

The Sting of Jealousy

(Acts 13:42-52)

Introduction

1. Theme: Jesus accelerates us by the Holy Spirit to grow deeper through His family, wider in our impact for the gospel.
2. Big Idea: When we're jealous of God's blessing/inclusion of others, we miss out on experiencing it for ourselves.
3. Background: God's focused, intentional, missional movement of the gospel into the Gentile world (cf. Acts 1:8)

Jealousy sees God's blessing as "mine" [Acts 13:42-46b]

1. Defining Jealousy
 - a. It is not envy
 - i. Envy wants something that someone else has that we don't.
 - ii. Jealousy is based on the fear of losing someone/something we do have.
 - b. It is not godly jealousy
 - i. God can be positively jealous (cf. Exo 20:5), & Christians should be on behalf of God (cf. 2 Cor 11:2).
 - ii. Sinful jealousy is selfish, suspicious; seeks to control/possess someone at the expense of the other.
 - iii. Godly jealousy seeks to protect someone for the welfare of the other.
 - iv. We often get the two mixed up.
 - c. Sinful jealousy is not limited to romantic relationships, but can poison our relationships with God & His family.
2. Initial positive responses to the gospel
 - a. [42] Jews & non-Jewish Gentiles respond positively to Paul & Barnabas' teaching about Jesus.
 - i. They are curious about how Jesus fulfills God's promises/plans throughout Scriptures.
 - ii. They want to learn more about being saved from sin & death by believing in the resurrected Savior.
 - iii. They invite Paul & Barnabas back to next Saturday's worship service.
 - b. [43] Both Jews & Gentile converts to Judaism pursue them with more questions out the door.
 - i. Paul & Barnabas encourage them to "continue in the grace of God."
 1. Grace: They are beginning to experience & understand God's unmerited favor & the free gift of salvation/eternal life, not through anything they can do, but through what Jesus has done.
 - c. [44] The following Saturday, by word of mouth, there's an immense crowd.
 - i. Seemingly every resident of the city has shown up to hear the Word of the Lord about Jesus.
 - ii. Most of them are not Jewish: Pisidian Antioch is a Roman colony, with a large, diverse population.
3. [45] The religious leaders' jealous reaction: "But when they say the crowds, they were filled with jealousy."
 - a. Common interpretation: Jealous of Paul & Barnabas' influence/popularity; fear losing control over people.
 - i. There is some truth to that (cf. 5:17).
 - b. But Jewish leaders in a Jewish synagogue aren't really that jealous of influence with the Gentiles.
 - i. Religious rules: Don't eat unclean things, or with people who do, because they're unclean.
 - ii. The religious are content living separate from Gentiles (unclean, unwelcome, unworthy of salvation).
 - c. Real issue: They are jealous of the inclusion of Gentiles (cf. Rom 11:11-16).
 - i. Fear of sharing or losing God's blessing, salvation, exclusive relationship with unclean outsiders.
 - ii. Attempt to possess/control God's blessings based on who belongs & will be included.
 1. Control by undermining the gospel & threatening/dishonoring Paul (literally: blaspheme).
 - d. Jealousy sees God's blessing as "mine": For those like me, who do things my way.
4. [46] The apostles' condemnation of religious leaders
 - a. Paul & Barnabas "speak boldly" (cf. 9:27-28; Luke 21:13-15).

- b. [46a] God sent these Jewish disciples to speak the Word of God about Jesus first to fellow Jews (cf. pattern set in 13:26,32-33; 14:1; 16:13; 17:1,10,17; 18:4; 19:8; Rom 1:16).
 - i. The promise of a Savior comes through Israel's history.
 - ii. For the Jews to become messengers of good news, they must first believe.
 - c. [46b] The religious folk reject ("shove away") the gospel (like the Jerusalem Jews; cf. 13:27).
 - i. They reveal they are unworthy of God's gift because they reject God's plan
 - ii. Mystery/purpose of the gospel: Bring those who are outside into God's family/inheritance of eternal life in Jesus (cf. Eph 3:1-6).
 - iii. Lie: we're "good", Gentiles bad; Biblical truth: all of us are bad/sinners, only Jesus is good/Savior.
 - d. To reject those God welcomes in (His plan) is to reject the gospel itself (& Jesus).
 - i. In favor of our own ideas/plans for who receives Jesus' salvation, what the Church should be.
 - ii. Can't receive just part of God's plan: It's all or nothing.
 - iii. We join a Kingdom with others very different from us, all of us once outsiders to God's family.
5. Application: Do you see God's blessing "mine"? For those like me?
- a. On scale of 1-10, how important is it for me to bless those different from me with the gospel?
 - b. At church, who are you unwilling to welcome, give a hug, hang out with in small group, invite for dinner?
 - c. Ever think: "I like church the way it is, with the people already here, who are like me & do things my way"?
 - d. Who do you see as a burden (to you or the church) instead of as a blessing/gift from God?
 - i. We fail to trust God's sovereignty in bringing that person/people to us.

