

Good morning. Question of the day. Who do you envy? You're like, oh, I didn't come to church for that, right? Who do you envy who has something you wish you had and secretly you wish they didn't?

I envy people who are faster and stronger than me. I envy people who have more hair than me. I envy people who have more dark hair, unless it's artificially colored. I don't envy you. I just despise you, right?

I envy people who don't need glasses. I envy people who have nicer cars than me, bigger houses than me, bigger bank accounts than me. I envy people who have more grandkids than me. I don't have any. That's not a statement.

If my kids ever listen to this, it's not a statement to them about having grandkids. I'm just saying, right? Envy. People have a nicer lawn than me and a nicer lawn mower. I was mowing my lawn yesterday.

My neighbor has one of those lawn mowers that mows an acre in like two minutes or whatever it is. And mine is taking like an hour, right? But I wish. I envy people that are more talented than me. I envy people that are more esteemed than me.

I envy people that are more successful than me. So how about you? Who are those people? What kind of people? All right, so one of the things with envy.

What's the color associated with envy? Green, right? I have a green shirt on today. Haven't worn this shirt for two years. Pulled it out of my closet, decided I needed to wash it first, and I did.

And I know how to press all the right buttons. So, green with envy, where'd that come from? Well, the ancient Greeks believed if you were jealous or envious, your liver produced more bile. This is not a biology. But more bile.

And bile could taint your skin. Yellowish, greenish. And then Shakespeare kind of took onto that. And in one of his plays, Othello, Shakespeare said, beware of jealousy and envy because it's a green eyed monster. That's how it made its way into our lingo.

Green with envy. When you talk about that. That's why I wore a green shirt today. I want to be. And if any of you have green on the day, it must mean you struggle with envy too, right?

So anyway, so the series is called Turning down the Noise from the Book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes was written about 3,000 years ago. And I'll just tag on to what Sean said when he. The tagline, when we read scripture, you always hear People say, grass withers, flower fades, word of our God stands forever. That's from the Bible.

It's from the prophet Isaiah. Because even though we believe this was written 3,000 years ago, the book of Ecclesiastes, it stands forever as true. There's things in there we can learn from, and there's nothing, nothing that changes about God. So the grass withers, the flower fades. The word of our God stands forever.

Right? It's always true. So we're gonna look at a passage today. It was written 3,000 years ago. Put it on the screen here so we.

Sean, just read this. I'm gonna have you read it as well. All right. Again, this was about 3,000 years ago. Most people think it was written by Solomon, if not Solomon, it was somebody who had had it all in life.

And they're kind of stepping back and kind of thinking, there's gotta be more. Right? So read this out loud with me. Here we go. And I saw that all toil and all achievements spring from one person's envy of another.

This too is meaningless. A chasing after the wind. Fools fold their hands and ruin themselves. One more slide. Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil.

And. And chasing after the wind.

The grass withers, the flower fades. The word of our God stands forever. 3,000 years old. It's relevant today, right? Everything that was just said is relevant today.

So what do we.

Envy is one of those things. Here's the first point. Yes? If you're asking, yes, you do struggle with envy. People call it the hidden emotion.

Envy is the most common problem that nobody has. One writer wrote, years ago, I was reading from an author, I really liked his books. And then I saw one of his books, and the name of the book was called Envy. And I thought, I might as well read it. I like his writing, but I don't think I struggle with envy.

I read the book, and it's a short book, and I realized envy's probably in my top three because it's the hidden emotion. It's the emotion nobody wants to acknowledge. I don't really struggle with that. Right. So let me just define it.

So envy is the internal pain we feel at someone else's success. Right. It's the internal distressing emotion we feel when someone has success more than me. And the thought comes, why them, not me?

Why not me? Right. It's comparative and competitive. Self worth. It's like you put your identity into the March madness and you want to end up on top.

So it's not simply About I want what they have, I want what they have and I want to be on top. I want a better lawn than him. I want to be a better dad than them, better at my job than them. I'm going to be better as competitive. And it's a self worth that's based on comparison and competitiveness.

