

Grace East of Eden

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[0:00] Let's read together from the Old Testament, from Genesis chapter 4, verses 1 to 16. Now Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord. And again she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. 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, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The Lord said to Cain, why are you angry, and why is your face fallen? 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 for you, and you must rule over it. Cain spoke to Abel his brother, and when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to

Cain, where is Abel your brother? He said, I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper? And 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. 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. Cain said to the Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me. Then the Lord said to him, not so. If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. This is God's holy word. We start a new series today from Genesis 4 through Genesis 11 that'll take us through the month of November. And the overall title for the sermon series is Grace Among the Ruins. And the reason for that is Genesis 4 to 11 is this section of stories about God's excessive grace that always extends farther than human corruption extends. So these are fall stories, decline stories. And in every one of them, there's a sense that things are getting worse and worse and worse with humanity. And we talk about creation and then the fall. So the big story of the Bible, creation, fall, redemption, new creation. And Genesis 3 is all about the fall. But really, when you read Genesis carefully, you begin to realize that the fall is a series of stories, not just one. So the original fall happens in Genesis 3, the fall into sin.

But Genesis 4 to 11 is a long narrative of deeper and deeper fall stories out of the frying pan, into the fire. It gets worse and worse every single section you go through this part of the Bible. And the word fall that we use to describe sin entering the world actually first shows up in Genesis 4, not Genesis 3. So in verse 5, it says that Cain's face had fallen. So that's the first use of the word fall that we use for sin. And it's really talking about depression there, about being downcast and despair and anger and hatred and envy and all the sins of the soul that are going on in his heart. [3:30] So that's the way the first word fall is used. But also, this is the first time the word sin is ever used in the Bible. In Genesis 4 verse 7, so you have that reference to sin is crouching at the door.

So this is the first time we see these words. That tells us that this chapter is about sin. The theme is very clear. It's about sin. It's about the fall. It's strange to think about this, but I think it must be true, right? That there was a first time for every type of sin that's ever been committed. And this is the first time murder is ever committed in human history. And there has been so much murder since, and of course still is every week in this world. But here we have the very first instance of it. I was joking with the musicians before the service and this week with a couple of people who asked, what is the sermon going to be about? And I said, well, the application is relatively clear. Do not murder your siblings. Case closed. That's bad. We learned that here in Genesis 4.

But of course, the event of murder that takes place in the story is just the tip of the iceberg. It's about the depth of sin. And you get in these stories a definition of sin, not by way of theological proposition. So this doesn't read like a systematic theology that tells you here's what sin is. Instead, what you get is stories that are explaining human corruption and sin to you. And this is definitely one of them. Now, maybe the question then at the start of this sermon series is, do you believe in sin?

And that's a very important question because, you know, that so many people, the sociologists of Edinburgh today want to say that sin is a pre-modern concept that was used by people that stand in very tall pulpits to convey social control over others, and that we need liberation from the concept of sin if we're really to ever be free in this world. But I think the question is, if you don't have a concept for sin, what kind of words do you use to describe the big problems of this world? And some of those might be things like trauma and self-interest and dysfunction, and one of the most common is maladaptive behavior. And all of those describe something true about the problems of humanity. But if you don't have a bigger bucket to drop those words into where they make sense, if you're not able to say that sin is actually the expression of moral corruption against God Himself who created the moral order, then how can you talk about any of those words actually describing something that's morally wrong? Do you have a category of morality at all? But here we see, I think in the human experience and in these stories, that sin is real. Sin is real. And we learn more and more each week about sin through the lens of this section of the Bible. Sin is a power in your life. It's a force. It is a predator. It is a parasite that shouldn't exist but leeches onto the good.

[6:36] It is a state of being. It's also an action and a thought. And each week we'll see something more about that. Today, this story tells us about the estrangement that sin brings, the coldness of sin, the potential of sin, and then grace, excessive grace really, of God to the earliest sinners in human history. So first, we learn here about the estrangement of sin. So in verse 1 and 2, you'll see Adam and Eve, they have a firstborn son. His name is Cain. And the Lord brings forth this son, Cain, for Adam and Eve.

