

# **Sermon on Be Content Rather Than Jealous**

Kwabena D. Akufo

3/4/2007

## **Text:**

**John 3:22-30** <sup>22</sup> Afterward Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem, but they stayed in Judea for a while and baptized there. <sup>23</sup> At this time John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, because there was plenty of water there and people kept coming to him for baptism. <sup>24</sup> This was before John was put into prison. <sup>25</sup> At that time a certain Jew began an argument with John's disciples over ceremonial cleansing. <sup>26</sup> John's disciples came to him and said, "Teacher, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the one you said was the Messiah, is also baptizing people. And everybody is going over there instead of coming here to us." <sup>27</sup> John replied, "God in heaven appoints each person's work. <sup>28</sup> You yourselves know how plainly I told you that I am not the Messiah. I am here to prepare the way for him-- that is all. <sup>29</sup> The bride will go where the bridegroom is. A bridegroom's friend rejoices with him. I am the bridegroom's friend, and I am filled with joy at his success. <sup>30</sup> He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.

## **1 Introduction**

Jealousy is witchcraft. Discontent fuels jealousy. A jealous person is a witch or wizard – he or she is demonically operated!

### **1.1 Jealousy means resenting someone over their success**

Ama is jealous of Akosua means she resents Akosua because of her success. Because Ama resents Akosua she will do whatever she can to pull her down, discredit her, and eliminate whatever makes Akosua successful. It is not that she wants to do whatever Akosua did to become successful so that she also will become successful. In fact, if she pursued that path that will be admirable because it will be positive competition; it will mean Ama admires and respects the success of Akosua so much so that she also wants to work hard to get the same success. Jealousy is negative competition. It is destructive. It is outright demonic.

## **1.2 Satan displayed the first act of jealousy**

Jealousy was carried out in the first instance by Satan. Lucifer was discontent with his position as the heavenly host praise leader. He was so jealous of God's position that he plotted and attempted a coup d'etat so that he will become God. So, jealousy is rooted in the devil. As a result, Jealousy produces demonic activity.

## **1.3 Cain's discontent and jealousy led him to kill Abel**

Cain was discontent with his failed sacrifice and was so Jealous of Abel because of his successful sacrifice that he plotted to kill Abel. Rather than look inward and fix the problem he took his discontentment on someone who had nothing to do with it – Abel. God warned Cain saying, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? <sup>7</sup> If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.” (Genesis 4:6-7) The devil was knocking at Cain's door. His desire to murder Abel over Abel's success invited the devil into Cain's soul. As a result, Cain was demonically influenced to murder Abel. Jealousy caused Cain to murder Abel.

## **1.4 John the Baptist was not jealous of Jesus**

In our main text, we read of a situation that could have caused John the Baptist to be discontent with his ministry and become extremely jealous of the ministry of Jesus Christ. John's attitude, however, was completely the reverse. He was rather content with what God had given him and was not jealous over the success of Jesus ministry. We should learn from John the Baptist and be content with what God has given us and we should not be jealous over our neighbor's blessings. In fact, we should rejoice over our neighbor's blessings and not hate him. We should be content with our lot and rejoice over our neighbor's blessings for discontent coupled with jealousy invites demonic fellowship and turns you into a witch.

*How do we become content with our situation rather than jealous of our neighbor's successes?  
Let's examine the attitude of John the Baptist.*

## **2 John was not upset over Jesus' successful ministry**

John the Baptist was conducting a vibrant ministry east of the Jordan River near Bethany in Judea. His ministry would have been called a mega-church of his day. Then one day he saw Jesus in the crowd and began to preach Jesus as the savior of the world and he pointed his disciples at Jesus. After he baptized Jesus, Jesus began his ministry also in Judea, west of the Jordan River and John the Baptist moved northwest out of Judea to Aenon near Salim in Samaria. John's disciples who stayed with him came and reported to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan-- the one you testified about-- well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him." (John 3:26) In other words, Jesus ministry had absorbed most of the people who used to be in John's ministry and more. Jesus' ministry had become a super mega-church and John's ministry was dwindling into nothingness. The manner of the report was to incite John to discontent and jealousy. Sometimes friends and well-wishers will knowingly or unknowingly incite you to become discontent and jealous of another person. But the disciples were in for a shock. Rather than discontent and jealousy, John showed goodwill and contentment. He rejoiced over the success of Jesus.

*Why was John not angry and jealous of someone who was experiencing great success?*

John was not angry or jealous because he knew his purpose, he knew the setting for his gift and blessing, he knew the scope of his gift and ministry, and knew the time of his blessings. Let's examine each one of these.

## **3 You will be content if you know your purpose**

### **3.1 John knew his purpose was to prepare for the launch of Jesus' ministry**

When John's concerned disciples reported the overshadowing success of Jesus' ministry he was not angry or jealous because he knew his purpose. His purpose was to pave the way for Jesus. He understood it clearly and had worked tirelessly toward achieving that purpose. The disciples didn't understand even though he repeatedly told them, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" (John 1:23) John's purpose was to prepare for the launch of Jesus ministry.

If Jesus launches his ministry successfully then John would have accomplished his purpose otherwise he would have failed. If he accomplishes his purpose he would be happy. In fact, the disciples report to him was great news – he had accomplished his purpose. Therefore, where was discontent, where was jealousy, where was anger, where was competition, where was character assassination, and where was gossiping? They were not to be found in John because what he wanted to do was what he had done - promote Jesus and then disappear from the scene. What a great man John was? That is why Jesus said about John, “I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.” (Matthew 11:11)

### **3.2 You must identify your purpose in order to be content in life**

If you are going to be content in life and not always look at someone else and be jealous of him you have to know your purpose in life. Thomas Carlyle said, “The man without a purpose in life is like a ship without a rudder—a waif, a nothing, a no man.” That is, you become aimless and without direction if you don’t have a purpose. So because of that you look at what others have accomplished and then become spiteful of them. I find this law that works among Ghanaians: If you are successful they want to do whatever they can to bring you down. I don’t know whether by doing so they think they can then gain your success or whether they think you will then experience their misery. Whichever reason, it is a sick minded person who wants to shoot someone down because they are soaring high. As I have explained this is outright witchcraft.

