**“God Is . . . Jealous”**

**Part 6 - Text: Exodus 20:1-6**

**~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on May 20, 2018 by Pastor Barton Priebe**

**INTRODUCTION**

* **(SHOW SLIDE1 )** We are doing a series on the attributes of God. God’s attributes are simply descriptions of what he is like. So this is a series about what God is like.
  + Sociologists are continually tracking what people think about God. What is interesting is that the vast majority of people, even younger people, still profess to believe in some sort of God. In other words, only a small minority of people are atheists. What is even more interesting is the fact that most people, whether old or young, believe in the same kind of God.
* In a major landmark study, Sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Denton showed that there are five key points of belief among people today.
  + **(SHOW SLIDE 2)** **1) A God exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth; 2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions; 3) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself; 4) God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem; 5) Good people go to heaven when they die.**
    - Smith and Denton call this **(SHOW SLIDE 3)** **“Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.”** *Moralistic* refers to the idea that God wants you to be nice to other people. *Therapeutic* means God is about helping you to be happy. God is not overly demanding. He doesn’t require you to go to church, or tell you who you can sleep with. *Deism* was an 18th century movement that said God created the world but is not involved in it. In this case though God is involved but only to help solve our problems and make us feel good. God is like our Divine Butler taking care of needs or Cosmic Therapist to make us feel better about ourselves.
* A great recent example of this is the book and movie *Eat, Pray, Love*, which is Elizabeth Bilberts spiritual odyssey. She gets rid of her husband of five years even though she says he is a devoted and good man. She is bored and frustrated and not ready to have kids.
  + In the end she finds love with a handsome Brazilian in Bali. In the middle she seeks God to smooth over her divorce proceedings and then ease her sense of guilt over what she has done. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.
* Today we are going to look at God’s jealousy. There is, perhaps, no more offensive attribute than this. God’s jealousy reveals that he is nothing like the God most people believe in and yet I want to submit to you that it is the kind of God you truly want deep down inside.
  + So let’s get into this and talk about three things: The puzzle of God’s jealousy, the meaning of God’s jealousy, and the implications of God’s jealousy.

**THE PUZZLE OF GOD’S JEALOUSY**

* Let’s begin then with **(SHOW SLIDE 4)** **the puzzle of God’s jealousy.**
  + God’s jealousy is clearly described in here. And note, this is no obscure passage. This is the Ten Commandments and it appears in the second command.
    - Look with me at verses 4-6. **READ 4-6** - ***You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.***
* But isn’t jealousy a bad thing? How can God be jealous? Perhaps this is just some rare mention of it. But no, that is not the case. A few chapters later Israel breaks this command, makes a golden calf and uses it to worship God. God is angry but renews his covenant with them and then repeats himself.
  + Exodus 34:14 says, **(SHOW SLIDE 5)** ***for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*** 
    - A name in scripture represents what a person is like. God gives us many names for himself to help us to understand what he is like. Here he says his name is “Jealous” because he “is a jealous God.” This is very puzzling.
* Maybe this is just the Old Testament. But no, in the New Testament we read in James 4, **(SHOW SLIDE 6)** ***“[God] yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us.”*** So God is jealous.
  + But isn’t jealousy a sin? In Galatians 5 Paul warns that if people give themselves over to certain sins without repentance then they will not inherit the kingdom of God. Among those sins are sexually immorality, drunkenness, orgies, and jealousy. So here jealousy is said to be a sin.
    - And yet this same Paul says he is jealous in 2 Cor 11:2, **(SHOW SLIDE 7)*“For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. 3But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”*** How are we to make sense of this? It is very puzzling.

**THE MEANING OF JEALOUSY**

* In the second place, let’s talk about **(SHOW SLIDE 8)the meaning of jealousy.**
  + From that last scripture in 2 Cor 11:2 you can immediately see that Paul wants to distinguish the kind of jealousy he is feeling with the kind that he says is sinful in Galatians 5. Notice he called his jealousy “divine jealousy” or your translation may have “godly jealousy.”
* We can see here that **(SHOW SLIDE 9)** **there are two types of jealousy—one is right (like God) and the other wrong (ungodly).**
  + Let’s describe the wrong or ungodly kind of jealousy by thinking about the story of King Saul. He was jealous of David because God said he would take the kingdom away from Saul and give it to David. Out of jealousy Saul tried to kill David.
    - So jealousy is what happens in your heart when something that belongs to you, and that you love, is threatened. Saul’s position as king was being threatened by David.
  + We see this in John 11. Jesus is very popular because he has raised Lazarus from the dead. The chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to discuss what to do with him. You can hear their jealous hearts when they say, ***“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”***
    - It is jealousy that leads them to develop a plan that ultimately kills Jesus.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Shakespeare called “jealousy” the “green eyed monster.” Jealousy is so bad because it leads to all manner of sins. It is jealousy that leads us to speak poorly of someone behind their back so we look better and they look worse. Jealousy resents others, seeks to destroy their personal reputation, and even their life.
  + That is why Proverbs 27:4 says, ***“Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?”***
    - So this is a wrong type of jealousy. This is not the jealousy that applies to God.
* But there is a type of jealousy even amongst humans that is right and proper and it is this jealousy that also describes God. The word translated ***“jealousy”*** here and in the same passage in Exodus 34:14 comes directly from the marriage relationship.
  + I remember being at a party. From across the room, I saw a guy talking with my wife, Heather. I immediately observed how engaged he was but didn’t think much of it. Yet, as I glanced over a few more times I could not help but think he was just too engaged. To me his gestures were too kind and his conversation overly engaging. He was definitely flirting with her.
    - I felt my heart catch on fire with jealousy like the time a biker guy looked Heather up and down like she was his play thing. I felt jealousy stir in me like the time a man, who knew full well that Heather is married, put his hand on hers and asked her out for coffee.
* If you ever want to see me turn green with jealousy and red with anger, try hitting on my wife. You and I will have a very one-sided conversation and you won’t be doing any of the talking. I do not know about your marriage but I am not inclined to share my wife with anyone. I am jealous for Heather’s love and I am absolutely intolerant of any rivals.
  + There is of course a line here where this could go too far, but you see what I am saying.
    - So you see this second kind of jealousy is the same as the first in that it arises when something that belongs to you, and that you love, is threatened. But it is different in that it is the very depths of love to protect my marriage from rivals. Both types of jealousy are about angered love but sinful jealousy turns to hate whereas godly jealousy seeks to rescue the love relationship.
* If I was not deeply in love with Heather I would not care if other guys hit on her. True love is jealous. True love in marriage guards against attack and takes action against anyone who violates it.
  + This is the sense in which we are to understand God’s jealousy. God’s jealousy is a good thing because it arises out of his love for his people. God’s jealousy is provoked when his people’s hearts wander to other lovers.

**GOD’S JEALOUSY REQUIRES TOTAL FIDELITY**

* **(SHOW SLIDE 10)Implication #1: God’s jealousy requires fidelity.**
  + Fidelity means faithful or loyal. Yet, the first two commandments warn us that our hearts are prone to wander to other lovers. Look at the first command in verse 3. **READ 3** - ***You shall have no other gods before me.***
    - The reason God has to say that is because our hearts are ever prone to wander to other things and make them our gods. And the second command says we are not to make idols of anything. So anything can become an idol, or false god, because our hearts can love anything.
  + When our hearts love anything more than him then it provokes his jealousy. Why? Because he is in a marriage relationship with his people. Every spouse requires this of his or her spouse. They demand to have first place in their lives and they are provoked to jealousy when other things or people take that place.
* It is certainly true that big things like adultery and pornography ruin marriages but more often than not it is not actually the big things; it is that couples start to give their hearts to other good things that ruin the relationship.
  + I remember being at a wedding rehearsal and being seated with the groom’s father. He heard we did triathlons and so we started talking about training and racing. This man was obsessed with triathlons. He could talk about everything in great detail. He even admitted that he loved triathlons so much and spent so much time training for ironman races that it became a marital issue. He said he just could not give up triathlons and they got divorced.
    - Choosing triathlons over marriage is foolish enough but what was so tragic is that he wasn’t even very good at triathlons. In fact, he had never even finished and ironman because he missed the swim time cut off and then the next year missed the bike time cut off.
* You see marriages can be broken by adultery but more often than not they don't break, they unravel. They slowly unravel as one or both partners stop making each other a priority and give their hearts’ true love to other things – even good things.
  + So a husband may be sexually faithful to his wife but she say, ***“He doesn’t really love me. What he really loves is his job. That is where he spends all his time and what he truly loves.”*** Or she will say, ***“His true mistress is not a woman but his hobbies and his time with his guys. The kids and I take a back seat to these other lovers.”*** 
    - But then the husband will turn around and say, ***“She says she loves me but what she really loves are the kids. They get all her attention, all her affection, and I am way down the list.”*** Or he will say, ***“Her mother is like a third member of our marriage and turns my wife against me.”***
* Marital fidelity means total loyalty to your spouse. When it comes to God we see the same thing. In these first two commands, God is saying, ***“What I want above all is your heart. Watch out for other gods, other idols, that will come in and steal away your affection from me. When you do this you provoke my jealousy.”***
  + This is the way to think about sin. Sin is not just breaking God’s rules. It is breaking his heart. It is breaking a relationship. Sin is spiritual adultery. The Old Testament constantly uses that image and so does the New Testament.
    - James 5 says that God is jealous for us when we try to love the world and love him. We can’t do that. James calls us adulterous people when we do so because you cannot love all that which is in rebellion against God and love God.
* Brothers and sisters, where are you provoking God’s jealousy? Are you seeking to love him with all your heart or is he just a Sunday mistress but you go back to your true loves the rest of the week?
  + Are you trying to love the world and love God? You can’t do it. You can only have one husband. Let us confess our infidelity to him. Let us ask for grace and mercy for the ways we have gone after other lovers.

