



Potomac Hills

Presbyterian Church, PCA

By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

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Genesis 4:1-16

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English Standard Version

“Cain and His Sacrifice”

This is the 1st sermon in a topical series entitled,
Misused Stories of the Bible

Genesis 4:1-16

“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, ‘I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.’² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.³ In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground,⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering,⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.⁶ The Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?’⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ He said, ‘I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?’¹⁰ And the Lord said, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground.¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.’¹³ Cain said to the Lord, ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear.¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.’¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, ‘Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him

sevenfold.” And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. ¹⁶ Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.”

*Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. Thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. We do not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from Your mouth and we especially need this Word for it deals with faith and repentance. Lord, as we come to your Word, we pray that You would give us greater understanding of this dark and difficult passage. Help us to see Your grace in this. Help us to see our own need of Your grace this morning. Get rid of our smug and self-sufficient attitudes. Soften our hearts. Make us repentant. Bring us to Yourself, for we are sinners who want to walk in the way of Cain. And so we pray, **have mercy on us** this morning, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, **help us see Jesus**, for in His name we pray, amen and amen.*

INTRODUCTION: We Underestimate the Power of The Predator

Over the years, I’ve watched the *Terminator* movies, usually with one of my sons. Now, admittedly, they’re pretty violent, but they’re well-made science fiction movies, especially the first one. And the first one is tremendously effective in creating a predicament because the characters **underestimate the power of the predator**, who is a killer robot from the future, referred to as ... the Terminator. Of course, the Terminator is trying to kill the hero, a woman named Sarah.

And throughout the movie, everybody continually **underestimates the power of the predator**, because they think he’s a human being when actually he’s a killer robot from the future. As a result, there are a couple of places in the early part of the movie where the predicament is so great because the police tell Sarah, “Stay in a public place. Nobody is going to kill you in a public place in front of everybody.” **They underestimate the power of the predator.** Then there’s a place in the movie where they say, “Lie down here on this sofa on the third floor of the police department. There’s no safer place. There are 30 police officers here. Nobody is going to come and get you in here.” **They underestimate the power of the predator.** It’s not just that he’s out to kill her, but that they don’t know the power of the one who’s out to kill her.

So what does that have to do with **Genesis 4**? Well, a lot, I hope, you see, in this text, God – very personally and very kindly – says to a particular individual, “You don’t know the power of the sin that’s in your heart.” It’s not just that our problem is sin. And yes, The Bible says the main reason the world is in the condition it’s in is due to sin, but it’s aggravated because we don’t even see the power of sin. God compares sin to a **predator**. And **we underestimate the power of the predator**. Therefore, there’s little more important than to understand the nature of sin. God describes it in one, very vivid verse, **verse 7** ... “*If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, **sin is crouching at the door**. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.*”

“... **sin is crouching at the door** ...” This is a Hebrew word that’s used of wild beasts, and in particular, leopards and lions and tigers. Big Cats. And big cats are **predators**. If you’ve ever watched a big cat hunt, what do they do? If she sees her prey, all of a sudden, she freezes. What happens? She lies low, she gets down. She’s hiding herself. She gets out of view. She pushes herself down. She’s trying to look smaller than she really is. She’s sort of hidden. She **crouches**. Sin is depicted here as a tiger, as a lion, as a **predator**, and it’s hiding.

What God comes to Cain to tell him, what God is telling **all** of us, is sin, by its very nature, looks smaller. Your sin always looks smaller than it is. Sin crouches down. It hides itself. You rationalize it. It's hiding, but in the midst of your very ordinary life and your very ordinary feelings ... **there's a predator**.

There are three things that God tells us about sin, and we can start with this. What's wrong with the human race? Sin. What's really wrong with the human race? Not just sin, but that we don't see our sin. Then when we do see our sin, we don't **recognize** it as a *predator*. And then *we underestimate the power of the predator*. That's what it's saying.

