



Envy & Kindness

Look Back

10 Minutes

- In his March 3 sermon on sloth, Pastor Emmanuel said that according to the Desert Fathers and Mothers there were two responses to the sadness of life, and both are forms of sloth: escapism and anxious activity. Which one are you most likely to use rather than bringing sadness or disappointment to God?
- Everyone is complacent in some ways concerning their Christian duties. Discuss ways you have or may be struggling with sloth and what has helped you in the struggle.
- In his March 6 Midweek Lenten Worship Service on the virtue of diligence, Pastor Curtis reminded us that people are meant to be co-creators with God and that He invites us to participate in His redemptive work for all of creation. How do you see your vocation as participating in God's redemptive work for all creation?

Read Aloud

Matthew 20: 1-15

Head: Observe the text and the author's main points

15–20 Minutes

1. What themes, patterns, or motifs did you notice throughout the text? What do you think they signify?
2. How does this parable of the vineyard give us insight into Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God? In what ways does Jesus challenge, undermine, or transform our perception of what we may or may not have?

Heart: Envision how the text—when applied—might transform your inner life in terms of your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.

15–20 Minutes

1. Recall a time in your life when you faced a situation similar to what the characters in the passage experienced. How did you respond, and what did you learn from it?
2. We live, work, and participate in a culture that valorizes competition. Envy of others for what they have tends to be the by-product. How has this cultural dynamic created tension in your life and faith?
3. What practices can you participate in individually or with others that celebrate the things God is doing in the lives of others?

Hands: Apply the text by moving from inward reflection to outward action looking for ways to live the text out in our lives to serve others

10 Minutes

Reaching Upwards: Growing in Your Relationship with God

- Reread Matthew 20:1-15 and reflect on how this parable challenges us to think or rethink how God gives gifts.
- It is difficult not to feel some sense of grief, especially if, for some time, you have been praying for and longing for a thing that seems to be happening everywhere else but not in your life. Psalm 37:7 encourages us to "be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way." Discuss how these words or other scriptures can be an encouragement to you on your spiritual journey.
- Meditate on the state of your heart, confessing to God and, if comfortable, to your small group, any envy that you are carrying, and ask for the Holy Spirit to restore a sense of gratitude for the generosity of God towards you.

Reaching Outward: Investing in Your Neighbors

- Thomas Aquinas characterizes envy as "sorrow over another's good as excelling my own." We often hear the call to be kind to our neighbors and not to envy or speak ill of the good that God is doing in another's life. As a group talk about how you will spend time noticing and celebrating the many evidences of grace happening in the lives of those around you.
- The greatest riches in life is a relationship with Jesus Christ. Who do you know who has questions about faith or spirituality? Invite them to Spring Alpha at FPC that starts Thursday evening, April 11 for 8 weeks. It meets from 7 - 8:30 pm on campus with dinner, conversation, and a short video to prompt discussion. For information

and to volunteer, contact Pastor of Outreach Emmanuel Paulpeter at epaulpeter@fpchouston.org.

- Invite a neighbor or friend to one of the many Lenten and Easter events and services at FPC. For a list of Lenten and Easter services, go to fpchouston.org/worship/lent.

Reaching Beyond

- Ask a FPC covenant partner, a neighbor, or a friend to join you on a short Local Mission Partner Field Trip from 12-1:30 pm on Thursday, March 21 to Star of Hope. SOH is a Christ-centered community dedicated to meeting the needs of homeless men, women, and their children. For more information and to RSVP, contact Madie Weir, Missions Coordinator, at mweir@fpchouston.org.
- Join Local Priority Mission Partner, Restoring Justice, for a Freedom Walk from 5 - 6:30 pm on Thursday March 21. The Walk involves a brief devotional, joyful songs, and prayers en route on foot to the Harris County Jail. For more information, contact Madie Weir, Missions Coordinator, at mweir@fpchouston.org or claudia@restoringjustice.org.
- As the turmoil in the Middle East continues, pray for peace.