

The Sanctity of Life in Biblical Perspective
“When God Comes Down”

Genesis 4:1–11

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Genesis 4:1–11 says [1] *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.”* [2] *And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.* [3] *In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, [4] and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, [5] but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.* [6] *The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”*

[8] *Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.* [9] *Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?”* [10] *And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. [11] And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

The ministry theme that is decided by our elders for the year becomes embedded and disciplined into the life of our congregation and for the last two years the theme has been a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship. The first year was focused on evangelism and the second was on discipleship. Now we are entering into the foundations of discipleship where we develop this into our curriculum with those who are teaching. There are five elements. The first is Christianity 101 particularly around what the Gospel is. The second element is spiritual disciplines which are the private and public means of grace. This is a way God brings grace into our lives as a means for us to grow in grace. The third element is lifestyle stewardship. Fourthly, is training in personal evangelism through the bridge to life. The last element is what true worship is through gathered worship and life worship. The whole purpose is for the praise of God to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

So we took one of those elements and made it this year’s ministry theme and this year it is lifestyle stewardship. We started this in our last study and now we have the sanctity of life Sunday. To recap we looked at the word for stewardship which is *oikonomos* and this means house rules. The church, God’s people, are His house and He dwells among His people. My mother had rules for our house and you disregarded them at your own precarious existence. God has rules for His house. The rules aren’t not there for you to get saved and admitted to His house. They are the guidelines, directions and commandments of those where He lives. He not only has the church as His house but He has you as His house. So He has house rules for you to show you how you live your life. Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, you do all to the glory of God. Another rule is when He says He doesn’t want us to conform to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you can prove that which is good and acceptable which is your life of worship.

The Greek word for steward is *oikonomia* and we get the English word economy from this word. The economy of life whereby the value and investments of life are lived. So we are going to be looking at the economy of life for a believer. A steward owns nothing. The master owns everything. The master sovereignly allocates to the steward. The master communicates how the steward is to use what has been allocated to them. The steward is accountable and is faithful, productive, has integrity and comprehensive. The Bible says we are sinners saved by grace. We are saints secured by grace. We are soldiers for Christ. We are servants to the master.

We are stewards who are to be found faithful to what has been allocated to us. What does it mean to be faithful? We are to manage, oversee and use what has been entrusted to us. We are never profitable but we can be productive in the use of those resources. Not only do we not own the resources but we are owned by the master. The master tell us how to faithfully use what He has entrusted to us. This just isn't with money but with all resources, relationships and responsibilities. We will be accountable for all this.

There is a day of judgment and we all will appear there. If you are not a Christian you will appear with your name in the books and you will give an account of the cosmic treason against the thrice holy God and the verdict will be the eternality of hell. If you're a Christian your name is not in those books for your name is in the Book of Life but you will still appear there, but not for the judgment of your sin because Jesus already handled that. You will be there for the judgment of stewardship – what did you do with what the Master allocated to you. The verdict we want to hear in that day is 'Well done thou good and faithful servant.'

If we are aiming for a lifestyle of stewardship, then doesn't stewardship begin with life? If we believe we have a lifestyle of stewardship then it would start with the stewardship of life. I don't know how long we have on this earth but there is a limited number, a finite number. So what am I doing with my life and about life? In this Genesis text Cain was not only reminded he was steward of his life but he was a steward of his brother's life. His response to that was 'No, am I my brother's keeper?' Cain said 'no' to stewardship of life so the Lord began to deal with him.

You know the story right? Adam and Eve have fallen into sin and have been driven out of the garden. They have two children – Cain and Abel. We know they had others but those two we know of. Cain becomes a farmer and Abel becomes a shepherd over a flock. Over a period of time with some regularity they come for worship and bring an offering. This is why the text takes time to give us their occupation because it was from your vocation that you would bring your offering. Because Cain was a farmer he would bring as an offering fruit from the ground. Abel was a shepherd so he would bring an offering from the flock.

Why did God affirm Abel's offering but not Cain and in the process communicate to Cain that it wasn't just his offering, but it was him that needs to be accepted? What is clear is that Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground but Abel brought the first of the flock. If Abel is bringing the first then that means he had saved it for this purpose. Then Abel brought the fat portions which would be offerings. Abel brought the tithe (the first) and the offerings to the Lord and God received him through the offering which becomes a picture how we get received through the offering of God, His Son the Lamb whereby we are accepted before Him.

What does God do with Cain? First, what does Cain do with the fact that God doesn't accept his offering? Cain needs another offering, something done for him. Instead of repenting and seeking God, he premeditatedly murders the man he thinks is his problem – thinking if I can

get rid of him I'll be okay. Cain murders Abel and Abel's blood is spilt out to the ground and the ground soaks it up.

There are three statements in the Bible that startle me, astonish me and frighten me. One statement is when God will say on that Day 'Depart from Me I never knew you.' Those are the most frightening words that I don't ever want to hear but there will be many on that Day who hear it. I don't want you to hear it. I want you to hear 'Come in beloved' because you have put your trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. The condemnation of being sent to an eternal hell under the righteous judgment of a holy God whom you have committed cosmic treason against and rejected His grace and mercy – it's the unending judgment of hell which is intolerable but must be endured with no remedy forever. It overwhelms to think I live among and will talk to people who will hear those words and that's why I want to get the Gospel to everyone.

