

Envyng Our Own Saviour

Genesis 37:1-11

Halifax: 2 October 2016, 10:30 AM

Introduction:

There is a particular sin of the church that has to be the most ridiculous, most preposterous sin of all.

- And it is a very common sin—it is found in every branch of the Christian church and no Christian is entirely free of it...
- It is also a sin that can be a damnable sin—a sin that can keep us from inheriting eternal life if it is not repented of...
- It is probably safe to say that it keeps the majority of those who are in the visible church from eternal life.

What is it?

- It is such an absurd sin, that it is embarrassing to even say it...
 - It is the sin of envying our own Saviour!
 - That's right, we envy our own LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ!
- God the Father has graciously sent Him to save us from our sins...
 - And we envy Him!
 - We do not have so much of a problem admitting that we need mighty men to come and save us from our enemies or to heal us from sickness or provide for our needs,
 - but when it comes to admitting not just that we have sinned, but that we are such sinners and that our moral condition is so ruined that we are utter rejects and that only Christ is acceptable—we begin to squirm and flare up in anger.
- It was this sin of envy that caused the chief priests and the leaders of the Jewish church to reject Christ and to deliver Him up to be crucified...
 - And it was this sin of envy against Him that caused the majority of the people of Israel to reject Him even after He was preached among them and shown to be the Messiah.
 - And it has been and still is this sin of envy that has caused people in the church for the last two thousand years to rely on Christ plus something in themselves—their own goodness, rituals, distorted views of God—anything but Christ alone.
 - And even in those who have largely repented of this sin of envy and who are indeed trusting in Christ alone, it can still be found in us, lurking in our hearts as a weed.

My dear brothers and sisters, today I want to search you out...

- I want to expose in each one of us this sin of envying our own Saviour.
 - There is not a one of us that does not struggle with this sin in some way...
 - And it may be that even among this congregation there is one or two in whom this sin so dominates that it has kept you from coming to Christ in a saving way!
- I want to help you all to identify it that you may confess it and that you may, by God's grace, root it out more and more...

- And if it should be that it has kept you from even coming to Christ, I desire that you will be able to receive Him as your Saviour today.
- I urge you to take heed to what I have to say, for God has appointed me to preach the gospel.

Our text is Genesis 37 where we begin the story of Joseph.

- We will look at the first 11 verses where Joseph is presented to us as the *deliverer* or *saviour* that God had chosen to save His church—the church in its bud—the people of Israel from whom the worldwide church had its beginnings.
- Now of course you understand that Joseph was but a man.
 - He is not **the** Saviour that was to come and save us from our sins.
 - No, he was only the saviour that God raised up to save Israel from famine in his day—a temporal salvation—but a necessary one...
 - Without it, there would have been no nation of Israel to establish God’s kingdom and to receive God’s promises and to bring forth Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world,
 - and there would have been no salvation for any of us.
 - We would be yet in our sins without hope and without God in the world—condemned without remedy to eternal judgment.
- Joseph is here presented to us as a type of Christ.
 - That means that by looking at Him, we can see a picture of Christ—not just any picture, but one that God has given to us in His Word for our good.
 - We can learn precious things about our Saviour, and we can learn, as I hope to show you today, about our sins against our Saviour,
 - And in particular, in our text today, about the sin of envy against Him.

So please listen carefully as I read to you from Genesis 37 beginning in verse 1.

- This is the Word of the LORD.

Gen 37:1-11: Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. ² This is the history of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. ⁴ But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. ⁵ Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. ⁶ So he said to them, “Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷ There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my

sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.” ⁸ And his brothers said to him, “Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. ⁹ Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, “Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.” ¹⁰ So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?” ¹¹ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter *in mind*.

May the Lord bless to us the reading and the exposition of His Word.

Our subject today might seem to be discouraging...

- for again, we are looking at the how the envy of Joseph's brothers is reflective of the whole church's problem with the envy of Christ...
- But there is a very bright side to the subject for all who love the Lord Jesus!
 - Because in looking at the causes of our envy, we will also be looking the surpassing excellence of Christ—for that is what stirs up our envy!
- And when we consider the fact that His excellence is put into service for our salvation, then we have great reason to rejoice in His surpassing glory!
 - Our happiness will be found in emptying ourselves of our pride and in finding our delight in Him as the only one in whom we can find acceptance!