So, let's take a look at the story of Cain and Abel just to see how that works. The centerpiece of **Genesis 4** is homicide. But this is more than a record of the first murder case. It's about, as **Jude 11** says, "*Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain ...*" meaning the slide of a heart **away from God** into notorious sin. The story reveals something of the essential nature of all mankind. It's a story of depravity **and** grace. However, the story starts with a burst of optimism, and so we see ...

v. 1-2a: SONS OF HOPE ¹

"Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.'" ² And again, she bore his brother Abel."

Eve's pregnancy must have been a source of wonder to the couple. They were probably trying to figure out what's going on, because there'd never been a pregnancy before. There's no one to get advice from. There's no one who'd been through it before. And so I think, like millions of her daughters to follow, Eve likely placed Adam's hand on her tummy so he could feel the movement of a new life. Perhaps he even listened in awe to the heartbeat within.

Eve's was the first pain ever in childbearing. But those pangs gave way to a joy so deep that it overcomes her pain. The Hebrew for "man" (*ish*) is not used anywhere else in Scripture to describe a baby boy. The baby's gender was that of Adam. This was another *ish!* Eve said in effect, "God made man, and now with the help of the Lord, I have made a second man!" She rightly saw Cain as a work of God. Her words were an implicit declaration of faith. And the new mother praised God with a newly encouraged faith.

Eve conceived again, beginning of **verse 2**, "*And again, she bore his brother Abel.*" His name signified **a lack** of permanence or meaning and unwittingly alluded to his life being cut short (Ecclesiastes employs the same word for "**vanity**"). Nevertheless, Abel's birth doubled her joy. Eve had become the mother of two sons. Three men filled the earthly horizons of the mother of all the living. Hope was high in the first family.

Now something happened that **all mothers of sons are familiar with**. Her boys didn't always get along. Hard to believe, I know. How many moms do we have here this morning that

1 The Introduction and Exposition of the text are adapted from my sermon, "The Way of Cain" 4/3/11, preached here at Potomac Hills. And the books, The Most Misused Stories in the Bible by Dr. Eric Bargerhuff, pages 30-39; Preaching the Word - Genesis: Beginning and Blessing by Dr. R. Kent Hughes, pages 101-108; Focus on the Bible Commentary – Genesis: The Beginning of God's Plan of Salvation by Dr. Richard Belcher, Professor of Old Testament, Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, pages 75-8; and Preaching Christ from Genesis by Dr. Sidney Greidanus, pages 86-100. And the sermons, "*Cain and Abel*" 7/12/98 and "*Sin as Predator*" 1/21/96, both by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive, Logos Bible Software 8.15 and "*Cain-R-Us*" by Rev. Matt Woodley, Pastor, Church of the Resurrection, Wheaton, IL, July 2007, www.preachingtoday.com.

have at least two sons? A fair number. Now, of those moms with their hands raised, how many of you have sons who have **never** argued and **never** fought. ... Yeah, no hands, that's not uncommon, either.

Now, as most parents know, this competitiveness is pretty natural for males. And, again as most parents know, it can often be revealing **of what's going on** ... on the inside ... either good or bad. In **Matthew 12:34b-35**, Jesus said, "*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*³⁵ *The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.*" The point is that our words and actions reveal our ...

v. 2b-8: HEART ATTITUDE

And that's exactly what we see here in **Genesis 4**, picking up with the second half of **verse 2**, "*Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.*³ *In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground,*⁴ *and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering,*⁵ *but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.*⁶ *The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?"*⁷ *If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.*"

We know nothing of the boys' growing-up years other than that Cain followed in his father's footsteps as firstborn, becoming a farmer, while his little brother became a shepherd. So both had honorable professions. We don't know if the brothers were in the habit of making offerings or if the text describes their initial offerings. Very likely this was not the first occasion because the opening words of **verse 3**, "*In the course of time,*" which nearly always denotes a **precise** period of time, likely referring here to the end of an agricultural year when sacrifices would be presented. In any event, their offerings caused a crisis, **verse 4**, "*And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.*"

