

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: “Hey, I want that.”

SERIES: *FATAL - Envy*

SCRIPTURES: *Genesis 4*

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Well good morning, it so great to worship with you.

Want to say welcome to all of you in this room and to so many gathered on-line.

Last week, we started a new series, called **FATAL (Sermon series graphic)**.

8 vices that are fatal to following Jesus. We find them lurking in our hearts. Sometimes, in fact often, we probably don’t realize they are even there.

Many of them are not “obvious or egregious” sins. And so we have actually become accustomed to living with them. We don’t recognize them and when we do, we think, well at least it’s not a major sin. I might lust, but I’ve never committed adultery. I might struggle with anger, but at least I haven’t murdered anyone.

But for followers of Jesus that is not our standard. Jesus isn’t simply concerned about the end result of our actions, or the big sins...he’s concerned with the condition of our hearts, our intentions, and our motivations.

Mark 7:20-22 - ²¹ For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

Jesus is concerned about the condition of your heart. Last week talked about sloth...“not doing what needs to be done, when it needs to be done”. Truth is our lives are filled with business, but it is often avoiding, procrastinating, filling our time with unnecessary tasks to avoid doing what truly needs to be done. It's a heart condition and it's fatal.

This morning we are going to talk about another fatal vice...**Envy.**

I. What it is?

And I was thinking Envy can best be described using a little phrase. A phrase that we all learned how to say when we were little, but nobody ever taught us to say it.

It's a phrase that seems so harmless and so we never learned to get rid of it.

And even if we don't verbally say it out loud anymore, we probably live with this phrase whispering into our ears, every day of your life.

Any guess what that phrase is? (I know some of you are cheating, you're looking in the bulletin for the answer.)

A. “Hey, I want that.”

It turns out envy is as old as humanity and the thread of envy in human hearts courses through history and stories of envy abound throughout Scripture.

Cain & Abel
Isaac & Ishmael
Jacob & Esau
Joseph & his brothers and his coat of many colors
Sarah & Hagar
Rachel & Leah
Miriam and Aaron and their brother Moses...

And it has been passed along to you and me.

You may recall that about 5 weeks ago, Pastor Bill actually talked a little bit about this in his series on the life of David. Remember we talked about Saul's envy of David. The townspeople sang, **"Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands."** And Saul's heart whispered those fatal words... "Hey, I want that."

And so my first thought was, *"Well we just talked about this 5 weeks ago, maybe we should eliminate this sermon from the series."*

And so I started thinking, how important is it really for us to talk about envy again? Is it really that big of deal in our world, that we should spend another 25 mins talking about this?

And I began to think...thankfully since we live in the modern United States of America we don't have to worry about envy...since we have more wealth and power than any other country in world...since we have the most advanced health care system in the world....since we have some of the best education in the world...since we have internet access and Ipads and the best technology in the world. Since we have the best of the best...Thankfully that means we have overcome envy.

Thankfully people in our communities and in our church we never look at other people and what they have and think, "I want that". We don't worry ourselves about

the size of our homes or the titles we carry. We never compare our kids with someone else's kids in sports and school. We never worry about our physical appearance, we know that for sure...just take a look around this room and you can tell that's the case😊

Truth is, as I began to think about envy and about where it shows up in our world, I began to realize, that phrase, "*hey I want that.*" is coursing through our veins. In our homes, our businesses, our churches, our entertainment...it's all around us and it's killing us.

And so followers of Jesus, this morning we just want to try understand a little bit more about where envy might be showing up in our lives, how it is that it's killing us and if there's anything we can do about it.

If you have a Bible with you, turn with me to **Genesis 4**. Story about two brothers, you've heard their names before. Cain and Abel. And you probably know that Cain kills Abel. But what you may not know, is why Cain kills his brother. Look at this with me for just a moment...

Now Abel kept flocks and Cain worked the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.

What's going on this story? Why does God look at Abel's offering with favor but not Cain's? I always used to read this story and think this is Biblical justification that God is not a vegetarian! Abel brought 20oz porterhouse and Cain brought green beans and salad. This is why when I'm going out for dinner I'm going to Texas Roadhouse, not Panera Bread I'm getting a ribeye not the steamed veggie medley, that's what God would do? Is that what's going on here...not exactly.

An important detail to understand related to **“experiencing God’s favor in our lives.”** To experience God’s favor requires “playing by God’s rules.”

Did you do this when you were in school...it’s test day in school, but the night before you chose to stay up late watching TV instead of studying. But as the teacher is handing out the test, your praying asking God to help you do really well on the test. You want his blessing, but you didn’t want to do the good, honest, hard work of studying for the test.

Or how about this? You’re headed to the doctor for your yearly physical. All year long you’ve been eating unhealthy, you’ve been neglecting exercise. But you want God to bless your physical health anyway. And you find yourself praying that your blood pressure is good. Your cholesterol is good.