And then right after that, they have a second son, Abel. So there's an elder brother and there's a younger brother. The elder brother is a farmer. The younger brother is a shepherd. And we don't know a ton else about them or their differences. But then if you look at this peculiar phrase that the commentators tell us in verse 3, it says that, in the course of time, Cain brought an offering to the Lord. So that little phrase, in the course of time, seems to be a liturgical term. So something like, in the right time, at the appropriate time, Cain brought an offering. So we've got this development here in very subtle ways of a who, a when, a what, a where. And the who is the sons of Adam. The what is at the right, I should say the when, is the right time. Maybe even, maybe it's a reference to the Sabbath.

They knew when to do this. And what did they do? They brought an offering, a sacrifice to God. And it's bringing it to God, to His presence. Meaning they knew where to bring it. And if you read the rest of the Torah, the first five books, you realize that you bring it where? To an altar that God has told you to come to. And so this is the earliest moment in human history of a sacrifice, of an offering. And I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but Cain and Abel here are behaving, without any text explaining this, that they're behaving like priests. Like you will see the priests behave later on. And another, maybe something, thought that struck you before is that if you look at all the world religions, barring only a few that we've ever found, every single one of the world religions contains sacrifice or offerings as the central mechanism of how people approach the divine. And right here in the beginning of this story, right after sin has entered the world, right after they have exited the Garden of Eden, there is no instructions. There's no laws. God doesn't do what He will do later in Leviticus and say, now therefore there's an altar here and you have to bring a sacrifice here and you're a priest and this is how it all works. Instead, we see this instinct in humanity, the sons of Adam to priests, to bring an offering, to bring a sacrifice because they feel the weight of what sin has cost them. And what it's cost them is estrangement from God.

And ever since then, all of humanity and every civilization, every culture, every world religion that's ever existed has brought sacrifices and offerings. Why? Because the human heart knows that we are estranged from God and that there is an estrangement from God, from the divine, that can only be fixed by way of sacrifice, by way of offering. And so it's just instinctive that humanity begins to do this. If you think about your own life, if you hurt somebody that you love, if you hurt somebody that you love, what do you do? If you want to repair the relationship, you say, you know, I will do

anything to make up for it. I will give my time away. I'll give my money away. I'll buy you gifts. I will own the fault that's been committed by me, and I'll swallow my pride, and I will say, I want to make a sacrifice before you because I want to repair this relationship. And so we do this instinctively in the normal rhythms of life. And then if you read the Bible, you read ancient history at all, you know that the Greeks had their tabernacles and temples, and the Romans, and the Vedic priest of Indian religion, and the many forms of Hinduism. Humanity has been bringing sacrifices for all of human history, and it is because we are estranged from the real God. And it's instinctive to feel that way and to know that I need to repair this relationship. I need to do something to be able to come home again, to be able to step back through the gate of the garden, back into the holy presence of the real God, the living God. All the world religions, they're instinctively right that we owe something to bring, to go back into God's presence. But of course, they offer it to the wrong thing, the wrong person, to just an idol. And when you read the Bible, you realize that sacrifice is saying three things, three things that the human heart longs to say to God. Number one, it's an offering where you're saying, when I bring crops, when I bring grain, when I bring a lamb, God, you are worth more to me than all of this stuff in my life. That's the offering. But it also says, I need to repair with you.

[11:46] So sacrifice is an acknowledgement that I know something else has to be burned up in my place, in my stead, that I deserve death for what I've done before you. And only something standing in my place can actually repair the justice, the injustice of that relationship. And then the third aspect of sacrifice is communion. And so throughout the Bible, when a sacrifice is altered, the altar then becomes a table. And then you're actually invited to eat with God, to have God's regard in your life, to come back and sit down at the table with God. Every single person everywhere has this instinct. Now, before Cain does anything wrong in this story, he is acting like a priest, and he is coming before God seeking to repair the relationship. And all I want to say, and I need to move on, is that from the very first moment of human history, God has offered a way.

We know that the relationship is broken. And instead of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel and every other human getting what they're supposed to get, and that's death. That's what God says in Genesis 3.