So let's look at the first thing we learn about our envy from Joseph as a type of Christ.

I. First, learn here that we envy our LORD Jesus because He exposes our sin and corruption...in other words, He makes us look bad.

- A. Joseph is presented as a young man who was exposing the wickedness of his brothers.
- He was making them look bad—because they were bad.
1. We are told in verse 2 that he was a mere youth of seventeen who was out with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's concubines,
 - tending his father's sheep.
 - It may be that Bilhah was the one who looked after him after his mother Rachel died because she was Rachel's maidservant.
 - Joseph was a bit younger than his brothers, for he was the last to be born with the exception of Benjamin who was quite a bit younger still...
 - Joseph is called a lad here, in our version...
 - Some say that the language here indicates that he was forced to be a kind of a drudge to his brothers—an errand boy...
 - Others say the opposite, that though a lad, he was put in charge of them.
 - It really does not matter which way it was...
 2. The point that is stressed is that Joseph saw his brothers' wickedness and told his father about it.
 - a. Here again, there are various opinions...
 - some saying that he was a nasty little snitch—a tattler that took pleasure in reporting their offenses...
 - Others saying that he was simply fulfilling his duty as a faithful son who was under obligation to report what his brothers were doing in hopes that his father would be able to correct them when he was unable to do so.
 - b. It is a wrong, and rather common opinion that it is always wrong to report the misdeeds of others...
 - that used to be my opinion when I was in grade school and a girl named Suzie would always tell the teacher what I had done when the teacher was out.
 - Some have lasting resentment about the Suzies in their life, and I must say that there were things worthy of criticism about her.

- But the scripture does not support the idea that it is always wrong to report the wrongs of others.
 - For example, in Deuteronomy 13, we are told that it is our duty to report those who worship idols or entice others to sin.
 - Our Lord Jesus taught us to go to our brother if he sins and to try to restore him, and if he will not hear, to take another with us and try again to lead him to repentance, and if he still will not hear, to tell it to the elders.
 - Leviticus 19:17 says: **You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.**
 - In other words, if you don't try to correct him, then you bear guilt yourself.
3. When we see the character of Joseph revealed to us, it is highly unlikely that he is a little snitch!
- You don't quickly advance from a common slave in a great man's house and have him put your in charge of everything and entrusted with all that your master has (as Joseph did) if you are a little snitch!
 - Nor do you, as a young man, refuse the advances of your master's wife because of your loyalty to the Lord your God!
 - It is unfair to impute such things to Joseph when all the text says is that he reported his brothers to his father...
 - Especially when we see the rotten character of his brothers that is revealed later.
 - We have every reason to think that Joseph had very good reasons to report them to their father.
 - The great majority of the older commentators see it this way—it is the modern ones who like to find fault with Joseph.

B. In any case, what we have here is a beautiful picture of what happened when our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world.

1. He came among His own people in the form of a servant...
- And as He around everywhere doing good, He continually offended people.
 - How so?
 - We will let Jesus tell us Himself...
 - In John 3:19, He says: **“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”**
- a. Whenever Jesus came around, He made people who thought they were righteous look really bad...
- He exposed them, both by the way He lived and by the things He said.

- He preached that men should love their enemies...
 - He preached that you are a murderer if you even hate your brother in your heart...
 - He preached that if a man lusts after a woman to whom he is not married, he has committed adultery in his heart...
 - He preached that worry exposes you as one who has your heart set on the things of this world and not on pleasing God...
 - He directly rebuked the religious leaders and called them hypocrites and then gave specific examples of how it was so.
- b. And when they tried to find fault with Him, it only made them look worse.
- The more they tried, the more they failed and the more hostile they became toward Him.
2. And it is like that in the church today!
- a. The Bible is the Word of Jesus, and He tells us things in it that we do not want to hear...things that expose our wickedness and our selfishness...
- And instead of humbling ourselves and repenting and confessing that He alone is righteous,
 - we start to question the things that He has said in His Word.
 - we bristle and change the message...we reinterpret it or we ignore the parts we don't like...
 - Some even claim that Jesus never said some of the things that the Bible says He said.
 - They pretend to have scholarly reasons for saying this, but they do not.
 - They have no reason but their own envy.
- b. It is this same envy that causes people to look for preachers who will blunt the message of the Bible so that it won't make us look so wicked...
- I remember hearing Robert Schuller complaining at those who preach about sin, saying that he wanted to build up peoples' self-esteem.
 - The message of the Bible is that we are all desperate sinners who can only find salvation in Jesus Christ, and this man and thousands like him are trying to make people feel good about themselves.
 - These preachers don't like the way that Jesus always talked about Hell.
 - They want to say that these things were added in later but Jesus did not say them...
 - Or they just ignore these things and pretend that they are not there.
 - They don't like what the Bible says about sexual purity, so they reinterpret it to suit their desires.
 - They don't like that the Bible says that those who practice immorality and many other sins should be put out of the church...so they ignore it.
- c. Do you know what people like that are doing?
- They are showing that they hate the real Jesus!

- They have a Jesus of their own making—a papier-mâché Jesus that they fashion as they please...
 - The real Jesus is an object of contempt for them.
- I tell you, we all struggle with that!
 - When the Spirit of Christ exposes our sin, we naturally recoil—we make excuses, we shift the blame, we try to forget it, we try to reinterpret it...
 - We do that first until at last we confess our sin.
- 3. But do you see—the fact that our Lord exposes us ought to make us delight in Him!
 - a. We are not in competition with Him—He alone is righteous—He alone is pure and holy and undefiled and separate from sin.
 - Instead of stirring up resentment, this ought to stir up our love and our praise and our admiration of Him!
 - b. Whenever we see a virtuous person like Joseph or Daniel, it also ought to make us rejoice inasmuch as we see more of Jesus in them.
 - It is so wrong of us to be offended at others because they are more virtuous than we are...
 - It is that same spirit in us that makes us resent Christ.
 - c. We envy Him because He is holy and we are not and because He makes us look bad when we ought to be admiring Him and imitating Him!

II. And now secondly, I want you to see that this envy is all the more stirred up when we see that He alone has obtained the favour of our heavenly Father.

- A. That is what is shown to us with Joseph.
1. Joseph was the son in whom Jacob (or Israel) was well pleased.
 - **Verse 3: Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age.**
 - a. That is quite a statement—*he loved him more than all his children...*
 - Joseph is described as the son of his old age—which is variously understood—but the idea is that he was the delight of his old age.
 - Here was a son that listened to his father.
 - Here was a son that his father could fully trust.
 - Here was a son that loved his father and was loyal to him.
 - We can be confident that this was so for the reasons I mentioned before—
 - Joseph shows himself to be loyal to his master in Egypt—and then to the warden of the prison—and then to Pharaoh...
 - In each case, they were able to entrust everything to him and know that he would be faithful.
 - b. Now of course we have warrant to criticise Jacob for his favouritism.
 - We have seen in previous sermons how he stirred up resentment in his family...
 - He was the one who married more than one wife and then showed favouritism to one above another.

- But at the same time, when you have sons that behave the way Jacob's sons behaved,
 - they have little reason to complain if their father favours the only one among them who is loyal and true to him.
 - And the truth is that his loyalty and faithfulness stirs up their anger all the more.
- Besides that, they should have respected their father even if he did have favourites.
- 2. But rather than respecting their father, these boys hated the object of their father's love...
 - a. We are told at the end of verse 3 that Jacob gave Joseph a special coat to distinguish him...
 - It is disputed whether it was a coat of many colours or not—what matters is that it was coat that distinguished Joseph as the favoured son and probably also as the one whom Jacob had chosen to receive the rights of the firstborn...
 - A double portion of the inheritance and the leadership of the family after Jacob died (and to share in that leadership before he died).
 - b. Instead of looking at Joseph and respecting him as the only one among them who was worthy of such a place, and being glad that he alone was fit to lead them as God's chosen family,
 - we are told that Joseph's brother's hated him for it.
 - The robe constantly stirred up their resentment.
 - Verse 4 says: **But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.**
 - This is very strong language...
 - To say that they could not speak peaceably to him means that they could not wish him will—they could not say “Shalom, the LORD be with you, brother!”
 - I wonder if there is anyone in your life that you cannot wish peace to?
 - If there is, you need to repent because that means that you are harbouring bitterness in your heart...
 - The scripture asks you, If you don't love your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen?
 - This is one of those very matters you want to deny—you want to make excuses to justify your hatred...but it is still hatred!
- B. This same attitude is often carried over to Jesus Christ!
 - 1. We are told in the scripture that Jesus is the only person who truly pleased God our heavenly Father!
 - When He was first baptised and began His public ministry, we are told that God spoke from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

- And then just as He was going up to Jerusalem to be crucified, He went up on a mountain with His disciples and once again the voice of the Father was heard declaring that He was pleased with Him!
2. Like Joseph with his brothers, Jesus is distinguished from all of God's sons and daughters as the one that the Father loves...
 - At the transfiguration, He was clothed with shining garments—His special coat that showed the Father's favour, approval, and delight.
 - He alone is declared to be righteous—He alone is acceptable to our Father who is pure and holy.
 - And here is the really hard thing—not one of us is acceptable to God—only Jesus! We are all rejects.
 3. But that should not make us hate Him!
 - a. It is the very thing that makes Him fit to be our Saviour.
 - 1) He is the only one who can represent us to the Father...
 - And that is exactly what He came to do...
 - Even though it meant that He must take full responsibility for our sins—He came to save us so that all of us could be righteous before God through Him.
 - 2) Do you want anyone else to have His place?
 - Do you want to stand in His place?
 - If anyone else tried to represent the church before the Father, we would be utterly condemned.
 - b. If Joseph had not been loyal, he never would have arisen to sit at Pharaoh's right hand...
 - If his brothers had gone to Egypt instead of him—they would never have arisen to sit at Pharaoh's right hand...
 - They were hating and despising the one that alone was to be their saviour from the famine.
 - If you don't know the story of Joseph, let me simply tell you that Joseph is the one that gains favour with Pharaoh, and ends up being in a position to save his father and his brothers from starvation.
 - They hated him as the favoured son when they should have rejoiced in him.
 - c. So it is with Jesus Christ.
 - Do not resent the fact that He is accepted by the Father when you are not...rejoice that the Father has chosen Him...
 - Come to Him, trust in Him as the elect Son and you will be accepted in Him.
 - You are a reject—don't let that make you angry...it is true...
 - He is accepted—don't resent that—rejoice that it is so!

- It is natural to us from creation to suppose that we must make ourselves acceptable to God...
 - But you must let that go and accept the fact that this is no longer possible because of your sin...
 - Only Jesus is acceptable and you can only find acceptance in Him.

III. And now we come to the third reason we envy Jesus (as revealed in Joseph): we envy Him because it is prophesied that He will reign over us!

A. With Joseph's dreams, we have prophecies that Joseph is destined to reign over his brothers.

- These prophecies infuriated his brothers even though they should have known that it was divine revelation...
 1. These dreams occurred in the days when God often spoke to people in dreams and when this was recognised by everyone.
 - Jacob received revelation in this way,
 - Laban did when he was about to attack Jacob,
 - Abimelech did when he was about take Sarah as his wife...
 - And later on in the Joseph story,
 - there will be a butler and baker who meet Joseph in prison who each have dreams...
 - And then Pharaoh will have two dreams that will reveal that a great worldwide famine is coming...
 - So we need to understand that Joseph's dreams were not just the product of his own pride, as if he were simply arrogantly dreaming of greatness.
 - They were seen as revelation from God, and it was his duty to report what the LORD had said.
 - God revealed things in dreams so as to show what He was about to do.
 - That way, when it happened, everyone would know that God had done it.
 - Joseph's dreams showed that God would raise him to power and authority, even over his father...
 - In this way, the LORD was teaching His people that He is the one who decides the future—that He is sovereign over the affairs of men.
 - It is wonderful that this was something that His people of old came to fully understand, even though we moderns are weak in accepting this.
 2. But you can see here that instead of accepting what God was going to do, Joseph's brothers responded with even more hatred...
 - just as the Jews did when Jesus prophesied that He would reign at God's right hand...
 - They said, "Who, you???" Who are you to reign over us? You are the carpenter's son..."
- a. Look at the first dream and how they respond...it begins in verse 5:
- **Gen 37:5-8: Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. 6 So he said to them, "Please hear this dream**

which I have dreamed: ⁷ There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.” ⁸ And his brothers said to him, “Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

