

I invite you to open your bibles this morning, to today's scripture text, which can be found in the book of Genesis, the 4th chapter, verses 3-5. Which can be found on page ____ in your pew bibles. We continue in our series "Taking care of God's gifts" Today's scripture reveals a lesson of what God Honors.

Ge 4:2-5

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 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.

As we continue our series about Taking Care of Gods gifts, we are going to take a closer look at our heart today. The heart we have about our possessions and what is it is to Honor God with their sacrifice. What is the motivation to our giving, to our sacrifices. How we choose to steward our gifts from God, and the type of person we choose to be in regards to our charity to others, and our sacrifices to God.

What does God Honor? There are certain things that God does not honor, and cannot honor. There are certain behaviors that God does not honor. Let's look at two well-known individuals for a good understanding of these two types of people.

In Genesis chapter 4, looking in verse 3, we see Adam and Eve were kicked out of the garden, they conceived and had children, Cane and Able. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with respect and favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not have respect or look with favor. So, Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

We have the two sons of Adam and Eve, Cane and Able, and they both brought an offering to God. Cain was a hard-worker, the farmer, always tilling the ground and sweating, and he brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. Cain ("acquisition") is a worldly man, a mere man of the earth. His religion was void of any sense of sin, or need of atonement. This religious type is described in 2Pe 2. [2 Pe 2:1-3](#) But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even

denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. Several things are said of Cain: (1) he worships in self-will (2) is angry with God (3) refuses to bring a sin offering, he is disobedient to Gods word (4) murders his brother (5) lies to God (6) becomes a vagabond (7) is, nevertheless, the object of the divine uneasiness. He is living outside of faith, in disobedience.

Able was a hard-worker as well, a shepherd, and he brought an offering of the fat of the sheep, of the flock, he brought a lamb. Abel ("exhalation," or, "that which ascends") is a type of the spiritual man. He is obedient to Gods word and lives *within* the faith of God. This religious type is described in Heb 9:22 22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. His sacrifice, in which atoning blood was shed was therefore at once his *confession of sin* and the *expression of his faith* in the confident statement of a substitute flock Type of Christ, the Lamb of God, the most constant type of the suffering Messiah--"the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" It is this demonstration of faith that God honors. In Heb 11:4 we read By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

God had respect for one offering but not the other. Cain's offering was not rejected because it was a non-animal offering, but rather because his heart, or attitude, was not consistent with the act of worship. This is evident by comparing the description of Cain's offering as the *fruit of the ground* to the description of Abel's offering as *of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions*. Abel, whose heart was fully devoted to worship gave not just "of the flock," but the best of the flock.

The description of Cain's offering implies that Cain did not offer the first fruits, the choicest produce, because his heart was not in the right place for worship. Cain knew how to worship God and did everything He was supposed to do except in the end He felt His *efforts were more important* than the sacrifice of the atoning blood of the lamb, simply, *God's sacrifice of the Lamb of God*.

It is no different in our day, instead of abiding in the life of Christ and being thankful for His blood shed for our sins. We can start to feel our ministries, our efforts, our good deeds, the fruit of our labor, are what God is impressed with somehow. We think **we** are important in God's work and therefore we deserve His favor. Of course, in the end, God does not approve of this attitude and condition of the heart, and leaves us to ourselves which leaves us in a place of being downcast just like Cain was.

Grace is the only motivator to acceptable worship. Grace leaves us in the place of rest, peace, joy and acceptance with God. Abel in the end, realized, only God's sacrifice mattered and His did not.

We must realize the life of Christ *in us* **will** produce the works that please God, and therefore *our lives and work* **will be rooted** in the only sacrifice God ever accepts: That of His Son.

We want to be pleasing to God. We want our giving to be accepted by God. But there are certain behaviors that we cannot bring and present to God. Selfishness, disobedience to his word, a lack of faith. There are certain things that are unacceptable to him. We labor, and we seek God, like Cain and Able, so that we may be accepted by him, and receive his blessings upon our lives, but it must be rooted in faith.

