

## **Jealous . . . of Jesus**

Matthew 21:28-46

#24 in Stories Jesus Told series

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**Worship song: *Make us Vessels for Your Glory*** by Nate Bullis and Vince Colbert.

If love is sacrifice  
Then take my life  
Make us vessels for Your glory  
Flow from us to every part  
Make us vessels for Your glory  
For Your love  
Make us vessels for Your glory  
Flow from us to every part  
Make us vessels for Your glory  
For Your love, for Your heart  
For Your love, for Your heart  
Your bleeding heart.

### **Prayer**

Lord we ask that You would help us to preach. In Jesus' name, make us all vessels for Your glory, Lord God, that Your word would move among us, that Your life would flow among us, and that we would experience not just our own life, but Your life. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

### **Message**

Matthew 21:28-32

*"What do you think? A man had two sons.<sup>1</sup> And he went to the first and said, 'Go to work in the vineyard today.' (Jesus is talking to the rulers of Israel, and Israel is a vineyard.) And the son answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. And [the father] went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "the first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God*

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<sup>1</sup> Hopefully that reminds you of the other story that Jesus told about a man who had two sons:

1. You remember that the younger son didn't do the father's will, but took his money and basically sold his love for loose living in a far country. The prodigal didn't do his father's will but did do his father's will—he repented and joined the party.
2. The older brother thought he did his father's will, but did not do his father's will—he was jealous of his little brother and refused to join the party.

At the end of the story, the father stands next to him in outer darkness saying, "But everything I have is yours . . . come join the party.

*before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your mind and believe him (John the Baptist).*

In Matthew 3:2 John the Baptist came preaching, “*Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” “*At hand*” means “*right here,*” in the wilderness with the crowds of tax collectors and prostitutes. But now, in Matthew 21, Jesus is speaking to the chief priests and the Pharisees in the temple in Jerusalem. The Sadducees and chief priests were like the liberal elite of Israel, and the Pharisees were the popular religious conservatives. Both groups believed and advertised that they did things for which they deserved “the kingdom.” And by “kingdom” they meant power and control.

They argued over who was first in that kingdom, but they all agreed as to who was last, least and lost: tax collectors and harlots. Tax collectors basically took life from others through extortion, and harlots bought and sold love as if it were a commodity. The priests and Pharisees thought they did the will of God and so deserved the kingdom. The tax collector and harlots received the kingdom and so did the will of God. Matthew was a tax collector. Last week Karl preached an excellent sermon about Zacchaeus, the tax collector.

You’ll remember that Jesus chose to go to his house. Then Zacchaeus just stands up and gives half his stuff away. It may not have been perfect, but no one told Zacchaeus to do it. He just wanted to do it. Then Jesus explains, “*Today salvation has come to this house.*” Remember the harlot at Simon the Pharisee’s house? She anointed Jesus’ feet with perfume and washed them with tears. No one said she had to do it. She wanted to do it. And Jesus said to Simon, “*The one forgiven little loves little.*” She loved much, and that must be the will of the Father—that’s life in the kingdom.

So pay attention, Jesus points out that there is a group of people that say the right things, have the right bumper stickers, attend the right meetings, and join the right clubs; but they don’t do the will of God. And there is a second group that doesn’t say the right things; they have the wrong bumper stickers, and go to the wrong clubs; but they actually do the will of God. The first group thinks they win the race and actually lose. The second group thinks they’ve lost, and they win.

Jesus says, “Hey you elders, pastors, counselors, and respected community Bible study leaders, the tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom before you!” He doesn’t even say some tax collectors and harlots. He says the tax collectors and harlots.

Imagine that you’re chatting with a few folks in the foyer after the service and one of them says, “How y’all doing?” And the person next to you says, “I’m actually doing good. I’m doing real good.” “I’ve been volunteering at Joshua station, and I love my Bible study.” You feel a little insecure, a little intimidated and so you say, “That’s great, I used to do that too . . . But now I’m really learning to rest in silence in the presence of God . . . I’m doing good.” There’s an awkward silence. Then the person on your left says, “I’m not doing good, and I’m incredibly ashamed. I’ve been desperate for cash to feed my addiction and so last night I had sex with a stranger just for a fifty dollar bill.”

The fourth person in your group is Jesus. He looks at the harlot standing next to you and says, “You win! You enter the kingdom of God first.” That might be rather insulting, don’t you think? Rather insulting . . . And strangely liberating because you know how it is when you start to

compete, especially in the name of love. You don't feel love but anxiety and fear. And when you advertise your goodness, you don't feel so good. But when someone says, "I'm bad," something breaks and something is liberated, something dies and begins to live.

