

Choosing to Worship Correctly¹
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
July 26, 2020

Diaspora XIX – The Church Scattered, Nineteenth Sunday

Text: Genesis 4:3-16, 25

Purpose: To help us understand that proper worship involves acknowledging our sin, seeking forgiveness with the right understanding of atonement for that sin, and trusting God with a contrite heart.

A man who had been stranded on a deserted island for two years was at last found. The media accompanied the rescue team, and when they arrived, they saw that the man had built three huts. When asked what the huts represented, the man explained.

"Well, this hut is my home. And that hut over there is where I go to church."



The reporters seemed moved by the revelation that he had a place of worship. But then one asked, "What is that hut over there?"

"That's where I *used* to go to church!"²

¹ Outline from "Firm Foundations: Creation to Christ" Lesson 13, New Tribes Mission.

² Mike's Funnies – An Island Funny – March 18, 2018

There is so much that can be said for the topic of worship. Many times, we confuse attending church with worship. Yes, we do gather and all our time on Sunday mornings is described as our Worship Service, but it only becomes genuine worship when we come by the grace of God, not by the works of our hands.



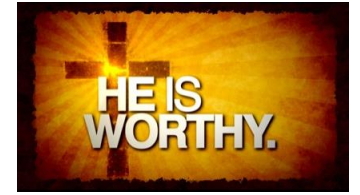
Let us consider the significance of worship:³

- It is obedience to a divine command.
- It is a way in which our spirit is nourished.
- It assists us in our spiritual growth.
- It encourages others as they invest in their spiritual development.
- It shows the world where our priorities are.
- It is one means of expressing our love for God.
- It is an avenue God has provided by which we can praise His name.
- It is a way of showing our thanksgiving to God for all He has done for us.
- It is a time in which we can shut out the world and focus on God alone.

Our passage of scripture in Genesis is about worshipping the Lord correctly. How we worship God reflects how well we live the rest of our lives. The heart of who we are is reflected in how we worship God.

We opened our service this morning with Clay singing the hymn, *Worship the Lord*. Later, we sang one of my favorite hymns, *Worthy of Worship*. Just before Clay's special, we

joined our voices in *Brethren, We Have Met to Worship*. The second hymn, acknowledges God as worthy of our worship. Each of these hymns point to the reason we have gathered – that is to worship God.



I. Our Lesson on Worship

Our text that we read this morning is one that involves the act of worship. What begins as two brothers bringing an offering to God ends in the murder of Abel and the banishment of Cain. How could something like worship end up with this kind of tragic ending?

Historically, man has continually refused to acknowledge God and the seriousness of sin. Most of the people I know would agree our present society has plunged itself into a period of decline and degradation. Moral values used to be clearly defined even among non-Christians. But now values have eroded into a blur of gray areas that seem to allow the sinner to roam freely even in areas of gross sin. The prevailing morality seems to be “If it feels good to me, I’ll do it.”



But God has not changed. His values are still the same; sin still requires the death penalty. God is eternally Holy.

The life of Cain is a stinging example of the horrible results of rebellion against God. Cain refused God's loving call to repentance, turned and killed his brother, and spent the rest

³ A Treasury of Bible Illustrations, The Meaning of Worship, page 421,

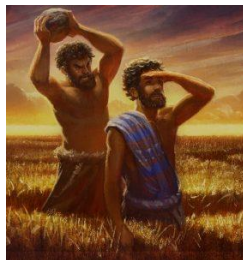
of his life on earth and all eternity away from the presence of God.

The story of Cain and Abel is a classic for all times but especially for our times. Many in our society are rushing headlong away from God. In the process, they are hurting whoever lies in their destructive paths. They will lie to get what they want. They will steal from the ones that love them, and in the end, if others stand in their way, they will kill.

Often, we hear the victim of a crime say, “Why did God let this happen?” This may be the first question, but it is the wrong question.

It is like a mother telling her six-year-old son not to hit his baby sister. The six-year-old turns right around and hits his sister anyway. Now would you ask, “Why did the mother let the boy hit his sister?” No, the right question is, “Why didn’t the boy obey his mother?” The young boys’ actions were a result of the young boy’s disobedience. The mother was correct in setting down the expected behavior. The son willingly disobeyed.

God had told Cain what was right and was even gracious to tell Cain why He did not accept him and his offering when Cain disobeyed. But Cain turned against all that God had told him to do and went out in anger and killed his brother.



This is the problem that we are faced with continually; our news is full of every kind of crime and evil – not because God should have stopped it, but because man should have believed God and obeyed Him.