Turn toward "outsiders" by focusing on the mission [Acts 13:46c-49]

1. [46c-47] Turn toward outsiders
 - a. [46c] Paul & Barnabas proclaim they are now "turning toward the Gentiles."
 - i. Because the religious folk reject the gospel/Jesus, we're turning away from focusing on them.
 - ii. Turn toward: Physical gesture of welcome, emotional embrace of acceptance & paying attention to.
 - b. [47] God's mission for His people revealed in Scriptures
 - i. [Isa 49:6] Israel is supposed to be God's servant to bring His light to Gentiles to the ends of the earth.
 - ii. Jesus fulfills where people fail, becoming the perfect Servant to the Father (cf. Phil 2:5-11).
 - iii. Paul & Barnabas understand that Old Testament Scriptures teach them it's not about being God's chosen people, but His chosen messengers, as Jesus' disciples continue His mission (cf. 1:8).
 - c. Like Paul & Barnabas, we turn toward those outside God's family by staying focused on Jesus' mission.
 - i. We remember that Jesus turned toward us when we were outsiders, far from God.
 - ii. We are now part of His gospel plan: He calls & empowers us to intentionally turn toward (not away from) other outsiders.
 - d. Live examples: Volunteers at the Hidden Treasures/Oakland A's game; Church Community Outreach BBQ
2. [48-49] Result of turning toward outsiders
 - a. [48] Gentiles response: They're happy (rejoice) & worship (glorify the Word of the Lord about Jesus).
 - b. Result: "As many appointed to eternal life believed."
 - i. Theology: Both God's sovereignty to determine who is called to salvation, & human response & responsibility to believe & yield self to Jesus.
 - c. [49] The gospel about Jesus spreads like wildfire throughout the region.
 - i. Those who are most happy about Jesus & most open to telling others about Him are those who are outside & far from Him & feel welcomed in.
 - d. Jealous people resent the gospel & the people it brings; included people rejoice & worship through the gospel & with the people it brings.
3. Application: If you are far from God or have been hurt by other Christians, Jesus is turning toward you.
 - a. You don't have to hide; He wants to lift the veil of shame, invites you into His family where you are welcome & can belong. The proper response is to rejoice & worship Jesus.
 - b. He will stretch & grow you in our community of imperfect people.
 - i. We're a herd of porcupines that poke each other & are learning to apologize & forgive.
 - ii. That's the kind of grace Jesus lavished on us, as we pricked Jesus with wretched nails into His innocent hands & feet, & He loves & forgives.
4. Application: Jesus followers, turn toward those outside God's family by staying focused on His mission.
 - a. Sometimes people are just beginning to experience Jesus' grace & their lifestyle hasn't changed much yet; do we turn toward or away from them in judgment, rejection, unrealistic expectations?
 - b. We do not condone sinful beliefs or behavior, but we can lavish grace & acceptance on the person.

- c. Someone different from you may annoy, hurt, or take advantage of you. If that happens while obeying Jesus, praise God that you get to suffer a little; great is your reward in Heaven.

We miss out on God's blessing when ensnared by jealousy [Acts 13:50-52]

1. [50-52] The religious folk are rejected
 - a. [50] They do not rejoice & glorify God for including the Gentiles.
 - i. Ironically, they go to influential, non-Jewish civic leaders to persecute the outsiders (the disciples) stirring up trouble in their city & drive the mission team out.
 - b. [51] Paul & Barnabas "shook the dust off their feet against them."
 - i. Symbol of leaving the rejecters' defilement behind; testimony against those who reject Jesus as they move on (cf Luke 9:5; 10:11).
 - ii. When people reject you, they're really rejecting Jesus (cf. John 15:18-25).
 - iii. They continue on ~90 mi southeast to Iconium.
 - c. [52] Despite the rejection & persecution, their mission team is not discouraged.
 - i. They are filled with joy & the Holy Spirit
 - ii. Because of the fruit of the gospel with outsiders
 - iii. Filled with God's joy & Spirit for obeying Jesus, staying focused on the mission.
 - d. Tragedy: The religious Jews miss out on God's blessing through Jesus.
 - i. If they had responded to the gospel, they would have been blessed in participating in the joy & empowerment of Jesus' work to the Gentiles.
 - ii. Now, they have no part in eternal life or God's mission/work of the gospel.
2. Application: We miss out on God's blessing when we're ensnared by jealousy.
 - a. By turning away from outsiders, are you missing out on the joy of Jesus & being empowered by His Spirit?
 - b. Are you missing out on participating in God's work to bless people with an eternal change in their lives?

Conclusion

1. Imagine what it likes for an outsider to come to church
 - a. What church should look like: Community of people practicing the gospel, where guests, strangers, outsiders, the poor, the vulnerable are welcomed in to Jesus.
 - b. Jealousy isn't just the fear of losing something or losing control, it's also a fear of change.
 - i. Losing "this is how we've always done church; this is the kind of people who have always been here."
 - c. The gospel calls us to a new Kingdom order, where all outsiders can be welcomed in.