Well, Jesus said to those that advertise their goodness, "The tax collectors and harlots go into the kingdom before you." Now Jesus is opposed to extortion and prostitution. He's diametrically opposed to stealing life and marketing love. But he does say: "*The tax collectors and prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.*" He doesn't even say "ex- tax collectors and ex- prostitutes." Think that through. Doesn't it mean that the only way you can enter the Kingdom now (or maybe ever) is to first admit that you are a thief or a harlot? And mean it?<sup>2</sup>

Next verse: Matthew 21:33

*"Hear another parable. There was a master of the house (oikodespot) who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and of the winepress in it and built a tower and leased it [let it out] to tenants (georgos—earth workers), and went into another country."<sup>3</sup>*

The first line of the story is right out of Isaiah chapter 5 and is meant to remind you of a world of pictures and ideas in Isaiah, the Old Testament and Jesus' other stories. Things like:

*"The Vineyard . . . of Israel" and "the men of Judah—the Lord's pleasant planting"* (Isaiah 5:1-7)

The fire that burns the Vineyard down to the root and "*the holy seed*" that "*is the stump*" (Isaiah 6:13)

The "*winepress of the wrath of God,*" which the Savior, the Son of the King, tramples alone (Isaiah 63:1-6)

The wine that is blood and the blood that is wine that forms a "*river of life, which flows from a throne,*" that looks like a tower (Revelation 5:6, 14:20, 19:15, 22:1-2) on which stands a slaughtered Lamb.

John 15:1, Jesus says, "*I am the vine and my father is the georgos—the earth worker.*"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Now it's easy to say, "I am a sinner." But it's impossible to mean it when you think you're in control and you consider the Kingdom to be your own creation.

<sup>3</sup> I so hope that you don't just listen to the stories Jesus tells and ask, "What's the practical application point?" That's like looking at a cheeseburger and saying, "I see no practical application point." I hope you take these stories, chew on the stories, ingest the stories, and they will change you—you will become the practical application point.

<sup>4</sup> In a walled garden, the Father took earth and breathed into it His breath and made Adam in his own image. He is the *georgos*.

In first Corinthians 3:9, Paul writes, “*You are God’s georgion,*” His worked earth.<sup>5</sup>

Well . . . “*The Lord planted a vineyard, put a wall around it, dug a winepress and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went into another country.*”

Matthew 21:34-46

*“When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the Vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”*

*Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’*

*Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”*

*When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.”*

The tenants take the life of the son because they want what he has: the inheritance. In four days, the chief priests and Pharisees will take Christ’s life because they want what *He* has—they’re jealous.

Now on one level, that doesn’t make sense, but to your heart it makes perfect sense:

If you can’t lose weight, you hope your friends get fat.

If you can’t get an A, you hope your friends get no better than a B.

They were jealous of Jesus, and what did Jesus have?

Verse 46: “*they feared the crowd.*” Jesus had the crowd, and they wanted to have the crowd. Only the day before, on Palm Sunday, they say, “*the world has gone after him*” (John 12). Jesus attracted crowds of sinners, tax collectors and harlots. Jesus had Jerusalem chanting, “*Hosanna in the highest.*” And of course, Jerusalem was herself a harlot. In the Revelation, she is transformed into a bride, but here she is a great harlot, for she will betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. The religious leaders buy her affections and convince her to chant, “*Crucify, crucify.*”

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<sup>5</sup> John 15:5 Jesus says, “*I am the vine, you are the branches . . . Apart from me you can do nothing.*” He is the *Eschatos* Adam, the ultimate man, the finished man.

In chapter 27, Matthew writes that it was out of “envy” that they delivered Him up for crucifixion. *Phthonos* is the Greek word. It’s usually translated “envy” and sometimes “jealousy.” *Phthonos* is almost always bad. Greek writers were careful to distinguish it from another words that can sometimes be a synonym. That word is *Zelos*, often translated “jealousy.” It can sometimes be good and sometimes be bad.

Paul writes that there is a “godly jealousy—*zelos*.” *Zelos* means strong desire for something that another has, whereas *phthonos* means strong desire for something that another has, and the desire that they no longer have it. *Phthonos* is a competitive spirit where your win is based on another’s loss. It feeds on fear, and the belief that there is only a limited supply of good to go around—that “the good” is a limited commodity. It seems that we are born with the idea or acquire it early on.

When my two oldest children were very young, they repeatedly got in this argument: Jonathan would say, “I’m happy.” Elizabeth would say, “NO! I’m happy.” John would say, “No, I’m happy.” And the fight would break out. I’d discipline them and say, “You both can be happy.”

See? They thought happiness was a limited commodity . . . Maybe because they knew that I, their father, was a limited commodity. I mean I couldn’t give each of them my complete attention in the same moment.

