

Friday, 22.01.2010

... Making jealous

Bible text: *'I will make you envious' (Romans 10:19)*

- Bible reading: Rom. 10: 18-19
- Gospel reading: Luke 24: 28-35
- Old Testament: Psalm 19



Thought for the day

Being jealous is not a very good attitude and usually centres on possessions. My neighbour has a new car, so I need a new car as well. My friend has the latest mobile phone, so I really should have a new one too. Sometimes people envy another person's character or positive attitude: If I could only be like him... *Making* others jealous is even worse. To show off your new gadget or to emphasize your own talents and look down on someone else is wrong.

Surprisingly, Paul talks in today's scripture about *God* making Israel jealous (Romans 10:19). Not all Israelites have accepted the good news of Jesus, and Paul makes clear that the problem is not with the gospel. If gentiles ('a nation of fools', GNB) could understand it, Israel could too.

How should we as Christians in Europe make non-believers jealous of the good news of Jesus Christ? Isn't that a mission impossible? A lot of European citizens have a very negative view of the church. They see it as the source of moral oppression and conservatism. How can we change the tide? I think the key is to think relationships. It is indeed almost impossible to change people's views on abstract concepts such as 'Christianity' or 'the church'. But small groups of Christians and individuals *can* make a huge difference in this regard.

We can show people with our *words* that Christians promote peace, truth and reconciliation. Often more visible is our lifestyle. Are we making others jealous of our deepest values by showing care, support and love to others in need? Actions speak as loud as words! It would be wonderful if we, as 21st Century Christians, could find a lifestyle that reflects that "in keeping God's law there is great reward" (Psalm 19:11).

Turning back to Romans 10:19 there is one important emphasis we need to realize. It is God himself speaking in the quotation from the Old Testament: *He* will make Israel jealous. We are his fellow workers and it is important that we reflect Christ in what we say and do, but in the end it is God who will convince people of His gospel and His grace. We have all the more reason to pray that God will open doors for the gospel in Europe and that we as His church can make others jealous so that they might recognize Jesus as the risen Saviour (Luke 24:31).

Prayer requests

- *Bosnia and Herzegovina*: Pray for justice for those who committed heinous crimes and for healing and comfort for those who were abused, tortured and enslaved.
- *Croatia*: Pray for the Christian outreaches to refugees of all communities and their lasting spiritual impact. Pray for effective church planting in every part of Croatia.
- *Bulgaria*: Pray for the body of Christ to play a significant part in the reconstruction of this country where 50% live in severe poverty, abortions exceed the number of live births and hope for the future is rare.
- *Serbia*: Pray that the Serbian Orthodox Church, which has growing influence, would support true religious freedom in its beliefs.
- *Kosovo*: Pray for Christian mission agencies to be able to establish long-term ministries in Kosovo. Pray that development projects in villages will result in transformed communities as people come to Christ.
- *Turkey*: Pray that the barriers and prejudices against Christianity will melt down. Pray for God's protection of all (new) Christians who are threatened, intimidated and sometimes rejected by their families.
- *Cyprus*: Cyprus is a major base for Christian organizations ministering to the surrounding Middle Eastern states. Pray for the organizations to thrive and have effective ministries.