You deserve death. Instead, immediately, we turn the page and there is a way back. There is a way of communion. There is a way to enter back into relationship with God. And it's through looking for a substitute. And through that, God offers communion with the first people. Let me say one more thing about it that's very important. We said that there's a when and there's a where and there's a what going on here. But think about it. Where are they? Where is Cain and Abel in this story? And it might be instinctive to you to say, they're out in the wilderness. They've been kicked out of the Garden of Eden. They've been kicked out of Eden, right? They're east of Eden. But if you look carefully, that's not true. So at the end of Genesis 3, verse 24, it says that they have been kicked out of the Garden of Eden. But it's not until Genesis 4, 16 that we learn Cain has been removed from Eden itself. So where is Cain and Abel when they make the sacrifice? They are in Eden. And Ezekiel 28 says that Eden is this mountaintop temple. That's how it describes it. And at the very top of this mountaintop temple is the Garden of Eden. And what's happened to them is because of their sin, they've exited the garden. They can't be in the home, the true home with God, the garden itself. But just like later, and if you've read Leviticus or Exodus, Numbers, you know, you might know that the temple, the tabernacle, Solomon's temple, God said, I want you to make the temple, the tabernacle, like Eden. So it's not the other way around. It's that the tabernacle and the temple are like Eden. And you might remember that the temple has a holy of holies, the closest place to God's presence. And then it's got the holy place just outside of the holiest of holies. Now, only the priest can go into the holy of holies once a year to be fully in God's presence all the way in. But where do the sacrifices take place? Where's the altar?

It's in the holy place, the place just outside the holiest of holies. Where is Cain and Abel? They are in Eden. They are in God's presence. That's how the text puts it. Cain says, God, please don't kick me out of your presence. God's presence is Eden. It's in Eden. It's in this great temple. And there is an altar there. And they are standing in the holy place, yearning to go all the way in behind the curtain. And that means at the very beginning of human history, it is God who pulls the veil of the curtain back and steps out of the curtain and says, I will meet you at the place of the altar. God says, I will extend my grace so much that already, already he's pulling back the veil. He's stepping through the curtain and he's meeting Cain and Abel.

[15:38] His presence is being gifted to the place behind, beyond the curtain. Already God's grace is so sweet, so overwhelming, so excessive, so surprising, according to what you would have read in Genesis chapter 3. Now, the second thing we learn here, and this is where you get into the meat of the story, is the coldness of sin. Not only does sin estrange us, take us away from God's presence, yet God comes behind the veil to us. The second thing is the coldness of sin. And then that's what happens in verse 3 to 5. So in verse 3 to 5, they actually give the offering. So in the course of time, Cain brings the offering to the Lord from the fruit of the ground, and then Abel brings of the firstborn of his flock and the fat portions. Now you read that, and you say they've both brought an offering, but then God accepts one offering and gives his gracious presence to Abel, but not to Cain. And the question becomes, what's the difference? What's the difference between the two? It looks like they're performing the same thing. And there's so little info given, and that's on purpose, because the difference is not found in any behavior they did. It's not found in the religious acts at all. The difference, the reason there's such little information is because it's trying to get you to say, it must be the case that the only difference between Cain and Abel is a difference in their hearts. It's not because, as some commentators have sometimes said, because Cain offers grain, but Abel offers that animal sacrifice, blood sacrifice. That's not the difference. We know later on in Leviticus that God accepts both. No, what's the difference? And all we're given is these two little words that Abel brought of his firstborn and of the fat portions. And you read the rest of the Bible, and you start to realize that God asks for the firstborn, and he asks in Leviticus for the fat portions. Very strange to us as modern people. Why?

Why the fat portions? Because for the ancient person, fat is flavor. And for us too, good steak. Fat is flavor. And in the same way, when you bring your firstborn, when Abel brings his firstborn, what is he saying? He's saying, God, you are more valuable to me than the first thing that I get in life from my work. You are more precious to me than that. And when he brings the fat portions, it's a pulling back the veil on his heart. His heart is saying, Lord, you are more precious to me than the thing that flavors, the thing that gives flavor to life. And it's built right in even to the names.

So Cain's name in Hebrew is Kayan, and it's in this family of words that means accumulation by gain and holding on to possessions. It really means accumulation by way of technology, by way of craft. Cain, next week, is going to build the first city by way of technology and by craft. And so there's this subtle suggestion that the difference in Cain and Abel is the difference in the heart, not in the religious practice. And what's the difference in the heart? The difference in the heart is Cain is the classic elder brother. He's the first elder brother, actually, in all of history. And he's the classic elder brother. In other words, he comes and he performs the religious act, but he does it in a humdrum, cold, mechanical way where you can tell even from the subtle hints that he does not care about communion with God. He doesn't care about the estrangement he's had from God. He doesn't want to be back in God's presence. He's just fulfilling a religious duty in the same way that the Pharisees will be called the elder brothers many thousand years from now. He's the classic elder brother.

