

Sibling Rivalries “Cain and Abel”; Gen. 4:1-12; Heb. 11:4; 12:24; I. An Acceptable Sacrifice II. The Blood that Speaks

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what kind of funeral messages have you heard? I imagine that you have heard 2 kinds of funeral messages- the first and most common type of funeral message is that of a eulogy. This kind of service focusses on all the nice things that this person did- how they were such a wonderful person- and how they will be missed, but because they were such a great person God will welcome them into heaven. The message is really a kind word about the life of the deceased- assuming God welcomes everyone who is nice into heaven. The other kind of funeral message is one that I hope we expect to hear in our churches. The funeral message is not about the person that just died- because that would not bring any lasting hope. Rather, when we face death our only comfort can be found in the person and work of Jesus Christ! His life- not the life of this deceased one- should be the focus of Christian funeral services.

Entrance into glory is possible because of His death- no other! Now why would I start this sermon by talking about funerals- well, today we are going to attend 2 funeral services. Each one with a distinct message for us to hear! This evening we are beginning a series on “Sibling Rivalries” in Scripture and we begin with the first set of sibling in Genesis 4. Cain and Able. So today we consider this theme: the blood of Jesus Christ speaks a word of comfort after the death of Abel. As we are going to see today- not only does Adam bury his righteous son, so also our Father in heaven buries His righteous Son as well! The blood of the martyrs speaks today!

I. An Acceptable Sacrifice

In our first point we are going to focus in on the context of Abel’s death as we found in Gen. 4. What led up to his murder- and why did Cain hate his brother so intensely? So our passage opens with 2 brothers- Cain is the older and his name means “gotten”- this male child was a gift I received from the LORD. The second born son, Abel, is also received. But his name means breath or vanity. Almost as if the brevity of his life is bound up in his name. Now these two brothers grow up and become quite different. As we will see, these two brothers become two priests with two separate sacrifices- which results in two very different responses from God. So Cain, the older brother starts to be a farmer- working the ground. At the appointed time- as Gen 4:3

says, Cain brought an offering of fruit. Next we have Abel the shepherd, who in 4:4, brings a firstborn of his flock, and fat portions of it. So Cain brings a small portion, leftover- no first-fruits and no abundance. But Abel- he brings a first- the best- and in abundance. Abel has a blood sacrifice that is generous. Now these two priests with their sacrifices make it clear what is living in their hearts. And God, seeing what goes on in the heart- receives the offering of Abel made in faith but He does not regard the offering of Cain. In fact, Cain is rebuked and warned- sin is crouching at your door in 4:7. The devil wants to consume you like a lion devouring a lamb- but you must get mastery over yourself! So Cain went home sullen and angry- while Abel went home justified- receiving the pleasure of God's favor. Although both brothers were sinners, one was atoned for by blood and the other not! One had a heart of faith and obedience and the other not! Cain notices this fact- and instead of repenting he allows this sin to grow and spread. Notice the development of sin- envy, to anger, to murder, to deceit! Cain is overcome by his sin, and he commits murder in cold blood! He kills his younger brother by trickery- and tries to hide his death by deceit! I John 3:12 builds upon this when it says- the reason that Cain killed his brother is because Abel's actions were righteous and his own actions were evil. The righteous works of Abel- his pleasing sacrifice- only served to expose the wickedness and rebellion living in Cain's heart! The world hates the righteous because the works of the righteous exposes the world's sins! So the rebellious son kills the obedient one! The wicked priest kills the righteous one! The seed of the serpent kills the seed of the woman! And thus, Abel becomes the first martyr- the first righteous man killed because of his faith! Now in our reading from Gen. 4:10, we find that the blood of Abel cries out to God. His innocent blood shed is crying out from the ground. Although Cain thought he could hide his actions- that the blood of Abel could be silenced- the fact is that his blood still speaks. Now what does the blood of Abel say? Well, this is the first murder after the fall. It was the first-time man had been killed by the hands of a fellow man- and that being a brother! So Abel's blood cries out- avenge me! His blood staining the earth is a guilty verdict- you are a murderer! His blood speaks a condemning word- and thus Cain will be cursed! So the sin that started with envy and lead to anger and murder followed by deceit- ends with the cursing of Cain and the removal of his presence from the land. Cain is cast out! The fact

becomes clear, the only priest that God will accept is one that has a pure hand and heart! Cain was an unfit priest! The only sacrifice that God will accept for atonement is one that is pure and holy- a spotless lamb! And although Abel was a righteous man, his blood can only cry out for vengeance! As we now turn to our reading from Hebrews, we find that this blood of Abel still speaks today!