Why, we wonder, was Abel's offering accepted while Cain's was not? And why did Cain become so angry? It's often supposed that the answer is simply that animal offerings were more acceptable to God than grain offerings, that blood sacrifices are superior to grain offerings. But I don't think that's the answer, **in this case**, because the Old Testament Scriptures honor both types of offerings. Moreover, the context says nothing about the priority of blood sacrifice. I think the answer lies in the text because where Cain only brought "*an offering of the fruit of the ground,*" Abel brought **the best** of the flock, "*the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions.*" The best explanation of why Cain's offering is rejected, and Abel's offering is accepted is the **heart attitude** of the one bringing the offering. Evidently, Cain was **indifferent** about his offering, but Abel was very **intentional** about his. The Hebrew commentators note that "*fat*" and "*firstborn*" mean that Abel gave God the pick of the flock. The difference was that of **heart attitude**. Cain came to God on **Cain's** terms, but Abel came to God on **God's** terms. Cain's spirit was arrogant, as the story will subsequently reveal.

The writer of Hebrews provides further insight into the brothers' hearts, indicating that Abel's offering was one **of faith**, **Hebrews 11:4**, "*By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.*"

Apparently, **Cain's** offering was **not** an offering of **faith**. He presumed to define what

his sacrifice would be. God would have to take him and his offering as it was. The attitude of Cain's heart becomes clear in his response to God's rejection. Cain is enraged. He seems to think God is somehow unreasonable and unfair. He got angry, which demonstrates the effects of sin in his life. Cain was surprisingly **unjust**, **unmerciful**, and **unhumble**! The giveaway to Cain's sinful attitude was his countenance, **verse 5**, "*So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.*"

However, Cain has the opportunity in this situation to respond in such a way that he can be accepted by God. Cain could have taken the divine disapproval of his offering as the gracious communication that it was and humbly asked for God's forgiveness, promising not to sin like that anymore. But he didn't. Seeming resentment toward God welled up in Cain, which strangely ... or perhaps predictably ... was directed at his brother Abel. And Cain's **hatred** was intense. No one could miss it. And yet, God gently responded to this seething man with gracious questions, **verse 6**, "*The Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?'*" Literally God said, "If you do right, there is uplift." That is, "If you do well, will not **your countenance** be lifted up?"

In a last-ditch attempt to deter Cain, God painted a frightening, however hopeful, picture for him, end of **verse 7**, "*And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.*" God personified sin as a beast, as a lion, as a **predator**, crouching at the door about to pounce. If Cain didn't master it, he would be its victim. Similarly, the Apostle Peter wrote about Satan being like a lion ready to pounce, **1 Peter 5:8**, "*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*" It's clear that sin is seeking to dominate Cain, and that if he doesn't bring it under control, it'll rule him.

The sin at the door was Cain's sin, and if left unchecked, it would grow inside him and eventually do him in. This is what James says in **James 1:14-15**, "*But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*" The consequences of Cain's action would be more far-reaching than the initial sin itself.

Cain stood at the edge of Hell. But sadly, God's graphic words about sin as a crouching **predator** bounced off his hardening heart. This brings us to one of the darkest and saddest verses in the Bible where we see Cain consumed by homicide and **hatred**. The stark simplicity of the homicide draws attention to the horror of the deed, **verse 8**, "*Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.*" Haste and violence pulsate in this short description. "**Brother**" is used twice in the text. This is not only a homicide but also a fratricide. This was Cain's little brother who, no doubt, **was very much like him** ... since both were direct offspring of the mother and father of the human race. Abel's flesh felt the same. Abel's eyes were mirrors of his own. Abel's breath bore the same aroma. There were no guns or bombs to depersonalize Cain's murder of his brother. Did he crush his skull and watch him die like a bug in the dust? Did he cut his throat with Abel's sacrificial knife and bleed him like a sacrifice? Did he choke Abel with his own hands until there was no more breath?