Well, is our Father in heaven a limited commodity? If He loves another more, does He have to love you less? Is love a limited commodity?

Well, in this world of space and time, a boyfriend or girlfriend is a limited commodity and so we compete. Some guy likes your girl and so you compete. The office of president is a limited commodity and so Bernie, Hillary, Donald, Ted, Marco, and John Kasich compete. And when you compete, you “go negative.” You begin to desecrate, rather than create. And that’s a problem, especially if you attempt to compete at love, because God is love, and love is the Creator. So if you compete at love, you desecrate the Creator.

A couple of weeks ago, my son, Jonathan, said, “Dad, you gotta watch this episode of one of my favorite TV shows.” It’s about a young man, named Josh, trying to get a girl. The show was called *Man Seeking Woman*. In this episode, Josh likes this girl named Rosa, but he discovers she’s dating someone else. He’s never met the someone else, but he thinks he must compete with this someone else and that means “going negative,” even as he acts all positive.

Clip from *Man Seeking Woman*

[The scene opens up showing a group of three girls and a guy (Josh) sitting on some concrete steps talking and laughing.]

Josh: *Wow! Ahhh! alright guys, this was great!* (Josh stands up from the middle of the group of laughing girls) *We'll have to do this again soon!* (He starts to walk off and is stopped by a news anchor and camera crew.)

News Anchor: *Josh! Josh!*

[A crowd is gathering to ask questions. A man manages the crowd.]

Josh: (Josh waves his hands to settle the crowd down.) *Please!*

Josh: *One, one at a time. One at a time. Uhh, Janet,* (he points to a dark haired reporter)

Janet: *Josh, are you trying to win favor with Rosa's friend, so that they will support you in a run for boyfriend?*

Josh: (shaking his head no) *I, I, I, that's ridiculous! As Rosa's friend, I merely like to have the occasional sit-down with . . . other friends of Rosa's. Ah, so that I can stay abreast of the issues that are important to them. For Instance, I just found out about some great spots to get salad, and about a play that has a deaf guy in it or somethin'.*

Steve (another reporter): *Did the topic of her boyfriend come up?*

Josh: *Oh, Steve, you're killing me. Uh, I won't lie; they expressed some concern that he doesn't hang out with them as much as they would like. Uh, which is a shame. These are great people* (The reporters all nod in acknowledgment) *with beautiful stories and unique voices that deserve to be heard.*

Manager of crowd: (Waves his arm to cut it off) *All right! That's it folks! Thanks for your time.* (He walks off with Josh as the female reporters protest, trying to ask more.)

Manager of crowd: *Dude, check the numbers* (holding up a notepad to show Josh) *Your approval rating with Rosa is way up!* (Josh clenches his fist in victory)

Manager of crowd: *Now is the time to pull out the stops and go at this hard!*

Josh: (putting his hand to his chin in thought) *What does that mean?*

Manager of crowd: *You gotta go negative.* (Josh nods thoughtfully)

[The scene shifts to show Rosa by a refrigerator, looking at her cell phone.]

Rosa: (sighs loudly)

[Josh peeks around the doorway at Rosa, then walks in the room to stand next to her and look at her phone.]

Josh: *Hey! Uh, you all good?*

Rosa: (Rubs the back of her neck as she looks at her cell phone) *Uh-um..Yeah...I just...I wanted to try this new Mongolian restaurant.*

Josh: *Oooo*

Rosa: *and my boyfriend, . . . and I don't want to be obnoxious and complain about it, because you know, he has all those food things,* (she looks at Josh and he nods in agreement.)

Josh: *Shsssss.*

Rosa: *but, we never get to go anywhere new, . . . and it's starting to get . . . really . . . annoying and . . .* (she rubs her forehead as Josh shakes his head in commiseration.) *uh uh! God! I'm so sorry. . .*

(Another guy closes the frig door next to them)

Rosa: *You're so not into this. This is so fine! It's not a big deal!*

Josh: *No, I . . .*

Continuation of Clip

Rosa: *You don't have to listen to this.*

Josh: *No, it is, it's about . . . , nnnn, I would assume that's gotta be . . . that's eventually gotta get . . . (he scratches his forehead) pretty frustrating!*

[The scene shifts to show a newscaster in front of a screen that says, "Breaking News!"]

