

What Envy Does

Scripture Reading — 1 Corinthians 13:4-6

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.
—Proverbs 14:30—

In the famous Star Wars movies, Master Yoda says, “Envy leads to jealousy, jealousy leads to hate, hate leads to anger, and anger leads to the dark side.”

The apostle Paul hadn’t watched Star Wars, but as a well schooled Pharisee, Paul memorized much of the Hebrew Scriptures. He knew the story of Cain and Abel. He knew the story of David and Saul. He could tell about Joseph and his envious brothers—and of King Ahab, who envied a farmer and stole his vineyard. Paul knew the proverb “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.” Envy poisons from the inside.

In Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be, Neal Plantinga helps us picture envy this way: “The envier gossips. He saves up bad news of others and passes it around like an appetizer at happy hour. The envier grumbles. He murmurs. He complains that all the wrong people are getting ahead. Spite, bitterness, ‘discord which undoes all friendship,’ accusation, malignity—all these things flow from envy and together turn friendship and good fellowship into a rancorous shambles.”

The envy of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden corrupted paradise. “Envy,” says the sage, “rots the bones.”

What do you think of God’s love for ragged sinners? True love gives up envy and exchanges it for grace.

Prayer

Father, thank you for your generous love to us. Transform our stingy envy into your joyful grace. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

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