And we're given one explanation, one little word in the New Testament that really gets at the heart of the difference. And it shows up in Hebrews chapter 11 when we're told that Abel brought a sacrifice and was accepted. How? And the writer to the Hebrews says, by faith. By faith, Abel's sacrifice was regarded and commended to him as righteousness. Now, listen, where does the gospel first show up in the Bible? Genesis 3, Genesis 4. What is happening here? You could look at this and you could say, well, doesn't God come to Cain and say, if you do well, will you not also be accepted? And you could read that as, if you do good works, will you not also be invited back into God's presence? But what is he saying? No, it's saying in the New Testament, by faith, Abel was commended as righteous. The very same thing that will be said of Abraham, that by faith he was received as righteous. What is this a pronouncement of? This means that in Genesis 4, it wasn't the ritual act of sacrifice that enabled

Abel to receive God's communion, his regard. What is it? It's that he believed that God would be gracious to him, a sinner. And he said, God, you are more valuable to me than my flock, than my stuff, than my gain. And so I know that this religious act of sacrifice is paltry. It's not the blood of bulls and goats. They're never going to satisfy the justice that's required of me. What does the text say? Hebrews 11 says, he was justified by faith that day. And it was the fact that Cain was actually depending upon his own merits, his own life. He had no regard for God. He didn't want to be saved.

[21:00] He didn't want to come forward to God in faith. And that's the difference. Sin, sin estranges you from God. It creates distance and God provides a way. Sin then even in the midst of that way that God has given, saying, come to me, turn to the substitute, turn to the sacrifice. Sin creates a cold mechanistic posture in the human heart that turns most people into elder brothers and sisters. That even when we embrace the religious calling that we've been given by God to enter back in and to come back to worship and to approach him on the basis of substitutionary sacrifice, we do it with cold hearts. And the God who wants to be warm to us, and we're made to be warm towards him. There's a coldness. The sin of Cain, what is it? It's just classic idolatry. It's saying, I'll do the religion, but I don't really want God at all. And this will be enough for me. You know, hopefully God will accept me on the basis of my religious performance. He's a classic older brother. That means that if you are to ever re-enter the garden of God, the place that God made for you to meet with him and be at home with him in true joy forever, what we learn here is it's not going to be by the way of obedience anymore. You know, Adam and Eve could have stayed in the garden by the way of obedience, but now we learn it will not be by the way of good works. It could only be by faith that God would regard you as just.

And we don't yet know the mechanics of that. We don't yet know, but we'll find out in a moment. Third, the potential of sin. Here's the test, then the test that comes to Cain in verse 6 and 7. So in verse 6 and 7, the Lord comes to Cain and says, why are you angry? Why is your face downcast and fallen? Why are you depressed? Why are you so upset? If you do well, will you not be accepted? So just like I said a moment ago, you could read that and say, is he saying that if Cain would only sacrifice the proper way, do the right works, then God might accept him and give regard to him? But the reason you find out, again, that that's not the case is right in verse 7 right after that, what he says to him. This is the most important clause in this chapter. Chapter, verse 7, part B, and God says this. It's where we learn the most about sin. If you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, and you must rule over it. There's no theological proposition in Genesis 4 to 11 about what sin is. There's no hard definition, but this is the sentence where you learn the most about what has happened to us about human corruption. And this is how we know that he's telling Cain, it's not by works that you will get back into my grace. No. Why? Because what does he say? He says, if you do not do well, sin, literally in Hebrew, is a croucher at your doorstep.

What does that mean? He's taken the language of Genesis 3, the serpent, and saying sin is a predatorial force that is now crouching, hiding itself in the bushes at your feet, in the bottom of your heart. And what would it mean to not do well? What would it mean? It would mean you never see that.

[24:26] So by definition, if sin is a crouching predator, you know, crouching tiger, hidden dragon. Sin. That wasn't funny, I guess. No. Sin is a crouching tiger. It really is. It's a predator. It's a coiled serpent.

