

The Apex-Predator - SIN

This past week, an amber alert was sounded across the West Coast of Canada in search of a missing two-year old girl... As the case progressed however, things got real nasty real quick... What first appeared to be an abduction spiralled into something far worse... The single-dad was soon found dead in their home and the amber alert was soon dropped as the remains of the two-year old Hailey Dunbar-Blachette was found near Blairmore, Alberta... and the suspect, a 22-year old man... Derek James Saretzky .. has been arrested... and has since been charged for two cases of first degree murder and a further charge for indignity charges against two-year old Hailey's body.

Admist much public outrage, a single question rings clear - WHAT is WRONG with him? What could possibly have possessed a young man.. 22 years of age.. with a bright future ahead of him.. a man who had grown up in the same close-knit community as Hailey... WHY did he kill a single-dad in order to run off with his two-year old toddler... and then kill her?

As bloodthirsty comments flood social media against the killer, I took a step back to ask the question from a slightly different perspective... Instead of asking, "what is WRONG with him? The question we ought to be asking is... what is WRONG with US? What is wrong with the human race... What makes people do such horrendous things?

SIN.

Sin is the problem. Sin is the cause of all that is evil and dark in this world...

But the problem isn't just sin.

The problem is that we UNDERESTIMATE the power of sin...

And as Christians, we might think it is safe... that we are free from this danger... but take heed - the same sin that causes a man to kill a two year old girl is inside you and me.

And so, with that... would you turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis 4.

Right away, we notice that the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 tells us much more about Cain than it does Abel. And so, let's begin by looking at Cain.

Now, there are some things that are left out for us to fill in... Such as the relationship that Cain had with Abel... Surely, Cain did not just wake up one morning on the wrong side of the bed and decide to kill his brother! This is something that Cain had been entertaining in his heart for a long time... He hated Abel.. He hated the way Abel was the first to say sorry after a fight. He hated the way Abel served others. He hated the way Abel always stole the spotlight - even when it was he, Cain, that did the harder work. But most of all, Cain HATED that his parents favoured Abel because of his faith and devotion toward God.

And so... one morning, when it was time again to present the first fruits of their labour as an offering to God, Cain grasped the opportunity.. AHA! This time.. I will NOT let Abel get the spotlight! I will prepare an offering so lavish that I cannot help but be the centre of attention!

But when Cain brought his offering to God, it was outright rejected. And as he looked over... he saw that God had accepted Abel's relatively simple lamb offering. Rejected and humiliated, Cain went home very angry... and his anger grew and grew...

until... he invited his brother out to the field to talk.. and there killed him.

WHY? Abel did nothing wrong. In fact, the Bible tells us that Abel was righteous! How could something like this even happen? How could a brother kill his own sibling?

Verse 7 gives us the answer... God tells Cain that sin is crouching at the door... getting ready to devour him.

Apex-Predator.

Cain underestimated his sin. He thought that he could indulge in the sinful fantasies of killing his brother without it having any real consequences... Just as how child molesters start off by fantasizing about sexual relations with young boys and girls, so Cain started by entertaining thoughts of murder...

And the Bible tells us that this is the way all evil is born... James 1:14-ff. writes, "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.

Sin is deceitful.. we think we can indulge ourselves in it without it bringing any real harm... but the Bible shows us the truth - sin is an apex predator that is out to kill you and if you do not rule your heart well, the evil desire that you have been entertaining in your heart will give birth to sin...

Like I said, no one wakes up one morning and decides to kill his brother. No one wakes up one morning and decides to cheat on his or her spouse. No one wakes up one morning to kill a toddler. It begins long before inside the heart... you begin to toy and play around with the thought.. until sin springs at when you are least aware and before you know it, you are committing the sin that was born from your evil desires...

Because God knows how sin works, he tells us... you must rule over it! You must RULE sin - not SIN rule you. Sounds very acho.. and manly.. and it gives much credit and dignity to man... but look it. The point of this story is not that Cain failed to rule over his sin... Rather.. the point of the ENTIRE Bible is that WE ALL FAIL! We all COMMIT SIN. There is not one person in this room who has mastered his sin. If you have, Jesus did not die on the cross for you. The fact of the matter is... when we are left to ourselves to fight against our sin.. we fail. And that was exactly what happened with Cain. He didn't talk it over with his parents. He didn't bring his murderous heart to God in prayer.. he just kept it in.. And before even his own parents suspected something was wrong...

Cain killed his brother....and that night he stayed out late working in the fields - not wanting to face his parents and suppressing his guilt and fear through hard work...when suddenly the unmistakable voice of God sent a shock through his body...

“Where is Abel, your brother?”

Things got serious real fast. Cain knew that God already knew! There is nothing hidden from God... He knew that! And he also knew that he should beg forgiveness and seek mercy... But like his father before him... instead of admitting he was wrong, he accused his brother...

v. 9 - I don't know! Why do you ask me, God? Am I my brother's keeper? Am I responsible for his safety and well-being? He should have taken better care of himself!

