

Obsessed With Envy

Scripture Reading — 1 Kings 21:1-16; Matthew 5:29

He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. — 1 Kings 21:4

King Ahab wanted his neighbor's land in order to cultivate vegetables, but Naboth the owner refused the offer. He would not trade or sell his inheritance, the garden God had assigned to his ancestors in the promised land. King Ahab moped, refused food, and retreated to bed.

Envy is a sin of the eyes: another's house, spouse, or salary can become an obsession. Some people have killed in order to get the things they wanted. Ahab's envy sowed a seed that grew into Jezebel's twisted plan, and he went along with it. Envy aims to destroy, and it harms everyone involved.

Seneca, an ancient Roman philosopher said, "No one can have all he wants, but a man can refrain from wanting what he has not, and cheerfully make the best of a bird in the hand."

In Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, the envious eye of the older brother could not bear to look on the joy of his father at welcoming back a wandering son who had returned (Luke 15:28-32). Envy gets in the way of the joy our heaven-ly Father provides and wants everyone to enjoy.

Jesus' recommendation to pluck out the envious eye may seem severe, but it is not worse than the sickness. It should be the goal of every believer, as we walk with the Lord, that we lose our own vision so that we might see through the eyes of God's grace.

Is that your goal?

Prayer

Open my eyes, Lord, that I may learn to see with joy the gifts you bestow on my neighbor. Amen.

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