God had a short conversation with Cain after his sacrifice was rejected, and it was an interesting conversation. The Lord said to Cain, "**Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?**" If Cane would have brought lamb as an offering, God is ready to accept it, God is ready to accept him. If he brought his offering through obedience to his Gods word, through a heart of faith following the Lord. The lamb is an offering that is a picture of Jesus Christ. The lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

Through the whole old testament, the Hebrews brought a lamb as an offering. A picture of Jesus Christ. In that way we could bring the fruit of the ground and have it accepted by God. There are certain things that God will accept, and there are certain things God will not accept, and will not honor.

Let's look at another way God will honor our giving through proper worship of our Lord, and faith. The main idea that Able is demonstrating to us. In Hebrews chapter 11, verse 6 it says **6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**

We must believe God. Start out with Faith. Trust in God. “without faith it is impossible to please God” God is not going to honor that which is not of faith. Ro 14:23 and everything that does not come from faith is sin. The reason Cain’s offering was rejected. God honors faith, he honors faithfulness.

1 Jn 5:4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. How precious it is to know and trust the lamb of God, Jesus Christ, and just take him at his word. How precious it is to have the faith and the peace that comes from believing the word of God. When we look at the Bible, where God gave us his word, we believe it, and we are blessed from believing it.

We believe it and we receive strength. We believe it and we receive peace. We believe it and we receive hope and help. We believe it and we have a pattern to follow, where we will have fellowship with God. We will receive forgiveness. God laid out some simple instructions for each of us. Its not the part of the Bible that we cannot understand, it’s not that difficult portion that’s going to cause us trouble. Its going to be clearly, “thus sayith the Lord.”

Where we follow the word of God simply because God said it, and we want to follow and obey Him, because it is the word of God. When we accept it with the authority of God himself. It so unfortunate, that so many people will read the word of God and consider the issue, and try to negotiate. They will say, “let’s look at this portion of scripture, and then we will decide what to do with it.”

Christians are to say, “here is the word of God, I’m going to follow it, I’m going to obey it, and as I understand it I’m going to practice it.” What do you have in your life that is a practice that is ungodly, is unbiblical, is wrong, what sin are you

dragging along and tolerating, that God cannot bless? We are to come out and be clean, we are to have a pure heart, a clean conscience, and a sincere faith. We are to be separate from the world.

When you take a boat or a ship out into the sea, the sea gets pretty deep after a while. If you have more water inside your boat than outside your boat, then you have a problem. They have started to make boats that you can saw in half and they will still float because of the material they are made out of. There is a picture of a boston-whaler fishing boat that they have sawed in half with a chainsaw and the two halves are floating! In our travels on the sea of life, if you get more of the world on the inside than on the outside, it's not going to float like a boston-whaler. You're going to sink.

If you build your life on a foundation of worldliness, like Cain, in selfishness, disobedience, worldly desires, having your own way, improper worship, and a lack of faith, it's going to fall flat on you. We can say, "I believe God," but the things we actually believe are the things we practice. If you want to see what you actually believe, take a look at your life and judge yourself based upon your personal behavior. Don't let yourself say "...yeah, I know that's wrong, but..." justifying your actions.

A little faith goes a long way. We go through Hebrews chapter 11 and we see the faith in every circumstance produced some action and some behavior in their life that was following and perusing God, living in a life of faith with God. What we don't read is that they had a pass of faith and they believed, but they didn't do anything about it. What do you know that you should be doing.

Some things we need to approach because they are the right things and we are not pursuing them. Other things we need to get away from them, confess them, and forsake them, because they are the wrong things and we are doing them. In the book of Eph 5:13-14 **But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for it is light that makes everything visible.** The closer we get to the light of Jesus Christ, the better our imperfections show up.

Its so important to have faith. Our faith isn't a dead faith, it's a living, and a lively hope that we have in Christ. Why would we live for Christ and put half-hearted effort into it? When we start putting forth half-hearted effort we don't live *an abundant life*. We don't live what God has intended for us. When we don't live pursuing holiness, and we are not pursuing Jesus Christ. That's not a Christian behavior.

