

PLEASING THE HEART OF THE FATHER

1. Today we are going to look at pleasing the heart of God- what does that look like, how do actually please the Father's heart
2. This sermon is both an exhortation and a strong warning
 - i. Sometimes the Word cuts as we know but it's for the purpose of leaving our hearts burning
3. Let's open the Word to **Genesis 4:1**
 - i. Context: Story of Cain and Abel who are the first two sons born to Adam and Eve
4. **4** Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten^[a] 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?^[b] And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for^[c] you, and you must rule over it." ⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother.^[d] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.
 - i. Just want to note we are very early on in the creation story. So far on the earth we have Adam, Eve and their first born son Cain and second born, Abel. Now pay attention to their occupations and their corresponding offerings in the next line:
 - ii. 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,
 1. That makes sense right because Cain is a farmer
 - iii. ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions.
 1. This also makes sense being that Abel was a shepherd
 - iv. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering **he had no regard.**
5. This story has bothered me, for years
 - i. One I've kind of skipped over
 - ii. There was no precedent for offerings at that time, no rules on what they should be or what they shouldn't be
 - iii. If Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd then their offerings made sense.
 1. They gave of what they had
 - iv. And because I know how loving the Lord is, I just can't see Him having zero regard for Cain's offering- initially this just doesn't sound like the God I know

6. Talking to friend Jess about it
 - a. Looked me in the eye and said, “but there *is* a type of offering that pleases the Lord”
 - i. You know when someone says something to you and it’s like for a moment God is speaking right through them? My spirit was suddenly on high alert almost like a fear of the Lord, holy, kind of moment
 1. It is vital to have friends in your life that have true intimacy and burning love for the Lord because it truly spurs you on in your own pursuit.
 - b. And I knew in that moment that I had missed the Father’s heart in this passage, and I knew He was bringing it up now for a reason. He’s bringing it up now, in this hour for His beloved bride.
 - i. So after my conversation with Jess..dove back into the text- this time my spirit was ready
 1. Okay Lord, whatever you want to show me, my heart is ready
 2. Approach the Word with humility and desire for the Truth above all else that’s when the Lord can speak to you
7. First Thing I Noticed: Beauty of Offerings
 - a. They weren’t told they had to do this. It was a gift they wanted to give God. Again, no precedent for it. And that’s beautiful.
 - i. When was the last time you thought about giving a gift to God? For no reason other than to bless Him. You might be thinking your tithe right? But if there wasn’t a biblical precedent would you do it anyways?
8. Abel’s Offering
 - a. For Abel it says he brought the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions
 - i. The fat of an animal was prized as its luxury
 1. Fat is a huge part of what keeps us alive
 - a. Alone series, fat being stolen from moose
 2. **Abel brought the first, and Abel brought the best**
9. What Cain Brought
 - a. For Cain, it does not mention any type of first fruits nor does it mention the best of the fruits- its just..fruit.
 - b. So the question is, by looking at other scriptures throughout the Word, can we begin to understand what the Lord was looking for when He received these offerings?
 - i. **What you will quickly find, is that in all things we do, God is looking at our heart.**
 1. Matthew 6:21 ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
 2. Jeremiah 17:9-10 I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to the fruit of his deeds
 3. Proverbs 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart
10. Hebrew Clue
 - a. But the real clue to what differentiated these two offerings is found in

- b. Hebrews 11:4 ⁴By 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.
- c. Faith REALLY pleases the Lord. In fact it is the crucial element involved in pleasing the Lord
 - i. Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
 - ii. Both Cain and Abel knew that God existed, all of us here (I hope) know that God exists. But do we know that when we seek HIM above all else, when He is the desire- we know it will delight His heart and He rewards us.

11. What Is Faith?

- a. Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”
 - i. Abel to his core, he knew with conviction that the Lord would receive his offering. How can you know how someone is going to respond to what you give them? Because you know them, right?
 - a. Example oreo blizzard for my husband, and fries and nuggets for me...
 - b. And while Jordan is driving home with these nuggets and fries, even though he hasn't seen me yet or given this to me yet, he knows without a doubt that my face will light up.
- 2. **I believe Abel brought his offering in faith because he knew the Lord. He knew the Lord is pleased when He sees a heart of devotion behind the gift.**
- 3. ***Having faith has so much to do with intimacy with God.***
 - ii. If you lack intimacy, you will likely start to live in doubt as to whether you ever please God. In anything you do.

12. What Cain really brought (Part II)

- a. Matthew 6:21 ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
 - i. He went through the motions of giving something to God but you can see how he was withholding. It wasn't his first, it wasn't his best, he wasn't in love.
- b. And when you have a truly loving Father, He will not celebrate loveless offerings. Loveless worship. Loveless anything.
- c. It would be like me taking my husband on a date and paying the bill but I'm not actually present with him. My heart isn't there. He's not going to be like wow Casey what a great date! He's going to be like, what's going on?
- d. **And that is exactly what happens between the Lord and Cain**

13. Let's go back to Genesis and look at the interaction between Cain and God

- a. ⁵but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face

fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted?^[b] And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for^[c] you, and you must rule over it.”

- i. the Father knew that just behind the surface of this “offering” was door that Cain had opened to the enemy and this enemy was crouched and waiting for Cain to take the bait.
- ii. And the Father loved him so much he used this difficult moment of not regarding Cain’s offering to expose what was just beneath the surface.
- iii. So how did Cain respond to God? Was he cut to the heart and grieved when he realized the Father wants his love and devotion more than some fruit he picked?
 1. No. It says he was angry. Really angry.

b. Cain wasn’t about exalting God with his offering, I think Cain wanted God to exalt him for his offering

- i. How many times have we done this? How many times have we said “God I did this and this and this for you and what have You done for me in return?”
 1. **When we do that, it reveals that our offering was never about pure love for the Lord, it was about what we would get from Him in return**

c. Cain brought mediocre fruit

- i. This is what lukewarm Christianity is all about. Doing just enough on the outside to appear godly but inside the heart has grown cold

d. And what does the Lord mean:⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted?^[b] And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.