His younger brother was a good man, a "**righteous**" man according to **Hebrews 11**. Jesus would even call him a prophet in **Luke 11**. But Cain **killed him**. Why? Because he **hated** Abel? Yes ... but also no. The German Martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer asks rhetorically, "Why does Cain murder? Out of **hatred** for God," he answers. Murder is an act of **hatred** toward God

for making or accepting another ... who **offends us** or **troubles us** or is **avored with honors** we don't have or **stands in our way**. According to Jesus we are likewise exposed by our own **hatreds** because they are **spiritual homicides** ultimately directed at God — however private they may seem. But it's clear in our text that the sin that was crouching at the door captured Cain. He wasn't able to rule over it. His sinful **heart attitude** led him to homicide and **hatred** and left him with a ...

v. 9-12: HARDENED HEART ²

God's on the spot, just as he had been with Adam and Eve after the Fall. When God challenged Adam, Adam told the truth, if not the whole truth. But Cain told an outright lie, **verse 9**, "*Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"*" Cain's flip reference to his dead brother revealed a **hardened heart**. Deceit became the murderer's refuge. Then the voice of God thundered over Cain, **verse 10**, "*And the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground."*" Abel's cry would not be silenced.

Now Cain learned something he hadn't previously considered ... Abel's body, though covered with dirt, couldn't be hidden, for his blood **cried out to God**. One Old Testament commentator writes, "According to the Old Testament view, blood and life belong to God alone; wherever a man commits murder he attacks God's right of possession. To destroy life goes far beyond man's proper sphere. Spilled blood cannot be shoveled underground; it cries aloud to heaven and complains directly to the Lord of life."

It's so easy for us to point the finger at Cain and to think it would never apply to us, "We would never do anything like that." How many of you remember *The Addams Family*? It was a long-running TV show and they made several movies. And in the second *Addams Family* movie, the daughter, little Wednesday Addams, who's the closest thing to normal in **that family**, goes to a Halloween party. Everybody is dressed in these incredible costumes. She walks in just wearing her regular everyday clothes. Somebody says, "Wednesday, why didn't you wear a costume?" She says, "I **am** in costume." "Well what have **you** come as?" She says, "I've come as a homicidal maniac ... they look just like everybody else." And that's true.

The columnist, David Brooks, wrote a famous article about this after the murder of 16 civilians in Afghanistan by an American soldier in March of 2012. He writes that terrible crimes such as this should not surprise us, "Even people who contain reservoirs of compassion and neighborliness also possess a latent potential to commit murder. Professor David Buss of the University of Texas asked his students if they had ever thought seriously about killing someone, and if so, to write out their "imagined homicide" in an essay. He was astonished to find that **91%** of the men and **84%** of the women had imagined detailed, vivid homicides. He was even more astonished to learn how many steps some of his students had taken toward carrying them out. One woman invited an abusive ex-boyfriend to dinner with thoughts of stabbing him in the chest. A young man in a fit of road rage pulled a baseball bat out of his trunk and would have pummeled his opponent if he hadn't run away. Another young man planned the progression of his murder — crushing a former friend's fingers, puncturing his lungs, then killing him." Just average American college students. Cain lives in each of us.

² David Brooks quote comes from his article, "When the Good Do Bad" by David Brooks, *New York Times*, 3/19/12, www.preachingtoday.com.

So the curse fell, **verse 11**, “*And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.* ¹² *When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.*” But he wouldn’t merely become a wandering Bedouin — the curse went beyond that. **All** his relationships with his family were broken. **All of them!** He became a lifelong pariah. The earth **itself** would be his enemy. Cain, who had once worked the soil, had watered it with his brother’s blood. That blood had cried out against him from the soil, so that he was banned from it forever — to wander over it as an enemy of the earth.

