

Christ Reformation Church

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Wise as Serpents – A Practical Theology of Evil

**(Part 5 – Cain is Still With us
Today)**

January 10, 2016

Sermon Text: 1 John 3:11-15

Scripture Reading: Genesis 4

Introduction-

"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak,

but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

"So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot

kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. (Mat 10:16-36)

Are you wise as a serpent, yet innocent as a dove when it comes to *evil*? This is an indispensable pre-requisite for serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you understand that you must *beware of people* in this world, that you will be hated by them, and that the gospel you are called to live and proclaim does not make peace, but divides like a sword?

While we are to be innocent of evil, we are commanded by our Lord to be wise

about evil. Largely, professing Christians today do not have nor do they even want this wisdom. As a result, evil lurks in the pews. It deceives unmolested, bringing people into bondage, and keeping them from enjoying the freedom Christ has given us.

The vast majority of that which claims today to be "Christianity" does not want to hear about evil. Until it touches YOU. Until YOU have been its victim, your tendency is to deny it, to remain blind to it, and tell yourself things just aren't that bad. That is not being wise as serpents.

We have seen in this study of evil that wherever Christ's light shines, evil most certainly will come on the scene very quickly. We saw it right at the outset in Eden when the serpent showed up, and we see this pattern continuing right on down through biblical history. This morning we look at a second early example of evil opposing righteousness and we don't have to leave the first family to find it. We are going to consider Cain and Abel. One would think that after their mom and dad's experience being duped by evil, these boys would both be wise as serpents about it. Only one was. The other was a child of that serpent it turns out.

Remember, we are looking at this pattern of evil at work because *the very same evil is constantly at work among us today. Evil always, always, always works to creep in among Christ's people.*

Listen then to the inspired record of the first murder in the first family:

(Gen 4) Now Adam knew Eve his wife, 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 has 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, but 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 to 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. Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. And

Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold." And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him." To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD. (Gen 4:1-26)

Let's make a few observations about Cain from this passage, then turn to some other texts in Scripture that tell us more about him:

- This was a religious family. A family that worshipped God in the now fallen world. Both of these brothers are seen here offering worship to God. Adam

and Eve's firstborn was a child of the devil, their second born was murdered by his brother.

- Evil showed up in this family once again, and once again *it came in connection with the worship of God*. Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord.
- Cain devised his own religion, though he would, in today's language, have professed to be "a Christian." We don't know with certainty exactly how Cain's offering was defective – whether it was because it was a bloodless offering, or because he did not offer it for the glory of God but for his own praise – but we do know that it was of his own devising, not according to God's instruction.
- After murdering Abel, Cain exemplifies classic and typical denial, blame-shifting, and self-pity. His subsequent life evidenced the true state of his wicked heart as he continue to pursue self-glory.
- The Lord faithfully preserved His elect by giving Adam and Eve another son, Seth. Cain's seed is still with us today, hating and trying to murder Seth's seed.

- Notice VERY carefully! Cain had the benefit of the very best Counselor to be found! The Lord Himself encouraged Cain to do right, but he would not. If we are going to be wise about evil today, we must cease thinking that we can always “love” evil into repentance. God Himself “failed” as a counselor in Cain’s case.

Let’s continue now and look at the inspired commentary on Cain and his evil:

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (1Jn 3:11-15)

Mark down these observations carefully:

- Cain, though born to Adam and Eve, was “of the evil one.” Cain

was a child of the devil. He shared the serpent’s characteristics and thus was a murderer

- Cain’s motivation is given here. This is the motive of all the descendants of Cain today – *his own deeds were evil and Abel’s deeds were righteous.*

I am convinced that a very typical (if not the most common) reason wicked men who claim to be Christians persecute and abuse their Christian wives is that, like Cain, they are evil and their wife is righteous. They are darkness and she is light. This is one of the most common ways that Christ’s people are persecuted for their faith today.

Abel was the very first victim of domestic violence in the history of the human race. He was the first Christian martyr, killed simply because Cain was evil and hated Abel for his righteousness.

How do you suppose many people would have explained Cain’s motive in killing Abel? I think I can tell you:

- Abel should have been more sensitive to Cain’s religion
- Abel was “holier than thou” and incited Cain to hatred

- Abel looked down on Cain because he raised flocks and Cain dug in the dirt

God's Word will have none of this blame-shifting business that is soooo common today and which we must be wise to. No, Cain killed Abel for one reason only. No other. Cain was evil. Abel was righteous. Cain was a child of darkness. He loved the darkness. He hated the light of truth-

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." (Joh 3:19-21)

This is an absolutely vital truth that you **MUST** get a firm hold on. As we follow Christ in His light and truth, we are going to be hated with a raging hatred by those who love evil and darkness. This is the fundamental and ongoing war that has raged all through human history. Cain is still with us. Cain is still murdering Abel. And Cain's motive in doing so is the same as always. It is this simple:

And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.