### **3.3 Measure your success relative to your purpose and not someone’s success**

You have to pursue success within the context of your purpose. That is, your accomplishment is based on your purpose. Success is not absolute but relative to your purpose. If Ama’s purpose is to get a high school diploma as her highest education and she graduates from high school then she has accomplished her purpose. Relative to her purpose she has been successful. On the other hand if Akosua’s purpose is to get a college degree as her highest education but she only finished high school then she did not accomplish her purpose. Even though both Ama and Akosua finished high school Ama is more accomplished than Akosua. If, However, Akosua did get her college degree then Ama should not envy Akosua because Akosua has a college degree and she has a high school diploma. You see, Ama has accomplished her purpose and Akosua

has accomplished her purpose. Ama should not stress out over what Akosua has done or not done. If you focus on your purpose you will not be jealous of your neighbor's success.

## **4 You will be content if you know the setting for your gift and blessing**

### **4.1 John moved his ministry to an appropriate setting for his gift and blessing**

John was conducting his ministry in Judea and then moved out to Samaria when Jesus came on the scene. John knew that the location for exercising his ministry had to change. He was constructing a road for Jesus and had finished the road in Judea and so he moved to Samaria to continue the road. In fact, verse 23 of our text tells us that “there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.” His gift and blessing was no longer in Judea but in Samaria and God was blessing him with plenty of water and members for recognizing it and making the move.

### **4.2 You must be in the right setting for your gift and blessing**

Rev. Dr. Ami-Narh in his book, *Achieving your Purpose and Destiny*, says, “God places His creation in an environment that will unearth their potential, enhance their abilities, support their development and ensure the attainment of their God given purpose.” (Ami-Narh, p. 11) You cannot successfully exercise your gift and receive your blessings in an environment that is not setup for you. You have to know where you are supposed to be. Don't blindly copy someone and move to where they are because they are prosperous. It may be that the particular setting is where they are supposed to receive their blessing. Your God-given setting may be right where you are.

When I was leaving Ghana to come to university in the USA my best friend decided to stay in Ghana and attend university in Ghana even though he could have applied to schools in the USA. When we all got our undergraduate degrees he never tried to come to the USA for graduate school but did it in Ghana. When I started working in the USA he never tried to come to the USA to work even though he could have tried. Today, he has become more successful than some of my friends who came to the USA with me. Somehow he knew that the setting for

exercising his talents and receiving his rewards was in Ghana and not USA even though the USA is seen as a land of opportunity and prosperity.

## **5 You will be content if you know the scope of your gift and ministry**

### **5.1 John knew the scope of his gift and ministry**

In responding to his concerned disciples, John told them, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.” This means that you will be content if you know the scope of the gift and ministry you have been given by God. John knew that his gift was to call people to repentance and his ministry was to prepare their hearts for Christ. He was therefore not jealous of the miracles that Jesus was doing. John was content because miracles were not in the scope of his gift but he had a unique gift to make people look at Christ and he was content with that. In fact, he could not have received more than God had given him. If he tried to receive more the extra will not have come from God. What does not come from God comes from Satan!

### **5.2 You must know and accept the scope of your gift**

God gives everyone a gift. James says, “Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above.” (James 1:17) You cannot receive more than God has given you. If you try then it means you are going outside God’s allotment for you—you enter the enemy’s territory. This is why some Christians go to see Fetish Priests for them to become prosperous with their store or business. Once you open yourself to the enemy you are now fair game for him. He will prosper you temporarily and then destroy you permanently.

Do you know the scope of your gift? If you do you will not be jealous of your neighbor. Not everyone can be successful at running a store. Not everyone can be a good nurse, or a good truck driver, or a good cleaner, or a good handyman. Not everyone can be a good preacher, or a good speaker, or a good singer, or a good dancer, or a good tambourine player. If you don’t accept your gift then you will look at someone else’s gift and be jealous of them. But if you know the scope of your gift you will be content with what you have and even be happy that your neighbor is also able to exercise his gift!

## **6 You will be content if you know the timing of your blessings**

John was content with the current status of his ministry because he knew the timing of his blessings. In fact, he puts it this way in verse 30, “He [that is, Jesus] must become greater; I must become less.” What an attitude of humility and contentment. O, that we may learn to be content with God’s purpose, setting, gift, and timing for our lives. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 3:1, “There is a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven.” Some people come to the US and see my car and they want to get the same thing immediately. They don’t realize that it took me a quarter of a century to get to that point. Their jealousy may drive them to do something stupid and illegal to get what it took me 25 years to get. They may end up dealing drugs or defrauding people. Your time will come if it is in your destiny but you must wait for it. If you know your time is not now for success you will be content with what you have and you will not be jealous of your neighbor.

## **7 Conclusion**

In order not to be fully content with your accomplishments you have to know your purpose, the setting for your gift and blessing, the scope of your gift and ministry, and the time of your blessings. If you know all these you will even be able to rejoice for the blessings that your neighbor has received.

I pray that the Lord will help you identify your purpose in life.

I pray that the Lord will let you know clearly the setting in which you can accomplish that purpose.

I pray that the Lord will let you see the scope of your gift and ministry.

I pray that the Lord will let you know the time you will receive your blessings.

Remember that, “God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ.” (Ephesians 1:3) I pray that you may fully realize all these wonderful blessings.