Another statement that frightens me comes from Romans 1 which says 'God gave them over to the degrading passions of their heart. He gave them over to sexual promiscuity and sexual perversion. Then He gave them over to social approval of promiscuity and perversion. Then the society would shame the Gospel which is why Paul starts off by saying 'I'm not ashamed of the Gospel...' because the society shamelessly calls good evil and evil good. Not only does sexual promiscuity and sexual perversion bring God's judgment when its present but it's the evidence that God has already begun His judgment. God gave them over, is a frightening statement.

A third statement is 'God came down.' This is found in the book of Genesis which I love. It is a book divided up into ten books of origins and they all start off with the phrase 'in the generations of...' In the text for this study we are right in the middle of one where we see where sin has originated and we see that the God who gives life now has to deal with those created in His image who assume that they can take life. Now only God gives life and takes life but they will usurp God not only by making their life their god but by taking the lives of others. That is what Cain does in murder.

This phrase 'God came down' appears three different times in the book of Genesis. It is found when the Bible talks of Sodom and Gomorrah in the reign of sexual anarchy and its violence. God comes down for investigation, responsibility, acknowledgment and then a measure of judgment. It is not the unmeasured judgment of eternity. God also comes down at the tower of Babel in the city state. Here the city state binds itself together with arrogance where they say 'we will build the tower to heaven.' God comes down bringing judgment as their language is confused.

Is any of this sounding familiar? A culture given over to sexual anarchy, perversion, promiscuity? A culture in which all of the trust is put in the society? We have the phrase 'in God we trust' on our coins but is that what we do? No. We put our trust in the military, politics, parties, Wall Street, economics yet don't get me wrong in that I'm grateful for those who serve in our military. Then God causes confusion – have you seen the confusion in our country lately? We have dictionaries that can't even identify pronouns anymore. We are wrapped up in confusion in our rebellion.

The third place God comes down in Genesis is here with Cain. In all three cases the voice and the cry of our sin rises up to heaven and then God comes down and brings judgment. In this text it's the voice of Abel's blood, the innocent blood that cries to heaven and God comes down in judgment. One man is murdered and the cry goes up and God comes down.

Do you know what the number one killer in the world is today? It's not heart disease or cancer or even our wars. It is the genocidal assault on the most vulnerable in the womb. Every

day 124,000 plus in the womb are killed. If the voice of one rises up what must be the cacophony in heaven today? I am utterly amazed that I have to confess I'm grateful that God's patience is longsuffering. I am praying that He hasn't come down in judgment because He is going to bring us up with repentance. I have a reason for praying this.

The Bible records another time that God came down because our sin went up and that's when Jesus came down to go to a cross. Instead of God coming down in judgment, God came down to bear our judgment so that we could have life evermore. So let's embrace a lifestyle stewardship that begins with the stewardship of life.

Let's thank God for that legislative movement that says we will not codify death. Let's thank God for that ministry that reaches out to the children that are born who are unwanted that we have homes for you. Let's thank God for those ministries that reach into to those women who bravely gave that birth and need assistance with all kinds of bundles to help them. Let's thank God for those with legal and medical abilities that step forward.

Let's thank God for those who have been there and known the forgiveness of Christ who are ready to be there for others who need to know their forgiveness through Christ who died for our sins. Let's thank God for those who reach in to the abortion clinics so the abortionists are converted. Many have been converted in this last year in particular for which I praise God. Let's thank God for those who are on sidewalks to counsel. We are here to help so come to us here at Briarwood.

Let's give God praise and glory for all of that multi-faceted ministry but it begins when we acknowledge we are sinners and our God has come down to take our sin to the cross and we've come to Him who is our life. Now we desire to be stewards of life.

I confess I do not watch award ceremonies on television. People who get together who I don't know to congratulate each other over something that I'm not excited about doesn't interest me. I was sent a recent video of someone accepting a Golden Globe award in which a woman caresses a statue and gives thanks that she was able to abort her baby lest it get in the way of her success to win that award. I immediately began to pray for her because what she was caressing is a toy of dust for it will not last. What she could have been holding was a life that is forever.

Instead of life's expended because it's all about us holding toys of dust, it is lives that are ready to steward life and give our life so that men and women can know the One who gave His life that we can live forever. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Take a few moments in silent prayer asking the Lord to speak to your heart to encourage you. Some of you reading this today may have had an abortion and thinking where can you go. We have a hymn that answers that question – but to the Lord. Come to Him who is ready to meet you, forgive you and take your life to make it new. Some may have been lethargic in this matter so God help me know my place and purpose and how I can be part of the stewardship of life with lifestyle stewardship. I don't know where I should be but Lord give me that place, that prayer closet, that prayer request, that ministry, just help me understand where I can be. Oh God we desperately need a revival. We need You to send the Holy Spirit among us as a people that we would repent of our sins, flee unto Jesus and You might bring into our life a culture of life that exposes the insidious stupidity of racism and classism, because we see each other made in the image of God and that life is precious. There is only one Giver of life who alone is to be the taker of life and there is only One who can give us everlasting life and He came down that we

might go up. Our sins cried out to heaven but He came down not to bring judgment but to bear our judgment so we rejoice for that cross and as the hymn says (*That Old Rugged Cross*);
On a hill far away, stood an old rugged Cross
The emblem of suffering and shame
And I love that old Cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain

So I'll cherish the old rugged Cross
Till my trophies at last I lay down
I will cling to the old rugged Cross
And exchange it some day for a crown.

He is the One who came down to take away my sins to bring me to heaven. I will look forward to the day when I will exchange it for a crown, for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.