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Order Of Worship (Liturgy)

Congregation: First Evangelical Reformed
Church in Singapore
Singapore
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Trinity Hymnal Revised 1990, The Psalter 1912

Psalter 179 - Invocation and Praise
TH 681 - How Gentle God's Commands
TH 582 - Yield Not to Temptation

Preached At:

Title: When We Do Not Love
Text: [LD 40 Genesis 4:1-16 \(View\)](#)
Occasion: [Regular Sunday](#)
Topic: [6th Commandment \(Murder\)](#)

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When We Do Not Love

HC LD 40, Genesis 4:1-16

We're people who are easily angry. She snatched my toy! I'm going to cry, yell, and get her into trouble. He insulted me - I'm going to destroy him. They took our jobs, used up our resources, we're going to get them. She's given me nothing but grief all these years, I'm going to get rid of her. God accepted his sacrifice and not mine, I'm going to sacrifice him to appease my grief. Murder happens when we do not love; when we do not prefer others over ourselves. Not too long ago, we looked at this passage about Cain and Abel. We saw how senseless sin can be. Cain killed his brother out of jealousy. One of his descendants, Lamech, killed because he was insulted. And he did it with no remorse; and challenged anyone to stop him. Why? Because of sin, we don't love but hate.

In considering Lord's Day 40 and expounding the 6th commandment, we see 3 points from Genesis 4. **Firstly, the murderous sins against life. Secondly, the roots of murderous sin. Thirdly, the godly**

way to keep loving life.

Firstly, the murderous sins against life. In this famous account, we see that Adam and Eve had two sons. The older killed the younger. It was murder. Heidelberg Catechism Question 105 asks - *“What does God require in the sixth commandment? A: I am not to dishonor, hate, injure, or kill my neighbor by thoughts, words, or gestures, and much less by deeds, whether personally or through another; rather, I am to put away all desire of revenge. Moreover, I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself. Therefore, also, the government bears the sword to prevent murder.”* It speaks of what God forbids – the dishonoring, hating, injuring, and killing of another through thought, words, gestures, and deeds. We see several ways that Cain murdered. And we see this in the narrative itself - how the Divine author has placed his words, sequences, and events.

Very clearly in verse 8 it was by his deeds - *“Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”* Abel died as a result of Cain's action. They were in a field. Now, we don't know how it was done. Cain in the field with the candlestick or Cain in the field with the axe. But the Bible says he rose up. This word means to stand with hostile intent. Like Psalm 68 which says - let God arise and all his enemies be scattered. This can also refer to his physical position. He was seated perhaps, and then he rose up to kill - which means he was in a position where he had leverage over Abel. Hostility combined with force and leverage - there was blood shed when he slew him. Matthew 23:35 speaks of how righteous Abel's blood was shed. And verse 10 suggests that the death of Abel was violent - *“the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.”* It was of such a nature that if it could, the cries of the blood or more accurately, cries of the bloods (plural) of Abel cried out to God. It was a violent and bloody murder.

But it was also by his violent demeanor manifested in his behavior. Several things happened. Verse 5 says that he was very wroth, and his countenance fell. The word “wroth” is a verb, not an adjective. It means to break out in anger - like a volcano blowing its top. He was not feeling angry so much as he was angered; or to be more active in voice, he burned. It was more than just a feeling, it was an action or attitude. It was something he did, not just something he felt. The Bible says be angry and sin not. Anger by itself is an emotion that may not be sinful; but there is a point where it is acted out in heart, mind, hand, and strength.

Furthermore, his countenance fell. Now, this wasn't a sad downcast look. Rather, this gesture meant something angry. When you are disgusted, you roll your eyes. When you are angry, you glare and glower. He was wroth. There was a change in his look. Like in Genesis 31, after Jacob increased in his wealth and number of cattle, the countenance of Laban, his father-in-law changed and Jacob knew it was time to leave. There was a change in attitude, in demeanor, in behavior or gesture. So likewise for Cain, there was murder in his eyes. In thoughts and gestures, he killed.

