

The Heart That's Sincere

Genesis 4:1-13

12/16/07

Intro

Adam and Eve have sinned and have been sent from the garden with no way to return. They must build a life very different from the one they had when they walked with God every day in the cool of the evening.

In Genesis 4 we read that Adam and Eve had two sons Cain and Abel. They had many more sons and daughters of course; after all, Adam lived 930 years, so you could imagine how many children they might have had!

But our story is about their first sons – Cain and Abel. The focus of the story is when they are grown men. Each of them has his own relationship to God and in seeing their heart; we also learn many lessons for our lives right now.

I. Wants His Life Right with God

- Eve conceives and bears her first son and names him Cain, which means “possession” or “virtue.”
- This is the first birth experience and she has great joy and pride in him as her firstborn.
- Could he be the fulfillment of the promise that one of her seed would crush the head of Satan?
- But what we see is that he becomes a man who won't live as God wants him to live. He becomes self reliant and insists on doing things his way.

A. Self reliance separates us from God

- Here is a great lesson we learn from Cain as we see his life before the Lord.
- He is a tiller of the ground, thus is strong and ruddy, working the ground by his sweat.

Genesis 3:19, By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground,

- Instead of seeing this condition as a reason for humility (because of sin I must sweat), he apparently sees it as a point of pride (look what I've done by the sweat of my own brow).
- Cain is then seen bringing an offering to God, which at first might sound good, but we see that God does not regard his offering.
- Why did God want them to bring an animal sacrifice? It pointed them to the work of Christ on the cross.

Hebrews 9:22, And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

- If Cain raised crops for everyone, then Abel would have tended flocks for everyone and Cain could have brought a lamb, but he didn't.

App – the problem of self reliance is that when things go well, we become filled with pride, and when go bad we become filled with anger or become depressed.

B. God sees the heart first

- The name Abel means vapor or breath. There could be several reasons Eve chose this name, but most likely it wasn't because he was the stronger of the two brothers.

Illus – David was also smaller than his brothers and asked to watch the flocks while the others did important work.

I Samuel 16:12, But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature... for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

- In verse 4, Abel brings the “firstlings and of their fat portions,” but what follows is absolutely key...
- The Lord had regard *for Abel*...and for his offering.
- God saw Abel’s heart and that is what made the offering valuable to God.

Hebrews 11:4, By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Illus – Jesus taught there was a great difference in being seen by men and being seen by God...

Luke 20:45-21:4 the Scribes and the widow.

Illus – God sees the sincerity of the heart in every way. One may sing like a marvel and a wonder, but sings so that others will take notice. Someone else may not be able to sing well at all, but truly worships from a genuine love – to God, that is beautiful.

C. Obligation or opportunity?

- Why did God require them to bring an offering at all? Did God need the sacrifice? Of course not!

- “God owns the cattle on a thousand hills,” the scripture says, and the streets in heaven are paved with gold.
- God is creating an opportunity to be changed. That is what He wants to see in each one of us.

Illus – In the early years of our nation the churches would commonly assign someone a long stick and ask him to sit where he could see everyone and if anyone fell asleep, he would walk down the aisle and poke him to wake him up.

But the tired farmers wanted to be poked because they didn’t want to miss any part of the sermon. They saw church as an opportunity to be changed.

- The difference is religion versus relationship.
- The word ‘religion’ actually comes from the Latin re- *again* and ligare- *bound or obligated*. So it means to be bound again.

Illus – Anything we do as a routine can be done religiously. Some people exercise religiously, some people can have a morning cup of coffee religiously, or some brush their teeth religiously.

- In contrast the word relationship means *to be connected*. When we have a relationship to someone we are connected to them. We communicate, we enjoy being together.
- The problem of religion is that it reduces the role of God. I’ll do my routine, I’ll give my obligatory appearance in church and the rest of the time I’ll do whatever I want. So God’s role is reduced to

that of Savior only. The rest of life is then Godless and we fill up life with ourselves.

App – The more we pursue our own pleasure, the more unhappy we become. The more we walk with God, the more our soul is filled up. God is giving us an opportunity not an obligation.

Romans 12:1-2, Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Illus – In Malachi 1, God challenges Israel to consider their heart. They were bringing sacrifices to God that were blind and sickly and would probably die anyway.

What would it say if a man brought wilted flowers to his wife? It's a question of having a heart that is in relationship to God and is growing in deeper faith.

II. Lifts Up His Countenance

- When God did not regard Cain or his offering, Cain became angry and his countenance fell.
- So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry?”

A. Walk where God wants you to walk

- First, it's important to see why Cain became angry. He was pleased with himself, but angry with God for not agreeing with him.
- He was angry with Abel for being righteous.

I John 3:12, not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

- But verse 7 is one of the most important to understand. God gives Cain great insight into life!!
- If you do well – if you walk where God wants you to walk – will not your countenance be lifted up?

Psalm 42:11, Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.

- When you're walking with God and your soul is right within, your countenance is indeed lifted up, your soul is not disturbed even in the midst of a storm.

B. But sin is crouching at the door

- There are several things to see in these verses. First, God asks him to look at himself. “Why are you angry?” If we could truly look at ourselves in all honesty it would be the beginning of true change.
- Secondly, God gives him an opportunity to make it right. God isn't holding it against him, he simply wants him to go and do something about it.
- But He then gives a warning that is for us as well

- “If you do not do well,” God said, “sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is for you.”
- This is so true! If we let resentment build up, if we let jealousy go unchecked, if we let anger run its course, then we will find that sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is to have us for lunch!
- You will say something that you didn't intend to say, or do something that you didn't intend to do. You will go farther than you ever thought you would go, and will catch yourself doing things that you never would have otherwise done.

Ephesians 4:26-27, do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.

Illus – A pastor moved into a small town to pastor a church and soon noticed a woman in town that was bitter and cantankerous. “What happened to her?” he asked someone. She was engaged to be married, but her fiancé broke up with her for her best friend. She has never been able to let go.

App -- At first we choose to not forgive, but eventually it chooses us. We become unforgiving.

C. Be your brother's keeper

- We know the rest of the story; that Cain plotted to kill his brother and then did kill him.
- Then the Lord came and asked, “Where is Abel your brother?”

- Then he gave an insolent disrespectful answer, “Am I my brother's keeper?”
- Cain's heart was wrong on every level, in truth; we are our brother's keeper and should be concerned with how our brother is doing.

Romans 12:10, Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

Illus – There is actually a very answer that should be on our heart... “He ain't heavy, he's my brother.”

That line actually comes from Row Fulkerson who wrote that in 1924 he met a “spindly and physically weak lad” carrying a baby and staggering towards a neighborhood park. “Pretty big load for such a small kid,” he said to the boy. “Why mister, he ain't heavy, he's my brother.”

- Is this not because we had someone help us when we could not help ourselves? Is not Christ the One who's blood speaks a better word?

Hebrews 12:24, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

- The blood of Abel cried out for vengeance, but the blood of Christ cries out that we should forgive as we have been forgiven.