



“What it means to be human : Broken”

Genesis 4:1-16

Emily Carpenter

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Pray

## Introduction: The right diagnosis is important

Illustration: I remember when I got my very first game console, it was a playstation, and with it I had this great new accessory the eye toy. It was a camera, which would put you into the game, you would be on the screen. And the way you moved would control your character. My very first time playing this game was at the Carpenter house. I had set it up in their front room, and the rest of the family were out in another room. I started to play. The game I first played was a running race. And so I started my first race, I did this, only to realise that my character wasn't really moving, so I thought I'll try harder and faster. And I did a little better, but I was still coming last. So I thought I need to try harder and even more faster. So there I am in the front room of the Carpenter house, running as hard as I could. Then Ian (my father in law) comes into the room, because he's been hearing all this thumping and wondering what all this noise was about. And I told him my problem, and he gently reminded me, that the camera was only showing the top half of my body and I had been moving the wrong part of my body. I should been just moving my arms, rather than focusing on moving my legs. Ian correctly identified the problem and then the solution became obvious. I won many races after that and began enjoying the game.

The right diagnosis of a problem is important isn't it? How much more important is a correct diagnosis when it comes to a life or death situation? When I was in high school, one of my friends had a headache, what do you do when you have a headache? She took some panadol, however her headache got worse and worse, and she ended up having a seizure and was taken to hospital, where she eventually was diagnosed with a brain tumor. And it was only from that point on, she was able to with the help of doctors and medicines and rehabilitation fix the problem that she had. A correct diagnosis of a problem is

important. we can work as hard as we can to fix it ourselves, but without the right diagnosis our problem doesn't get fixed.

As we've been going through Genesis we've been thinking about what it means to be human. We've seen in the first 3 chapters that we're created by God, created in his image, we are created to be in relationship with him and others and saw in chapter 1 and 2 that all that God created was good. But then in chapter 3 lies and deception come into the world. We saw that Adam and Eve chose to believe the lies of Satan, these lies broke the relationship that they had with God. They turned their back on God and their punishment was to be banished from the Garden forever.

And today, in Genesis 4, we see the story of the very first family and it takes place outside the Garden of Eden. And It's such a tragic and terrible story isn't it? We see the very first murder, and it's the murder of an older brother killing his little brother. But this story is more than just a record of the very first murder,

I think the stories in Genesis 4 are an honest diagnosis from God, an honest diagnosis of what life is like in a world which has rejected its Creator. It's also a truthful diagnosis that we need to hear about us. So today the first part of our diagnosis in this chapter is that Humanity has gone from bad to worse.

## From Bad to Worse

As we read our passage today, did you see any parallels in our story that were similar but different to the story of Adam and Eve in the garden? Because I think these similar but different parts show us that humanity has gone from bad to worse. Here's what I mean, have a look at verses 6 and 7, Cain doesn't need to be persuaded to sin like Adam and Eve did, in fact he's ready to sin without any persuasion from anyone and what he needs is to be encouraged not to sin, he has the urge to disobey God and do evil. Cain chooses to ignore God's words and it leads to him killing his younger brother.

And again after Cain has sinned in verse 9, we see that instead of hiding from God like Adam and Eve did, When God asks of Cain, Where is your brother?, Cain responds with an outright lie, straight to God's face – I don't know; am I my brother's keeper? What a response to your creator.

Cain has killed his younger brother and lied about it to God. Humanity has gone from bad to worse. But do you know what, human sinfulness doesn't stop there does it? This chapter continues to show us the spread of sin and its effects and it's only getting worse. In the second half of chapter 4, we get told of Lamech, Cain's great great great great grandson and although his family shows that civilisation has advanced significantly it also continues to show how bad their rebellious attitude has gotten. Lamech in verse 23, when he has sinned, doesn't hide, doesn't lie, but proudly boasts to his two wives saying, listen to this – I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. Humanity has gone from hiding from God, to lying to God, to boasting about his evil actions.

This rebellious attitude towards God, the ignoring of God, the urge to do evil just gets worse and worse.

