



Am I my brother's keeper? Genesis 4

Sermon Melville Junction

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- We are in the 2nd chapter of the story of God and us, Paradise lost.
- Paul W covered Genesis 3 (The 1st Exile) for us last week. He showed us through the use of matching Hebrew words how to make sense of this text. (I will give a brief recap today but go and listen to it on our website or read the notes)
- I was at a **wedding the other day**, it was so special, it felt like the world was right for a brief moment, people seemed to be living in complete harmony with God and each other.
- It was early on a Saturday morning, I needed a cup of coffee, the only place serving coffee at that time of morning was the coffee station in the Casino – so in I went
- I was shocked, people **glued to slot machines**, absolute despair on their faces, it was as if those machines were literally sucking the life out of people.
- **What a contrast of worlds so close to each other.**
- The sad truth is that this **world in the casino is the reality** we live in – people enslaved by worry, greed, and the need for personal gain.
- The world at the **wedding was only a glimpse of the world** as it should be.
- We are **looking at Genesis 4, the story of Cain and Abel today.**
- It is very interesting **what I remember about this story**, it's not very much.
- Cain and Abel bring an offering to God, Abel's offering is acceptable, and Cain's is not.
- **Cain becomes angry or jealous and kills his brother.**
- I want us to take a **closer look at this story**, because it sets up an understanding as to **why the world is the way it is.**
- read **Genesis 4**
 - a quick recap of last week's sermon:-
 - In the beginning **God created all things good**, man was in harmony with God, with man and with creation (Wisdom of God). Naked (arom)
 - In the garden God puts a boundary in place... don't eat from the tree of knowledge of good & evil (Wisdom from God).
 - God knows that if we do ...things will not go well for us, the boundary is put in place to protect us.
 - Man oversteps that boundary (**they don't listen to Gods wisdom** but instead follow the **wisdom of the serpent**). Serpent was crafty/wise (arum)
 - The consequence of eating from the tree is banishment from the garden (naked – erom)

- The **ground is cursed (arur) and the serpent is cursed** - by the sweat of our brow we will eat of the land, it is no longer abundant.
- so that's Paul's 45min (not 25min!) in a nutshell
- and the story continues
- Cain & Abel bringing an offering to God is the **result of that toil (curse)**.
- **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."**
- Cain does not master it, he kills his brother and when God asks him where his brother is he replies... **"am I my brother's keeper?"**

The 1st thing I want to talk about is right choices

- **The answer is yes...** in Gods way (wisdom) we are our brother's keeper, God has always been calling his people to love those around us (our neighbour).
- **Cain kills his brother and is cursed (arur) and is exiled...**
- Cities are built, people become musicians, nomadic farmers, and learn to forge instruments.
- Man becomes very industrial and starts building an empire, moves away from following God.
- **By the end of Genesis 4**, the descendents of Cain have completely walked away from God to the point that Lamech says to his 2 wives...**I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times.**
- The deterioration is huge, **God was going to avenge Cain but Lamech is so far removed from God** here that he feels that he can take his vengeance into his own hands, and deserves 10 times more than God's vengeance.
- That is the thing about walking a path away from God, **our humanity deteriorates until we hardly resemble the likeness of God** that we were created in.
- In the book of **Matthew 18**, Peter asks Jesus, "How many times should I forgive my brother if he sins against me... up to 7 times? **Jesus says no forgive him 77 times.**
- **The contrast here is obvious** the path of God is to live in peace and harmony (shalom) with your brother, but the path of man without God is everybody for themselves (industrious but me focused).
- The reason I am going on about this is I think in some way we have misunderstood the message of Jesus to be **a message about my personal salvation.**
- Once we have said a **magic prayer**, we are saved... but that is not what this message is all about. **Following Jesus is the way.**

- How often do we “Christians” worship Jesus on Sunday morning but then hold a grudge or mistreat people around us every other day – **we somehow feel that it is ok, there is grace and I am saved anyway.**
- **There is always a choice, every moment of every day to follow Jesus** (the wisdom of God) **or to follow our own wisdom on a path away from God.**
- **The story of Cain tells me** that God wants us to make the **right choice** because He knows that the wrong choice is a **slippery slope** away from him and eternal life.
- If we actually listen to the words of Jesus and **obey all that he has commanded**, the world will start to look more and more like it was **intended to be when God created it.**
- Those moments like the one at the wedding, where things seem to be as they should **will become more frequent** as we start to actually make conscious decisions to follow the way of Jesus, the way of giving up our stuff for the benefit of others.

The second thing I want us to look at is offering.

- Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 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 favour on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour.
- It is interesting to note that it is **not a sacrifice, or a penalty but simply an offering.**
- Abel and Cain are still in a **personal relationship with God.**
- This concept of **offering** was **not something** that happened inside the **Garden of Eden.**
- Because an **offering is something that costs** us, it is a giving up of something precious to us to **help put those things into perspective.**
- To put **God in the correct place** of worship, and to put the things that **we potentially worship (idols) in their rightful place.**
- In the **garden**, it was **abundance**, so **no sacrifice** was needed. It would cost you nothing to give a portion of everything back to God.
- The 1st commandment – **You shall have no other gods before me.**
- The **offering is to help us align our hearts**, to have no other gods before our God.
- There have been **all sorts of theories around why Abel’s offering** was acceptable and Cain’s was not but the text only gives us one clue.
 - Cain brought **some** of the fruits of the soil.
 - Abel brought **fat portions** from some of the **firstborn** of his flock
- **Abel gave of his best to God (fat portion)**, his heart was in the right place...
(God 1st – his stuff 2nd)
- **Cain’s heart was not** in the right place, he gave God some of his stuff.
- It **may seem like a minor** thing but it is not, this **text the goes on to show the extremes** to which the **human heart can stray** when we do not have this order correct.

- The whole story of the line of Cain shows this, **building, increasing, consuming culture.**
- **My cousin** asked me the other day how I get paid? (He is a farmer, he works hard and has slowly been aligning himself with God but some things about church just push his buttons). **He says** “Let me guess – you tell people to give you 20% of what they earn or else”.
- I can’t explain to him why people give money to the church because he doesn’t know God yet and thus doesn’t understand God’s heart on this.
- **We don’t give our money to church because God needs it, or because I as the fulltime elder need it. We give money and our material stuff away because we need it.**
- The story of **Cain and Abel helps us understand it better**, when **by the sweat** of our brow we had to start working the ground, the things we work for can become more important or valuable to us than God.
- **So can I ask us as church today, think about it?** Do you give an offering to God like Cain, or do you give the fat portion, the first fruits, the best part to God.
- **If you sit in the Cain group** can I suggest that your **stuff has become a god before your God.**
- Can I encourage you to start putting God (Jesus) first? **If you need to give stuff away to do that then do it?**
- **We (Christians) are not immune to this decision**, sin still crouches at our door and it desires to have us, **we must master it.**
- We are covering **Paradise lost - the 2nd exile.** Not all happy and feel good, but I find it **enlightening - why the world is the way it is.**
- It is **not all doom and gloom** though – it never is in the story of God and us; there is always a ray of hope.

The 3rd and last thing I want to pull out is that there is always hope.

- At the end of Gen 4 we see that Adam and Eve had another son, Seth to replace Abel.
- Seth has Enosh and from that time **“men began to call on the name of the Lord.”**
- **The line of Cain** and the **line of Seth** (who is the Abel replacement) are set up as a contrast here.
- **One line (Cain’s) follows the normal human pattern without God.**
- **In this line, the world looks more or less the same** as the world we find ourselves in today. **(the casino)**
- A world that promotes **me getting mine**, the rich getting richer.
- In this world, **the church has found ways** - through adaptation of the message to support us living in Cain’s legacy.



- But in the **line of Seth** (Abel), men **started calling on the name of God**.
- **It all started with an offering, but more than a physical offering – the heart behind an offering.**
- **I look around at the world and I wonder**, if (as I would like to assume) so many people are following in the **footsteps of Seth’s line – The way of Jesus – the church... Why does the world still look predominantly like we are following in the footsteps of Cain’s line?**
 - **This is the point I want to make – the take home message.**
 - The **message of Cain and Abel through our understanding of Jesus.**
 - **The church (us) – followers of Jesus cannot say we believe in Jesus but then live a life as though we don’t.**
 - **We cannot go through life** - with two choices before us **and continue to take the option that is away from God**, shrugging our shoulders and using grace to justify those choices to ourselves.
 - We need to make a concerted effort to **align our choices with what is right in God’s eyes (His wisdom).**
 - The **way of Jesus is already inside** of us (The Holy Spirit) - **we know the way**, nobody needs to tell us the right choice to make.
 - We know it - **if we start to make the correct choices** - the world will start to look more and more like it was intended to be.
 - We will bring the kingdom of God here to earth.
 - The **people around us** will start to **see what the kingdom of God** looks like here and now and they **will be drawn to God**.
 - It is a huge responsibility, but it is easily managed **one choice at a time...**people will begin to call on the name of the Lord.
 - Pray