You might still think, I don't really know if I struggle with that. But let me give you another angle to come at. Envy. There's a German phrase and the phrase is schadenfreude. Who's heard of that word before?

It's kind of made in schadenfreude. Schaden means harm or sad. Freude means joy. Schadenfreude is the emotion you feel when someone else that's more successful than you has a sad thing happen. And you might think, please don't tell me none of you struggle with that because somebody else that you, oh, look at that.

You know, nobody had. I had schadenfreude when UConn got beaten basketball by Michigan. I don't feel bad for. I feel bad. I feel joyful at their bad experience and shot.

It's the emotion of, you know, somebody you think has a great family or they have a bigger house, something bad happens to them. As long as it's not life threatening. You kind of feel a little bit, little bit of sick glee. That's good. They kind of get them down to sigh, but that's a term that kind of comes from the German language.

But it's like, it's envy. It's like envious. I don't like looking at somebody's success and if their success gets knocked down a bit, I feel a little happy about that.

If you're not convinced of that, it's all over the Bible. Cain envies Abel. Esau envies Jacob. Joseph's brothers envy him. Miriam and Aaron envy their brother Moses because of his leadership position.

King Saul envies David because of his popularity. The Pharisees, Scripture tells us, envied Jesus his popularity. That's why Scripture even says that's why they wanted to kill him.

Paul talks about envy in Corinth, Galatia and Philippi in his letters to those churches. James, the brother of Jesus in his letter in the New Testament warns of the dangers of harboring bitter envy. From Augustine in the 4th century to Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century and everywhere in between, theologians have written about envy as a dangerous thing to our souls. Modern day, though, in the movie

incredibles syndrome envies Mr. Incredible and the Lion King scar envies Mufasa.

Snow White, the Evil Queen envies Snow White's beauty. And I just found this this week. There's a British singer named Morrissey, anybody's heard of him, he's like indie rock, kind of. He has a song and the title of the song is we hate it when our friends become successful. And it's kind of this whiny English.

We hate it when our friends become successful. He keeps repeating, that's what envy is. And then he says, and then part of the song is, if you have Spotify, get it, don't listen to it right now, but listen to it later. It's kind of got this weird. It's kind of attractive, you know, in a weird way.

He wrote it in 1992, but he has a concert in Norway next month if anybody wants to go. All right. But we hate it when our friends become successful. Part of the song is, it could have been me, it should have been me. We hate it when our friends become successful.

It's the anthem, right? It's the anthem of envy. We hate it when our. And you might say, and maybe you, I don't know, but just it's in your blood, it's in our bloodstream, it's in our DNA. We're human.

It doesn't mean you're wicked and awful. It just means it's in there. So when I say I struggle with envy, what I'm really saying is I'm more insecure than I want to admit, I'm more ungrateful than I want to admit. And I'm more self centered than I want to admit. Because at the core of envy is me saying, why them and not me?

And we usually envy people in our own realm. So if you're a grandma, you might envy other grandmas because they have more grandkids, better behaved grandkids, I don't know, right. Grandkids that like you more. But if you're an engineer, you might envy other engineers. I was talking to somebody in the first service.

If you're a writer, you maybe feel that write better than you. We envy people in our own sphere that have more than we have or more successful. And it's not simply that I want it that's coveting. It's more I want it. And I want to be on top.

I want to finish in the final four. I want to get to the final game. I want to win March Madness. And it's like this self, it's identity, but it's competitive and comparative. But one of the most effective ways to deal with envy is simply admit it.

When I read this book, and I actually had to say to myself and to God, I do struggle with envy. It's all over the Bible. Like I said, it's all over history. So none of us have escaped it. Second point is this.

Your envy is suffocating your soul. Better one handful with. Say the word tranquility with me. One, two, three. Tranquility.

We don't use that mostly in common lingo, I think. On the moon, isn't there, like, a sea of tranquility? That's the only thing. But tranquility, the word there is like rest, quietness. And it has this sense of kind of descending into rest.