And yet today we see many Christians who ARE surprised when they are hated. They are told that it is their fault, and they believe it. Their pastors tell them it is their fault. Their fellow church members tell them that it is their fault. They are told that they are too judgmental, too harsh, too narrow. They are blamed for dividing the family.

But what is the reality? Who is the real culprit? Cain. Cain and his seed. Hatred of the world for the true people of Christ. *Simply because they are righteous.* Think of it. Why did the world hate and kill Christ? He couldn't be convicted of ANY sin, yet the world hated Him:

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own

character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." (Joh 8:42-47)

There it is. Why do you suppose that Jesus spent so much time telling His disciples, and us, these things? *Because he was educating us about evil, so we could be wise about evil and not duped by it.* Here is an example. I put a short post up yesterday on these very things, calling on Christians to stop thinking they can do better than God at "counseling" Cains into repentance. One lady who obviously knows firsthand what it is like to be hated by evil simply for being righteous said:

And the "church" needs to STOP making it women's, and especially wives responsibility that the well being, or lack thereof of a relationship/marriage/spouse is dependent upon their/her commitment; to prayer, to submission, to being "nice", to keeping silent, to ..., to ..., to ..., etc...

Insert "victim" there for "women" and you can apply her words more broadly to any situation in which wickedness is

persecuting the righteous. Stop making it *Abel's responsibility* to have a healthy, friendly relationship with Cain. Stop telling Abel that he needs to pray more, be more patient with his brother, to communicate more clearly, to be nicer.....etc., etc. That is NOT wisdom regarding evil. It is foolishness and it is to allow evil to deceive us and bring us into its bondage through lies like this.

Listen to these absolute truths from the Lord Jesus again:

- And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.
- people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light
- You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.
- The reason why you do not hear [My words] is that you are not of God.

And yet today, in this vacuum of wisdom about evil that exists in the visible church, these truths are typically and regularly rejected in

practice. There are entire schools of counseling, calling themselves “biblical,” for instance, that focus on efforts to change Cain into Abel, usually at the expense of Abel. Underneath it all is this *refusal to acknowledge the true nature of Cain. Cain is evil. Cain is of his father the devil. And Cain and his descendants are in most every single local church today, offering their self-worship offerings devised by their own hands, offered to a god whom they have invented. And if you are not wise to these things, they will bring you into miserable bondage.*

Why did Cain kill Abel? Because Cain was _____ and Abel was _____.

There are even more Scriptures about Cain:

But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted;

wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. (Jud 1:10-13)

Notice the context here:

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jud 1:3-4)

Hidden reefs among us at the communion table, you see. That is wisdom about evil. It came into Eden, it crept into the first family in the person of Cain, and it has continued to creep in as it still does today. Jude is calling on us to “contend for the faith” and in order to do this we must be wise about these evil ones disguised as sheep. This is not some kind of irrational paranoia. It is not a religious witch hunt of some kind. It is wisdom about the existence and nature of our enemy and his tactics and those who serve him.

Here it is in the Old Testament:

I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. But my foes are vigorous, they are mighty, and many are those who hate me **wrongfully**. Those who render me evil for good accuse me because I follow after good. Do not forsake me, O LORD! O my God, be not far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation! (Psa 38:18-22)

This is wisdom. This is truth. A genuine child of God confesses his own sin. Cain refused to do this! But a genuine Christian is sorry for his own sin.

BUT...and mark this down very, very carefully....

A Christian has enemies, and a wise Christian knows it. Being wise about evil means knowing that these enemies hate us WRONGFULLY. Satan is an accuser, and if you believe the accusations he makes against you through his diabolical agents, you are going to be in trouble and misery.

Notice that the Psalmist gives the REASON these enemies hate him. It is the same reason Cain hated and murdered Abel – *Because I follow after good*. He realizes that this is what is really going on and he therefore is enabled to call out to God to help him. He is able to get past the “I confess my iniquity” part and clearly see the “my

enemies hate me wrongfully, they do me evil simply because I do good.”

If you do not grasp these things, then you are not wise about evil and evil will get you!

Bloodthirsty men hate one who is blameless and seek the life of the upright. (Pro 29:10)

I cannot tell you how many times the wicked have accused me, and how often I spent way too much time considering those accusations as perhaps being true. All of this is meant to discourage us, to dis-empower us, to have unwarranted self-doubt and guilt and shame...it is from the enemy.

Why did Cain kill Abel? Because Cain was _____ and Abel was _____.

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. (Heb 11:4)

And so he does. Those who are wise, hear him.