

What to Give Someone Who Has Everything

(Gen 4:1-5)

12/20/15; Sun AM Pine Grove (Christmas Message)

Introduction

In a few days, millions of gifts will be exchanged in homes all over the world as people celebrate Christmas.

The tradition of giving gifts stretches back for 1000s of years as well.

Some say that giving gifts comes from the idea that the wise men came to baby Jesus bringing gifts.

Some say that giving gifts comes from an ancient Roman festival that was held in December each year where people gave gifts to one another.

Others say that gift giving comes from very generous people who would give to the poor secretly.

Whatever the reason, gift giving has become a Christmas tradition.

People make lists of all they have to purchase, and they begin shopping for the perfect gift weeks if not months before Christmas day.

That means crowded stores and stressed out shoppers.

And often times, that means less than perfect gifts are often purchased and given in an effort to end all the stress.

Now, when it comes to choosing gifts, some people are easier to buy for than others..

In my experience, the people that are hardest to buy for are the people “who already have everything.”

This could be a very spoiled child or a very rich man or woman.

What do you buy these people that they don't already have or don't already have the ability to purchase themselves but haven't?

What do you do when your mind can't settle on a single thing to purchase and give someone who has it all?

Well, you buy a gift card and nice card and move on to the next name.

But let's say that God was the final name on your list..

What would you give Him?

Talk about stress.

He truly does have it all.

Everything in the universe belongs to him..

I have heard a couple of radio ads for a company called Star Registry...

Their claim is that that they offer a gift for the ones that are truly hard to buy for...

And this gift is to have a star named after them.

I thought about this week in relation to giving a gift to God, but that wouldn't work for Him either.

He doesn't want a star named after Him.

He made all of them.

So, what would you give to God.

Well, this morning we are going to get some answers to that question from a place in the Bible that may seem unusual..

I want you to take your Bibles and turn with me to the very first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis..

Genesis simply means beginnings..

And the book of Genesis is a book of beginnings.

And it contains a number of “firsts” in the world..

In the book of Genesis, we meet the first people in Adam and Eve...

We see the first animals that were created during the first week of the world’s existence.

We see the first day and first night.

We hear the first words of man and woman.

We see the first temptation, and the first sin.

There is also a first family that we meet in Genesis, which consisted of Adam and Eve and their children.

Since God created Adam and Eve out of the dust, which means they weren’t born, we also meet the first baby in Genesis which was Cain and the second baby was his brother Abel.

And these two brothers are going to be the subject of our time together this morning in Gen 4:1-5.

Specifically, we are going to look at the gifts that Cain and Abel offered to God..

And we are going to try and answer some questions about the gifts that these men brought to God...

And as we do, the focus of this message this morning is going to be on you.

Have you given anything to God in your entire life?

What does God want from you or does He want anything at all?

How can you know what to give him and beyond that, how can you be sure that he likes what you offer?

So, let's look at Genesis 4 this morning...

I have divided it into 2 parts...

I. The Giving of Gifts (4:1-4a)

II. The Receiving of Gifts (4:4b-5)

Let me read these 5 verses and then we will dig a little deeper into each of them...

4 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to [b]Cain, and

she said, “I have gotten a [c]manchild with the help of the Lord.” 2 Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 So it came about [d]in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground.

4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

There is a lot to see and learn in these verses, but for this morning, I just want to focus on the gifts that these men brought to God...

So, let's begin in verse 1 and set the stage for what is going on here in Gen 4...

I. The Giving of Gifts (4:1-4a)

Though Genesis 4 seems like the very beginning of time, a lot has already happened on earth in the first 3 chapters of this book..

In Genesis 1, the heavens and the earth and everything in them were created by God in 6 literal days.

The sun, the moon, the stars, the plants, the animals, the oceans, day and night,...

All the things that we have come to see as a part of our world were created out of nothing by God in Genesis 1...

In Genesis 2, we are given a closer look at God's creation of man and woman..

As God made man form the dust of the ground and the name woman out of man's side...

Adam and Eve were the very first people to be put into God's creation...

It is often said that it will be easy to spot Adam and Eve in heaven because they will be the only man and woman in heaven without a belly button..

Since belly buttons are a result of being born from a mother, Adam and Eve won't have them because they are the only people who don't have a mother.

God simply made them by hand.

So, in chapter 2 we meet the first people and we then witness the first marriage.

God designed marriage in chapter 2 and Adam and Eve are joined in marriage when that chapter ends.

