

**Minnesota Valley Church**

**Date: Sunday, August 20, 2023**

**Church Year Date: 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

Singers: Fugleberg

THEME: The brokenness that comes to a family with a rebellious child who chooses sin and a bad attitude resulting in trouble. The blessing that comes to us when we remain thankful to God and follow His good ways.

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson

CALL TO WORSHIP: *Psalm 50:15&23*

*PASTOR: call upon me in the day of trouble;*

*ALL: I will deliver you, and you will honor me."*

*PASTOR: He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way*

*ALL: so that I may show him the salvation of God."*

Hymn #148 "Sing to the Lord of Harvest"

**Confession of Sin:** *(Psalm 25:11-20) For the sake of your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity, though it is great. Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. He will spend his days in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them. My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish. Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins. See how my enemies have increased and how fiercely they hate me! Guard my life and rescue me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you. Amen*

Children's Sermon:

Reader: Luke Johnson

EPISTLE LESSON: *1 Corinthians 15:1-10 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance:*

*that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Luke 18:9-14 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-robbers, evildoers, adulterers-or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

READER: "Here ends the reading of God's Word."

SING: "God be praised, for His glad tidings."

CONFESSION OF FAITH: *PSALM 23 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever. Amen*

Gloria Patri: Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

Announcements and Prayer Concerns

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: CHOSEN BY CAROL

**HOPE FOR A FAILED FAMILY**, Genesis 4:1-16, 8/20/23

Pastor Tom Olson *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

One of the best decisions I ever made was to get married and have children. Raising a family has given me a purpose to work hard. It is fulfilling. But having children is risky. There is no guarantee they will turn out to be who you hoped and dreamed they would be.

Today's Old Testament Lesson is about the first two human beings born after creation, the first family, the children of Adam and Eve. This is a sad story, a message of hope and a serious warning. Let's learn from it together, from Genesis 4:1-16 in a message called, "HOPE FOR A FAILED FAMILY."

## I. HIGH HOPES

*Genesis 4:1-2 Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." 2 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.*

PURPOSE: Traditional belief is that the primary purpose for marriage is for a couple to have children. Before 1960 (the invention of practical birth control) it was inevitable. There are very few things as exciting as the news that your doctor gives you that you are going to be parents. Nothing can describe the awe of taking that little helpless bundle home from the hospital with the

overwhelming expectation of raising that baby up to be your pride and joy. You imagine the life you will share together from the first steps, to working side by side to having them by your bed when you breath your last breath.

*Psalm 127:3-5 Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. 4 Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. 5 Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.*

EVE: Notice that Eve gave God the credit for helping them to have a little boy. Perhaps this was a very literal statement and God came into the scene to help that first little boy to be born. They obviously knew nothing about how to cut the umbilical cord and nurse the child. God talked to them directly in those days.

HELPERS: Both boys seemed to be helping out to sustain the family in the world, now that they were banished from the fruitful garden of Eden. *"Abel kept flocks and Cain tilled the soil."* With their efforts there was wool for warmth and there were vegetables for food. We have a picture here of a nice family, working together and enjoying their lives of mutual service. Nothing indicates that they were not happy. God came to talk with them and they gave offerings of gratitude to God. We see HIGH HOPES here for Adam and Eve and family.

## II. A REBELLIOUS CHILD

*Genesis 4:3-7 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So, Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. 6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is*

*crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."*

DIFFERENCES: Every child is born with a personality and develops his own attitude. Some are compliant and others are strong-willed and defiant. It takes a lot of thought and prayer to raise up each child according to their bent. Abel appears to be generous and obedient. Cain developed a stingy streak and powerful, angry temper.

*Proverbs 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

BENT: Hebrew scholars tell us that this verse could also mean, "Train up a child **ACCORDING TO HIS BENT** and when he is old, he will not turn from it." Deal with each child according to his personality. Train them up according to their gifts. I wanted my son to play in the band, because I was a band director. But he didn't like music and he wanted to play football. And that worked for him better than music would have. It was his bent, his "way."

OFFERINGS: Abel brought an offering of the best of his flock to God. But the wording here indicates that Cain gave a poor offering, perhaps poor crops or perhaps vegetables instead of a sacrificial lamb. When God was not pleased with the offering, Cain got very angry. His face became red and contorted. He looked down and could not look up at the Lord. God warned him that this anger had to be mastered for it would overpower him resulting in something bad.

ANGER: Someone here today is likely dealing with anger. It is eating away at your soul. We all have plenty of hurts and disappointments to be fertile ground for anger. Anger can go inward and cause depression and disease and anxiety. Anger can go outward and result in violence and broken relationships and even murder. Anger is an expression of pride ("I deserve better

treatment!") and it is so powerful that we must "MASTER IT" or it will destroy us.

*Ephesians 4:26-27 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.*

EXPLOSIVE: The Word of God warns us to not even be angry over night...deal with it before the sun goes down. Anger can ferment into bitterness and that can turn us into a keg of gunpowder that is ready to explode. I urge you to come to the altar for prayer if you are struggling with anger and surrender the situation to the Lord before it is too late and you do or say something you will regret.

CAIN BECAME A REBELLIOUS CHILD.

### III. A MURDER

*Genesis 4:8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.*

UNREASONABLE: Cain had no reason to hurt Abel, but anger and rage are NOT REASONABLE. Anger is toxic and takes over the soul. Once it gets a foothold it becomes a fortress. Cain had actually become so obsessed with his anger that he had planned a way to kill his brother. It was pre-meditated murder! He put the blame on his brother for making him look bad.

LAWN: I remember once having a neighbor who didn't like to mow his lawn and it looked terrible. I habitually mow our lawn once a week, even more in the wet springtime. One day the neighbor came out and rebuked me for mowing my lawn so often because I was "making him look bad." I suspect his wife had compared me to him the day before or something. Instead of being mad at me for mowing my lawn, he should have thanked me for

being a good example to him of how to care for his home. Anger keeps a person from thinking straight and correctly.

**RUSSIA:** This whole war in Ukraine is based on anger. Russia is angry at the west for plotting to take the nation into NATO in spite of our promise not to do that. It would be like them convincing Canada to become a part of the Soviet Union and putting weapons on our Canadian border aimed at us. We would not like that.

**UKRAINE:** Ukraine is angry at Russia for their heavy hand in their land for the past 500 years. Both sides are angry and that anger boiled over into war, resulting in the tragic deaths of thousands of young men who have no grudge against each other. Anger is a powerful emotion that results ultimately in some kind of death. For couples, anger results in the death of loving feelings toward one's spouse.

**CONSEQUENCES:** For Cain and Abel, the anger resulted in A MURDER of a good natured and godly man. It also resulted in guilt and great loss for Cain.

#### **IV. GOD'S INTERVENTION AND MERCY**

*Genesis 4:9-15 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" 10 The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. 11 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." 13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. 14 Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." 15 But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance*

*seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.*

**REALITY:** When the ANGRY OUTBURST is done, reality starts to set in. Cain can't hide from God or anyone else. He is now a hunted man. Someone, someday will try to take revenge on him. That was the system of justice in ancient times. People would kill the person who killed their family member. Undoubtedly the human race was growing in population as Adam and Eve's children had children. It is amazing how many people can be born in 100 or 200 years or whenever this happened.

**WATCHERS:** There may also have been a certain group of angels watching over the human race in those days called watchers. These would have been the angels that eventually left their holy role and co-habitated with humans to create the giant Nephalim in the time of Noah. I am the first to admit that I have more questions than answers...the details are vague but Cain's fear of retaliation shows that there were plenty of others who he knew would want justice for his deed of killing Abel. Reality had set in once his emotions cooled down.

**MERCY:** God is merciful. He gives Cain a way out and delivers the first family from their rebellious brother and his equally nasty offspring. God puts a mark on Cain that would keep people from hurting him. God offers grace to the angry man and gives him a chance to continue his life.

**GRACE:** Grace is in the heart of God. The Christian faith is the only religion in the world that has grace and forgiveness. Every other religion is about punishment for sin and reward for good behavior. But our faith is totally different. It is about forgiveness of sins and a new life with God's Spirit dwelling in us.

**CONSEQUENCES:** We may have to face the consequences of our sins in this life with time in prison, fines, loss of trust and regrets. But from God's point of view, the death of His Son, Christ Jesus,

on the cross, washes away all of our sins and makes us right, holy and pure in His sight.

***Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

LOVED: Cain was a sinner, but God still loved him and worked with him. You and I are sinners, and God still loves us and works new life in our souls, no matter how bad our sin is. He has MERCY.

## **V. THE PAINFUL CONSEQUENCES OF SIN**

***Genesis 4:16 So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.***

EXILE: Cain was forgiven but he had to leave the fertile land that had been so good to him. He needed a fresh start. He went to the land of Nod, east of Eden to raise his family. I don't know what happened but I doubt he ever saw Adam, Eve and the rest of his immediate family again. This is the painful consequence of sin.

SAYING: There is an old saying that should make us think twice about venting our anger, nursing a grudge or allowing bitterness into our souls like Cain did: "Sin takes you farther than you plan to go, keeps you longer than you plan to stay, and costs you more than you plan to spend." Anger, hatred and violence are forces that bring a lot of destruction in our world today. The only solution is for Jesus to bring new life to people who are filled with bitterness. And that is something He has done millions of times and wants to do for you today.

INVITATION: GOD GAVE HOPE TO THE FAILED FIRST FAMILY. Are you harboring anger in your heart toward someone that has hurt you? Is that anger becoming bitterness? Are you ready to explode? The only place you will find relief is at the cross. Jesus can heal you and give you peace. When we have

failed, God's mercy is our only hope. *May the peace of God that passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

Hymn #460 "Have Thine Own Way, Lord"  
Lord's Prayer & Benediction  
Closing Song: Chosen by Carol  
Postlude: Carol Gustafson