- i. So how do we define “doing well” or not “doing well?”
- ii. Hebrews tells us right it’s coming to the Lord in faith, and as we see with Abel bringing your best out of devotion
- iii. And if you don’t do that, what happens right? Sin is crouching at the door.”

e. Lukewarm devotion is a slippery slope

- i. The Lord in this moment exposed what was happening to Cain and warned him to not let sin overtake him.

14. The VERY next line it says Cain spoke to Abel. And then he kills him.

- i. Rather than dealing with the mess going on in his heart, he took it out on his family.
 1. Conflict this way (horizontal) usually reveals conflict this way (between you and the Lord)

15. Justice Being Served

- a. And ultimately what happens. The blood of Jesus hadn’t been shed yet right so justice had to be served in some form God spells out specific consequences for Cain. Let’s look at this interaction:
 1. **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.^[e] 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."

- a. Did Cain repent and was he remorseful? No. Instead he complains and negotiates his punishment

16. The scariest verse in this whole story for Cain

a. **Verse 16 "Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord."**

- i. **Lukewarm Christianity is both delusional and far more dangerous than we could ever imagine.**
- ii. Because here's the scary thing. I used to think that when I got to heaven the majority of my regret would be in realizing how big the plans God had for me were, and how little I accomplished because of my timidity. And that's still real.
- iii. But the older I get the more I realize- I want to make sure I get there and when I look into the eyes of Jesus, they are eyes I've been gazing into my whole life. I know them. I know Him. He knows me. I know he loves me and I love him.
- iv. You don't want to live your life doing the right things only to realize you never really loved. You never fully felt loved by God because you never fully gave Him your heart, you never burned with love for Him, and without that forget thinking about being capable of truly loving or feeling loved by other people.
- v. This is SO relevant to today's church

17. Compare Cain's Warning and what Jesus says to the Lukewarm Church in Revelation

- a. Revelation 3 Jesus calls out the church of Laodicea for becoming not only lukewarm but also delusional thinking they are rich when spiritually they are poor
- b. Revelation 3:19 To those whom I love, I reprove and discipline,
 - i. The Lord reprovved and disciplined Cain **and Cain left the presence of the Lord, right? But listen to what Jesus actually wants.**
 - ii. **19 so be zealous and repent.**
 - iii. **20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.**
- c. All Jesus wants is for you to LET HIM IN. Let him in where? **To your heart.**
- d. The Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit want YOU. They desire complete unity with you which is obtainable only by the perfect sacrifice and blood of Jesus
- e. And if you want to know how badly Jesus wants you to be close to Him...
 - i. Right as Jesus was being betrayed by Judas, surrounded by soldiers, he says this to his disciples:

- ii. **Matthew 26:53-54** ⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?
 - 1. Jesus says explicitly that he could request the Father to send angels to stop his crucifixion, and it says if He did, the Father would AT ONCE send them out. He didn't have to, he chose to.
 - 2. He would rather experience horrific torture and death on a cross than live comfortably in heaven without you.
 - 3. He chose to endure the lashings and piercings so that Holy Spirit can come and live inside of you by His blood.
- 18. Holy Spirit, Jesus and the Father can commune with you as close as your very breath. So often we turn to pray or worship and we're stretching out our hands like God where are you and He's like I'M RIGHT HERE.
 - a. They know you the best and they love you the most. And all Jesus wanted was to be close to you.
 - b. The Lord said to me during pre-service prayer **"It grieves me that my kids who are under my blood don't draw close to Me."**
 - c. This is what He wants: **Hebrews 4:16** Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace
- 19. How to Draw Close
 - a. Just what Pastor Todd said last week, it's a process. We die.
 - i. There is no room to be full of yourself and full of Christ.
 - b. Abel brought not only an offering, he brought a sacrifice. There was a death right. The blood of a lamb. So beautifully prophetic.
 - i. And thankfully we no longer need to slaughter animals because of Jesus so now, **what can we give?**
- 20. Romans 12:1** I appeal to you therefore brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
- 21. Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
 - a. It is love and intimacy with God that gives us faith that the Father is pleased with us when we approach Him under the blood of Jesus.
 - b. Abel somehow tapped into this and it moved God to record it for all of history and how much greater for us who know Jesus gave himself for us.
 - c. Really let Him in. Give him time alone with you. Get undignified in worship.
- 22. We are meant to be like little children before the throne of God. They're not self conscious. It doesn't serve us to be self conscious when we can be God conscious.
- 23. **God wants you to draw near in faith that He loves you, the blood of Jesus covers you come to his throne of grace like a little kid.** God conscious, not self conscious.
 - a. If there is any part of you that has been acting lukewarm- it is a slippery slope and there are decisions that must be made between you and the Lord.
 - i. Cain left the presence of the Lord. Peter, was fully restored.

1. Peter in the book of Acts shows a man fully restored and set on fire
2. There's always time to be restored and set on fire

Small Group Questions

1. How do you root out lukewarmness from your devotional life with Christ? How do you continue burning with first love?
2. (Practically) How does the life of a "burning one" differ from that of a lukewarm Christian? Are there any differences that can be observed?
3. Discuss Romans 12:1 and Galatians 2:20 and the idea that one needs to "die" before they can fully "live" to Christ. What are we dying to? What are you dying to currently?
4. Discuss the relationship between faith and intimacy with God.