Male newscaster: *And, . . . a breaking story now (he puts his hand up to his ear mic)*

[The left side of the screen shows a picture of Ben with his head bent, hand to chin in thought with banners underneath that read: "Race for boyfriend," "Greenberg front runner," "Is Josh a lock?" "Pundits weigh in," "Earthquake kills 9,000" CCN]

Newscaster: *This just coming in, from Iowa. Josh Greenberg has just received a phone call from Rosa.*

[The screen shows Josh talking on his phone as he's standing next to his campaign manager in front of a white van]

Josh: *I . . . love game nights! So that's a big yes! Yeah. I will definitely be there!*

(The bottom of the screen reads: "Breaking News Dinnergate: Rosa calling Josh" CCN)

Josh: *Josh Greenburg! Never bails on a date!*

[The scene shifts to show Rosa sitting next to Josh at a dinner table]

Rosa: *Alright. Where do we put our bazaar?*

(The scene pans back to show a guy seated at the table with them and two girlfriends)

Josh: *I suspect we should put our bazaar relatively close to say, uh, the caravan. Because that way we can trade, uh, goats for resources, because you and I are goat rich.*

Rosa: *That's why I'm glad I'm on your team!*

Josh: *I think you are.*

Rosa: (hits Josh's arm approvingly) *because of all the strategies!*

Josh: *That's exactly right.*

Guy: *Rosa! Guess who decided to show up? (nods toward the door)*

Rosa: *Oh, my God, yes! (she gets up from the table excitedly and runs to the door) He came! (Josh's face drops)*

[Rosa opens the door and you see Jesus standing outside with a bright light surrounding him. The light hits Josh in the eyes as he turns to see who it is at the door, and blinds him]

Josh: *Holy shit!*

(Jesus comes inside, long hair blowing in the breeze, and closes the door, shutting out the light)

Jesus: *Hey, hey!*

(All the people around the table call out "Hey" back in chorus)

Josh: *Is she, is that, Is that Jesus Christ?*

Rosa: (In background) *Aw, honey.*

Redheaded girlfriend: *They met at Dave and Buster's. He's really cool.*

Blond friend: (getting up from the table to greet Jesus) *Oh! It's been too long! (She kisses him on both cheeks, and he kisses her back)*

Jesus: *I'm sorry it's been a while! It's been crazy at work!*

(Rosa rubs his arm in sympathy.)

Blond girl: *With the lepers?*

Jesus: *With the lepers; you know other stuff. You know, they're really . . .*

Redheaded friend: *He cures lepers.*

Josh: *Oh, good, good. (nods)*

Jesus: *Oh, hi! Whoah, you must be Josh!*

Josh: (turning to face Jesus) *Yeah, yep. That's me. Hi! (standing and shaking Jesus' hand)*

Continuation of Clip

Jesus: So good to meet you man, I'm Jesus!

Josh: Yeah, I know. I'm very...

Rosa: Huh huh (laughs)

Josh: familiar with you. Yeah.

Jesus: Well, I'm very familiar with you.

Josh: What?

Jesus: You are famous in this house.

Rosa: Um-hmm.

Jesus: Office manager, correct?

Josh: I mean, you're Jesus Christ!

Jesus: Ah! Come on!

Josh: So you're . . . you're the Son of God?...And God?

Jesus: It's so... It's so complicated

Josh: Yeah.

Rosa: It took me a while too, right?

Jesus: I, I don't even understand it.

Josh: Yeah, right.

Jesus: When it was explained to me, I thought, "Okay, so I'm the Son of God and you know, I'm, at this point, I'm like tell me where to go.

Josh: Yeah. I uh . . .

So it turns out that Josh is jealous of Jesus and not in the good way but the bad way. The chief priests and Pharisees were also jealous of Jesus. They were jealous that Jesus had Jerusalem because Jerusalem was their girl. They were jealous that Jesus had the crowd. (They didn't love the crowd; they loved controlling the crowd.) They were jealous that Jesus had the crowd. And they were jealous that the crowd had Jesus. (They didn't love Jesus, but they loved controlling Jesus.) They would've loved to have Him on their team, but Jesus always picked the wrong team and even played the wrong game. They were jealous that the crowd had Jesus. And they were jealous that Jesus had Jesus. They were jealous that Jesus had truth, life, light, love and goodness. They were jealous that Jesus saves, and they couldn't save.

I watched that episode of *Man Seeking Woman* and wondered: "Do I ever compete with Jesus? Am I ever envious or jealous of Jesus?" And then I thought: "Am I ever jealous of anything *but* Jesus?"

Matthew 28:18, John 13:3, Hebrews 1:2 all make it clear that Jesus inherits all things. So whenever I'm jealous that anyone has anything, I'm jealous of Jesus' thing . . . But it's not just Jesus' things. Jesus is the thing. I'm not just jealous that Jesus has all things, I'm jealous of all things that have Jesus. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth and the life,*" "*I am the light of the world.*"

These are all predicate, nominative clauses saying, "This is that," and maybe, "that is this."

