

Jealousy  
Numbers 11:4-6,10-16,24-29

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

I think I am feeling Deja-vu. It all seems very familiar. Have you ever had Deja-vu? When everything just seems familiar, like you have experienced it before, almost like a repeat ripple in your life.

Our gospel reading and our Old Testament reading today is like that ripple of Deja-vu. As you listened to the scriptures being read to you did you hear what they said. Moses was feeling burnt-out, the people were whining and complaining over everything and Moses needed help. One man can't do it all alone he realized and so God tells him to appoint 70 others and they will be his council of leaders within the nation of Israel. And as the seventy are meeting two of these new elders remained behind in the camp and are seen prophesying. And Joshua, Moses assistant, runs to him and says, "They are doing great things without you there, stop them."

Then we get our Gospel reading where Jesus has just finished confronting the disciples and the crowds because they were arguing amongst themselves about who is the greatest, who was going to get what when Jesus rises up to power. And now John, Jesus' assistant, comes to him and says, "We saw someone doing healings in your name and you weren't there and we weren't there so we tried to stop him."

"Hey there is someone doing amazing things without you, Stop them." Both Texts 1200 years apart in time but the same general story. What ties these two stories together is something that has been around for a long time, long before John and the disciples, before Moses and the 70 elders, it goes back to the first family all the way to Adam and Even and especially their children Cain and Abel. Jealousy. Cain kills Abel because he was jealous over his offering pleased God more then his. Even Genesis 3 says that Eve and Adam ate of the tree because they "saw that the fruit of the tree was desirable to make one wise". It was desirable and they wanted what they couldn't have, it was a form of jealousy. Joshua didn't like that the other two elders were doing something without giving credit to Moses, and he was jealous because people were praising them. The same thing with John and the disciples the man who was casting out demons in Christ's name

bothered them because it wasn't one of their group, it was someone else getting the credit and they were jealous. Jealousy as we can see has been around for a very long time. And most of the time it is not a good characteristic to possess. When we hear about someone having jealousy we think of lusting after things, items, or objects that don't belong to us. We're jealous of other people because of their fame, or their house or car, or family, or job title, or their money. The list goes on and on. So we all know that jealousy is bad.

But did you know that understanding jealousy can also be a good thing, when we see it and know it, understand it, then it can help us concentrate on the proper things of life. If you recall God says he is a jealous God several times throughout the Old Testament and most memorable right there in the first commandment, where God commands them not to worship other gods; "You shall you shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God." Further St. Paul even writes to the Church in Corinth that he feels a "divine jealousy" for them, because he cares for them so much. Paul compares his feelings for the church to a DIVINE JEALOUSY. A godly expression of wanting the church to be in God's kingdom before everything else. God loved us so much and wanted to give us his kingdom so much he even let his own son die on the cross for our sake, so that we may have a place in God's kingdom. That divine jealousy is what our readings are telling us we should be about, rather than earthly jealousy. We are to focus on God and the kingdom. Our theme from our text this morning reminds us to be jealous for God's kingdom.

We read in our first reading that the people of Israel, hundreds of thousands of people not to mention livestock and goods are traveling in the wilderness fully depended on God. Day after day, week after week, God provides for them and guides them through the wilderness of the desert of the Sinai towards the promised land. Every single day for every living thing in their nation, God provides for enough food to eat and enough water to drink. Yet, what happens? They grumbling and complain against God and against Moses, God's appointed leader. "Are we there yet", "why are we going this way." Why not that way?" "I am hungry, I want something else to eat." "I want meat!" "You're leading us to our deaths". It gets so bad that Moses throws up his hands and complains to God himself asking God to tell him what to do, because he is used up. I am not able to carry all these people alone, if this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at

once, do not let me linger in misery. And the Lord hears the cry and sends the meat to appease and teach the people and most importantly God sends the Spirit to rest upon the seventy elders to lift them up and make them part of the ministers of God's people. The elders would be there to help Moses and guide the people. And yet when two of them start to prophesy, Joshua, the assistant to Moses and future leader of the people gets jealous. He wanted the Spirit to remain With Moses and so perhaps with him when he became the next leader. He was jealous for Moses' power and authority. And so Moses asks him why he is jealous- a human response?

That is a human jealousy, that Moses well understand. He has been hearing it from the multitude for days on end, everywhere he went. He knew human wants and desires. It's the same wants and desires of today. Our human tendencies, just like then, make us the center of our own universe. Humanity and society tells us that the world revolves around each one of us as individuals. This human tendency pushes the kingdom of God down on our list of priorities. We don't always make decisions even as a church of God based on what is best for the kingdom of God but rather what is good for us. That's being jealous based on human things.

But we are to be jealous of God's kingdom, for divine reason. Remember what Moses says next to Joshua? He says, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets and the Lord would put His spirit on them." Then perhaps all the people would understand and know the power of God.

Remember Moses was the only one that understand the word of God. But now there were the seventy and he wished everyone knew God like he did, not just the seventy but all people. Moses didn't want to limit God's kingdom or the Spirit. He wanted it to grow beyond the seventy to every believer to spread to all people, to bring all people into the faith and trust in God, to fulfill the kingdom of the Lord

Remember the disciples who were complaining that there was a man casting out demons without first becoming one of them. Jesus said "Do not stop him. No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us". A house cannot be divided against itself. Satan cannot cast out Satan. Doing the work of Christ, which is using the name of the Lord as

witnesses of his power and love for others, whether they are of this church or any church of Christ, they all work towards the up building of the kingdom of God.

God's divine purpose is that His kingdom will grow, one sinner by one sinner who repents. That's what it means to be jealous for God's kingdom, to look first to the Lord's kingdom, realizing that the Lord takes care of all the rest. Like the children of Israel; like Christ's disciples who were sent with a mission, whether part of the twelve or not, we are to trust and believe in the one who brings the kingdom, to desire that fulfillment first and foremost. Look at your past week, have you been building up the kingdom of God or tearing it down. Look to the week ahead, and think about how you can build up the kingdom of God. Be filled with that divine jealousy, seeking the Lord in all things, believing and trusting in the Love of God and the kingdom that is coming. Amen

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.  
AMEN.

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Almighty God, into this world you have sent your Spirit to grant us life and hope in you. Through your Son we are connected us to your kingdom now in this time and look forward to that fulfillment in the time to come. Make us jealousy for that divine love, to strive to always be near you and connected to you in all that we face in this world. Empower us to worship and honor you in all your glory.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, Hear our Prayer..

O Heavenly Father, we ask that you bless us with the mind of service, to be like the sacrificial lamb who gave of himself so all might have life. Allow us to follow in his footsteps, to overcome hatred, and division, to seek your path of service and discipleship. Allow us to come to your waters of baptism and your table of Holy Communion and leave renewed and energized for your work in this community and beyond.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, Hear our Prayer.

God, send your comforting spirit to descend upon this world and guide nations and leaders to come to understand and know of your ways of peace. Hold this world in your ever caring hands Lord, and mend broken hearts, overcome hardships of disasters and diseases. Grant your spirit of healing to those who are torn down by sickness, or troubled by despair, be with all those who are homebound or hospitalized and be with Anne Bevins, Ron Wolf, Howell Crawford....and all those we lift up in our prayers to you now,

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for your church, and our community of people. Guide us this day as your witnesses. We pray putting before your our missionaries and pastors, our bishops and leaders who guide your church and lead your people. Together with those leaders, make all believers your priesthood of all believers, working together to share your Word and grant your love on those who still need to know of your atoning blood. Teach us to be your one family here in this place and throughout the world working together for your kingdom as your witnesses in our communities and beyond.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Into your hands, o Lord we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.