

Coram Deo
Soli Deo Gloria, Soli Deo Gracia, Soli Scriptura
Agnus Dei, Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi
Deo Volente
Sermon Preach at Stouffville United Church
By the Rev. Dr. John S. Niles MSM CD

“The Jaundice of the Soul”

3rd in the Series on David

September 11, 2023

1 Samuel 18:1-17

Andrew L. Webber was once asked, “What is the hardest instrument to play? He said, “the second fiddle.”

The car maker Mercedes ran a full page ad in The New York Times. It contained only six words. At the top were two words: “More Power.” Four inches below that were two more words: “More Comfort.” And finally, four inches below that, the last two words: “More Envy.”

One can appreciate the advantages of driving a car with more power and with more comfort. But what does envy have to do with driving a car? Power and comfort are qualities we can possess. Envy, on the other hand, is not something we possess; it is something that others are possessed by.

The creators of the ad fully understood the human condition. They understood that envy is a marketable commodity if they can tap into it. Human nature hasn’t changed.

Envy is built into us. Say the rabbis: “Except for his child and his disciple, a person is envious of everything” (Sanhedrin 105b). At the beginning of history, the serpent is jealous of Adam and Eve – and is responsible for their expulsion from the Garden. Cain is jealous of Abel – and kills him. Joseph’s brothers are jealous of him – and sell him into slavery. Haman is jealous of Mordecai and Esther and is destroyed by it. And Saul is jealous of David and wants to kill him.

When Shakespeare referred to envy in Othello as the “green-eyed monster,” he knew that it was precisely that: a monster that eats away at our soul.

O, beware, my lord, of jealousy;
It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock
The meat it feeds on...”

Or as John Dryden calls it “the jaundice of the soul.”

The problem with the type of victory David had against Goliath, is it gives birth to envy and jealousy.

Often in life we are faced with two types of Giants – the external (like Goliath) and the internal (our own personal goliaths).

The external giants we spoke about last week, are the goliaths like – fear of defeat, danger, divorce, disease and death – and we overcome them by minimizing our fears, muzzling the fickle and maximizing our faith.

The internal giants are personal to each of us. They could be anxiety, insecurity, fear of losing something or someone that is important to you. It could be a rivalry or hostility.

We know that in spite of the fact that King Saul was a King and had many victories, he had just as many insecurities. He required help to find peace of mind in order to sleep, so he had David play music to sooth the soul. He didn't address his insecurities, anxieties, or jealousy's. He just put a bandage on it. And what had worked temporarily, eventually, stopped working completely. The music David play became an irritant not a comfort.

Because Saul didn't deal with the underlying issues things got worse, for him and everyone around him.

I

As a result of Saul refusing to deal with his own insecurities, anxieties and jealousies he became **defensive**. *“Whatever Saul sent him to do, David did it so successfully that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the people, and Saul’s officers as well. 6 When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. 7 As they danced, they sang: “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.” 8 Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. “They have credited David with tens of thousands,” he thought, “but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?” 9 And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.” (1 Sam 18:5-9)*

Envy is an attitude that is hard to define. Many of us think of envy and jealousy as pretty much the same thing, but Christian psychologist Dr. Gary Collins writes:

There is a distinction between jealousy and envy. To envy is to want something which belongs to another person.

In contrast, jealousy is the fear that something which we possess will be taken away by another person.

Another author explains envy this way: The envious man feels other's fortunes are his misfortunes; their profit, his loss; their blessing, his bane; their health, his illness; their promotion, his demotion; their success, his failure. —Leslie Flynn

Saul became jealous because of David's success and we are told that from then on he would keep a jealous eye on him. Nothing can ruin a working relationship, friendship or marriage faster than jealousy.

Jealousy creates anxiety, anger, loneliness, hate, fear. As a result, no one thinks clearly when they are jealous.

Two shopkeepers were bitter rivals. Their stores were directly across the street from each other, and they would spend each day keeping track of each other's business. If one got a customer, he would smile in triumph at his rival. One night an angel appeared to one of the shopkeepers in a dream and said, "I will give you anything you ask, but whatever you receive, your competitor will receive twice as much. Would you be rich? You can be very rich, but he will be twice as wealthy. Do you wish to live a long and healthy life? You can, but his life will be longer and healthier. What is your desire?" The man frowned, thought for a moment, and then said, "Here is my request: Strike me blind in one eye!"