II. The Blood that Speaks

As we read in Heb. 11:4- although Abel is dead, he still speaks! What does Abel say today? Two things, the just shall live by faith- and without faith it is impossible to please God! Abel's blood cries out against Cain- your sin and rebellion have condemned you! His blood proclaims a verdict of condemnation- as a wicked rebel you will be removed from the presence of God! Your sin has mastered you- that is why your offering was rejected- that is why you took my life! Your heart is rebellious- and the fact that you took my life proves your wickedness and deceit! You cannot trick God- you cannot deceive Him by your empty actions of religion! He sees your heart! You cannot hide what you have done from His eyes- He sees all- and He will avenge my life! We see a similar teaching in Rev. 6:10 where the souls of the martyrs are crying out from under the throne, how long until you avenge our blood? When will we be vindicated and your justice poured out upon those who took our lives? But what about the blood of Jesus? As we read from Heb. 12:24, the sprinkled blood of Jesus speaks a better word than that of Abel. So what does the blood Jesus say- and how is it better than the shed blood of Abel? Well, the context in Heb. 12 speaks of the spirits of the righteous being made perfect, and that Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant! In some ways, the death of Abel- the shedding of his blood- was the proof that the first covenant, the covenant of creation, had been broken. When Abel's blood cried it- it was clear that man had rebelled and fallen- that man could not stand in the presence of God- thus Cain was sent out of the land because he was a rebel! But Jesus' blood is the blood of the New Covenant! Not the covenant of works- but the covenant of grace! The fact is, we are in need of a better priest and a lasting sacrifice. Instead of seeing ourselves in Abel- we should see ourselves in the actions of Cain! By nature, we are all guilty. Our hands are stained with blood. We all sin in various ways by

hating, lying and deceiving! So we need a priest who is perfectly righteous- one who ever lives to intercede for us! We need a sacrifice that is sufficient- one that will be offered once for all! So what makes the blood of Jesus better is that He is both the perfect sacrifice and the perfect priest to offer it! Cain was not an acceptable priest because he did not have faith and he did not obey! Abel was a righteous man of faith- but he was killed! Abel's blood cries out for vengeance- but the blood of Jesus cries out for pardon- forgiveness! So again, how is the blood of Jesus better? What does the blood of Jesus proclaim? His blood is better because He remains our innocent and perfect priest! His body being the perfect sacrifice! The message that His blood proclaims is not condemnation, but rather His blood speaks of mercy, forgiveness and grace! That is why the blood of Jesus speaks a better word! Forgiveness and atonement are secured! That the guilty can be pardoned! Abel's blood says- that without faith it is impossible to please God- it says that those who approach God in worship must believe that He is just and that He rewards those who seek Him! Cain knew that God was real- he even heard His voice- but He did not believe in His Word! It is the blood of Jesus that secures this necessary faith- so that we in Jesus might now become holy priests of God who can offer their lives as a living sacrifice of praise- pleasing and acceptable to our God!

As we close, it is striking to remember that blood speaks. Although we may not hear it, the death of every man says something. Do you hear what the blood of man says? Life is short, death is coming, are you ready? Abel's blood says- look what you have done! You are guilty and deserve to be condemned! But Jesus' blood- His blood says- look at what I have done! You are forgiven and your sins have been washed away! So this evening we have attended two funeral services. The funeral message for Abel was this- you are a sinner who deserves God's wrath! His blood cries out- you are a murderer! The second funeral message was heard at Calvary- here we heard a different message- a better message! You can be pardoned and your sins forgiven- you have been atoned for- all those who live by faith are now at peace with God because of this better word! The blood of Jesus Christ speaks a word of comfort after the death of Abel. Praise God for the blood of the New Covenant- that we hear a message of peace and forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ!