

## Advent Midweek 1 - This is My Son - Cain

1. For those of you who've had children you know that when a husband and wife discover that they're expecting all kinds of things go through your minds.
  - a. Parents begin dreaming about what their child will be like, what he or she will accomplish - they hope for the best.
    - i. Every parent wants to be able to point out their child at any stage in their life and proudly introduce them by saying "This is my son" or "This is my daughter."
    - ii. But every parent has to face inevitable disappointment as well.
    - iii. Our children will not live up to every dream or expectation that we have of them.
    - iv. Life with children does not go as we plan or hope.
  - b. This Advent series will look at three father-son relationships found in the Old Testament.
    - i. These stories will explore the hopes and expectations that the fathers had for their sons but will especially look at the pain that each father faced as his son failed to meet expectations.
    - ii. Ultimately, each sermon will end by looking at the perfect Father-and-Son relationship: the one shared by our heavenly Father and His only begotten Son upon whom God smiled and said, "**This is My Son, whom I love, with whom I am well pleased**" (Matthew 3:17).
2. We begin our series by looking at one of the saddest accounts of a son in the history of mankind—the son of Adam, Cain.
  - a. Adam and Eve had high hopes for Cain.
    - i. This was evident not only by his name but also by what Eve, his mother, says about him.
    - ii. In our translation, after Cain was born, Eve says, "**I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.**" (Gen 4:1)
    - iii. However, some scholars, including Martin Luther, have understood Eve to say, "**I have gotten the man of the Lord.**"
    - iv. Luther and others believed that Eve thought Cain was the promised Seed of Genesis 3:15 who would crush the serpent's head and bring salvation from Adam and Eve's sin.
  - b. The name *Cain* comes from the Hebrew word meaning "to possess" or "to acquire."
    - i. Martin Luther imagines Eve thinking like this: "I remember what we have lost through sin. But now...I have gotten the man of God who will **obtain** (acquire) that lost glory for us again."

- ii. Contrast that to his brother, Abel, who gets no such welcome from his mother and whose name means “vanity” and implies something that is worthless or cast aside.
    - iii. Perhaps the names of these two brothers reveal the hopes and expectations of their parents.
    - iv. But if that were the case, Adam and Eve were only setting themselves up for more disappointment because Cain was no savior.
  - c. As we heard in our reading tonight, Cain was full of selfish pride.
    - i. That was the result of the sin that had already infected the first children of the human race, passed down to him from his parents.
    - ii. When God accepted Abel’s offering but not Cain’s he grew angry and killed his brother – the first murderer in history.
    - iii. Many people wonder why God accepted Abel’s offering and not Cain’s
    - iv. But it’s made clear in Hebrews 11 that Abel possessed true faith in God and received His favor while Cain’s offerings were rejected because his heart did not belong to God.
- 3. Can you imagine the pain and sorrow of Adam and Eve when they found out what Cain had done?
  - a. The son they thought would save their lives instead became a taker of life.
    - i. They had to come to grips that the curse of their original sin had been passed down to their own children.
    - ii. And it continued to be passed down to their grandchildren, and to their great-grandchildren, through every generation up to and including our own.
  - b. We are all sons of Adam, and we have inherited the same inclination to sin that lurked in the heart of Cain.
    - i. As Romans 5:19 tells us, **“By the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners.”**
    - ii. And we like Cain are guilty of murder, as Jesus makes clear in Matthew 5.
    - iii. Everyone who becomes angry with his or her brother is liable to the judgment of murder.
    - iv. Anyone who insults his brother or says to anyone “You fool!” will face the same condemnation that Cain did: exile from God.
  - c. When it comes to keeping God’s commandments, none of us have lived up to the expectations of our heavenly Father.
    - i. Our offerings to God have not always been made with hearts full of faith and joy but out of grudging compulsion.

- ii. Just like the children of Israel some 800 years before Christ, **“Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me...I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.”** (Isa 1:13)
  - iii. We have harbored anger and envy in our hearts toward others, and yet we dare to show up here as though we were innocent.
  - iv. As children of God, we have fallen well short of expectations.
- d. If Adam and Eve had hoped that Cain was the promised Seed they were sorely mistaken and let down.
  - i. But God’s plan was still intact.
  - ii. The Savior would indeed be a son of Adam—true man—but would also be the Son of God.
- 4. Into this world of hatred and murder was born our God of love and life.
  - a. From the moment Jesus was a little child, the spiritual heirs of Cain sought to take His life, and eventually, they succeeded in spilling His blood.
    - i. God told Cain, **“The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground,”** (Gen 4:10) - the blood of Abel cried out for justice for himself.
    - ii. But Hebrews 12 tells us that Jesus’ blood cries out not for Himself but on behalf of the whole world, **“You have come . . . to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel”** (Hebrews 12:22a, 24).
    - iii. Jesus became our murdered brother so that He might keep us from everlasting death.
  - b. Jesus is the true Son of Adam whose shed blood and broken body are the perfect sacrifice accepted by God the Father to wash clean our murderous hearts and make us children of God.
    - i. **“For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man (Adam), much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ”** (Romans 5:17).
    - ii. Because of Jesus, our perfect brother, your heavenly Father is not disappointed in you.
    - iii. Instead, through your Baptism, He looks down upon you with approval and love and says proudly: **“This is My son or daughter, with whom I am well pleased.”** Amen.