And we see it in his violent words. In verse 8 before Cain killed Abel, he talked to him first. *“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”* What they talked about was not recorded for us - we can't derive the violent content from the words. However, it's significant that they talked first before Cain killed Abel. It could have been an exchange of angry words, where Cain was not satisfied, and thus expressed himself in actions. I'm not sure - it's possible from the order of events. Now, if these words were angry words before they were in the field, then why would Abel have gone to meet him there? But if these words were duplicitous words, used to deceive Abel into meeting with him in the field away from others where he would kill him; then these words were even worse - there was premeditation to do violence. These were the murderous sins against Abel's life.

But secondly, we see the roots of murderous sin. Yes, he burned with anger. Yes, he rose up and killed his brother - shedding lots of blood. Yes, he may have been duplicitous in words. But what were the underlying reasons? Catechism question 106 asks - *“But does this commandment speak only of killing? A: By forbidding murder God teaches us that He hates the root of murder, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge, and that He regards all these as murder.”* Jesus taught that all unrighteous anger is murder. And what we see is that Cain was angry with God. Verse 4 says that God has respect unto Abel and his sacrifice. The word translated “respect” here means to regard favorably. So God approved of Abel and his sacrifice. We see this in Hebrews 11:4 - *“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts...”* But he did not approve Cain or his offering. Verse 5 - *“But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.”* Not good enough! And the immediate result was anger - *“And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.”* But at whom was he angry? Context tells us it was not at his brother first, but at God. When God rejected his offering; he immediately got angry. He lost honor and esteem before God which he had worked so hard to obtain - by the sweat of his labor, all the days of his life, did he produce fruit from the ground. But he could not obtain God's favor on his own terms.

It's like Jonah. Jonah became angry and depressed when he realized that God relented of his plans to judge the Ninevites. Just as God asked Cain, God asked Jonah twice if he had a right to be angry. The anger was against God - that God chose not to punish the Ninevites (which was his prerogative); that God chose not to accept his sacrifice (which was also his prerogative).

His anger then turned against his brother because Abel pleased God. God accepted Abel and his sacrifice. So this was envy. The New Testament commentary explains this. 1 John 3:11-12 says, *“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.”* Why did Cain kill? Because his brother did better than he. His brother received God's favor by offering a life, while Cain tried to gain God's favor by

offering his works. One was righteous; the other was wicked. Because of his anger against God, and his envy against Abel, he killed.

There's another reason why he slew his brother - an underlying root issue. It was a presumptuousness on his part - an independent spirit. We know that only God has the right to take away life - and those that God has appointed as civil magistrates, as his instrument on earth to do his will in punishing wicked doers - not out of personal revenge but out of justice. But Cain here, having this presumption on his part, rejected the authority of God. Notice in verse 7, God graciously gave a warning. Why are you so angry? If you do what's right, you'll be accepted. But if you refuse to do what is right, then beware - sin is prowling at your door, ready to pounce to control you. You must subdue it and have mastery over it.

But instead of listening to God, subduing his sinful impulse; he gave in to sin and the devil. And it's no surprise he killed because he did only what Satan would do. In John 8:44, Jesus spoke of the Pharisees - *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."* Satan rebelled against God. He was a murderer. His deception was intended to kill the souls of Adam and Eve. Cain killed, because he gave into the devil. And when he did, he lied about it. After killing Abel by spilling his blood, Cain hid his deed by burying Abel. When God asked Cain where his brother was - he was giving Cain the opportunity to admit. But there was no such admission of guilt - but a proud and haughty response - am I my brother's keeper?

And this came from Cain, who should've known better. His parents sinned and were naked before God - their fig covering was not enough to hide their sin. Cain should've known that Abel's death would've been known to God. Not even the dirt covering was enough to hide his brother's body from God. Even God said - Abel's bloods cry out from the ground to me. Cain's vengeance clouded his judgment. Did he not remember the judgment on his parents by their sin? Thou shalt surely die? Did he not realize God's judgment on him if he would be surely found out? This was despite God's warning - don't do it, don't give into sin. But he did. Not only did he murder Abel, but he put his life at risk of judgment. You see, a presumptuous and independent spirit is not independent at all. It is enslaved to the devil and sin nature.

Dearly beloved, we have all experienced these murderous sins. We may not have been guilty of rising up to kill someone by shedding their blood. But what we have been guilty of countless times is when we rise up in heart to kill them by our thoughts. We have done so by our countenance. We have desired revenge - to see those who hurt us to be punished for their transgressions; not admitting to ourselves that we have especially transgressed. Why? And how odd it is, that we who have called on Christ to save us, who are now servants of Christ, would give ourselves over to sins!