Perhaps that sounds depressing, but I want to jar us out of the common view that **Genesis 4** contains a simple, moralistic tale about good guys and bad guys — Abel is the good guy and Cain is the bad guy. We hear the story and insist we’re **not** like Cain, making us the good guys. And because we’re the good guys, we can go home a little more smug and a little more secure. But now I find this story’s much messier and more disturbing — and yet more hopeful — than I ever thought. As we walk through this story, we’ll repeatedly find two realities that exist side-by-side — on one side there’s human sin; on the other side there’s God’s grace. Almost every story in the Bible — and, really, our own story — boils down to those two things ... sin and grace. But there’s hope for us today — it’s precisely out of the mess of human sin that God brings us grace. So, last, we see ...

v. 13-16: HEARTS THAT NEED GRACE

Cain’s response provides the first lament recorded in Scripture, starting at **verse 13**, “*Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.* ¹⁴ *Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.*” Notice that this is not **repentance**. The mark of a repentant person is you’re more concerned with the sin than the punishment, but the mark of a person who really isn’t repentant, like Cain, is basically saying, “I’m really worried about the punishment.” And so Cain falls apart! But **not because** he felt any compassion for Abel, and **not because** of the emotional trauma he caused his parents, and **not because** he had sinned against God. His cry was one of terror and self-pity. He, the killer, feared he would be killed. He knew that with the expansion of civilization, someone during his long life would seek to avenge the blood of Abel. He felt fear and self-pity, **but no remorse**.

And yet, God heard him and responded, **verse 15**, “*Then the Lord said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.*” This is amazing. God cares for **the unrepentant**. God cares for the people who won’t listen to Him. He cannot bring Cain into His presence. But He protects Cain when He sends him out. God promised Cain that any vigilante would be severely judged, and then He marked Cain with a distinctive sign. In one sense the mark didn’t lighten his punishment, because only a premature death would have shortened his sentence. Nevertheless, the fear of a violent death was removed. By all estimates God’s mark, whatever it was, was an amazing grace. Cain was **cursed** by God, yet **guarded** by God. Cain’s life still belonged to God. He still bore God’s image, however marred that image was. This was the mercy that God could do, and does, for the unrepentant.

There is astounding grace right here in one of the darkest scenes in Genesis. God didn’t abandon the guilty Cain. When Cain arrogantly brought his offering to God, and God saw his anger, God didn’t turn away from him. **That’s grace**. God, in fact, engaged Cain in a fatherly

manner with probing questions. **That's grace.** God didn't leave him exposed to Satan without a way out. **That's grace.** God exhorted Cain to withstand temptation. **Again, grace.** After the murder of Abel, God listened to Cain's unrepentant, self-pitying plea. **More Grace.** Finally, God placed a sign upon Cain that protected him for the rest of his life. **Permanent grace.** Nonetheless, Cain had to leave. He had to leave his land, and he had to leave the presence of the Lord. Finally we read, **verse 16**, "*Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*" Cain said back in **verse 14**, "*I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer*" and now in **verse 16** we see he "*settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*" This is a play of words. The land of Nod means the land of wandering. This is the impact of sin in our lives — we're cut off from God, cut off from community with other human beings, and cut off from our true selves. We become wanderers. Without the grace of God, we find ourselves settling in the land of Nod ...

CONCLUSION: *East of Eden* ³

In light of this passage, there's a fascinating novel by Nobel Prize winning author John Steinbeck called **East of Eden**. A masterpiece of Steinbeck's later years, it's not only famous, but hugely important in American literature. Do you know what it's about? It's about a man named Adam. Adam's life has been destroyed by sibling rivalry, and unrelenting pride, and bitter competitiveness with his brother Charles. He gets married and escapes to California to set up a new place where he's finally going to have a happy life. And he names this new place ... Eden. And there in Eden, Adam has two sons, Caleb and Aron. Sounds a lot like Cain and Abel, right? Because it is. His life helplessly reenacts, first the fall of Adam, and second, the poisonous rivalry of Cain and Abel.

