school, or in the bridge club or on the sports team that you secretly want to lose? There would be something in you that would rejoice if they broke their leg or lost their voice...

Or envy invades relationships by **seeking to criticize**, gossip and slander others. When I was at that pastor's retreat, At one point I caught myself doing this internally. I was really envying this one pastor's theological competence. He was about my age... and feeling particularly insecure at that moment and subtly I started to criticize him in my heart, "He probably just sits in his office and reads all day, probably is out of touch with the people. I'm a man of the people, I'm in touch with their lives." I started over-compensating and elevating myself in my mind and knocking him down a peg. Don't we do this? Don't we find flaws and reasons to criticize them? Check your heart, this may be at the root of why you are so critical of others.

Envy is a Pervasive Species

Envy is an Invasive Species

#### 3) How to Destroy Its Roots

**Dig Deeper-** We have to get to the root of why...

Pastor Tim Challies says, "When I see your success, it makes me think less of myself. It calls into question all that I am, all that I've done, all that I've accomplished, all that I've worked for. It becomes an issue of my own identity. Your success screams that I have failed, I'm incomplete, I'm unacceptable."

We are trying to use particular things that we are prone to long and desire to plug the whole in our heart that continually drains- someone else's success, looks, smarts, possessions, families, popularity, sexual prowess... Of course none of it works, even when we get what we wanted, we need more or something different... The root of envy of others reveals this sobering truth- we have idols of our hearts, things that we worship, that we love, long for, desire too much, that will never fulfill us and always disappoint us. What do you long for, who do you envy and why? Whatever that is, inevitably points to heart idol.

### Apply the Gospel Treatment

The only treatment you can apply to destroy the weed of envy is the gospel.

#### Titus 3:3

*For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.*

Paul says- we were slaves- idolaters, chasing things to fill our hearts...

#### Titus 3:4-7

*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy.*

#### Titus 2:11-12

*For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. <sup>12</sup> It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

What Paul says, is that the Gospel- when applied to the envy struggles in our lives, the Holy Spirit begins to train us to say no, I'm not going to be a slave to that. How? Envy thinks that we deserve more than we have, but the gospel says, we deserve death and shame and hell for our sins, but Jesus was treated like we deserved, so we can now be treated as Jesus deserved. He took our failure, everything about us that is unacceptable and disappointing and incomplete, and took all our shame upon himself so that we can be complete, satisfied, acceptable, and unconditionally loved. We have His love and affection. He looks upon us not marred by our insecurities and envy, but completely acceptable and honored and accepted by grace. He has given us the Holy Spirit as our helper to fight envy with the truth of the Gospel. And promises that we will one day get all that our hearts could have ever wanted or longed for...completely satisfied, because we are heirs with Christ.

#### Professor Mark Buchanan

*"Here is the surprise: God made us this way. He made us to yearn – to always be hungry for something we can't get, to always be missing something we can't find, to always be disappointed with what we receive, to always have an insatiable emptiness that no thing can fill and an untamable restlessness that no discovery can still.*

*Yearning itself is healthy – a kind of compass inside us, pointing to True North. It's not the wanting that corrupts us. What corrupts us is the wanting that's misplaced, set on the wrong thing. The more of heaven there is in our lives, the less of earth we shall covet. The love of God casts out envy of men."*

When the divine love of God has captured our hearts, it does not envy because it is a heart that is satisfied by the love of God, the only one whose opinion ultimately matters.

**Will you turn over the idol that your envy is revealing and give it to God?** There was a little girl whose most prized possession was a string of pearls. The fact that they were fake didn't bother her. She wore them everywhere and played with them every day. She loved the pearls. She also loved her mommy. She put her to bed, one night and asked this question: "Do you love me?" "Yes, Mommy. I love you more than anything." "More than anything?" "More than anything." She paused for a moment. "More than the pearls? Would you give me your pearls?" "Oh, Mommy," she replied. "I couldn't do that. I love my pearls." "I understand," she told her and kissed her good-night. As she fell asleep, she thought about her mommy's request. When she awoke, she thought about it some more. It was on her mind that morning and later in the day. Finally, that night, she went to her mommy with her pearls. "Mommy, I love you more than these. Here, you take them." "I'm so glad to hear that," she said, standing and opening her purse, "I brought you a gift." She opened the small flat box and gasped. Pearls. Genuine pearls.

You suppose your Father wants to give you some as well? He offers authentic love, authentic acceptance. Authentic satisfaction of your deepest longings. But he won't give you the genuine until you surrender the imitations.

When rid our souls of the weed of envy and exchange it for authentic love- it will be so countercultural. This is why Paul sets love up as an opposite of envy. By this the world will know we are Christians.

Envy pushes people away from you, but love pulls them in closer. Envy sees people as rivals to defeat. Love sees people as teammates to celebrate. Envy seeks to criticize to elevate ourselves. Love seeks to give honor above ourselves. Let's show the world the love of Christ.