John writes, “*God is love.*”<sup>6</sup>

And people are quick to point out: “*God is love*” doesn’t mean “Love is God.” They point out that a statement like “Banana is fruit” doesn’t mean: “All fruit is banana.” And that’s true because “fruit” is a larger category than “banana.” But there is no category larger than God—so all love is God. And there may be fake love, imitation love, but there is no real love other than God. So when Jesus says, “*I am the way,*” I think He also means “*The way is I am.*”

So any progress, any way is the activity of I AM—Jesus. It means any truth is Jesus. It means any life, true life, is Jesus. Maybe any light is actually Jesus. That doesn’t mean that there can’t be darkness, death, lies and “lostness” in with the way, truth, life and light in any given person.

Actually, when I’m jealous of a person, I’m not jealous of the whole person. I’m only jealous of the way, truth, life, light, and love in that person. That’s what I want to take from that person. At one point in Mark and Luke, Jesus literally says, “*No one is good enough except one, the God.*” At that same point, Matthew records Jesus as saying: “*One is the good*” or “*The good is one*” (predicate nominative). That means all good, all beauty (*Agathos*, in Greek) is one, and God is one.

Last week Karl preached a really beautiful sermon full of way, truth, life, light, and love. And I want Karl to preach a good sermon...but not too good, because I suspect there’s only so much good to go around. I want Karl to preach a good sermon...but not too good because if it’s too good, I might not have enough good to compete. You might not want me, and if you don’t want me, you might not pay me. And if you don’t pay me, I might not be able to buy food. And if I don’t buy food, I might die and lose whatever good I got. When I’m jealous of Karl, and envy Karl, and compete with Karl, I want to take the good in Karl to save my own life and purchase your love<sup>7</sup>.

When I compete with Karl, I hate the good in Karl. And now class, what is the good in Karl? That’s Jesus. So when I compete with Karl, I sacrifice “the Good” in Karl to save my life (which is really Christ’s life) and to purchase your love (and there’s a name for someone who buys and sells love). In other words, because I’m a thief, who constantly steals “the life,” and because I’m a harlot, who makes love a commodity to be bought and sold, I envy the Good and so sacrifice the Good and I’m not even aware I’m doing it, for I do it in the name of God because religion is my game and that’s the worst kind of harlotry and extortion.

See? Actually, when I’m jealous of anyone, I’m jealous of Jesus and so are you. So yes! I totally get why they crucified the Christ. It may not be logical, but it makes sense to my dark and twisted heart. Jesus, who is the good in flesh, rode into Jerusalem, and they felt threatened by the Good, and so were jealous of the Good, and so took the life of the Good on a tree in a garden. But why did Jesus ride into Jerusalem? To *give* His life, on a tree in the garden. He went to give Himself and all things with Him—His inheritance. They try to steal His inheritance, and He came to give His inheritance. It seems that all sin is like trying to take what God has already given...but you can’t receive until you stop trying to take—until you die to the lie that you need to take; the lie that you now think is yourself, your ego.

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<sup>6</sup> That’s a predicate nominative.

<sup>7</sup> as if you were my own vineyard

Do you remember why Eve took the good from the tree in the garden? It was because she believed a lie that she must make herself in God's image. So get this, the very thing she tried to take was the very thing God had already declared that He would give, "His likeness." *"Let us make man in our image and likeness,"* said God—the Good. And man took the good to make himself in the likeness.

I think the good, in flesh, was hanging on that tree in the garden, like fruit (containing seed). When Eve took the fruit on the tree, it died. ("The good" became her own private limited commodity.) When Jerusalem, the harlot, took the life of Jesus on the tree He died, and we all died (we thought "the good" was our own private limited commodity.) We *took* the good, but God *gave* the good, and the Seed was planted in the ground that is us. A fountain was opened that flows from the throne. The throne is a wine press that makes a river and the river is blood. The life is in the blood, it's eternal, it's not limited at all. All eyes will look on the One whom they have pierced on the tree, that stands like a tower, in a vineyard, where we took the life of Christ in God forgave the life of Christ to make us in His image. He is good! We are His inheritance, and He is ours.

Now I know you couldn't follow all of that, but we're just glimpse that. But for now just consider this: All sin is trying to take what God has already given, (or from our perspective) is in the process of giving. And that means that envy is not only evil, it's just stupid. In first Corinthians 3, Paul gets after the Corinthians for competing. Listen to his logic:

I Corinthians 3: 3-4

*. . . You are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? . . .*

The whole chapter is about that. Then he concludes:

I Corinthians 3:21

*So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours.*

(Remember? Christ's inheritance is "*all things.*")

I Corinthians 3:21 – 23 (ESV)

*So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death (Death is yours—what a thought!) or the present, or the future (We're talking all space and time) all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

In other words, "Peter don't be jealous of Karl. You own Karl and Christ owns you, and God owns Christ. Don't be stupid."