And at that point, all was perfect in world.

Perfect people, perfect creation and perfect happiness.

Then we get to Genesis chapter 3 and everything changes...

We read about the first temptation of man as we watch Satan tempt Eve to not believe God's Word.

And a result, she and Adam fall into sin.

And from that moment until this very day, the world had been filled with sin and sinners..

Now, God could have simply ended it all right there...

Adam and Eve have disobeyed Him.

He created them, so He would have simply chosen to end their lives and call it quits.

But instead, God showed his compassion and mercy and grace by allowing Adam and Eve to live after their sin.

Now, God didn't erase the consequences of sin and he wasn't going to let their sin go unpunished...

So, he cursed the woman and the man because of their sin.

Women would experience pain in childbirth as a consequence of sin and man would experience pain in work as a consequence of his sin...

But that is not all....

Look back in chapter 3:21 with me a minute...

After God gave out the consequences of sin, he also had to make a way to cover Adam and Eve's sin for a time..

So, we read this in Gen 3:21...

21 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

That is such an important verse but we often skip over it when we talk about the effects of sin in the world..

Sin not only led to hard childbirth and hard work, it also led to guilt and shame..

And once they sinned, Adam and Eve were shamed by the fact that they weren't wearing clothes..

Sin had that consequence as well...

And God being gracious and kind made a way for their sin to be covered...

And so he made garments of skin to clothe Adam and Eve..

And in that simple act, God established the idea of a sacrifice...

The skin for their garments and to come from an animal that God had created...

God couldn't use their skin, so He used the skin from an animal that he killed to provide clothing for them...

And this was so very important in God's plan for the world..

The idea that something must die in order for sin to be covered is an idea that God wanted to set in the minds of Adam and Eve forever.

I went to college to be a teacher.

I wanted to teach elementary school kids math or science...

And part of getting a degree in education is doing student teaching, where you spend 6 weeks in a classroom under the supervision of that teacher..

My first student teaching experience was with 3rd graders, and my teacher gave me one piece of advice...

Make sure you set the tone early on the very first day.

If the kids see that they can take advantage of you, they will...

So, that first day I went in and I didn't smile at a single kid.

I looked serious and I told the kids o the first day that talking in class without raising your hand would not be allowed.

And that if I saw you talking, there would be warning...

You would not be allowed to play at recess after lunch...

Well, about 15 minutes into my lesson, I saw a kid whispering to his neighbor.

And there was my chance to set the tone of my classroom..

I will never forget it.

The little boy's name was Chance, and I simply walked over and said, "No recess for you."

He got quiet and didn't say another word.

And he sat out of recess that day.

I came to really like Chance, and before I asked him what he was saying that first day when he got in trouble..

He told me, "I was just telling my friend that I was really going to like having you as my teacher."

But getting back to Gen, God was trying to set the tone about the seriousness of sin in the world...

And so, when sin entered the world, there were consequences for that sin for both the man and the woman and there was the death of an animal to cover sin.

Now, did Adam and Eve see God sacrifice this animal to make clothes for them?

WE don't know for sure but I think they were there.

And even if they weren't, they would have figured out that something had to die for them to get the animal skin clothes...

Because that was the point that God wanted Adam and Eve to understand.

Sin is horrible.

Not only does it bring horrible consequences into your lives, it leads to the death of an animal so that your sin can be covered and forgiven...

Now, that is going to be something that God deals with later in the Bible as He eventually establishes a system of sacrifices in the book of Leviticus.

But in Genesis, God is simply intruding the idea of a sacrifice in order to deal with sin.

What effect did this have on Adam and Eve?

Well, we can't know for sure, but can make some pretty good guesses about how this idea of an animal sacrifice affected them...

Because guess what we see in Gen 4?

One of their sons brings an animal sacrifice to God.

I am only assuming here but I can't help but think that Adam and Eve were very good parents...

Think about this....

They knew God was real; they had seen Him with their own eyes before sin..

They had talked with Him.

They had enjoyed His creation..

And though their fellowship and sight of God was broken when they sinned, I am sure that they wanted their kids to know about God.

So, we assume after Cain and Abel were born that Adam and Eve told them all about God.

They surely told them that God was real and that he was loving and kind...

They surely told Cain and Abel to believe in God.

But they also surely told Cain and Abel about the disastrous effects of sin.

How sin had ruined their fellowship with God.

How sin had lead them to be removed from the garden of Eden.

How sin how led to painful work and painful child-birth.

