

Date: 9.11.08
Text: Genesis 4-5
Place: Kingscliff / Tweed am/pm
Title: The murder of Abel
File: Genesis4

I was reading in the newspaper a couple of months ago about the world's biggest killer. How despite our medical advances, despite all our research, despite all the drugs we now possess that this killer is still on the increase. Now I wonder if you know what the world's biggest killer is? Is it cancer? Or AID's? War? Child birth? Or malnutrition?

According to the article I read, the world's biggest killer is Malaria. A disease that is spread through mosquitos. A disease that mainly affects the poorest of people, people who live in the tropics near the equator. Now you might think, no one dies of malaria in Australia today do they? And you are right, almost nobody does, because we have powerful and effective drugs.

But the poor people of this world can't afford those drugs. Or can't afford inoculations to reduce the risk of catching malaria. And so this disease spreads across the globe, silently but deadly, changing the lives of those it meets.

So in a way it is a bit like sin. Last week we saw how sin came into the world. Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they ate of the fruit and sin led to further sins. Things like hiding from God, blaming one another, disruptions in families. And now we turn to Genesis 4 and like malaria, we see sin continues to spread even more so. For now we meet Adam and Eve's first two sons, Cain and Abel.

1. Sin Increases.

And we hear that Abel is a shepherd, he keep flocks and Cain is a farmer, he grows crops. And despite the fact that they now have to work harder for their produce, than Adam had to before the fall, they each do well and they both bring to God a thanksgiving offering.

But there's a problem. God accepts Abel's offering but not Cain's. Why? Well we are not really told, but I think there is a hint in the text of Scripture. For there are two different approaches from the two brothers to God.

You see verse 3 says, Cain brought *some of the fruits of the soil* as an offering to God. Some, not the first, not the best, but some of the fruits. Whereas Abel brings the *fat portions from some of the firstborns*. He brings the first, he brings the best, he brings the sacrifice that was most costly to him, whereas Cain however just brought what was nearest to hand.

Also I think the other big difference between Cain and Abel is not the kind of offering they brought, but the attitude or motive behind their offering. You see motives matter to God. God is not impressed with those who do the right thing for the wrong reason. And so when God looks at what we do, he wants us to do the right thing and to do it in the right attitude.

Now this is picked up by the writer of the Hebrews in the NT in chapter 11. He says, *“By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings.”*

So the motive behind Abel’s offering is faith, trust in God, gratitude. Whereas Cain’s motives are different. And we can see that, for when Cain’s offering is rejected by God, he gets angry, very angry & God warns Him. “Cain be careful, sin is crouching at your door. You must master it.” But it masters him and so the wrong motives turn into anger, which turns into jealousy of his brother, which turns in murder.

If Cain had been trusting God with the same sort of faith as his brother Abel, he would have accepted that God’s way was other than he had supposed. Sure he had been in the dark, not sure what would please God. But now he knows what does please God. And his faith would have reacted accordingly. But instead he gets angry. And so his sin gets compounded.

As someone said, "As long as anger lives, she continues to be a fruitful mother of many unhappy children." And Cain’s anger leads to Jealousy & Envy. What some has called the "acids of the soul." They eat away at us. They mar and destroy our relationships with God, with others, and with ourselves.

Dwight L. Moody once told the fable of an eagle who was envious of another that could fly better than he could. One day the bird saw a sportsman with a bow and arrow and said to him, "I wish you would bring down that eagle up there." The man said he would if he had some feathers for his arrow. So the jealous eagle pulled one out of his wing. The arrow was shot, but it didn’t quite reach the rival bird because he was flying too high. The first eagle pulled out another feather, then another--until he had lost so many that he himself couldn’t fly. The archer took advantage of the situation, turned around, and killed the helpless bird. Moody made this application: if you are envious of others, the one you will hurt the most by your actions will be yourself.

The lesson from Cain and Abel is that we have to watch our motives for doing things. Watch our jealousy, our envy, our anger. And if we see any of those emotions in us, we need to deal with them, get rid of them, take them to God. Don’t let them fester, you will be the one who is hurt as well as those who live around you.

