

Sunday May 10, 2020

Lesson 11: God's Grace toward Adam, Eve, and Cain

Scripture: Genesis 3:21, 4: 10-16

**Context:**

We jump from the last book of the bible, Revelation, to the first book, Genesis, in today's lesson. The scripture passages referenced are parts of the story of Adam and Eve, followed by part of their son Cain's story. As we go through the lesson, we will examine how God granted them grace in their worst moments and how God does the same with us today.

The scripture verse from chapter three in the lesson is a short snippet of the account of Adam and Eve and their disobedience in the garden. A cliff notes version of this story is Adam and Eve being told not to eat fruit of a certain tree, being tempted by a creature, and then eating the fruit. Of course God discovers them and they are ashamed of being caught, responding to God they are not to be seen for they are naked. They bring about their own curse as this means they will be expelled from the garden.

Yet verse twenty-one concludes the story in an odd fashion. The cursed ones are protected by their Creator and are given a blessing. The one who tests is the one who provides and does something the couple cannot do for themselves.<sup>1</sup> While the humans cannot deal with their shame, God can, will, and does.<sup>2</sup> God clothes them and equips them despite the fact they have disobeyed God.

The second narrative is a more developed portion of Cain's story. Cain is the firstborn son of Adam and Eve. His name derives from *qanah*, which means "to get, to create."<sup>3</sup> This name is a form of praise and falls in line with the celebration of an eldest son born to a family. His brother Abel is born and his name means "vapor, nothingness," without the possibility of life.<sup>4</sup> Even the names of the brothers indicate there will be trouble in their relationship and life together.

Upon offering their labors to God, Cain's offering of fruit is rejected. The dejected farmer stands next to his huntsman brother who has provided an animal sacrifice. Thus, Cain kills Abel in a fit of rage and is discovered by God.

God punished Cain by promising him hard work at tilling the ground and becoming a nomad. Cain protests his punishment and God hears him. He places a mark upon not as a curse, but as a form of protection. The story makes it clear violation of a

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Brueggemann, "Genesis," *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, KY, 2010), 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

brother is deathly act and yet God announces in Cain's mark God has not lost interest in the murderer or given up on him.<sup>5</sup> God will give him new life even in his guilt.

### **Application**

As much as we would like to remove ourselves from the stories of Adam, Eve, and Cain, we cannot. In both cases, humans sinned and strayed from healthy paths to dysfunction. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and eat from the off-limits tree and Cain chose to spill his brother's blood.

Our sins may not be the same and yet we are all sinners. As seen in the stories, the sins though started out as things appearing innocuously. In the garden, what started out as simple anxiety about God's providing for Adam and Eve turned into the two directly disobeying God. What started out as sibling rivalry of two brothers trying to win God's blessing turned into fratricide. The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.

However, the highlight for both stories is not the players earning their redemption or atoning for what they've done. Instead, the highlight is upon God who grants them grace in their worst moments and even continues to provide for them. God still provides for them in spite of themselves. God grants them grace.

We all have our worst moments we can name whether it is something we've done during the day or an act we committed which has led to ongoing repercussions. No one is exempt from being a sinner and all have struggles in this life. Like Cain we might even argue with God after we have done or said something leading to us being angry and upset about our plight in this life.

Thank the Lord though God does not abandon us in our sinful state. We are given grace and God provides for us. Even when we are anxious and make poor decisions, God continues to provide and take care of us. Even when we become green with envy and may commit acts of treachery against others, God still marks us as those who belong to God.

In some ways it might make us uncomfortable. How can we atone for our sins, perhaps make up for what we've done? We want to feel better about ourselves and somehow look right before God. I know of people who have sought to prove themselves to God and others because of the results of their sinful behavior.

The good news for us is that the Lord does not have a scale for us and our sins. God see us in our naked shame and forgives us, granting grace instead of curses. Like Adam, Eve, and Cain we are given shelter and we are marked as children of God. We have nothing to deserve it and we certainly haven't received the designation because we worked to get there.

God grants us grace even in our weakest and worst moments. Sometimes we realize the grace is there after we've committed the sins and at other times it may take intentional reflection and time with an accountability partner. Perhaps we confess to someone we trust our sins and they remind us God's grace covers us. Those are gifts as we are reminded our God is in the business of repairing and empowering all those God loves.

We have been given grace, a gift of unmerited favor and blessing. We do not deserve it and we should be reminded it is a precious gift. Through grace, God took

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 63.

broken people like Adam, Eve, Cain, and many others and transformed them as players in God's story. And if God can use them, God can use broken people like you and me.

How would you describe the word "grace"? What images or allusions come to your mind? What are the sins you have committed which still bother you today? What are the means of grace which remind you God loves you unconditionally? What does it say about God in the treatment of Adam, Eve, and Cain which gives you hope for yourself and others?

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