

Hannah Brown- First Temple Preaching Resident  
Vice & Virtue Series- Envy/Kindness  
1 Peter 2:1, Isaiah 43:1-4, Colossians 3:9-14  
First Temple - Classic Venue  
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Well good morning church, I am so excited to be here with you all this morning. My name is Hannah and I'm the Preaching Resident here at First Temple.

If I have not had the opportunity to meet you yet, would you do me a favor and come right outside those double doors after church, shake my hand, and introduce yourself to me?

Because I have been a part of this church for about four years now and one of the biggest joys for me has been getting to know all of you and to hear your stories.

So there's been a little bit of confusion about my role here at the church, so I'm gonna set the record straight today. See my job as the Preaching Resident is the job that all of you have dreamt about at some point. Bc every week, I get to sit with our pastors Joe, Evan, Josh, and David Goddard, and I get to tell them everything I didn't like about their sermons!

Sounds pretty great, right?! Now before you get too excited though, this dream might become kind of a nightmare for you when you realize that come Tuesday afternoon, they all get to tell me what they didn't like about my sermon.

But in all seriousness, you all know that rather than having one person who preaches every week, we have a team that rotates. And I am a Masters student at Truett Seminary and I get to be part of that team now. We meet together every week to offer feedback from the previous week's message, plan sermon series together, and offer encouragement to whoever is preaching the next week.

And we do this so that regardless of the **person** you hear on Sunday morning, the **message** of the good news in the Bible is the thing being elevated; it's most important.

So the last few weeks, we've been looking in Colossians chapter 3. In these weeks leading up to Easter Sunday, we've been looking at some of the root desires we have as humans.

Vice/root desire/ Virtue (Slide)

And these desires are given by God; they're what help make us human. But sometimes as we try to fulfill these good, God-given desires, we look towards vices- bad habits or wrong actions to fulfill these desires within us. Instead of turning to good habits or godly, virtuous actions to fulfill these desires.

So today, we're going to examine the **vice of envy**.

Now, while it's not explicitly listed in Colossians 3 with some of the other vices we've looked, it is mentioned throughout the Bible. Let's look in 1 Peter, chapter 2:

Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander  
– 1 Peter 2:1 NRSV (slide)

So what is envy?

Envy is like the ugly stepsister of greed. Evan talked about greed last week, and he said that greed is putting anything and everything that is not God at the center. Well for the envious person, they are not primarily focused on **WHAT** they have- they are focused on **WHO** they are because of what they have.

See, the envious person doesn't want what other people have just for the sake of having stuff. The envious person wants things because of the dignity, respect, authority, honor, and love that they associate with having those things.

Envy traps you in an endless game of comparison and competition because your worth and your value as a person become dependent on how you rank against others.

In fact, envy so entraps us this competitive game that we find ourselves unable to be happy when good things happen to others. Because in our minds, when someone else is being respected, celebrated, and given honor and authority, we are then not respected, celebrated, given honor, and authority.

The theologian John Calvin will say it like this:

“If others manifest the same endowments we admire in ourselves, or even superior ones, we spitefully belittle and revile these gifts in order to avoid yielding place to such persons” – John Calvin

In the envious person's mind, there is no first place, second place, third place. There is #1 and there is nothing. And if you are not #1, then you are nothing.

The envious person feels powerless. After all, if you were really worth something, if were really as powerful as your rival, then you would already be ranked #1.

Now if you're anything like me, you learn about envy and you start thinking, “okay, so I'm good.” Cause I don't hate anybody that much. I'm not like sitting here praying for God to smite people on my behalf.

Well in her book, *Glittering Vices*, Dr. Rebecca DeYoung provides a list of symptoms for envy. These symptoms are the byproduct of what happens when we let envy infiltrate our lives. Let's look at the list:

Symptoms of Envy:

- Feeling offended at the talent, success, good fortune of others
- Selfish or unnecessary rivalry and competitions
- Pleasure at others' difficulties or distress
- Wishing others ill
- Reading false motives into others' behavior
- Belittling others
- Creating false accusations
- Speaking poorly about a person behind their back
- Gossip
- Antagonizing someone
- Scorn of another's abilities or failures
- Teasing/bullying
- Ridiculing a person
- Prejudice against those you consider inferior or threatening your position

Oof. I'd be willing to bet that all of us can identify with at least one thing on that list. Because envy is seductive. It creeps into our hearts and grabs hold. It convinces us of the lie that we aren't worth anything until we've proven we're better than everyone else.

And that lie works, right? Because of the God-given desire we all have to feel worthy, to feel honor. No one in here is sitting here going, "my goal in life is to be worthless." Nobody says that!! Because human dignity is essential to who we are as people.

We desire to be worth something. To be respected, to be honored, to be loved.

But time and time again, we take this good thing- this good desire God has given us and we try to fulfill it by stealing the honor from someone else.

But it doesn't work like that does it? Because the second you think you've replaced someone as #1, another person walks in whose just as much of a threat. And before you know it, you're looking around and you've got enemies everywhere.

For me this happens when I'm sitting in a seminary classroom and I start looking around at all these people who are gifted and talented and wonderful. And I start thinking, "why would anyone wanna hire me? Why would anyone wanna listen to what I have to say?"

Maybe for you, it's realizing your coworker makes more money than you, or logging on to Facebook to find that person you graduated high school with has a fancier car and a bigger house than you. Or those people who have a better relationship with their children and their family than you do.

And the vice of envy lies to us and convinces us that if we can just steal enough from other people then one day we'll be worth it. One day we'll have honor and value and respectability.

One of my favorite movies growing up was a movie called "Cool Runnings." It's based on the true story of the first Jamaican Olympic bobsled team. Its about this group of Jamaicans who have never seen snow a day in their life but they decide they are gonna compete in the winter Olympics. And they find this former Olympian who won a ton of medals in bobsledding to be their coach.

And they're training and improving and they're gonna qualify for the Olympics, but then they find out their coach is actually a disgraced Olympian. He was disqualified from the last race of his career because he got caught cheating at the sport.

So the leader of the bobsled team asks him about it. He says, "why'd you cheat?" and the coach says, "it's quite simple really, I had to win. You see, I'd made winning my whole life and when you make winning your whole life, you have to keep winning. No matter what." And the player said, "I don't understand coach, you had two gold medals, you had it all."

And the coach said, "a gold medal is a wonderful thing but if you're not enough without it, you'll never be enough with it."

See in our desire to be worthy, we've let the lie of envy convince us that if we can just have what they have, we'll be enough. **But if you're not enough without it, you'll never be enough with it.**

So if envy won't fulfill our desire to be worthy, to have honor, what will? What will satisfy us?

Let's turn to Colossians 3, starting in verse 9:

<sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup>and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. – Colossians 3:9-10 NRSV

Let's pause there for a moment.

Verse 9 says "you have stripped off the old self." You have seen envy for the lie that it is. That it will never satisfy your desire for respect and honor and worth and value and you are throwing it away. You are taking it off and casting it aside.

But now, you have to put on this new self. You have to reject the lie and clothe yourself with truth. Truth that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the creator.

What will satisfy your desire for worth? It's the knowledge that God has about you. But it's not just for you. Verse 11 says,

<sup>11</sup>In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! – Colossians 3:11 NRSV

What this tells us is that the truth God has for us, the knowledge of what will satisfy our desire to be worthy is available to everyone. It doesn't matter who you are or where you've come from, the knowledge that God has about you personally is equally important.

When God looks at us, he doesn't see all these different categories- this or that. God doesn't see these divisive labels we've put on ourselves. God sees us for who we really are.

So what is the knowledge God has about us? Let's look. Can you hardly stand it? God's fixin to give us a brand-new t-shirt to put on!