Galatians 3:27-28

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, [There is no Peter nor Karl] for you are all one in Christ Jesus and if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs . . . [Inheritors] according to promise.*

In other words, "Peter, don't be jealous of Karl. You are Karl. You are one body, the body of Christ. And the river of life flows through you."

In I Corinthians 12, Paul explains the body of Christ in the gifts of the Spirit. In verse 31 he writes, *"But earnestly desire the higher gifts."* "Earnestly desire" is the verb *zeloo*, so he literally writes, *"Be jealous for the higher gifts."* I'm sure he means Godly jealousy, but I've had earthly jealousy, especially for the gift of prophecy. I figured if I had prophecy, the way some have prophecy, it would make sermon-writing way easier and maybe infallible.

I Corinthians 12:31 – 13:1 (ESV)

*"Be jealous for the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."*

And then Paul writes the most famous chapter in Scripture, the love chapter.

See? Love is the "more excellent way" to get the gifts. I didn't know this when I married her, but my wife has an amazing prophetic gift; sometimes God will just tell her stuff—beautiful amazing stuff (I know it didn't just come from her).

One day I was complaining to God in prayer that she had this gift, and I didn't have that gift. And I just had this thought, it was something important: "Peter, she has female parts and you don't have female parts. (Remember seventh grade, when you became so interested in female parts?) Peter there are two ways you can get female parts. You can *take* them (and that's rape or maybe surgery) or you can *receive* them, the: '*still more excellent way.*' Peter, you love Susan, and she loves you, and you are bound in a covenant and celebrate its sacrament. So you don't have female parts and yet you do have female parts, and you have Susan and is that not a far, far 'more excellent way?' You don't have her gifts and yet you do have her gifts, and you have my entire body and all its guests. And is that not a far, far "more excellent way?"

In other words, "Peter don't be jealous of Karl, be grateful you're not Karl because then you can enjoy Karl, and Karl can enjoy you. You are two indispensable and unique members of one body, my Body. You have Karl and with Karl you have me."

And now, before any weird rumors start, let me say: I have no carnal interest in Karl Wheeler, and we are not planning to get married and yet we are married. We are bound together in the covenant of grace, and I'm actually wed to the Jesus in Karl and Karl is wed to the Jesus in me.

And this is where the story of the tenants in the vineyard really gets interesting: When the son came to the vineyard, that is when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, He was romancing His Bride. Jerusalem is His harlot bride, and the priests and Pharisees are part of Jerusalem.

They were jealous of Jerusalem, yet they *are* Jerusalem. They wanted the “Son’s inheritance,” yet that they are the “Son’s inheritance.” They are His Bride. There are two ways that they can *know* their Groom: They can *take* the Good, *kill* the Good, and try to *apply* the Good to their *own* lives. Or they can *receive* the Good, *surrender* to the Good and *allow* the Good to apply *them* to *His Life*. They can seize control of the good to know the Good, or they can surrender to the Good to be known *by* the Good, filled with the Good and impregnated by and with the Good. They can compete with the Good and kill the Good or they can thank God for the Good, confessing they’re not Good–losing themselves in a river of endless Good, animated by the Good.

So when you’re standing in the foyer at the back of the church and someone says, “I’m doing good.” You can be intimidated by the Good, you can feel threatened by the Good, you can try to take the Good and make it your own, *OR* you can remember: “*God alone is Good,*” and thank God for “the Good.” For whatever Good is in that person is the Spirit of Jesus in that person. And you can freely confess you’re a harlot, because Jesus loves harlots and turns them into brides.

You know, it’s so easy to get sucked into that spirit of competition, and when I do I can feel myself getting trapped in anxiety, shame, fear, and death. So when I do, when I’m terrified I won’t win, I’ve learned to whisper something in my heart. I whisper, “I lose,” and then I win: freedom, joy, life, Jesus! Jesus, the Good and then I’m good, and that’s the will of God.

Jesus takes tax collectors and harlots and turns them into disciples and His Bride, He’s Good. But the priests and Pharisees can’t receive the Good because they try to take the Good, jealous of the good. They know all about the will of God, but they won’t be known *by* the Will of God. They won’t surrender to the Will of God so they won’t do, or “be done,” by the Will of God.