So sin is now on the increase, Adam and Eve’s sin leads to Cain’s sin which leads to Lamech’s sin in verses 23 and 24. He is not satisfied with one wife, so he takes two, Adah and Zillah, thus breaking God’s plan for husband and wife to become one flesh. He is wounded by a young man and what does he do? He kills him. So that more blood cries out to the Lord from the ground. And then rather than showing remorse for such a violent action, he writes a poem about it, celebrating it!

And he arrogantly asserts that if Cain’s life is avenged 7 times, his is worth seventy times seven lives. So what do we see in this chapter? Violence, arrogance, bloodshed is running riot, its out of control. Anxiety, alienation, vengeance, is now the norm. Like malaria it is moving quickly across the land.

And the result of this sin is death. For when the writer starts tracing the line of people from Adam and Eve through Cain and Seth in chapter 5. There is one constant refrain, one chorus that *is picked up again and again*. “And then he died, and then he died, and then he died.” God wants to give his people life, eternal life, life to the full, but instead we turn our back on our Creator and death is what comes our way.

So we have seen that sin is on the rampage, its like a snowball rolling down the mountain, its getting bigger and bigger. Its like Malaria, its deadly and there seems no stopping it.

But did you know one man is trying to stop malaria from increasing? This article that I was reading was about Bill Gates. He and his wife Melanie have set up a foundation where I believe they have put something like \$40 billion into. And other wealthy people have put other significant amounts in as well.

And one of the things that the Gates Foundation is trying to do is to eradicate malaria. Apparently we have the medicine, but because the people who catch malaria don't have any money, no one in the drug companies is developing the technology so that it can be given to the people that really need it, in a dose that they can take and then going out and actually give it to the people.

You see there is no money in it for them. They have the power to wipe out this deadly disease, but there's nothing in it for the drug companies to do so., So they don't use it. Until now. For if Gates will throw billions of dollars at the problem, now suddenly they are interested in doing something. People can be inoculated, others can receive the drugs that will cure them of their disease.

But you see someone has to give it to them. Someone has to be gracious. Someone has to do something, with no strings attached. And in a way that's what happens in Genesis 4. Someone, God, does something about the spread of the deadly disease sin. Someone, God, steps in. Someone, God, graciously reaches out to the world, if not to stop sin, at least to provide an alternative to sin.

2. Grace increases all the more.

And so we see that where sin increases, grace increases all the more. For God is still good to Adam and Eve, he gives them children, brothers Cain and Abel. They may have made a hash of life in the garden of Eden but he still wants a relationship with them and his family. He still wants to know them and be known by them.

And even when Abel is killed, God graciously gives Eve a replacement son, Seth. God allows life to continue even in a fallen world of violence. And even in the midst of that violence, God graciously protects the murderer Cain.

Yes he will judge him for his acts and yes one day justice will be done. But in the midst of judgement, of Cain being sent to wander the earth as a nomad, he puts a mark upon Cain's so that no one who finds him would kill him. God does not abandon him, but places him still under his protective shield. He graciously allows him to live.

And so he goes to live in the land of Nod, which I think is where the Presbyterian Church originally came from. But as well as that there are glimpses of what theologians call common grace. Grace that is available to all people whether they follow their creator or not.

Cain's descendents develop the engineering capacity to build cities, so that people can live together. They are given the ability to raise livestock, so that there can be meat available for all. Their inventiveness leads to the creation of musical instruments and music itself.

God does not take his hand completely off mankind. He doesn't allow sin to totally dominate. But in a way this is only a band aid job from God. It may deal with the symptoms of sin, but what about its underlying causes? And what about its ultimate effects. For if you were to read Genesis 5, you will see a genealogy of Adam and Eve's family through Seth, through the godly line, through those who have begun to call on the name of the Lord.

But there is something about the genealogy that struck me as I read it through. The entry of each person ends with the words and they died. Adam lives for 930 years and he died. Enoch for 905 years and he died. Kennan dies. Mahalalel dies. Even the oldest man in the bible Methuselah lived a whopping 969 years but he too dies.