The spread of sin is horrible. Romans 5:12 reminds us of what we have already seen in our study of Genesis. “*By one-man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*” Men and women, because they have been given free will – freedom to obey or disobey – are responsible for their conduct.

God hates sin and disobedience. The sin of rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. We have been given the choice to believe and obey God **OR** walk away from God and seek our own selfish way. We are responsible for our choices. Sin is not God’s fault. Sin cannot be paid for or atoned for by our earthly efforts.

**Disobedience To
GOD Always Brings
Consequences.**

II. God gave them instruction about worship

Over the last few weeks, we have emphasized, Adam and Eve sinned when they disobeyed God concerning the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. When they rejected God’s instruction, they were separated from God. It was only by God’s intervention and offering of a sacrifice that their relationship could be restored. God took the skin of an animal and used it as a covering for Adam and Eve.

Sin is to be punished. Adam and Eve knew that it took the sacrifice of an animal to cover their sin. The Bible doesn’t go into detail how they were to do this, but we can assume that this way was taught to

“Some say God
is too good
to punish sin.
NO!
God is too good
to NOT
punish sin.”

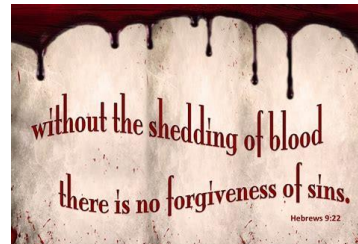
~ Adrian Rogers

them by God and then Adam and Eve taught this to Cain and Abel.

God must have told them that they were to bring a sheep as an offering to Him. They had to kill the animal in such a way that the blood of the animal was poured out. Sometimes I wonder why God would require this action. The blood of the animal could not pay for their sin. Why would God tell them to do this?

I think it is primarily because God wanted them to realize that the punishment for sin was death. He wanted them to remember that they would die and go to everlasting punishment unless God himself saved them. Also, if they would agree with God that they were sinners and that only He could save them from this eternal separation, then to signify this, God instructed them to bring a sheep as an offering to Him.

Hebrews 9:22 reminds us that “*Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission for sin.*” The blood sacrifice for sin was part of God’s plan to deliver man from sin and death.



III. Cain and Abel’s sacrifice

We read that the time to worship had come and ...

- Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.
- Abel brought the firstborn of his flock and gave it as an offering unto the Lord.

Which one had brought the acceptable offering?
Was it Cain or was it Abel?

Cain brought a sacrifice of the works of his hands – an offering of grain.
Abel brought a sacrifice of the first born of his flock – an offering of blood.



God told Cain that his offering was not acceptable. Cain became angry. God questioned Cain about his anger and the change in Cain’s attitude. Instead of recognizing his error and coming to God in the manner God desired, Cain began to turn his anger towards his brother.

This burning anger began to take hold and grow into full fledged jealousy and then into a murderous rage. In a fit of rage, Cain killed his brother Abel.

God had previously spoken to Cain about this growing anger. He warned Cain that sin was lying at his doorstep – like a lion – waiting to destroy him. Cain could have averted this tragedy, but he was too proud, arrogant, and self reliant to listen to God.

How many of us know someone like that? How many of us are like that? We get angry when we are reprovved. We don’t get our own way. We reject authority at the workplace, in the home, at school. We are independent hardheaded individuals. Do you know how I know this? Because I too could easily do and act just like Cain. We

need to heed the advice of God. Do not let that lion at the doorstep take control of your life.

At the heart of worship, is surrender to God. Without proper worship, without a proper orientation of our life towards God, our lives will be out of balance.



To help refocus our lives, we need to turn our attention to God when we worship, recognizing Him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We often sing hymn 249 that says:

Father (Jesus) (Spirit), we love you; we worship and adore You,
Glorify Thy name in all the Earth.
Glorify Thy name, Glorify Thy name,
Glorify Thy name in all the earth.

IV. Our efforts at worship

Throughout the Old Testament (the Old Covenant) God reinforced the idea of worship and sacrifice. Year after year, month after month, sacrifices and offerings were presented to God to atone for the sins of the people. God has said that there is only one way in which we may approach Him. It is through the blood.



In the New Testament (the New Covenant) God loved us so much that He sent the perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ, to die on a cruel wooden Roman cross. When the blood of Christ was spilt, it was poured out for everyone, past, present, and future. His atoning sacrifice was once, for all eternity.

When we come to worship God, do we acknowledge this truth? Many times, we do not.

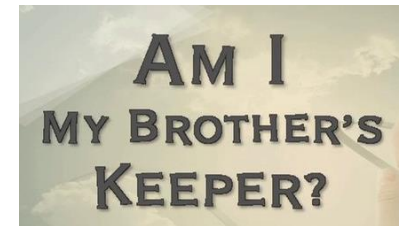
- We say our worship involves going to church.
- We say our worship involves giving money.
- We say worship involves helping others.
- We say worship involves being good.