I’ll give you another example from the Kipe house. The Kipe House is also known as the Kingdom of Jenny. There are three little inhabitants who dwell in that kingdom, but Jenny is the BOSS.

In order for the inhabitants to experience favor/blessing, they must do life in Jenny’s Kingdom according to her will. If they don’t, if they try to experience blessing outside of the boss’s will they will miss out on the blessing.

Jenny makes the best chocolate milkshakes. She uses just the right amount of ice cream mixed with just the right amount of 100% whole milk and splash of vanilla flavoring. She blends it just the right viscosity...it’s not quite like drinking chocolate milk, but it’s also not so thick that you can’t drink it through your straw.

Now if you want to experience the blessing of that shake in Jenny’s kingdom you are required to eat your full dinner, including your veggies. There are no bargains. Can I

eat half of my green beans. Can I substitute a green bean for something else? No, no, no.

This is God's Kingdom. And in order to experience His blessing we have to play by His rules.

“So often we do things that make sense to us and ask God to bless our actions and come alongside our plans, rather than looking at the things God promises to bless and acting alongside of them.” (Claiborne 199)

Look carefully at the details related to the offerings of the two brothers.

Abel, we are told, brought **“fat portions from the firstborn of his flock.”** Which is kind of like saying, *“Abel was bringing his absolute best to God.”* He had given God his wealth, his occupation, his security, his life. Abel was willing to offer, God's way...and as a result he was experiencing God's favor.

Cain on the other hand, we are told, brought **“some of the fruits of the soil.”** Which, in Hebrew, is a little bit like saying, *He was giving God the extras, his leftovers, second-best, he was going through the motions.* He wanted to experience God's blessing, but he wanted to do it his way.

Kind of makes me wonder, how many of us desperately want God's favor in our lives, but we don't want to live God's way.

Do you see the difference? And so as a result Abel experiences God's favor and Cain doesn't. And this is where the envy begins to creep in.

So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Cain's anger is rooted in envy. Cain started looking over at his brother and his little heart whispered. "Hey, I want that."

Envy is a **resentful longing for what somebody else has**. It's when I look at the people around me and say, "hey I want that!"

Envy is different than greed. And we're gonna talk about greed in a few weeks. Greed is an insatiable desire for more.

Envy is similar, but envy is a resentful longing. Envy is I want more and you to have less. I want you to be diminished. I want you to fail.

We envy co-workers who are praised by the boss for a job well done. Better athletes. Better musicians. People who are better looking. Better writers. Better speakers. Better pastors. Bigger churches.

People who have better tans or better hair or better teeth. Better cars, better grills, newer deck. Newer phone. Bigger home.

Parents of perfect families, with perfect kids and perfect pets and perfect vacations.

Every time Cain looks at Abel, his heart whispers, "Hey I want that." And it's killing him. And then just look at this...

Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."¹⁴ While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Cain decides the world would be better off if Abel wasn't in it. Envy is fatal.

I told you last week that each of the 8 fatal vices often has other devastating side-effects. It's part of what makes them fatal.

For example last week we said that the nasty side effect of sloth...is a constant sense of “unrest.”

Envy has a nasty side-effect as well. What do you think the side-effect of envy is?

B. Judgmentalism.

See when you live your life looking around and wanting what others have, you lose contentment and satisfaction. You lose your ability to cheer others on and encourage. And when we can't or don't have what other's do we often resort to pointing out their faults.

Samuel Roberts was a 19th century British poet, and he was in a gathering of people who were all praising a duke they knew because he had good looks and talent and wealth and a promising future. In a brief pause Robert's said, "Thank God, at least, he has bad teeth."

(Ortberg)

That's often where envy leads. We look at other people all day long and we think to ourselves, "If I can't have what they do, I hope, at least they have bad teeth."

He might make six figures, but I bet he's materialistic.

She might have a nice figure, but I bet she's a terrible cook.

In fact Jesus knew this was a problem for people...one time in his own sermon Jesus said, **“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye...”**

If you find yourself easily critical or judgemental of others, there's a good chance envy is creeping around in your heart.

So,

II. What we can do about envy?

A. Envy and Jesus.

Alright, rule of thumb when it comes to spiritual transformation...you cannot eliminate envy simply by trying really hard not to envy. And you'll have hard time finding any motivation or example in our world. There is only one person ever who held the secret to overcoming envy...his name is Jesus.

As followers of Jesus, we eliminate envy by looking to Jesus. We give our lives to him. And then we choose to keep our eyes focused on him. And as we focus on Jesus and his life and his teachings, envy is replaced by other traits, like love and joy, generosity, good will, peace and security.

There's a story in the book of Mark, where two of Jesus very own disciples, James and John come to Jesus and they say, **"One day when you are on heavens throne, can you promise that one of us will get to sit at your right and left."**

The other 10 disciples find out and they get angry...its anger sparked by envy. They are thinking "hey I want that." And pretty soon all 12 are arguing about the seats of honor.