Is there anyone who can stop death? Is there anyone who can stop sin leading us all down the road to death. Can Bill Gates do it? Can he throw a couple of hundred billion dollars at the problem and make it go away? Can Walt Disney do it? He was one who tired to support the cryogenetics project, where you freeze dead bodies until the technology develops to cure their illnesses? Can any one stop sin, or death?

Well hidden away in Genesis 5 is a short passage about Enoch. Let me read it to you. *"When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away."*

There was one man that escaped death's clutches. There was one man who never died. Enoch. And the only thing that the Bible says about this guy that is relevant to this subject is that he walked with God. Then he was no more, because God took him away.

I like the story of the little girl who was telling her Mum about the Sunday School story of Enoch one Sunday after Church. She described what happened like this. "One day Enoch and God took a walk together. They walked and they talked and they walked and they talked until Enoch finally said, 'Oh my, dear Lord, its getting late, I'd better be getting home.' And the Lord said, 'Why Enoch we've been walking so long together, I believe we're closer to my home than yours. Why don't you come home with me tonight? So Enoch went home to God. "

Did it happen like this? Probably not. But it seems to me from the passage that the way to beat the death that sin brings, is to call on the name of the Lord. Its to walk with God. Its to not disobey God and hide from him, but to obey His words and walk

with Him.

What does it mean to walk with God? I would think that walking with God means going in the same direction as God. It would mean sharing his companionship along life's highways and byways. It means eventually arriving at the destination to which our life is heading towards together. And the book of Hebrews adds that its about living by faith, trusting each step to our loving heavenly father.

God's grace is so amazing that even in the midst of a world of sin, even when our own hearts are darkened by disobedience, God still finds a way where we can walk with Him. Romans 5: 20-1, puts it this way, *"But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

3. When sin increases, graces increases all the more ... to bring eternal life through JC our Lord.

For ultimately that is God's final solution to sin. Its not just to send us glimpses of his grace inside a fallen world. But it is about sending his Son Jesus. A man who always walked with God. A servant who came to seek and to save and to serve. A man who didn't deserve the punishment of death, because he never sinned. But who graciously, loving, generously took our place on the cross. He died so that we might live.

God does not abandon his world. But in the line of Seth God finds a way where sin's stranglehold over us can be broken, where death does not have to claim every victory, instead where those who wish to walk with God, can have their sins forgiven and their life on earth can lead to eternal life. Where their home on earth can lead to a home in heaven. Where those who live amongst the wreckage of sin, can ultimately live amongst the amazing grace of God.

Is that what you want for life? Life of death? Walking with God or hiding from God? Grace or sin? For that is the age old problem isn't it? All of us have a choice! All of us have a decision. All of us are presented with the same challenge.

Are we going to do things that please God or please self? Are we going to give God our best or what costs us nothing? And when we make mistakes, when our faith fails, when we are unsure of what God wants and we go down the wrong path, what sort of attitude will we have then?

Will we get angry, lash out, try and knock someone else down a peg or two and let the deadly sin virus spread, further and further around the world. From self to family to Church to community to nation, to the whole globe. Or will we look for God's grace in the world and primarily in the cross. Will we rely on the one who walked perfectly with God. And will we place our hand in Jesus hand so that he will lead you into God's amazing presence, into eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And what happens if mankind as a whole continue to walk away from God. Will God just say boys will be boys. Will he forgive them anyway? No in the next chapter we see that there is a flood coming, judgement will soon sweep those away if they don't get their act together.

But before judgement comes there is grace, amazing grace. Friends, take that grace. Turn from your sins. And humbly walk with God. Apparently Abraham Lincoln was once asked to pray that God would be on the side of the Union Army. His reply was that He would pray that the Union Army would be on the side of God.

That's the key isn't it? Not that we ask God to walk with us, but that we would walk with God. That one truth, if we really believed it would change our prayer life, our attitude, our whole lives. Friends this week, why don't we pray that we would be on God's side and at God's side.