We are no longer slaves to sin. That's what Romans 6:17 says. But we're freed by Christ to obey and been given power over sin.

We can in a godly way keep loving life. That's the third point. The reason why Abel's sacrifice was accepted was simple. Hebrews 11:4 says that Abel's sacrifice was by faith. And the sacrifice was more excellent because it was a sacrifice that made him righteous. The only way that we are able to obey God is because he has made us righteous by Christ. And the way this was made possible was by Christ's murder. He was murdered by sinners so that his death could set us free. He said, *"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."* And because he sets us free from sin, we're able to resist sin. The preamble for the 10 commandments was this - *"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."* Similarly, because Christ has set us free, we can resist the sin of murder. Cain was told in verse 4 to restrain himself from sin, if not, sin will have mastery over him. It's a reminder to us, that if we have been freed from the power of sin, we must not give into it. We must restrain sin. We must resist it. James 4:1-2 asks and answers - *"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not."* And that's why James says in verse 7 - *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

Practically, what does this look like? It requires subduing your independent spirit - the belief that you have the right to be angry against God, to feel outraged enough to take matters into your own hands, through your attitude and gestures. It's to die to envy and your lusts. It is to give no place to the devil. For you are not your own, but belong body and soul to your faithful savior. And it also requires loving and keeping your brother. When God asked Cain where Abel was, Cain in an independent spirit retorted in verse 9 - I don't know: am I supposed to watch over my brother? But that's the thing, dearly beloved. As believers in Christ, who gave up his life for the very ones who killed him, we are to love our brethren, our neighbors, our enemies - those who do evil against us. Heidelberg Catechism 107 asks - *"Is it enough, then, that we do not kill our neighbor in any such way? A: No. When God condemns envy, hatred, and anger, He commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, to show patience, peace, gentleness, mercy, and friendliness toward him, to protect him from harm as much as we can, and to do good even to our enemies."*

1 John 3:11-12 says, *"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother..."* Cain refused to love Abel who did nothing to him. But Joseph loved his brothers who did evil against him. He showed them patience, peace, gentleness, mercy, and friendliness. He gave them food, asked after their wellbeing, did not retaliate, treated Simeon well even though Simeon had been cruel to him. He even restored the money they paid for the grain the first time. And he protected them from harm - by calling them and their father to live with him in Egypt where he would take care of them. As

Romans 12:20 says, *"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."* You will melt his coldness through warmth. Remember, such an act of kindness is what Christ did for his enemies. The Jews had plotted against him, hated him, crucified him. But his death was for them. At Pentecost, Peter said to them *"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."* God delivered him to die for the people who killed him. And when they asked, *"what shall we do?"* Peter told them the solution - *"Repent and be washed everyone of you from your sins."*

In the early 15th century, one of the German princes complained to Sigismund, the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, "Why do you show favor to your enemies instead of destroying them?" And the emperor replied - "Do I not destroy my enemies by making them my friends?" God who is judge forgives. He does good and shows his saving love upon his people, in that while they were yet sinners, Christ died for them. This is what we are to do.

We have murderers in this congregation. We are quick to take offense. But God has saved you. Just as he turned to the thief on the cross and assured him of his salvation, he assures us who believe in him. Then why are we murderous on others who have sinned against us, when showing love keeps the commandment and shows the mercy of God? If they are unbelievers, it is a demonstration of the gospel. If they are believers, it is a demonstration of the gospel. Christ demonstrated the gospel by forgiving us when we were enemies. He demonstrates the gospel by forgiving us when we currently sin against him. Christ was numbered with the transgressors to deliver transgressors, he was murdered to save murderers, he loved the unloving, so that the unloving can love as he did.

So I leave you with one practical question which application is obvious - dearly beloved, where is Abel your brother?

Sermon Outline:

1. The Murderous Sins Against Life
 1. Violent deed
 2. Violent attitude
 3. Vengeful words
2. The Roots of His Sin
 1. Anger against God
 2. Envy against his brother
 3. Presumptuous independent spirit
3. The Godly Way to Keep Loving Life
 1. Christ was murdered to free us from sin
 2. Restraint against sin
 3. Loving and keeping our brother

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