**GOD’S JEALOUSY REQUIRES OBEDIENCE**

* **(SHOW SLIDE 11)Implication #2: God’s jealousy requires obedience.**
  + The Ten Commandments outline how God wants us to live. To be in relationship with him means we are to obey him. But again, this is so far from the God most people believe in—a God who is not overly demanding, a God who helps you out with problems but doesn’t talk about the details of your life, especially your sex life.
    - C.S. Lewis said that the God most people want is not a father but a grandfather. Fathers and mothers are very demanding of their kids. They are always saying, ***“Get that out of your mouth. Don’t kick your brother. No, you can’t go out until midnight. Have you done your homework?”*** Grandparents, however, let the parents do the hard work of training and discipline. Grandparents are close but not too close.
      * This is the God of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism but it is not a jealous and loving God.
* The God of the Bible is like any good and loving father. He is deeply concerned about our happiness and it is precisely because of this that he is very exacting and demanding. He knows that we will only be happy when are holy and so the Ten Commandments cover every part of your life, including your sex life.
  + Yet we all believe the giant lie of the serpent that God’s laws are not in our best interest—that we would be happier if we disobeyed and did things our own way. Deep down we all think that obedience is opposed to our happiness. This is why people want to believe in a therapeutic God who just helps to give us what we believe will make us happy.
    - But do you really know what will make you happy?
* Tim Keller gives a great illustration of this. He says, ***“What would happen if you told God everything that you want to be happy and he gave it to you right now?”*** Then he rightly points out that this is like giving a five year old whatever he or she believes will make them happy.
  + One of my kids’ greatest dreams is for God to turn the entire world into candy so that lampposts are made of licorice, roads are paved with Oreo cookies, and the oceans and lakes are all made of pop. They truly believe this would make them happy. But if God did this it would ruin them and they would probably be dead within a week.
    - What about a 13 year old? What if God gave a 13 year old everything he or she currently believes they need to be happy? It would ruin them and they’d probably be dead in a month. What about a 20 year old? They would maybe last for a year.
* When you look back at your life you can see that at those ages you never really knew what would make you happy though you were convinced of it at the time. If I met my 20-year-old self I would say to him, ***“You’re an idiot. You have no idea what will really make you happy.”*** What’s so depressing is that that I am sure my 65-year-old self would say the same thing to my present 42-year-old self.
  + No matter what your age is, if you could meet your future resurrected self who has lived on the new earth in the presence of God for 50,000 years, that future self would say, ***“I don’t even know how to explain to you how wrong you are about what you think will make you happy.”*** 
    - The Bible says that you were made by God and for God. He alone knows what will make you happy. His commands are designed for your happiness, which is a relationship with him. Do they contradict you? Of course they do. A truly loving Father often contradicts his children. He tells them what to do and what not to do in order that he might guard and protect their freedom and happiness. God’s jealousy over your obedience is one of the greatest signs of his love for you.

**HOW CAN WE LOVE AND OBEY GOD?**

* So let me help you put all this together. How can you love God with all your heart and continue to grow in obedience to him? The *order* of the Ten Commandments shows you this. The order is the key to understanding everything about God and how to relate to him.
  + If you can answer one question correctly it will reveal if you are on the right track. Here is the question (listen very carefully to the wording): *how do the Ten Commandments begin*?
    - Most people think they begin with ***“you shall have no other gods before me.”***  But this is entirely wrong. It immediately makes you think that the Ten Commandments are God’s job description for us. That God is the kind of God who, if we obey his rules, then he will love us and let us into heaven when we die. But this is emphatically not how the Ten Commandments begin.
* They begin in verse 1. **READ 1-2** - ***And God spoke all these words, saying, 2“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.***
  + Notice, the Ten Commandments do not begin with a command to do something; they begin with a declaration of what God has done. They do not begin with law; they begin with grace. They do not begin with what you must do but with what God has done. Never read the Ten Commandments without reading verses 1-2.
    - God did not give them the law while they were in slavery saying, ***“If you obey me then I will liberate you and love you.”*** He liberated them *from* bondage *for* relationship with himself.
* This is the story of the entire Bible. The message of the Bible is not, ***“Obey God and he will love you.”*** It is, ***“God has set his love upon you, sent Jesus to die and rise again for you, so that you can be in a relationship with him.”***
  + This changes everything. When you receive Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven and you are brought into a relationship with God. But what about all this talk about obedience? We obey not to earn God’s favour. We obey because we already have God’s favour. We seek to obey out of a deep sense of security in God’s love for us.
    - Verses 1-2 are the marriage vows. The Ten Commandments are how you live once God is your husband. I don’t remain sexually pure so that my wife will love me and marry me one day. I remain sexually pure because she loves me and we are married. So also, the way to obey God is to constantly remember the secure relationship that you enjoy with him once you become a Christian.

**CONCLUSION**

* God’s jealousy is one of the greatest proofs of his love for you. God set his love upon you before he created the world. He sent His Son to purchase you with his own blood. He made you his Bride. A day is coming when we will sit down at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb and enter into an eternity of joy with him. His love for you is great.
  + This is why he is jealous for your love.

1. When the apostles became very popular with the crowds we read in Acts 5:17: “But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him . . . and filled with jealousythey arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)