And at the end of the book, he finds to his horror and everlasting shame that the problem he had was not with Charles... but was **in himself**, because the unrelenting pride and bitter competitiveness in his own heart is passed down to his sons. They learn it from him. It spreads to them. Instead of sharing with and loving each other, they hate, they're hostile, they're competitive, they're proud, and the sin becomes generational ... **and just keeps on going.**

This is what happened to Cain as a result of his crime of first hating and then murdering his brother Abel. In Cain's case, so far as we can tell, there was no change of heart, or no growing love for the land and people he left. Did Cain repent? Probably not. The New Testament Scriptures uniformly speak of Cain in the negative with phrases like "*the way of Cain*" (**Jude 11**) and one "*who was of the evil one and murdered his brother*" (**1 John 3:12**). His life is contrasted with "*righteous Abel*" (**Matthew 23:35**).

Nevertheless, we don't know what ultimately happened to him. He may have responded to God. Cain was not beyond the grace of God. Abel's blood rightly calls for vengeance. But Jesus' shed blood shouts forgiveness to all who come to Him. In a sense, Abel looks like Jesus, but there's a way in which Jesus is the greater Abel. When Abel's blood was spilled ... Spilled blood always cries out for justice, but when Jesus' blood was spilled ... **it provided that justice.** On this side of the cross, the Scriptures tell us that in coming to Christ, we come, **Hebrews 12:24**, "... to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood **that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.**"

³ **East of Eden** is the classic novel by John Steinbeck, loosely based on the story of Adam and his sons, Cain and Abel.

Don't you see? Jesus is the greater Abel. If you know what **He** means to you, if you know what **He** has done for you, if you know **He** came and willingly died for you, if you see what **He** has done for you and you know how much you're now loved **in Him** ... you won't be Cain ... you'll be Abel, because you've placed your faith in the greater Abel, the Lord Jesus Christ, *whose shed blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*" So there's great hope for us. **Jesus' blood** will wash away all the **hidden sins** of those who come to Him. **Jesus' blood** atones for **our public sins**, whatever they may be. No one is beyond grace because "*the sprinkled blood [of Jesus]... speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*"

If there's one thing that **Genesis 4** teaches us it's that Cain couldn't save himself ... and neither can you. If you repent, God takes you to *the sprinkled blood of Jesus*. **Jesus' blood** provides the forgiveness we need because we have failed like Cain. **Jesus' blood** supplies the grace we need to make us into the worshippers we need to be. **Jesus' blood** cries out to God, not for vengeance, but for the grace and mercy and salvation of our God.

For the first time in six months, we're about to come to the Lord's Table, The Lord's Supper points us to Christ. You'll notice in the Last Supper that Jesus uses the elements to instruct us about the cross. He uses the simple elements of bread and the cup to show His body, broken for us, and His blood, spilled for us. When you come to the Lord's Supper, you come in repentance, you come to the cross, you come for the gospel of God's grace, because you come "*... to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*"

Think about that. You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

Heavenly Father, we ask that You help us to understand these things. Help us see the seriousness of sin and to live out of the grace of God. Father, we're amazed at the grace You showed Cain. He was so undeserving and yet You protected him. We're not nearly so amazed at the grace You've shown us. It's because we think we're better than Cain. But Your Word makes clear that's not the case, we're fully capable of as much, if not more, evil than Cain. And yet here You are again, showing grace to the undeserving ... to sinners like us.

Lord, we ask that the blood of Christ would now speak graciously to You on our behalf, and as we look and see what He has done for us, that would draw us to Him. He was devoured by our sin; therefore, we don't have to be. We pray, Lord, that the love and mercy and grace of that will affect us so we may find that we really can master that sin which crouches at our door. Lord thank You that no one is beyond Your grace. Thank You that we're not beyond Your grace. Thank You that the blood of Jesus covers our sins. For we pray, in the Name of Your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

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1 John 3:11-14a

“For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.”