Colossians 3, verse 12:

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. – Colossians 3:12 NRSV

When God looks at you, you know what he sees? His beloved. His chosen ones. That word "holy" being used here means "to be made complete; to be made whole; finished; not lacking in anything"

That is what the God of heaven and earth, the king and creator says about you! That you are already chosen. You are already complete and whole, not lacking in anything. You are already beloved.

This is what the God of the universe has been saying about you all along. We see this throughout the Bible. Isaiah 43, that the worship team read earlier says,

<sup>1-4</sup> But now, GOD's Message,  
the God who made you in the first place, Jacob,  
the One who got you started, Israel:  
"Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you.  
I've called your name. You're mine.  
When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you.  
When you're in rough waters, you will not go down.  
When you're between a rock and a hard place,  
it won't be a dead end—  
Because I am GOD, your personal God,

The Holy of Israel, your Savior.  
I paid a huge price for you:  
all of Egypt, with rich Cush and Seba thrown in!  
*That's* how much you mean to me!  
*That's* how much I love you!  
I'd sell off the whole world to get you back,  
trade the creation just for you. – Isaiah 43:1-4 MSG

This is the knowledge that God has about you. This is the message God declares over you. And notice this: God declares this about you regardless of your actions.

**Before you have done anything- before you have even clothed yourself with this new virtue, you are already enough.** Before you have even had the chance to turn to a vice or a virtue, before you have done any action at all, God has fulfilled your desire to be worthy.

**Your worth will never be based on your actions bc you are already priceless to the King of the Universe.**

Our desire to be worth something, to be respected, to be loved is satisfied in God. “Chosen. Complete. Beloved.”

So if this root desire has already been satisfied, if we're freed from the lie of envy that tells us we have to always compare ourselves to others, what should our relationship with others look like?

Well let's look again at Colossians 3, starting in verse 12:

<sup>12</sup> As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. – Colossians 3:12-15 NRSV

We are told to put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, and thankfulness. We should celebrate the achievements of others, to grieve when others are grieving, and to pursue love above all else.

Now I know what you're thinking, “Hannah, the virtue listed for today is supposed to be kindness.” And you're right, it is. So, let's talk about kindness.

Kindness is an action. It involves using your time, energy, and talent to improve the life of someone else. See when you take off envy and put on kindness, your actions are now motivated by a desire to see others succeed.

So in a way, kindness incorporates all these other actions. When you are striving to see others succeed, you are prone to compassion, humility, patience, forgiveness, peace, and thankfulness. Your relationship with others improves when your first priority is to help them succeed, not take their success from them.

Kindness can be kind of abstract sometimes though. It can be difficult to know where to start when we think about being kind to others. So here are a few practical things we can do to practice showing kindness:

- Invest in activities with shared common goals

- this helps us stop viewing everyone as competitors
- ex. go serve somewhere with others, go enjoy something together (like creation, music, movies, etc)
- Do an anonymous act of kindness
  - Ex. w/the warmer weather, could you go mow your neighbors yard w/out telling them? Buy your coworker a cup of coffee without them knowing?
- Pray for the person you are envious of
  - Ex. I am praying for a friend I have in seminary; praying my attitude toward them will change and that God will continue to bless them
- Practice gratitude
  - This helps us celebrate the good things God has already given us. When we recognize all the good things God has given us (not based on our merit) our fear that we have to earn God's favor is eliminated
  - Ex. keep a thankfulness journal, text a friend to share what you're thankful for, etc

Friends, God has called you worthy. Be free from the lie of envy. And embrace kindness towards others.

Let's pray:

God, we are constantly in awe of you.

How deeply you love us. How much you desire to be with us.

The fact that you would go all the way to the cross to prove your love for us.

I'll admit, God, we struggle to accept your unconditional love.

So, would you help us?

Remind us of how you see us.

Give us the strength and the courage to reject the lie of envy.

Help us to see others the way you see them, God.

Let us be vessels of your kindness and your peace today, God.

We love you, too.

Amen.