They don’t respect the Will of God in flesh–Jesus, but the Lord of the vineyard did say, in Matthew 21 verse 37, “*They will respect my son,*” “*They WILL...*” And Jesus did say, “*The tax collectors and harlots go in before you.*” But, that means, they still go in. Perhaps it’s after their city is destroyed, like Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. Perhaps after they weep and gnash their teeth in outer darkness, after they are humbled and made last and least, but they will see the Son and respect the Son.

The Lord of the vineyard must have known what they’d do to His Son after all they had done to His servants, but He sends Him anyway saying, “*They WILL respect my son.*” “*All eyes will look on the one whom they have pierced*” (Zechariah 12:10) and “*Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess . . . To the glory of God.*” (Romans 14:11)

Well anyway, in episode six of *Man Seeking Woman*, Josh is jealous of Jesus, and so hates Jesus, but doesn’t really see Jesus or know Jesus, and so he betrays Jesus. He brings Mongolian curry to the party, hoping to humiliate Rosa’s boyfriend, who happens to be Jesus, and that’s when he truly sees Jesus.

Clip #2 from *Man Seeking Woman*

[Josh is dishing up Mongolian curry]

Josh: *Jesus, would you, would you like some?*

Jesus: *No! No, no, no! I'm very . . .*

Girlfriend: *It's very good!*

Rosa: *Yeah, Jesus, come on.*

Jesus: *I'm very full.*

Rosa: (holds up her bowl) *Babe, babe*

Josh: *Jesus, come on! Well, like I said, it's exotic! I know it's a big ask. So . . .*

Rosa: *Babe!*

Jesus: *Let me . . . I'll try . . . quick question and this is so annoying, um, is it gluten free?*

Josh: *Yeah, I think so.*

Jesus: *You think so, or you know so?*

Josh: *I know so.*

Jesus: *Huh-hmm. Josh,*

(Josh chuckles softly.)

Rosa: (laughs too)

Jesus: *You know, so?*

Josh: (pauses, then whispers) *Yeah, yeah. I know so. I know so.*

Rosa: *What?*

Josh: (firmly) *I know so.*

Rosa: *Okay?*

Jesus: *Okay.*

Rosa: *You got clearance!*

Jesus: *That's all I needed to know. (He dishes up a bowlful.) Even when I was full, I don't mind having a little bit of something that's um, of the right flavor. So, why not? (He brushes his hair away from his face and takes a spoonful.)*

Josh: *There's plenty more where it came from.*

Rosa: *Um - Hm!*

Jesus: (looking up at Josh after chewing) *Mmm! Josh, (there's a pause and Josh looks nervously at Jesus) best thing I ever had.*

Josh: *Hey, come on!*

Jesus: *No! No! Josh, I'm not kidding! Best thing I ever had!*

Rosa: *That's a lot, you know?*

Jesus: *Best thing I ever tasted?*

Josh: *Thanks.*

Jesus: *And the texture!*

Josh: *Hey, good.*

Rosa: *Mmm! The texture is... (she goes to take a bite from her own bowl, and notices Jesus is standing frozen) Babe? (Jesus stands frozen, eyes wide, Josh looks at him puzzled)*

Continuation of Clip

Rosa: *Babe! Look at me!* (Jesus slowly turns his head to look at her) *Huuuuuh!*  
Josh: *What's happening?*  
Rosa: *Oh, my God! Where is it, babe? Point to it.*  
(Jesus points to his belly and makes a gulping sound.)  
Rosa: *Oh, my God! I'll get the antacids!* (She takes his bowl and goes to get the antacids)  
Josh: *I mean, I...* ( he looks down at his own bowl)  
Rosa: *Let's have the bowl.*  
Josh: *What's happening? Uh, What? What?*  
Jesus: (grabbing his side) *Ow! The pain!*  
Josh: *The pain?*  
Jesus: *The pain. Uh! Oh – uh!* (he gasps in pain, spreads his arms out to his sides, groans a couple more times)  
Josh: *What?*  
Jesus: (groans) *Josh!* (He reaches up and holds the side of Josh's face) *You betrayed me.*  
Josh: (shakes his head no, unable to look in Jesus' eyes) (whispers) *I'm sorry.*  
Jesus: (groans in pain, turns runs into the bathroom, slamming the door behind him.) *ahhh!*  
Josh : (stands there looking at Rosa with his chin in his hand, ashamed.)  
Jesus : *I, uh,uh, uh!* (speaking in Aramaic)  
Rosa: *Do you hear him? He's in pain!*  
Jesus: (groaning in Aramaic)  
Josh: *Is that Aramaic?*  
Rosa: *Yes!*  
Jesus: (Calls out again in Aramaic)  
Rosa: (looking towards the bathroom door she says something in Aramaic)  
Jesus: (Replies in Aramaic)  
Rosa: *Yeah.*  
Jesus: *Yah.*  
Rosa: *Yeah.* (she scratches the back of her head)  
Rosa: *You see, he's picky because he has to be. He has Celiac!*  
Josh: *Oh.* (The sound of the toilet flushing occurs.)  
Rosa: *That's why he's so thin!*  
Josh: *Man! Oh, I am, I am . . . so sorry!*  
Jesus: *R- Rosa!*  
Rosa: *Yeah babe?*  
Jesus: *It's not his fault.*  
Rosa: *What do you mean?*  
Jesus: (opens the bathroom door and comes out, closing the door behind him.) *I just remembered. I had a whole basket of pita at lunch.*  
Rosa: *Well, why would you do that?*  
Jesus: *I don't even know what I was thinking. It was not the curry at all. Don't...don't worry about that.*  
Josh: (exhales loudly in relief)  
Rosa: *Josh, I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to come down on you like that!* (Turns to Jesus) *I just. I was really worried about him.*