It's like getting off the treadmill with your soul and having your soul get in a recliner. And it's your soul at rest.

Isaiah, God says in the book of Isaiah, in repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength. So the writer here to Ecclesiastes is comparing this. Tranquility, rest, supernatural peace. This is not like laziness. It's supernatural rest and peace.

He's comparing, contrasting that with the striving energy of envy and wanting more.

And envy works against this in a major way. You know that there's a movie called Amadeus. Some of you probably seen it, you know, decades ago. I think it's about Amadeus Mozart, right? Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Great composer in Vienna.

He was, like, popular in Vienna, so it had been, like, in the 18th century, but he had a rival. Now, granted, the movie plays with history a little bit, but the movie's still good to see, right? He has a rival named Antonio Solieri. And Solieri was the former popular composer in the Viennese Royal Court. He was popular, but then Mozart comes along, and Mozart is gifted out the wazoo musically.

He can write musical scores without editing it, which is unheard of. It's like writing a paper for the first time and never going back to recheck anything. So it was incredible. And Solieri started developing deep envy for Mozart. Why him and not me?

Why does he have all those gifts? Cause he recognized he has gifts. Like, incredible. Why him and not me? And there's a point where he gets actually angry, solely airy.

Gets angry at God. Cause he said, God, I ask you for gifts. I ask you that I'm gonna use your gift for your glory. But why did you give him a greater gift? Why?

That's not fair.

There's a scene in the movie where Solieri is so. He's so full of envy and mad at God, right? Because really, envy really is saying to God, why him and not me? It's like, God, what do you. And this is what this is.

He. Solieri grabs a crucifix and he starts talking to the crucifix, but he's talking to God. And he says this. From now on, we are enemies, you and I. Because you chose for your instrument a boastful, lustful, smutty, infantile boy.

People say that's true of Mozart. He was kind of immature, right? You chose him. And because you are unjust and unfair and unkind, I will block you. He's saying that to God.

I will block you. I swear it. I will hinder harm your creature as far as I am able, and I will ruin your creation. I mean, envy really got the best of him. The movie, if you've seen it, if you haven't, the movie is basically takes place 30 years later.

He's in an insane asylum. The envy kind of totally shredded his soul. And he's talking to a Catholic priest, and Catholic priest says, can I hear your confession? Can you tell me what. And he's like, leave me alone.

Leave me alone. And the priest says, I can't leave you alone. I can't leave alone a soul in pain because it never ends well. It suffocates your soul. Now, you may not be like that.

You may not end up in an insane asylum, but I guarantee you, as long as envy festers, even in small ways, it's suffocating your soul. Think of the people I mentioned earlier. Cain, Esau, Joseph's brothers, King Saul, the Pharisees from the cartoons, the Syndrome, Scar, and the Evil Queen. It doesn't end well for them. Their souls do not end in a place of supernatural joy or peace or great contentment in the hands of God.

It doesn't. So sometimes it's good to see those. That movie Amadeus is really good because you see that and you're like, I don't want to be that way. I don't want to be close to that way. It just ate him up.

Third point. Antidote to envy is love. So later on in the passage, we didn't read this, but read this with me. This is right after he talks about envy, and then he kind of makes this weird shift. It's kind of like a.

A stick shift gone bad. If you ever learned how to drive stick shifts, like, whoa. That was kind of weird, but it makes sense here. So read this with me. All right?

This is the very next verse after what Sean and I read. All right, Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. I use that in weddings. Right, but why the shift from envy and all of a sudden two are better than one?

He's saying. But maybe the answer to envy is relationships. Being with others, not envying them, but loving them. You know, in the first four verses that we read, envy leads to meaningless toil, isolation, loneliness, discontent, and lack of joy. But then it shifts that maybe love, relationships, two are better than one.

Can I encourage others? Maybe that begins to dissolve the envy in my heart.

So here's my envy story. I have many. This is like the big story, right? So I used to pastor another church in Bloomington. Church.

We had started from scratch, and at one point we were probably down to less than 50 people attending. All right, I enjoyed the people. It was good people. But sometimes the numbers got to me. Ask any pastor if they're honest.

Numbers always get to us, right? Whether they're good or bad. I'm driving by a church here in Bloomington, not this one. I have a picture of it in my notes to remind myself. But I could tell you where on the road I was on a Monday morning.

And they had more cars in their parking lot on Monday than we did on Sunday.

So for a second crawl inside my heart, and what was I feeling? Woo hoo. Way to go. No, of course, that's what. I see that in my first.

Out loud in my car. Come on, God, that's not fair. Immediately, graciously, God says to me, that's envy. Ooh, that's right. I mean, of course you have to tell God.

He's right. That's right. Absolutely. Hit the bullseye. And then I just said to God, I don't want to be that way.

I don't know what you want me to do, God, I don't want to be that way. So I still had this. And then no more than a week later, I happened to talk to a young woman who attended that church. And, you know, when there's envy about something, you know, you kind of. You don't want to see good things about the person you envy.

But then she starts to tell me about how that church and the pastor there was instrumental in bringing great healing and wholeness and joy to her life. She's telling me this through tears. And I thought, okay, God, I can love that church. I love, I love. They're part of the body of Christ.

But it took. And then what did I do? What did God lead me to do? I sent that church a check, part of my tithe check. Because for me, my

heart follows my money.

I think it's true for all of us. Heart follows my money. And I thought, okay, God, I'm for them. So I don't know, you know, I don't know what your come on God moment is. Maybe you're come on, God, why do they have more than me or more than me or better grandkids than me or more kids than me or more kids that are following Jesus and me?

Why does this person have a better job? Blah, blah, what's your come on God moment?

And maybe Jesus will lead you to take some steps that can help start dissolving the envy. Because envy is the enemy of love.

Can't have both. So maybe with your come on, God, he might say, get them a gift. Maybe money, anonymously. So you're not. Maybe a gift card, not White Castle.

That's a jab, right?

Maybe Jesus will lead you to intentionally celebrate them. Maybe you say something to them. Or maybe just you say, God, I'm grateful for that person. I'm grateful for that woman. I'm grateful for that guy.

I'm grateful for them, God, I'm grateful for what you do. Or maybe God might ask you to speak a word of encouragement to someone to that person that you envy. You don't need to tell them, I envy you, but I'm going to tell you, that doesn't work. Don't do that. Right?

Just speak encouragement. Maybe you affirm their success to them, to others. You might say, I could like have said to other pastors, boy, that church is really doing great things. The church that I was envious of, right? They're really doing great things.

I've seen people's lives changed there. Figure out, whatever God tells you to do, do it. Because that will begin the process of breaking up the hard ground of envy in your soul. And resist the urge to compare. So my last, my concluding point is this.

Invite Jesus to turn down the noise of envy in your heart. The series is turn down the noise and you'll I'm saying this in your heart because in Mark, chapter four, Jesus is talking to the disciples and he tells them what comes out of a person is what defiles them. In other words, it makes you dirty before God. For it is from within, out of a person's heart that evil thoughts come. Then he has a shopping list of evil thoughts.

What do you think one of Them is envy. All these evils come from the inside. Jesus said so. The noise of envy is not so much outside as it is inside.

I need this affirmation. I need to be better than them. I need to have more than them. But you can invite Jesus. And when you invite Jesus to turn down the noise in your heart on envy, he can do whatever he wants.

And you need to be willing to let that happen. Because he will lead you to peace and joy and freedom. So as long as you hold onto the volume nozzle in your heart, he won't do anything. You let go of that knob in your heart, he's able to do something. He might tell you to give affirmation, give money, give encouragement.

Affirm that person in front of somebody else.

Because when you invite Jesus into your heart. I'm not talking now as to become a Christian. I'm talking about to help you become free from envy. You're really inviting wisdom into your heart. These books, Psalm, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.

But Ecclesiastes is wisdom. Wisdom. I'll define wisdom. It's the ability to live life well, joyfully, peacefully, contently, but, well. So when you invite Jesus, you're inviting wisdom.