Benjamin Franklin once said, “It is the eyes of other people that ruin us. If all but myself were blind, I should want neither a fine house nor fine furniture.”

II

As a result of Saul refusing to deal with his insecurities, anxieties and jealousies he became defensive and also **destructive**. *“The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand 11 and he hurled it, saying to himself, ‘I’ll pin David to the wall.’ But David eluded him twice. 12 Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had left Saul. 13 So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. 14 In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him.” (1 Sam 18:10-14)*

Matt Weinstein, in his book, “Managing to Have Fun,” tells of an amazing psychology experiment nicknamed “The Good Samaritan Study.”

There aren’t many payphones around anymore, but when there were. Researchers noticed that pay phone customers like to check the coin return slot for money after making a call, so they decided to test how those who found money in the slot versus those who did not find any money would respond to people in need.

The researchers then hired a young woman to walk by the phone at the exact moment that the subjects were hanging up. When the young woman walked by with her arms full of books, she pretended to stumble and drop them on the ground. Astonishingly, the researchers observed that the people who found the money in the coin return were four times as likely to stop and help the woman pick up her books than were the people who found no money in the coin return. They concluded that when we feel good we tend to do good!

It’s been said, “How a man or woman plays the game shows something of their character. How he or she loses shows all of it.” (Pulpit Helps 10/94).

Saul was delighted with David until, he thought he lost something to him. And his jealousy began his destruction. Rather than using his time to do something constructive; his jealousy caused him to use his time to think of ways of being destructive. He decided that one of them had to go. He thought to himself, “How dare he steal my success? David’s star was rising and his fans were growing. Saul lashed out in enraged by what he had heard and seen, throwing a spear at David.

For Saul failed to realize as Harold Coffin said, that “Envy is the art of counting the other fellow's blessings instead of your own.”

III

As a result of Saul refusing to deal with his insecurities, anxieties and jealousies he became defensive, destructive and finally, **deceitfully**. *“For Saul said to himself, ‘I will not raise a hand against him. Let the Philistines do that!’ 1 Sam 18:17*

You can almost hear Saul laughing after saying that.

Saul set up a scenario that sent David into a battle that Saul had hoped would finish him. He thought, getting rid of David would solve all his problems. But his problems, like our own, often run deeper.

This type of scenario has been played out on the big screen and in real life. The Walt

Disney team of Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg brought magic, music and money to the kingdom before they split. Katzenberg founding Dreamworks as a result Eisner was never the same since.

Two months after CEO Michael D. Eisner had an operation, the corporate world was shocked by Katzenberg's resignation rather than promotion. Katzenberg had success overseeing 40 films a year and was credited with the huge success of Disney's animation, including *The Lion King*, but Eisner refused to name him as the No. 2 man at Disney.

Katzenberg complained bitterly: "For 19 years, Michael has been my mentor, teacher, No. 1 champion, my boss and my friend. I just wanted him to take me as his partner, to bring me to his inner circle. I did not want his job. I was prepared to be his No. 2 guy. This as a teacher and a student, and now the student asked to be a teacher's assistant...It's about a father not being able to accept his son. I still don't understand it, and it's hard to reconcile." (Time 9/5/94).

Succession scares leaders. Only 34% of the chief executives say they have identified their successors, concludes a survey by Korn/Ferry International, an executive research firm in New York. (Wall Street Journal 7/19/94)

Some people gracefully accept other's success only when they themselves are successful. Some react strongly when others have more success. Some bring out the worst in themselves when their stock is down and others are up.

No matter what Saul did to David, David did not go away. David survived spears, snares set for him by Saul and setbacks.

For as William Penn said, "The jealous are troublesome to others, but a torment to themselves." - *Some Fruits of Solitude*, 1693

IV

As a result of Saul refusing to deal with his insecurities, anxieties and jealousies he became defensive, destructive, deceitfully even as David continued to be delivered. And so, we hear in verse 12 *Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had left Saul.*

Even though David remain *loyal* to Saul trying to comfort his anxiety and insecurities by playing the music that had once eased his soul (v10). And he remained *reliable* – entering his presence more than once to offer his support in spite of Saul's previous attempt to kill him (v11) and *faithful as in* (v13); his response had nothing to do with Saul and everything to do with who he was and whose he was.

The very things we attach value to determine the priorities of our life. "Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him." That was his priority and it made all the difference. As he late said in Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. ⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

You think about that. Amen.