

DATE: May 4, 2008

TEXT: Genesis 4: 1-11

TITLE: "Genesis VI: Cain and Abel"



We now move out of the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve have been cast out of the Garden and are now establishing a life. Let us take a minute and speculate on what they were doing. They were growing crops. They were raising animals. They were worshiping God. We know they were still communicating with God. Cain and Abel had a direct conversation with God. Very possible, immediately outside the gates of Eden Adam and Eve had established an altar for their family worship of God. The angels of God guarded the gates. They could not enter: but possibly, upon occasion, God stood in the gateway and received their worship.

Of course, as the text says, Adam and Eve began having children. First Cain, next Abel, later Seth and later many, many other sons and daughters. I can just imagine them taking Cain and Abel to the gates of Eden and worshiping God. I can see them explaining to the young boys why they could not enter the gates. And later, when Cain and Abel were adults, they too would go to the gates of Eden and worship God.

Our text this morning focuses on the proper worship of God. We will see a contrast of the offerings of Able versus the offering of Cain. I want to point to one more truth. Remember when you are reading Genesis 3, historical time periods are critically important. First, of course, is the time of the actual story. There was a time when Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel walked on this earth. Second, remember Moses was writing this book during the wanderings in the wilderness. The Tabernacle had been established. Possibly even the golden calf had been built and the people had been punished. Proper means of worship was a central lesson for these Israelites wandering in the wilderness. Moses was writing to teach his generation of followers. Third, remember the Word of God is still active in our lives today. We, too, need to know the acceptable and the unacceptable forms of worship. We learn these in the very beginning of scripture in the story of Cain and Abel. I will share 5 lessons.

Lesson # 1 The only acceptable worship of God involves the total giving of ourselves.

We see this in our text in *Genesis 4: 3-5* states

3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast

What was different? After all Cain was a farmer and he brought the fruits of the soil and Abel was a shepherd and brought the offerings from the slaughter. The difference is this: Abel brought the “firstborn” as an offering. The Hebrew indicates that Cain brought the “leftovers” from the fields. The “leftovers” offerings are unacceptable to God. King David teaches the same truth. *Psalm 51: 15-17 states...*

15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

The amazing truth is this: God knows we are sinful, fallen people. God does not expect us to be perfect. He knows the more we try to be good, the more we fail. Paul has shared this truth in *Romans 7*. Let me share this passage, but let me say I could be writing these words:

14We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing..... 24What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

1. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death....3For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.... 5Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

God understands that we are sinful. We try to do good. We try to be obedient, but we fail. But this last verse tells us what acceptable worship is. We “live in accordance with the Spirit” and we “have our minds set on what the Spirit desires.”

Cain lived for himself. His worship was an obligation. His offerings were tokenism gifts. He was trying to give the minimal acceptable gift. Remember we do not give our offerings in church to appease God. We do not give out of obligation. We give out of love. We love God and He desires us to give of ourselves as an expression of love.

We must look at our worship of God. I picture myself at the foot of Jesus by the Sea of Galilee and Jesus asks me the same question he asked Simon Peter, “Do you love me more than these?” And Jesus points to Peter’s friends and Jesus points to Peter’s family and Jesus points to Peter’s worldly possessions. “Do you love me more than these?” That is the question Jesus is asking you and me. This is the acceptable act of worship to the Lord. It does not matter how we worship. It does not matter if we like the music. It does not matter if the sermon was good or bad. Are you giving to Christ your heart, soul and mind?

Lesson # 2 Cain allows anger to rule his life, again rejecting the love of God. *Genesis 4:5-7*

but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. 6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 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."

God is gracious. Scripture says God desires all people to follow Him. God offers

opportunity after opportunity to choose Him as Lord. God is speaking to Cain, "Cain, My son, I

love you; try again; give to me your heart; give to me your love. Try again. Cain chose anger.

Cain chose to allow anger to be his master. *Ephesians 4:26 tells of the danger of anger*

26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

Anger is a foothold for the devil. Anger is often a person being out of control. Anger

almost always leads a person away from God. Cain acted in anger and this drove him away from

his Creator. He refused the offered love of God...again and again and again.

Lesson # 3 Cain decides to lower the standard of God and refused to accept responsibility.

Genesis 4: 8,9

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." [a] And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Here is what Cain thought to himself: “God did not accept my offering: It’s my brother’s fault; if he wasn’t such a “goodie two shoes” God would take my offering. Well, I’m not going to give any more; I guess I’ll eliminate the competition then God will have to accept my offering.” “Oh Abel, let’s go out for a walk.” Of course, that reasoning is faulty. Of course, that reasoning is stupid, but isn’t that the reasoning of people today?

“God can’t really expect me to go to church every Sunday... it’s my only day off.”
 “God doesn’t expect me to forgive that person... not after what he did to me.”
 “God understands that I really love this person... of course I should express my love.”
 “God can’t really expect a tithe...the cost of living is just so high.”
 “God can’t really expect me to believe the entire Bible...after all it was written 2000 years ago.”
 “God knows I just have a personality that leads to anger... He created me this way.”

I could go on and on and on. As a matter of fact if we are all honest with ourselves, the habit of compromise is a constant struggle. We try to create God in our own image. We try to make God’s commands fit our comfortable lifestyle. This was the sin of Cain.

And then when he was confronted by God, he refused to accept responsibility. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The answer is, Yes. Of course, we are responsible for each other. Of course, we are responsible for our brothers and sisters.

I remember once when Erin and Adam were in school. Erin was like in 6th grade and

Adam was in 3rd grade. There was a bully that was picking on Adam. Kim and I did not know this. A few weeks later Adam came to us and we asked if he was getting along with the kids in his class. He said, "So and so was picking on me a few weeks ago but that's not a problem any more... Erin talked to him." We looked to Erin and she calmly said, "I told him if he picked on my brother again I would beat the bejabbers out of him." And Erin can have a look that you know she means business!

We are responsible. We are responsible for our family. We are responsible for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are responsible for our fellow humanity. And we are certainly responsible for the sin that we commit.

Lesson # 4 God brings judgment on those who choose a path of sin. *Genesis 4:11-12*

Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

Notice that this text is a parallel of the fall of Adam and Eve. Sin progresses. Adam and Eve desired to be like God. Cain commits murder of his brother. The curse of Cain is very simple: the lack of peace and joy. A wanderer of earth. Always looking for satisfaction down a

new path. Never really finding satisfaction, never really finding joy, never really finding contentment. That is the curse of Cain. That is the curse of humanity today. It is also the blessing of Jesus. He removes the curse of Cain upon His children. He brings us home. He gives us peace. He stops our wandering. *John 16 gives this promise...*

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

This is the blessing of our Lord. He has lifted the burden. His yoke is light. He gives us peace.

Finally Lesson # 5 God does not give up on His creation.. He creates Seth *Gen. 4:25,26*

Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." 26 Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.

God could have just given up. I would have. But God created Seth. Seth means "granted" in Hebrew. God granted favor to Adam and Eve. We also now have a picture of two civilizations. Those who choose to have God as their Lord after the line of Seth and those who choose self and evil as their lord. Moses is telling his people to choose God. Be in the line of Seth. Reject evil. We, too, must take that command to choose God... reject evil... discover the

peace of God.

AMEN