The scripture points us to Love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our might. God's intentions for his kids are to have faith and trust him, a child like faith if we look in the gospels. Humble faith, humble as a little child. We need to become like a little child, when we look at the nail marks in our Saviors hands. We should trust him, not for our Salvation, for our life. Not for eternity but for today, not for down the road but for the next five minutes, we need to trust him now. We want to have the security of faith, God honors faith.

God takes our small step of faith, and he will shine on it, and encourage us to take a bigger step of faith, and he will bless that, so we can take a bigger step of faith. We are either growing in our faith, or we are dying in our faith. It's a miserable horrible thing to doubt, isn't it? God honors faith.

We should behave holy, and spiritually because of our Savior Jesus Christ and our connection, our relationship with him. It shouldn't be a one day a week experience we only live on Sunday. We take him with us everywhere we go, led by him, fed by him, protected by him, inspired to give of ourselves and our gifts for him. For Christ, who is our life, our life is lived in Christ, our God. God honors faith, God honors service.

There was a youth group working on a woman's house, and they weren't having very much fun. They hated being there, they hated the job. The porch and the front yard were littered with old cars and sofas and garbage. Eventually they began to make fun of the people they were there to help. They began to act like people that would rather be doing something else. They picked on each other, they argued, they began to make sarcastic jabs at every opportunity.

Eventually the woman that owned the house came out with tears streaming down her face. She sat in the grass in front of the house shaking her finger speaking through the few teeth she had left. She really got after this group of kids. She asked, "what's wrong with you kids, don't you know that I have been praying for a long time for someone to show up and help me? Don't you know how badly my kids need bedrooms, and a bathroom that works. I have been praying for this for a long time, you don't know that you are the answer to my prayers. Why don't you treat each other like an answer to prayer?"

The young people were ashamed. From that moment on, their attitudes changed, their thoughts changed, everything changed. Instead of it being an obligation, something they had to do, it became a mission to them. Rather than tearing each other down and being sarcastic, they encouraged each other and built

each other up. It's amazing that when someone tells you that you are the answer to prayer, it changes you, it provokes you.

Each of you, are an answer to prayer. We all realize that we don't always act like it. Each of you, are a blessing. Again, we don't always act like it.

Eph 4:1-4 4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit the bond of peace.

The church, can accomplish so much more, if we get in the same yolk, and pull together. The world spends too much time thinking about each other's problems. Spending too much time pointing fingers and being sarcastic. Everybody thinks that someone should step up and be a good example. We are the someone they are asking for. We are Christ's church.

If you look around, thinking of your witness to others, and ask yourself, "what would the Church be if everyone was just like me? If every member was just like me? If everyone cares just like me? If everyone works just like me? If everyone consecrates the holiness just like me? If everyone obeys God's word just like me?" It's so easy to figure out who a verse would apply to as long as it's not you.

The word of God calls us to make a personal application of God's word to our own lives. God honors faith, God honors hard work, God honors faithful giving, God honors service. God honors his word. Isa 55:11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Jas 1:22-25 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.

Sometimes we will follow the word of God as a suggestion. Sometimes we will follow the word of God as though we will make a decision later. Sometimes we will follow the word of God as it is, the word of God. The commandment and the instruction God has given us for life.

Our giving should be like Abels', an act of worship. Giving sacrificially, like one that realizes that it is a way to show faith in God, in his provisions, of his gifts, that when we give, we receive. We should give the best of our crops, the first fruits. We are blessing God by blessing those around us that we give to, that he sends us to, for his purpose. The more we give, the more we receive. When we are proper stewards with the gifts of God, it is an act of worship that God honors.

Gracious Lord, Heavenly Father

We thank you for your Love, for your Grace, for your word.

Thank you for sending us your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,

The lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

We pray Father that you will help us to be your good stewards,

obedient to your word, worshipping, and living in faithfulness.

Give us the strength to complete the tasks you have prepared for

us each day making us a blessing and an answer to prayer

to those who are lost in this world of darkness.

May our witness draw them into a deep loving relationship

with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen