

Speaking to the soul



Envy

Then I realised that my heart was bitter, and I was all torn up inside. I was so foolish and ignorant— I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you. Yet I still belong to you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny.
Psalm 73:21-24

The psalmist had been struggling with his thoughts. In this psalm, he admits he has become very envious of wicked people who seem to enjoy a really easy life, avoiding many of the problems which good people face. He wonders whether following God has been a complete waste of time for him. However, the more he reflects, the more he recognises the foolishness of his thinking, because the wicked people are on a slippery path which is bound to end in their destruction.

In our verses, Asaph the psalmist wakes up to his foolishness and recognises that what really matters is his faith in God. God has kept him secure and will guide him through the rest of his life. At the end of the psalm, he draws the conclusion: “But as for me, how good it is to be near God! I have made the Sovereign LORD my shelter, and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do” (v28).

Envy can very easily grow in our lives. We look at other people who are so much more talented, wealthy or beautiful than we are, and we conclude that life is completely unfair. Like Asaph, we need to beware, because envy can end up destroying us and leading to a life of resentment and misery. It is significant that one of the ten commandments is not to covet. In Exodus 20:17, we read: “You must not covet your neighbour’s wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbour.”

The temptation to covet will always exist because our life circumstances are so different from one another’s, but we need to resist that temptation, and we do that most easily as we focus on the incredible blessing that we have in sharing

our lives with a God who knows us and who will always care for us.

QUESTION

Be honest. Are you envious of anyone? Bring that to God and then remind yourself how blessed you are to know him.

PRAYER

Lord God, thank you that you provide perfectly for all my needs. Amen

Photo - Mosaic of the Last Supper Westminster Abbey

This intricate mosaic of the Last Supper is from the Abbey's High Altar screen. It was designed by J.R. Clayton and made by Italian artist Antonio Salviati.

The inscription along the top reads 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ' - a quotation from the book of Revelation.