And how sin had led to the death of animal so their sin could be covered..

And I think all of the past events lead to what we just read about in Gen 4...

Because in Gen 4, we meet Cain and Abel..

The first children born in the world...

Cain was born first and Abel after him..

Some suggest that they may have been twins...

No way to know that, but either way, in chapter 4, we meet these brothers for the first time...

And we learn a few things about them..

The first thing we learn is their profession..

Abel was a keeper of the flocks, which would suggest a chicken farmer....

Just kidding, had to throw that in there for all you chicken farmers out there...

But he was herdsman; he had animals that he raised..

And Cain was a farmer..

These would both be normal jobs for people of this time...

You had to eat to survive and ever since sin entered the world, it was hard work to keep yourself fed..

And then in verse 3, we read this...

It came about in the course of time...

And that simply means that there came a day when God required an offering from the brothers...

We don't know how they knew this....

Maybe God had told Adam to offer sacrifices every so often to keep his and Eve's sin covered...

And Adam's sacrifice had been good enough to cover the sins of the family while the boys were little...

But now the boys had become men and God requires an offering from them...

Maybe God had simply told Cain and Abel to do this when they reached a certain age...

We simply don't know how they knew to bring an offering to God; we only know that they knew to do it...

And so that leads to verse 4...

Abel brought the firstlings of his flock and their fat portions...

In other words, he brought the best of his flock to God.

Cain, on the other hand, brought the fruit of the ground to God...

That is simply the giving of the gifts to God in chapter 4...

Cain gave the best of his fruits and Abel gave the best of his flock..

Now, let's look at the receiving of the gifts...

II. The Receiving of Gifts (4:4b-5)

The second half of verse 4 says this...

And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

The Bible is clear here...

God did not receive the gift of Cain, but he did receive the gift of Abel...

God did not want the fruit, but He did want the flock..

Why is that?

What is going on here?

Why would God like one gift but not the other?

So in the spirit of Christmas let me offer you a few reasons why God accepted Abel's gift and rejected Cain's gift.

What do you get Someone who already has everything?

Well, let me make a few suggestions if you are trying to figure out what gifts God likes...

The first thing we need to see is this...

#1 - God wants gifts.

If you are a husband sitting in here this morning and you are thinking to yourself...

“My wife has everything she needs. There’s no need for me to get her anything for Christmas.”

Let me be the first to tell you that you are greatly mistaken.

I have been married for 15 years, and though I have a lot to learn about marriage..

I assure you of this...

My wife wants a gift for Christmas...

She may have everything she needs, and she may even tell me..

“Oh, I have everything I need. Don’t get me a thing.”

However, I don't even let the thought of not getting her anything even cross my mind..

And if you are sitting here this morning thinking that God has everything he needs...

And what you could possibly give him that he doesn't already have...

Let me read you a verse..

1 Timothy 2:3-4..

3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the [c]knowledge of the truth.

No one can say with 100% certainty why Cain and Abel knew that God required the gift an offering..

There was no Bible at the time to tell them to do it.

I think it best to assume in that age that God had simply told them to do it.

However, in this age, we have God's Word written in the Bible..

And we know what God desires by what He says in it.

And one thing he desires is for people to be saved.

God likes gifts given to him, yet the best gift you can give him is to repent of your sin and believe alone in His Son to save you.

God desires the salvation of all men.

Have you given him your life?

#2 - God wants gifts given in faith.

Here is how Hebrews 11 describes the gifts of Cain and Abel...

4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain..

What does it mean to say that Abel's gift to God was better because it was given in faith?

It means this...

Abel's heart was in the right place by by what he gave but by how he gave it...

This is the same thing that your mother tried to teach you when you went to your grandparents at Christmas and only got a pair of socks..

You had come with the idea of leaving with a new Star Wars toy, but instead you got 6 pair of socks..

And as you were sitting in the backseat of the car pouting on the way hime, your mother looked back and said...

“It is the thought that counts.”

And I think there is some truth to the answer of why God accepted Abel’s offering and not Cain’s offering..

It was the thought and especially the heart behind the sacrifice that really mattered to God anyway.

And there is much truth in that...

The Bible is very clear...

What God seeks is not the outward works of a man but his heart...

He desires gifts given from a heart of faith and trust in Him.

Cain didn’t give in faith...

He gave the fruit of the ground but not really trusting in God.

He didn't really believe in God but he figured he better give something.

This is like the man or woman who shows up at church only on Easter or Christmas...