## Continuation of Clip

Josh: *No! Of course, I get it! Totally . . . Totally fine! I would do, the same thing!*  
Rosa: *Okay*  
Jesus: *Okay, yeah.*  
Rosa: *Okay, I'm so...*  
Jesus: *Okay, um, could you do me a favor? Do you think you could get me some candles, maybe? Maybe some air fresheners? From the closet?*  
Rosa: *Yeah, okay. Hang on! Okay.* (She turns to go get it.)  
(Jesus looks at Josh, blowing a loose raspberry)  
Josh: *Yeah.* (They turn away from the bathroom door and walk down the hall together)  
*Good game night, huh?*  
Jesus: *Yeah, I would say. Yeah, um. You know, um, Josh, I know that it was the curry.*  
Josh: *Oh! Shit!*  
Jesus: (looking deeply into Josh's eyes) *I forgive you.*  
Josh: (bends his head) *Thanks.*

You won't find Mohammed in many sitcoms like that, and that's because Mohammed finds glory in conquest, but Jesus is glorified in His humiliation. And everyday, at every party, and in just about every conversation He is humiliated, for we constantly take the Good, use the Good, and abuse the Good. And He allows it so one day we can all see that He is "the Good" and so we would respect Him and make Him the King of our own lonely little kingdom and become His Kingdom.

We all betrayed Jesus. We took His life, and He gave His life; He forgave. That's as far as they got in the sitcom, and that's too bad because the kid's name is Josh, and Joshua means Jesus. (Joshua is the Old Testament Hebrew form of the name Jesus). Josh is jealous of Jesus, but Josh *is* Jesus, and Jesus gets Rosa. Josh is Jesus, and you are the Bride and Body of Jesus.

The Way in you, the Life in you, the Truth in you, the Good in you, the Love in you is Jesus in you—the Spirit of Jesus in you. He became a "life-giving spirit" (I Corinthians 15:45). "The Life" flows through you as an endless river. "The Good" is God, and He is not a limited commodity: "His mercy never comes to an end." So you should be zealous for Jesus, but don't be jealous of Jesus; you are Jesus. I mean, you are actually the Body of Christ, and He is the perfect image of the invisible God, and God is good.

## Communion

So on the night we betrayed Him, He took bread and He broke it saying, "This is my body given to you; take and eat, and do it in remembrance of me." And in the same way, after supper, and having given thanks, He took the cup and He said, "This cup is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you."

This is the Good! The Way, the Life, the Truth, the Good, the Love. Here's the tree. (Peter points to the cross behind him.) Whenever and wherever you see the Good, don't be intimidated by the Good, don't envy the Good, don't ever compete for the Good, don't even try to apply the Good,

be grateful for the Good. And worship the One who is Good, and He will apply you to Himself. You are His Body. Whenever you feel the temptation to be jealous, to compete, just say, "Father, thank you for the Good." "Thank you for Karl." "Thank you for me." "Thank you for all things." In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

### **Benediction**

Think of someone you really envy. You may really dislike them. You may really like them; it's probably both. Now just in your heart thank God for that person.

Lord, we thank you for the Good in that person because the Good is You. Any Good is You. I think we can even thank you for the bad in them, because Lord I'm beginning to see that the bad is like an empty stage waiting for the revelation of the Good. The evil is a place waiting for the revelation of Your mercy. Disobedience is a place waiting for the revelation of your glory.

So, Lord Jesus, on the tree you bled Your life into our empty places, giving us yourself, and now maybe you are even choosing us to bleed your life into that person. So Lord, thank you for them. Thank you for all things—for your self. Thank you that you are the Creator that speaks your Word into the void, and we're beginning to see He is good. Thank you for creating faith in us, in the midst of this dark world.

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*