Then the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 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." (vv. 10-12).

Now, this is where we are going to stop following the story from Cain's perspective and move to examine righteous Abel. But before that, I want to draw out a practical application from the story thus far. Ready? Here it is: DO NOT underestimate sin. Do not play around with it! RUN! Run AWAY! It is an apex predator... a wolf in sheep's clothing... a KILLER that will KILL you if you invite it inside by entertaining it...

As Christian, one of the most dangerous things that you can ever do is push the envelope of your freedom in Christ by asking the question - is it sin? Is it really sin for me to watch game of thrones? Is it really SIN for me to watch South Park or Futurama? Is it really SIN for me to play violent video games? I mean, I'm not actually SINNING right? No, you are not. But you are indulging yourself in content that leads to you committing very real sins like inappropriate speech. killing. and adultery.

So..Do not indulge! RUN!

Now, I want to spend the rest of our time looking at Abel... and if you remember from the reading, there is almost nothing recorded about Abel other than the fact that his sacrifice was accepted! But the author of Hebrews sheds light unto the kind of person he was...

We read in Hebrews 11:4 that Abel was commended by God as being righteous because he presented his offering in faith! Aha! Here is the key! The reason why Abel's offering was accepted and not Cain's is because Abel offered it up by FAITH! Whereas Cain's offering was motivated by self interests, Abel's was fuelled by a pure faith in God! LORD, I know that all I have is yours. Even after the curse you placed upon us because of my parent's sin, you are gracious in

providing for our needs... And so.. as a sign of trust and thanks.. I offer up to you the first born of the flock!

It is significant that God doesn't provide much detail about the first offerings ever recorded in the Bible... Some have gone as far as to say that God rejected Cain's offering simply because it was an offering out of the cursed ground while Abel's was a offering of blood... but we must remember that the sacrificial system had not yet been set in place... and even then, there were offerings of grain and vegetation as well as drink... The point here is that from the very beginning... God is drawing our attention AWAY from outwardly appearances... and drawing our attention towards the heart...

Why are you doing what you are doing? Is it faith? Or something else?
One of the scariest verses in the Bible for me is found in Romans 14:23...where the apostle Paul writes... whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

Let that hit you. Just like Cain, all your lavish service to God can be rejected if you are not doing it out of faith. Not only is such service rejected by God, it is EVIL. 1 John 3:12 says that Cain's offering was EVIL. You can give lavishly to God... and invest a lot of your time and money for the church and at the end of the day... ALL OF IT IS EVIL, if you do not do it out of a pure, child-like faith in God.

Even PASTORS... It disgusts me to see how many so-called pastors scheme behind the scenes to get promotions and advance their own careers by hopping from church to church... God looks at that and says, "EVIL"! But I won't rant on that...

Look it.

We would like to identify ourselves with Abel... do we not? But the truth of the matter is... we are Cain... We are the one who lived in hostility to God.. We are the one who were under God's curse... We are the one who killed the innocent Son of God...

We MUST get it through our thick skulls that we are not the hero of the story.. Jesus is... The role of the hero and the righteous man is reserved for Jesus Himself... Jesus offered up a living sacrifice that was pleasing to God... and we were the ones that killed Him... Just as how Cain killed a innocent man... we killed Jesus...

And so... we would expect... just as how Cain was cursed... should we not also be cursed? Thousands of voiced outrage through the flood of bloodthirsty comments that cry out for JUSTICE at the killing of an innocent girl..? How much more then, should we... NO... lets forget about us for a second... HOW much more should the heavens be crying out for justice at the slaughter their king at our hands?

That is what should have happened. Instead, we are forgiven... No - not just forgiven, if you remember from last week... we are declared to be RIGHTEOUS! All who have to do is put our FAITH in God like Abel.

HOW? How can this be?

v. 10- we read here that Abel's blood cried out from the ground to God... in accusation against Cain... But the blood of Jesus cries out in our defence...

Hebrews 12:24 writes... "Jesus' blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24).

Jesus' blood speaks a better word for us..

Here's what that means..

Whereas the blood of Abel cries out GUILTY! JUSTICE! RETRIBUTION;
the blood of Jesus cries out - FORGIVEN! ACCEPTED! RIGHTEOUS!

There at the blood of Abel, God cursed Cain..
but at the blood of Jesus... we are saved..

At the blood of Abel, Cain was alienated from all men... and from that point onwards, lived in hostility towards God and fellow man...

But at the blood of Jesus, we are reconciled to God and one another.. we have PEACE.

Abel's blood exposed Cain's shame and sin...

but Jesus' blood covers our shame and cleanses us from our sin...

And so, at this time, I would like to end by inviting the worship team up... and as we sing! We are going to end our time by responding to God's Word right here right now.. by singing Nothing but the Blood... and as we sing... really meditate on the words... and let there well up within you and renewed heart of thanksgiving

praising God for the blood of His Son that was spilt on our behalf... Everything we have is owing to the fact that Jesus' blood speaks a better word. So won't you all rise with me as we sing praises to our King!