

To Take in Envy or Give in Love
6th Sunday After Pentecost
Rom 12.6-14

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In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Spirit—one God—Amen. Today, as we continue to look at the epistle to the Romans, we hear about gifts from God. And that we should be content with the gift that God has given us.

When I was in high school, I went on a recruiting trip to Kent State University where I ended up going to play baseball.

And as I was there and visiting with the coach and I saw this big ring on his finger. It was ring from the recent conference championship they had won. And I remember thinking—I want one of THOSE!

Well, that it is where I ended up going and did win a few more of those championships but the reason I say that is because when you're part of a team, each person on the team has their job that they need to do. If you're a pitcher, you work on being a good pitcher... you don't work on your swings so you can hit home runs. Because you're not helping the team if you're working on something other than what is your job, right?

Or worse, if you don't like your job and you'd rather be a hitter or you're a hitter and you'd rather be a pitcher. I was a catcher, so I needed to work on being the best catcher that I could be, so that I could help my teammates.

So I would look at the other team and say—ok what do these batters want to do? What pitches can I call. And then talking to the pitching coach and different things.

All this so that I could be good at my job. If I am not focusing on my job and I am focusing

on other things. If I am not cultivating my gift I am not helping my team.

It's the same way for us as Christians in the Church, right? We each have a gift that God has given us. Not every one of us is good at all the things, teaching, administration, hospitality, prophecy etc.

Some do have multiple gifts, but we all have gifts that God has given us. We need to work at cultivating those gifts, so that the Church can be built up.

This is what Paul is talking about today.

But if we're not content with what God has given us, like, Adam and Eve—remember God told them they could eat from every tree in the garden except for one. . . except for one

They were struck by this sin of envy, they wanted that thing that wasn't theirs. That they couldn't have. Right? That's what envy is. Wanting something that is someone else's. Jealousy is guarding what you have—envy is wanting to take something that's not yours. And so, envy is actually what casts us out of paradise.

Casts us out of union with God. When we want something that isn't ours. When we're not content with what we have. This excommunicates us from the church in a certain way. We are taken out of the body because then that thing, whatever it is that we want, some material possessions, some spiritual gifts, or whatever, whatever it is that we want, that becomes our God.

Or, simply my own desires become the thing that I want to serve. And so, I can no longer be united with God because that other thing that I desire—or my desires themselves have become my God—that which I worship. So the sin of envy is something we need to be very careful of—we need to be on the watch for it. And St. Paul gives us an understanding of how to be on the watch and of how to repent of envy.

How do we repent from envy? Well, repentance is a life lived. It begins with coming to the Church. It begins with confessing our sins to God. Right? Coming to the Church, confessing our sins in the Church.

But then it is a life that we choose to live. And so what does a life of repentance look like?

Well, we can look at our Lord, right? Our Lord teaches us what this looks like, and that is the life of giving. By giving to such an extent that He gave His own life for those who were yet sinners. That's what the Scriptures tell us, right?

So our Lord gave His own life. And so we can also give something. What is it, what is it that we give to God? Well, St. Paul tells us. He says, we can rejoice. We can rejoice. So we give thanks. We are thankful for what God has given us. And in this way, we combat this sin of envy that would threaten to excommunicate us from God's holy Church.

St Paul tells us also, we can be patient. Patience. Patience is very difficult. When I order something on Amazon I don't want to wait four days or seven days or oh my gosh, two weeks, what is that? I want it now. So patience is another thing that we have to practice so that we can learn to be content with what we have.

And patience gives us that opportunity to grow in our gift. To work on our gift. To cultivate what God has given us. Right? Maybe we won't be a great teacher, administrator at first

But we have to cultivate our gift with patience and offer our efforts so that it can grow

And then St Paul tells us we can also contribute to the needs of the Saints. So this is giving again We're not taking for ourselves but offering out of our own resources

So we give to those who are in need. We have all kinds of opportunities to give. You just drive down the street here, and you'll see a couple people you can give to. You go online, there's all kinds of opportunities you can give to somebody.

You're talking with someone and in the conversation you hear that someone is in need.

They need something? We then ask ourselves, how can I help them?

But it's not just money, we give our time, we give our listening ear, we give our resources, right? And this giving helps us fight the sin of envy.

And connected to this giving for the needs of the saints is giving hospitality. By hospitality, we're welcoming somebody into our home, and we're giving them our love in this way.

We're offering them our love.

And then finally St Paul tells us we bless. We bless those who have persecuted us, this is the,

the highest standard of the Christian life.

It's very easy for us to love our family most of the time, right?... Most of the time. But those who are our enemies. This is what is really difficult to do...

But our Lord shows us this is the way...

He says from the cross—Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. And so we, also, in imitation of our Lord, are asked to bless those who hurt us and persecute us. Right? So pray for those who are hurting us, who are hurting those we love... This is divine. We cant do that as fallen human beings.

That's not the law in our fallen, sinful state that we are, to bless those who persecute us and hurt us.

But when we unite ourselves to Christ and His Church—when we're in union with the Lord, then we have the ability to bless those who are persecuting us. And this is also something that we give. We give blessing to those who would hurt us and destroy us.

So rejoice and be content with what you have

Be patient and cultivate your gift from God

Look for ways to meet the needs of those around you

And bless those who persecute you

In so doing the Lord stitches up the wound of envy and we are healed by our Lord—the great physician—and we can participate in the building up of our Lord's holy Church. Amen.