They don't really believe in God; they just want to keep in touch in case He is real...

So, they drop in around Christmas and Easter, and say hey and then disappear until trouble pops up in their life...

Let's be clear, God doesn't desire gifts that aren't given in faith.

That is like heading out to a Christmas party and grabbing something lying around the house...

Throwing it in a gift bag and tying on an old bow...

And then bringing it to someone there..

You hate to show up empty handed; people may think less of you.

But that is exactly what millions of men and women are doing today when they show up at church for the Christmas sermon only.

They are offering God the leftovers of their life...

They are thinking to themselves....

“If God is real, maybe he will be happy with what I got him, even if it isn’t my best.”

Well, I can assure you that God will reject your gift as fast as he rejected Cain’s gift...

If you don’t give in faith...

If you don’t get from a heart that is in love with Jesus Christ...

God has no use for your gift at all.

And your gift will be thrown in the pile of gifts that God has been given over the years from people who don’t give in faith...

The same pile of gifts that will burn along with their gifts forever and ever...

Finally #3...

#3 - God wants gifts that forgive sin.

There is no question that Abel’s faith played a part in God accepting his sacrifice over Cain’s.

We just saw that, but it also seem that the fact that Abel brought an animal rather than fruit played a part as well..

And here is why...

God takes sin seriously...

We live in a world that takes sin lightly.

In fact, some sins that are clearly called sins in the Bible are no longer sins in the world...

Yet, according to the Bible, God never changes and neither does His word...

And God in the very beginning took sin seriously.

That is why you see the consequences of sin right after Adam and Eve disobeyed God.

That is why you see God killing an animal to cover Adam and Eve's sin right after they sinned..

To sin against God is not laughing matter.

To sin against God is not something that you should cause you to yawn and daydream...

To sin against an eternal God carries an eternal penalty...

That is why God desires gifts that deal with sin.

So, what do you have to offer him today..

Abel brought the best of his animals because he knew this incredible truth....

Sin requires death.

The wages of sin are death.

Something or someone has to die to pay for sin...

Now, when God killed an animal to cover Adam and Eve...

And when God accepted Abel's animal sacrifice, no sin was completely forgiven...

It was simply covered for a time...

That is like having a leaky roof...

You can get up on the roof and cover it in a tarp and it will keep the rain out for a while...

But you eventually need a new roof...

God allowed sin to be covered for a while through the sacrifices of animals and other offerings, but eventually sin had to be dealt with...

And it was dealt with for good when Jesus was sent to the cross as a sacrifice for sin for all time...

God wants a gift that forgives sin...

Because sin is serious, and let me tell something...

Sin is still serious today...

Your sin and my sin is still serious today...

And God wants a gift that forgives sin.

And there are but two options for every one of us today.

You will either pay for sin with your own life...

Or you will pay for sin with the life of Jesus Christ.

Now, many people see that as unfair...

Many people in this world are probably like Cain...

Though he knew that God desired an animal sacrifice, he took his chances with some fruit of his crop.

And many of you may know that God requires faith in Jesus Christ and repentance of sin to be saved...

But you are simply willing to take your chances with God...

Hoping that your good works will outweigh your bad...

God doesn't want your gift of good works; he wants you to repent of your sin and trust in His Son to save you...

Jesus has the good works and the forgiveness of sin that God wants...

Stop telling God what you want to give Him and start giving God what He wants..

Conclusion

And we have seen what God wants today...

He wants the gift of you being saved.

He wants the gift that comes from your heart given in faith.

And He wants the gift that forgives your sin.

God wants you to believe upon Christ this morning.

God wants you to put your faith in the baby in the manger who became the man on the cross.

The blood that flowed in his veins as a baby is the blood that flowed out of his veins on the cross...

And it is Christ's blood applied to your life that you need to give to God today...

What do you give to God?

What do you give to Someone who has everything?

You give Him His Son.

You turn from your sin.

And you turn in faith and trust in His Son..

One day I will stand before the Lord just like Abel did...

And God will want to know what I brought Him.

I will simply tell God...

I read your Word how to be saved.

I read in your word what gift you desired on this day.

Therefore, I turned from my life of sin and I trusted
in Your Son to save me.

As I stand here today, I bring no good gifts to you
of my own doing..

I simply bring you the gift of Your Son.

And on that day, God will look at Christ and He will
accept my gift given in faith...

Christ is my only hope in that day...

And he is your only hope in that day as well...

Let us pray.