We see this in our society today don't we? You know, We've seen great progress and advances in our history, where many good and wonderful things have been created. But with those good and wonderful things we have also seen the horribleness of human nature, world wars, nuclear bombs, terrible cruelty, and murder. But it's not just out there, it's in here isn't it? Our thoughts and our actions, our hearts are part of the problem. We are living in a broken world. Genesis 4 gives us an honest diagnosis. It tells us that every human heart wants to ignore God and it does not want to choose to do the right thing. The book of Romans 3:10-12 summarises our condition

As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.

All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

This is an honest diagnosis of who we are. Sin is in here, in me and in you. And No matter how hard we may try to make ourselves better, no matter how many self-help books we read, no matter how much progress and advancement we make in civilisation, we will never be able to get rid of our evil actions and

rebelliousness against God, we don't want to do what is right. Its one of the great lies of the modern world. That with self improvement we can solve everything. That all we need to be is more educated, move civilised, we believe the lie that basically deep down we are good people.

Illustration: I can't remember many of my uni lectures, but I do remember sitting in a psychology lecture, and my lecturer came in and asked us to answer the following question. Rate from 0 -10 generally how good do you think human beings are? 0 being very bad, and 10 being very good. I can tell you in that lecture there were answers ranging from 2-10. How good are human beings? Well Genesis 4 and in fact the whole bible tells us that, when we look at the human heart, the number is 0.

We see in this chapter that Humanity has not learnt from the mistakes of their parents, they've followed in their parents footsteps, in fact they're behaviour has gone from bad to worse. Our story today is much more than just a murder between brothers, this story is revealing to us the essential nature of all humans, it's an honest diagnosis about the effects of our rebellion towards God.

## Warning: Don't underestimate the power of sin

And that's what sin is. Sin is rebellion against God. And for us to get a better understanding of the diagnosis of humanity we need to understand what sin is.

Verse 7 is the very first mention of the word sin in the bible? Of course, the idea of sin is not new, as we clearly see the idea of sin introduced in chapter 3. But here in verse 7, Cain gets a warning from God about what sin is like, and this warning is relevant for every human born into this world. It's an amazing but terrifying picture of sin, because it shows us that sin is ready to pounce and sin is waiting to devour us.

The very first thing that God tells us about sin is to not underestimate the power of sin. Sin is crouching at your door and it desires to have you. It's an image of a hungry beast lying in wait, waiting to pounce on it's unsuspecting victim. There is a kids song that talks about sin, it brings up this image of sin very well. the words are Sin is like a great big crocodile, sin is a dangerous trap, sin can creep up like a crocodile, all of a sudden, SNAP. Sin is very near and it's hiding.

The other warning that God gives us is that Sin desires to have you, sin's desire is to rule over you. God is saying, "Deal with your sin. Don't let it go on, don't be

relaxed about it or you will soon find yourself in the grip of a monster you can't control." Don't flirt with it, don't dabble with it, not even in your thought life. Flee from it, Otherwise, it moves in and takes over, making you its slave.

If I was to ask you the question -, how good do you think you are, by rating yourself between 0-10, what would you rate yourself with. What would your number be? There's actually a problem with the question that I asked, there is actually no range from zero to ten, it really is either a zero or a ten, you're either perfect or a sinner. And that's where I think we fool are ourselves, we think there are levels of being a sinner, we compare ourselves to others rather than to God and when you compare yourself to God it's a 0.

God warns us by saying Don't be fooled into thinking that sin is far from you. Sin is crouching at your door, waiting to pounce and to rule you.

What sins are crouching in your life and trying to rule you?

Is it the longing for more than we should? Is it anger? Is it pride? Is it bitterness? Is it the flirtatious looks? Is it constant grumbling or complaining? Is it the watching or reading of pornography? Is it that your language and actions actually tear and puts down people, rather than build up? Is it lying? Is it wanting what someone else has?? Is it the ignoring of God in your daily life? Is it that you depend on yourself rather than God? Is it loving the things of this world more than God? Is it thinking that you're generally ok, no major sins to be found here!