Mark 10:42 – 45 - Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them."

Jesus is saying "envy is the way of the world. I want to win and you to lose. I want to have more and you to have less."

⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

See what Jesus is teaching...Jesus is teaching his disciples to have less so other's can have more. To lose so that others can win.

Now who teaches stuff like that? Not the Romans, not gentiles and not the religious leaders. And you won't find that kind of teaching anywhere in our world either. Not on your favorite television show or newspaper. Not from our political leaders or Oprah or Judge Judy.

This teaching, you lose so others can win, comes from Jesus.

But it's not just in his teaching...it's a way of living. Check this out...

On human level, envy is actually the reason Jesus went to the cross.

This is from [**Mark 15:10**](#) - Pilate saw that

¹⁰it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.

The religious leaders begin looking at Jesus and they became filled with envy. Jesus had many followers. Jesus was a great teacher. Jesus was miraculously healing the sick. They didn't like it. They begin to think like Cain...We want that. We want what Jesus has. And if we can't have what Jesus has then the world would be better if Jesus wasn't in it.

So out of their envious hearts, they formulate this plan to kill Jesus...because envy is fatal, that's what it does. This is where it leads. Jesus needs to lose in order for them to win. So they nail him to a cross.

But then something strange happens. Jesus doesn't respond like humans respond, because Jesus doesn't have envy in his heart. Jesus is not interested in winning so that others might lose. Instead chooses to do the opposite...Jesus chooses to lose in that moment, so that religious leaders, and Roman governors and betrayers and doubters and centurions and enviers...and everyone else could win.

And when we choose Jesus as master in our lives, then we can choose to claim his victory in our lives. He dies so that you can succeed.

When Jesus comes into your life, when you make room in your heart and you're your attitude and your intentions and your motivations for Jesus...then he starts to push out those attitudes like envy. That's what heart transformation is. That's why Jesus is the Master and the savior of humanity.

And then second, the Church, as followers of Jesus, is supposed to be that unique group of people in our world who stop envying the success of others and instead we...

B. Take joy in the success of others.

John Ortberg has this fantastic line we **“make our lives a joyful exercise in trying to serve, enhance, ennoble, equip, give to the lives of other people.”**

That's who we're supposed to be Five Forks.

I'll just show you how this happens...A few months ago, I had the great honor of having my wife Jenny up here with me to share a mother's day sermon. And I'll tell you, going into that sermon Jenny was pretty nervous, because public speaking isn't her favorite thing.

But after that message she had so many people reaching out telling her how much they appreciated that sermon and how powerful that message was. And how much they loved her vulnerability and authenticity, how great her stage presence and sermon delivery was.

I even had people coming to me telling me how much they appreciated her preaching and how they learned more from that sermon than any sermon I ever preached...In fact many people said, *“they appreciated her teaching so much they wished she’d do more of it, I’d do less...so now I’m out of a job!”*

I’m just kidding but in all honesty can I just tell you, every time someone reached out to me and told me how much they appreciated HER message that morning...do you know there wasn’t the slightest bit of envy in me...instead it made me feel good because she’s my wife and when she wins, I win. I like it when she wins in life.

You’ve experienced this too, with people who are close to you. When your son or daughter aces a test, when they score a goal, when they sing a solo...you take joy in their success.

Well Jesus says in his kingdom there is no longer Jew or gentile, slave or free, male or female...but we are all one in Jesus. That’s why Jesus went to the cross, so that when He wins everyone wins.

Every other human being becomes part of our family...all cheering each other on...our lives become joyful exercise in serving, enhancing, ennobling, equipping, giving to the lives of other people.”

What if husbands and wives started to live that way?

What if youth sports coaches started to live that way?

What if co-workers started to live that way?

What if Republicans and Democrats started to live that way?

What if world leaders started to live that way?

And we say, “yeah, yeah, yeah it’ll never happen.” Maybe that’s true, because not all of those people have given their lives to Jesus. So you’re right, that’s very unlikely.

But what if it started with a little group of people, in the village of Five Forks, in south central, Franklin County, PA.

What if there was one little group who became fully aware of their tendency to envy and how it was fatal to their lives and how it was killing the world, so they committed their lives to Jesus and they started to be just a little different in this area...so that our hearts stopped whispering “hey I want that” and instead our hearts whispered, “Wow, it’s so great you have that.”

What if it started right here in this church? What if it started with you? What if started with me? What if we started this week?

Tomorrow we’re gonna wake up and the first thing we’re gonna do before we get on with our day...we’re gonna say, **“Jesus we need your help. We have envy in our hearts and it’s getting in the way of who you want us to be. But we want today to be your day. Open our eyes to see the success, that talents, the gifts of others. Our co-workers, our friends, our families and then fill us with overflowing joy at their success. Show us who we can encourage. Show us who we can thank or recognize or compliment or brag about.”**

Pray.