If by definition it is that, it's coiled, you can't see it, then that means he's saying to Cain, can you see? Can you see that you're a sinner? You don't see it. It's crouching at your doorstep, but you're not awake to it. What is he asking Cain? He's saying, will you simply see and confess, I'm a sinner in need of grace. That's the request he's making. And here we learn what I think is probably the most powerful definition, one of the most powerful definitions of sin in the Old Testament. Let me rattle off to you four quick things about what sin is according to this moment.

We learn here that sin is a power in your heart that should not be there. So sin is a serpent, a leopard, a tiger in the bottom of your heart that doesn't belong there. In Genesis 3, sin was the serpent on the outside trying to tempt you. In Genesis 4, now sin is inside of you trying to destroy you.

And it's not supposed to be there. What was once on the outside has now moved to the inside. So it's alien to what humanity should be. And secondly, sin wants you to think that it's not there. And so maybe this is the greatest danger we have with our sin. Sin wants you to believe that sin doesn't exist. And of course, in the same way that I mentioned at the beginning that today the sociologist will tell us sin is a fiction. It's a way that churches have tried to control people over history, social control by way of ministers and pulpits. But that's exactly what sin wants us to think, that it doesn't exist, that it's not there. It's crouching. It's trying to hide itself from us. Thirdly, sin is a force that has the potential, we learn here, to dominate you. So this is the real meat of it.

[26:30] He says, sin is a predator crouching at your door, and if you don't rule over it, it's going to rule over you. And he's saying there that, Cain, what's going on in your heart right now as you look and you hate your brother and you have envy towards him and you want God's regard, that is a predator in you that is going to grow and grow and grow unless you can master it, rule over it. Now in the same way, you think about, just take something as simple as maybe refusal to forgive a parent for the way they treated you as a child, for the way they raised you. Think about the refusal to forgive somebody in your life that has really hurt you. And the more you hold on to that, it becomes more and more a grudge, and that grudge makes you more and more bitter. And it ends up being like a drip of poison that's poured into the well that then ruins all the relationships in your life. You can never really get past it.

Sin is a predatorial force that if you let it in, it will continue to bite at you until it dominates you. And so eventually, petting any sin in your life, the tiniest little sin over and over again, what happens is, well, Smeagol eventually becomes Gollum. And anything that's in your life, that's why Jesus is so extreme in Matthew 5 to 7 when he says, if you struggle with lust, cut your eye out. And you say, whoa, of course it's a metaphor. But what is he saying? He's saying that if you make peace constantly with even a thought that is sinful, it's going to be the predator that eventually dominates you and seizes you. And so you've got to be killing sin lest it kill you, because that is exactly what sin wants to do to you. And eventually, you pet your envy, and you pet your bitterness, and it becomes murder. And so the idea here is not that there are two different types of people in the world. There's Cain's and there's Abel's. You know, there's really bad people that could commit murder, and then there's an Abel out there who's peaceful and humble. It's saying that every single sinner has a predator at the bottom of their soul. And that sin, that force, that power within you wants to dominate you. And so lastly, that means that we've got to see the earliest grace that's given in human history here. And in verse 6, let me just take a step back, and we'll be very brief. Verse 6, even when Cain has given his offering, and there's no regard for his offering, even then, God has every right in the midst of Cain's anger and his lack of desire for God to come and bring the courtroom of justice to Cain in that moment, and to say, you don't desire me. You don't want to be with me. You're to be cast out. But instead, in verse 6, how does God come? He says, Cain, why is your face fallen and downcast? Why are you depressed? Why are you so upset? I just want you to note, God comes to this man first as a wonderful counselor. He comes to him and says, I'm not here to bring the court of justice upon you right now. I'm here to be your counselor and to say, don't you know, Cain, that there is grace for you as well? That's the very first way God approaches him. And then right after that, in verse 9, Cain murders his brother, Abel. He lets that predator of envy become something so big in his life that he becomes a murderer. And how does God come to him? He comes to him in the same way that he came to Adam in Genesis 3. Remember in Genesis 3, when he came to Adam, he said, what have you done, Adam? And he came gentle.

[30:08] And here, he has every right to come to a murderer and bring the weight of justice down upon him. And he comes to him and he says, where's your brother? And you see, he's coming again, and he's trying to give him an opportunity. What is this opportunity? The same opportunity Adam was given, and it's to confess and say, I did it. That's what this question is. And then we tell where Cain's heart is because he gets snarky with God. And he says, am I my brother's keeper? Am I responsible for him? Am I supposed to be the one keeping up with him? You see the depth that Cain is continuing to fall into when the God of grace comes to him and says, would you just confess? I'm still here to show grace to you.