- You see that his brothers are perfectly able to interpret the dream,
 - but instead of accepting it as what God has appointed, they resent it.
 - It is this very thing they refer to later when they decide to kill Joseph—saying, **“we will see what will become of his dreams now!”**
- Is that not exactly the attitude that those who crucified Jesus had when they hung Him on the cross?
 - If He is really the Son of God, let Him come down from cross.
 - If God really delights in Him, let Him deliver Him.

b. And the second dream of Joseph brings about a similar response...

- It should be noted that as Joseph himself says when Pharaoh has two dreams about the same thing—the matter is repeated because it is certain...
- We are told Joseph’s second dream in verse 9 and of his family’s response in verses 10 and 11.
 - **Gen 37:9-11: Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, “Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.” ¹⁰ So he told *it* to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What *is* this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?” ¹¹ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter *in mind*.**
- Now you see that even his father rebukes him...
 - Yet, unlike the brothers who envied him, Jacob ponders these things...
 - He knows enough about these things to know that there may very well be something to these dreams—that it is an oracle from God.
 - But all that is found in the brothers at this time is envy...
 - “Who is Joseph to rule over us?”
 - A prophet is not without honour except in his own country.

B. The parallels to Jesus are quite obvious...

1. All through the years, the prophets spoke of Him, and all through the years, the prophets were stoned and rejected...
 - Even the covenant people did not except their message of ‘Thus saith the LORD.’
 - They resented Christ’s rule, and took out that anger on the prophets who spoke in His name.
2. And then in the fullness of time, Jesus Himself came...
 - He was introduced by John the Baptist, His forerunner who was the voice in the wilderness, declaring the coming of the King...

- He called everyone in Israel to repentance, because the King was coming to establish God's kingdom.
 - They were to turn from their own way, and prepare to follow Him as their Lord and Master and Saviour.
- And then Jesus Himself came, and He declared that He was indeed the King and He commanded men to follow Him...
 - to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Him.
- And they said, "Who are you? You are from Nazareth...you are nobody special..."
 - They said that even though Jesus cleansed lepers, cast out demons, gave the blind sight, and raised people from the dead....
 - They said that even though He spoke as no man ever spoke...
 - They said that even though He came at the time and in the manner spoken by the prophets...
- But what infuriated them more than anything was when the high priest asked him under oath if He was the Christ, the Son of the blessed, and Jesus said:
 - **Mark 14:62: "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."**
 - Their response was,
 - **Mark 14:63-65: Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? 64 You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. 65 Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.**

3. Now what about you?

- Will you have Jesus to reign over you?
 - Don't answer too quickly...
 - What has He called you to do as your LORD that you refuse to do?
 - What is it?
- I tell you that He is LORD.
 - Don't call Him LORD if you refuse to do what He says.
 - I am not talking about coming short of what you ought to be—I am talking about refusal to submit to His Word.
 - Do you really want to make the rules and then appear before God on the Day of Judgment?
 - Would you not rather be found in *His* kingdom with Him as your Master?
 - Do you envy Him of His place as Lord?
 - Do you have your own little kingdom that will be judged before the LORD, or are you a member of His kingdom?
 - God has made Him Lord and Christ and no one else will do.

Conclusion: What have we seen about Him today?

- We have seen that He is the one who exposes our sin—and we must accept that...
- We have seen that He alone is loved and accepted by the Father—and that we are rejects unless we trust in Him as the only Saviour God accepts...
- And we have seen that He is the one God has appointed to reign over us—that we must not reject His rule, but come to Him as our Lord.

Do not resent the exalted place that the Father has given to Him the way Joseph's brothers resented the place their father and God had given to him...

- Do not envy Him, but rejoice in His beauty and His perfection.
- Do not try to compete with the one that God sent to save you—receive Him!
 - **Acts 4:12: There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**
- Do not be angry that He said, (John 14:6) **“I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me.”**
 - Do not be angry that He said that, but come to Him to be saved.
 - It is very foolish to envy the One God sent to save you.