It is a bleak diagnosis for us, isn't it? Humanity in a constant battle with sin, a constant battle with sin crouching at our door looking to master us. And we know we fail so often. Thankfully we are not left on our own to fight this battle. God is there revealing himself to us, just like he did with Adam and Eve and even with Cain.

So let's turn to God and be reminded of his Character and Grace.

## Character and Grace of God continuing to be revealed

I want to point out three things that this chapter reveals about God's character.

1. God is committed to Justice –One of the questions I ask from this story is, after murdering his brother did Cain think that he would get away with it. It seemed like he did, when he lies to God about not knowing where his brother is. But God does not let Cain get away with it, God hears the cries of Abels blood from the ground. There is no way that Cain was ever going to just ‘get away with it. We think like that sometimes don’t we, it’s just a little anger, it’s just a little lie, it’s just a little bit of grumbling, it’s just a little bit of ... But God’s justice stays the same throughout history. Nobody in this world will ever just get away with their rebellion against God, When Jesus returns God’s wrath will be poured out on all those who are disobedient. God is committed to justice.

Secondly we see that God is not a distant God. God comes into the world, he speaks into his world and reveals himself to us. Even before Cain had sinned we saw that God gives him a warning and an encouragement to not turn away from God and his goodness. And after Cain kills his younger brother, God comes again to speak with Cain. Do you remember what he said? Where is your brother Abel? Do you think asked this because God didn’t know where he was? No I think God asked the question to give Cain an opportunity to repent and turn back to God. It was the same thousands of years later when God sent his only son into this world, to give us the same message – Repent and turn back to God. God comes to us.

The third thing that we see is that God is gracious and merciful. When Cain is punished by God, Cain cries out to God for mercy, he says in verse 13 “My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me. And God in his great mercy puts a mark on Cain to protect him. As we realise the depths of our sin, we too cry out for mercy and forgiveness. How is mercy shown to us? Well we don’t get the answer from Genesis 4, but the story of Cain and Abel is picked up in a New Testament passage Hebrews 12:22-24. We are shown mercy because of the blood of another innocent man thousands of years later. God’s only son Jesus, who died on the cross. Jesus blood not only cries out for justice like Abels blood, but his blood speaks a better word than that of Abel’s. Jesus’ blood cries out for mercy.

We can see in this chapter even with the horrible diagnosis of humanities character that there is hope because of the character of God. God will bring justice, God is with us and God is merciful. And it is in Gods character that there

is a solution to our problem, an answer to the diagnoses of sin. But just like my friends story that I spoke about in the beginning, without understanding the problem and accepting the right solution we are still stuck in the same problem. So what is our response to the diagnosis of sin?

## What is our response to this diagnosis?

Do we accept this diagnosis? Do we acknowledge that we are rebellious and disobedient towards God?? Do you believe that you have a problem. If we do, if we see the extent and depth of our problem we then start to understand the amazing gift God has given us with the death of Jesus.

We can then turn to the solution, we can be given power through the holy spirit to fight sin at our door. 1 John 3:12 says Do not be like Cain and allow sin to master you. Turn to God, call on his name, don't reject him, allow him to give you a new heart, so that you can do what is right.

One thing that I was reflecting on whilst writing this sermon is about the way that we can help each other. If you are finding it hard to see the sin in your life, ask a trusted person, whether it be your husband or wife, or someone in your bible study, ask them. Go and have a coffee or tea with them, and ask What sins do you see in my life? And we need to be ready to hear it don't we? We often hate being reminded of our sinfulness, we close our ears and don't want to hear. But if we don't want sin to master us, we need to actively do something about it. Are you ready to hear about your sinfulness? Ask someone you know and trust to tell you where your blind spots are. I pray that that we will hear the truth of our sinfulness, and be ready to hear so that we can be transformed to be more like Jesus.

Let us be truly thankful, that the bible correctly tells us the true state of humanity as sinful, but we can even be more thankful because it also reveals to us Gods character and his solution, Jesus death and resurrection that is offered to save us from our sins.