I'm still here to show mercy to you. And then in verse 15, some people have read the mark of Cain. You know, he says, you have to go outside of Eden. You have to leave the temple. You have to go outside the city of God and be a wanderer. And he puts this mark on Cain that says, nobody is allowed to kill him. Why? And some people have read that as some kind of negative thing, but no, what is God doing?

Cain says, if I go out there, people are going to kill me. Yes, there are other people living in the world. I'm not going to touch that today. I'll leave that for a later time. There are other people already present outside of Eden. He says, when they find me, they're going to kill me. Why? Because they know the justice. They know that if a man has murdered a man, that the court of justice is that the man forfeits his life. We read that later in the Torah and Levitical law. But he says, no, I will put my name on you. I'll mark you. And the mark of God in the rest of Genesis and Deuteronomy is

something that says, holy to the Lord, set apart. And I want you to see, because we're running out of time, the simple claim is this. God is giving excessive grace to a murderer and giving him his life to be lived and saying, there is still a way back. There is still an opportunity to come home again. And what we learn here is, even if the beast has taken over in your life fully, and there may be some today here who feel that way, that the beast, the little sins that have always been there, I have embraced over and over and over and over again. And I have become this person.

And I've done things in my life that shocked me. I never thought I'd be capable of, what is God saying? He's saying, there is a way back. There is a way back. There's a way back into the garden. On what basis could he give a grace like this? There's one question as I finish in Genesis 3, really one statement from God that is the foundation of Genesis 4 to 11. And it's when God says to Adam and Eve that one day there would be born to the woman an offspring that would crush the head of a serpent, the head of the serpent. Now we know that it's not just the head of the serpent, Satan, outside of us, but it's that offspring is going to have to crush the head of the serpent within us as well, the predator within. And that means that if you're an ancient Near Eastern reader, you've got to be asking the question, who is this seed of the woman, this one son that would be born? Well, flip the page to Genesis 4. What do you think? You think it must be Cain. He's the firstborn son. He was born with the help of the Lord, but then he becomes this murderer. Then you think, well, could it be Abel?

And you can only say, well, Abel's blood, he was murdered. Abel's blood cries out from the ground for justice. That's what Hebrews 11 says. So it's not Cain. It's not Abel. But wait, who could it be? [33:53] On what basis could God look forward in history and offer grace to Cain the murderer? On what basis? And the basis is that Hebrews 11 says that Abel's blood cried out from the ground for what? For justice. But Abel, that priest, Abel, that prophet, was simply Abel, the victim. He could never be a substitute. He could never gain justice that his blood deserved. But Hebrews 11 says that Abel's blood points to a better sacrifice, a better Abel. And Jesus Christ is the true and better Abel.

Abel's blood cried out from the ground for justice. And how was Abel murdered? Abel was murdered by an elder brother. And thousands of years later, a true and better Abel would come into the world, and men of religious scrupulosity, elder brothers all around him, would take him to a fake trial and murder him. The elder brother killed the true and better Abel. But though Abel's blood could never accomplish justice, Jesus Christ, the true and better Abel, his blood does accomplish justice. See, on what basis could God look at Cain and say, there can be justice in your place? And it was because he was looking forward to Jesus Christ, the true and better Abel, and saying, one day, your little brother, the real Abel, his blood will come up into the heavenly courtroom and be the sacrifice that says, because this has been offered, I will never demand another payment. God the Father was willing to receive the blood of Jesus Christ to show forgiveness to Cain, the murderer. And that's the gospel. And the gospel was preached all the way back in Genesis chapter 4. Friends, if you are here today and you say, I've gone too far, you need to know that the blood of Jesus Christ is all the payment you need.

That you can come back in. You can go through the curtain. You can have home with God. You can enter back into the garden. You don't have to be a wanderer forever. You don't have to be lost. Come by faith. Let's pray. Father, we ask that you would bring us back into your presence, and we thank you so much that it is only by faith in the blood of Jesus that we are received and accepted. We thank you for your excessive grace and your mercy to sinners, and we thank you for that in Jesus' name. Amen.