# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

**“Godly Jealousy”**

**2 Corinthians 11:1-4**

**May 24, 2020**

One of the strongest human emotions is jealousy, which is a powerful reaction against something or someone that threatens one’s well-being. A girl sees the boy she likes talking with another girl and she may feel jealous. Or a member of a basketball team avoids passing the ball to a particular teammate because he is jealous of how many points the teammate is scoring. Or the neighbors’ house or car is nicer than ours and we are jealous of what they have. Jealous persons are unhappy with the success of others, but feel good when others fail because it makes them feel better about themselves. In these types of jealousy, the jealous person is concerned only about their feelings and their possessions. They are jealous *of* something or someone.

Are you aware that the Bible tells us that God is a jealous God? But, and this is critical, God is not jealous *of* anything; he is jealous *for* something. He is not concerned about his own well-being, for nothing can threaten him or take anything away from him, but he is concerned about our well-being. He is jealous *for us.* God in his infinite power and glory is thinking about us, like a loving parent he cares about us and what we do, and he wants the very best for us. In our biblical text this morning, Paul uses this idea of godly jealousy to express his deep care and concern for the Christians in Corinth. I am reading from 2 Corinthians 11:1-4

I hope you will put up with a little more of my foolishness. Please bear with me. For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ. But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed.

Paul knows that it sounds a bit foolish for him to say that he is jealous for them, but he asks them to bear with him so he can explain what he means. The first thing he does is qualify the nature of his jealousy. He is not jealous of them, in the sense that he wants something from them that they are not giving him, but he is jealous for them with the jealousy of God himself. He is concerned about their well-being, in particular their “pure and undivided devotion to Christ” which he is afraid is being degraded. To help them understand what he means, he uses an illustration from marriage.

When a groom is standing at the front of the church, eagerly anticipating his bride coming down the aisle, he has every right to expect that she is completely devoted to him, just as she has every right to expect that he is completely devoted to her. They are about to speak vows to one another, vows of faithfulness and companionship and the “forsaking of all others.” What Paul is saying is that he is concerned that the Corinthian “bride” is not wholly devoted to Christ, her groom. Not because she has chosen deliberately and willfully to go astray, but because she is being deceived by outside influences that are drawing her loyalty and faithfulness away from her future husband. To illustrate the point, he reminds them of the time when Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

Having created Adam and Eve and placed them in a wonderful garden which provided richly for all their needs, God told them not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. “For,” said God, “if you do so you will die.” Along comes the devil, in the form of a serpent, and he says to Eve, “Did God really say that you couldn’t eat any of the fruit of the garden?” Notice how he subtly twists God’s words. When Eve corrects him and tells him that there is only one tree from which they may not eat, for if they do so they will die, the devil replies: “You won’t die! God doesn’t want you to eat it for if you do you will become like him.” The devil’s strategy is always the same: first, he tries to get us to doubt the truth of God’s Word; then, he substitutes his lie. But the devil’s lies cannot change the Word of God. Adam and Eve did die, and they didn’t become like God.

Paul is warning the Corinthians that the devil is at work among them, not in the guise of a snake but in the guise of false teachers proclaiming to speak for Christ but actually preaching a false Christ, a counterfeit Holy Spirit, and a corrupted gospel. Later in this eleventh chapter he reminds them that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, and Satan’s servants disguise themselves as servants of Christ. The false teachers are saying that the death of Christ on the cross is not enough for salvation; good works must be added. They are proclaiming that the Holy Spirit is present only in those who speak in tongues or display other types of miraculous signs. They are declaring that the gospel is only for those who are Jews, so for a Gentile to be saved he or she must first become a Jew.

God is jealous *for us*. He told Adam and Eve not to eat of the particular fruit precisely because he loved them and knew the consequences of their disobedience. He tells the bride and the groom to remain faithful to each other because he knows the consequences of unfaithfulness. He comes to us this morning through his holy Word and he reminds us that when we stray from a pure and undivided devotion to Christ, by listening to those who preach a different Christ, a different Holy Spirit, a different gospel than what we find in God’s Word, we will be deceived and in our deception we will suffer harm. God loves us too much to simply sit back and watch it happen. He is jealous *for us* and calls us to a wholehearted devotion to his Son and to his Word.

The only antidote to the lies of Satan is a steady, daily diet of God’s Word. Read it, meditate on it, ask the Holy Spirit to increase your understanding of it, and act on it. Couple regular time in Scripture with regular time in prayer, giving God your undivided attention, and you will know the blessing of a close, intimate relationship with the One who loves you more than you can even imagine and wants only the very best for you. Because, he is jealous *for you*.