

## **Sermon for Sunday 7 June 2026 (The First Sunday after Trinity) – 6.00pm Evensong**

**Carol Rivett, Reader**

***Psalms 41; 1 Samuel 18.1-16; Luke 8.41-end***

The reading from Samuel today is a storey of jealousy, or envy, which was named as one of the seven deadly sins. In Proverbs, God warned that jealousy makes the bones rot. King Saul's jealousy of David was ignited by David's massive popularity after defeating the Philistine champion Goliath. The songs, the praise, and the dancing of the women of Israel wounded Saul's pride and began to make him suspicious of David. He began to fear that David would eventually usurp him as king. This passage is just a small section of an ongoing storey of Saul, David, and Jonathan.

Jonathan was the eldest son of Saul. And therefore the heir to the throne of Israel. He first appears in 1 Samuel 13 as the victor in the fight for a Philistine stronghold. Saul has a tricky relationship with his eldest son, as in chapter 14 he had threatened to kill him for his disobedience, and in chapter 20 he describes Jonathan as the son of a perverse and rebellious woman.

When David had beaten Goliath, Saul wanted to know who the young man was. So he was brought in front of Saul to explain himself. When David had finished speaking to Saul, his son Jonathan felt a very deep connexion to this boy. This was apparent before they had even spoken a word to each other. There has been a lot of speculation regarding the exact nature of the relationship between David and Jonathan, which I do not intend to go into here. They appear to have had a lasting and deep friendship like that of two brothers. We are told that Jonathan loved David as his own soul and that he would not even let him return to his own house. Jonathan gave him his own robe, his armour, his sword, his belt, and his bow, presumably as tokens of his extreme regard for David. Later on, Jonathan actively protected David from attacks from his father Saul.

Saul begins to suspect that Jonathan is colluding with David to overthrow him. This becomes the one and only thing that consumes his thoughts. The Bible says an evil spirit comes upon him as he makes plans to kill David. It seems as if in a moment of spite and with a spear in his hand, he throws the spear at David, who was not doing anything other than playing his lyre, just like he did every day. Perhaps Saul didn't like the tune he was playing. He intends to pin David to the wall, and he tries this twice, but both times David eludes him and escapes Saul's wrath. We are then told that Saul was afraid of David, so he removed him from his presence.

Saul made David a commander of a large army, and presumably sent him out to fight. I can't help thinking that Saul hoped David would be killed in a battle somewhere. However, David came back successful in all his undertakings, which put Saul more in awe of David and made David even more loved by Israel and Judah.

There should be no place for jealousy in the life of a Christian. But who can say, hand on heart, that they've never felt a twinge of it? At all? Ever? I can honestly say that my neighbour's husband, slaves, ox or donkey have never caused me a moment of envy. But would I like prettier dresses? A better car? Or a bit more money? Of course I would. The thing is, I don't let these things take over my life to the exclusion of everything else.

In Corinthians, we are told that love does not envy. Envy is the coveting of what others have. Jealousy is the resentment that somebody else has got what they have. Neither of them are good feelings, and both of them are wrong. When we see that others have been blessed in ways that we have not, it is often very tempting to allow ourselves to become jealous. It is the way that sinful hearts so often respond to the blessings of others. Instead of rejoicing in the ways that God has blessed us, we resent the ways that he has blessed others rather than ourselves. Social media, a growing influence, may exacerbate these feelings of jealousy. It is all too easy to see what others on social media have got, enjoying the things that we want, and it may provoke jealous feelings within us.

It is not quite what we expect for God to send out an evil spirit into somebody. I found this part of the reading a bit difficult to understand, so I hope that you will forgive me if my interpretation is not quite right, and I'm sure Simon will correct me. Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul. Saul knew that it had gone from him. We are told this in verse 12. I think that because of the feelings of envy, jealousy, and rage that Saul was feeling, God could just not be with him as he was getting deeper and deeper into sin and going well against God's wishes. Saul knew that he had messed things up good and proper. Jealousy is surely not a God-given state of mind.

Saul appears to have spent the rest of the story plotting against David. He planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines in verse 25, trying to make the Philistines kill him. Saul became David's enemy. It is such a debilitating state of mind. Removing everything that is worthwhile from life, especially the presence of God. There is a contrast between God's blessing on David and King Saul's destructive descent into paranoia. His attempts to thwart a chosen one of God only shows the futility of fighting against the will of God.

Jealousy robs us of our joy. It is impossible to be jealous of others and joyful in Christ at the same time. It is displeasing to God if we have hearts filled with jealousy, as well as being an

awfully miserable way to live. We should rejoice in God's blessing towards others, as was Jonathan, rather than being envious and bitter like like Saul.

In Romans chapter 12, we are told to rejoice with those who rejoice. This may not always come naturally, and there are times when we need to be reminded of the wonderful blessings in the gospel. There was a time when we were all sinful and enslaved by our sinful desires, but God in his mercy sent his own Son to earth to rescue us. Acting as our substitute and suffering for the punishment that our sins rightly deserved. In Ephesians chapter 1, it says, 'In Christ we are blessed with every spiritual blessing because of what Jesus has done for us. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.' Amen.