Let me just unpack that a bit. So in Proverbs 3 talks about wisdom. Joyful is the one who finds wisdom, the one who gains understanding. For wisdom is more profitable than silver and her wages are better than gold. Wisdom is more precious than rubies.

Nothing you desire can compare with her. I'm gonna read that again, but I'm making a little bit of a flip here. Because in the New Testament, Paul says in Corinthians that Jesus is the wisdom of God. Jesus is the wisdom of God. So I'm read that same proverb.

I'm gonna put Jesus in for wisdom. Cause that's the same thing, right? Jesus is the wisdom God. He knows the way to live life well, right? So Proverbs 3, inserting Jesus for wisdom.

Same thing I just read. Joyful is the one who finds Jesus, the one who gains understanding. For Jesus is more profitable than silver, and his wages are better than gold. Jesus is more precious than rubies. Nothing you desire can compare with him, See?

Cause the heart of envy is desire gone bad. I desire more of Jesus. I want more of Jesus than I want to be a better, have a better job, more money. I want more of Jesus. I want Jesus.

I want more of him in my. I want his wisdom in me. I want to live that way. I don't want to live the Competitive march madness of self esteem and self image.

So out of that proverb that Jesus is more precious than anything we desire, we're going to sing a short chorus.

Somebody told me it was retro, so tell me how old I am. Right? But it's a good song anyway. But it's going to be on the screen. We're going to sing it through a couple times.

Why don't you stand up with me? And it's basically saying, lords, you are more precious than silver. It kind of repeats what proverbs just said about wisdom. But we're singing this to Jesus, and I'm gonna ask you to do this why we're singing. Cause I think when we're singing, we open up, if I can call it a portal to God.

When you're worshiping, I think God often speaks to us. Pay attention to any random thoughts, random faces that come to mind, things that God may be wanting you to do, to start, unpack and dissolve the issue of envy in your heart. All right? So pay attention. We're gonna sing it through twice, so give me the starting note, Lord.

Okay. Lord, you are more precious than silver. Lord, you are more costly than gold. Lord, you are more beautiful than diamonds. And nothing I desire compares with you.

Now, with no piano, let me hear your voices. Lord, you are more precious than silver. Lord, you are more costly than gold. Lord, you are more beautiful than diamonds. And nothing I desire compares with you.

And nothing I desire compares with you. Jesus, we want to be to the place in our lives where we can say nothing that we desire compared to. To you. Not our envy, not our jealousy, not even our discontent with life. We want our desire for you and your wisdom inside of us and your love toward us.

We want that to be stronger than any desire we have. That's the kind of people we want to be. We invite you in us to turn down the noise. We ask in your name. Amen.

Go ahead and have a seat. It's the time of the service where we. Response time. So there's a couple different ways we respond. Primarily, it's communion.

Based on whatever tradition you're from. You may call it Eucharist or Lord's table or whatever. It's kind of the same thing. But Jesus said every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, he said this the night he was betrayed. Every time, every time, every time you eat this, remember me.

Remember me, remember me. And sometimes we're prone to remember, like the dark part of the cross, and that's part of it. And, you know, but

remember what he said. And what he said was, he came to give you rest for your soul, which means you're giving up on envy, and you're going toward the tranquility and the rest for your soul that Jesus promises. So when you take this bread and this cup into you, you're inviting the spirit of Jesus into you.

You. You're inviting him into you to lead you to rest for your soul, to lead you to a life of tranquility, joy, supernatural power, supernatural peace. So at the same time, there's many people on the corners, lanyards, on orange lanyards there to pray for you. And maybe you just want somebody to pray for you about something else, but it may just be, I. I want to be rid of this cancerous monster of envy. Maybe that's you.

Maybe you want. Maybe for the first time, you're like, if this is Jesus, I want to follow Jesus. And you maybe want to get baptized. We can arrange that pretty quickly, today or anytime. But talk to the people in the orange lanyards.

So just respond to Jesus. Invite him into your heart, turn down the noise.