All of these things are great and good. But if the foundation of Christ's sacrifice is not present in our coming, giving, helping, and being good, then our worship falls short. Cain's sacrifice fell short because he was doing it in his own effort and not in what God had done for him. Cain's self-reliance and pride led to his outburst of anger and his eventual banishment from the presence of God.

V. God's punishment to Cain

After Cain had killed his brother in the field, God confronted him. He asked him that notorious question that we have heard quoted so often. God asked, "*Where is your brother Abel?*"

Cain replied, "*I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?*"



Talk about an answer that has echoed throughout time! “*Am I my brother’s keeper?*” The Lord’s answer is not there in the text, but it is implied.

- We are to be our brother’s keeper.
- We are responsible for those around us.
- We need to be concerned about the needs and concerns of others.

God said, “*Abel’s blood cries out to Me from the dust of the earth.*”

As a result, God separated Cain from his family. God cursed the ground so that Cain would not be able to raise any crop from the ground. From that day forward, Cain was to be a wanderer on the face of the earth. To protect Cain, God placed a mark on Cain as a sign of protection. We do not know exactly what kind of mark this was.

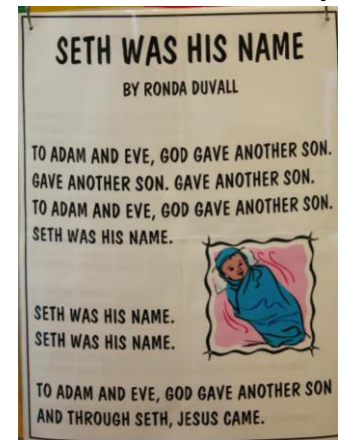


Beginning at Genesis 4:17, we see the listing of one of the first genealogies in the Bible. The descendants of Cain would be scattered across the face of the earth. They were involved in many good things. They built cities. They made tools and musical instruments. They filled their minds and time doing the things they wanted instead of being concerned with the things of God. It seems as if they had no interest or time for God.

How many people do you know like that? They have time to go here, go there, do this, and do that, but do not have time for God. Could it be our world has gone the way of Cain?

VI. God provides another son in place of Abel

In verse 25, we see God gave another son to Adam and Eve. His name was Seth. It was to be through this son, that God’s plan of salvation would come. As we work our way through the Bible, we will see that Satan understood a part of God’s plan to provide a redeemer. In the genealogy of Jesus listed in Luke 3:38, we see our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, descended from Seth’s family line. All through the Bible we find Satan seeking to destroy and thwart God’s plan to bring a Savior to the world.



It was by faith that Abel came to God. Hebrews 11:4 says, “*By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.*”

Today, we come to God in the same manner. We can only come to God by faith. Our works, our plans, our handmade offerings are inadequate. When we come to God, we are to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

There is an image in the Book of Jeremiah that illustrates our relationship with God. We are simply clay, and God is

the potter. We are to yield our will, our pride, our anger, our arrogance, our self to His control. As we yield, we become what God wants. We become the vessel that God intends for us to be.



The story of David's sin with Bathsheba illustrates for us the consequences of sin as well as a path towards restoration with God. David saw Bathsheba bathing in a home below his. He sent an invitation for her to come to his home and she became pregnant. He tried several ways to cover his sin. As a last resort, David did something akin to murder when he ordered Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, to be placed in harm's way during a battle. Uriah's death allowed David to think his sin was covered and no one would know.

In Psalm 51, Nathan the prophet comes and confronts King David about his sin with Bathsheba and the death of Uriah. The words recorded in Psalm 51 gives us a pattern in which we are to come to God. David repents and calls upon God to extend mercy and forgiveness to him. In order for David to experience renewal and restoration, he came to God with a broken and contrite spirit – a spirit of acknowledgement of who God is ... and what David had done.

When David confessed his sin, God healed his broken spirit and restored unto him the joy of his salvation.

RESTORE UNTO ME
THE JOY OF THY
SALVATION; AND
UPHOLD ME WITH
THY FREE SPIRIT.

The good news for us today is that same forgiveness and restoration is available to us through Jesus Christ. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:7, 9)

We are a blessed people. We that have accepted Jesus as our Savior have received forgiveness for our sins. We have been adopted into the Family of God. We have been given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And one day, our Lord will return and take us to be with Him – forever!

Let us walk in the spirit – thereby worshipping God as He has instructed us.

LET US PRAY