



Message Transcript

Evaluate Your Worship

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- Lord Jesus thank you for your word. Lord thank you that you desire to speak to us. Thank you that you're living, that you're active. Lord, thank you that you love each one of us and you have a desire for us to hear this word today. So Lord, speak to us in a way that only your spirit can speak to us, that we would know that we've had an encounter with you. That we've been changed and we've been transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. And now for all who are gathered, who desire to hear the word, believe what God says and by faith put into practice what he shows you. Would you agree with me this morning by very loudly saying the word amen? Amen.

I want to start this morning by asking you to clear your desks, put all your books away, take out a clean sheet of paper. I want you to put your name on the top right hand corner and the date, number one to 10 on the left, we're going to have a pop quiz. Aren't you glad I don't have to do that anymore? I used to hate those days because that day was the time for an evaluation, where whether you were ready or not, you had to say the answers to what was going to be asked. And even if you were prepared, there's something about taking a quiz that feels invasive, where you think to yourself, I already know this. Why do I have to tell you this? And we feel this way at different times, don't we? I mean, you can feel this way as an athlete when you practice. And then the coach has you do certain drills or you're in a game and you think I already know how to do. I don't need to prove myself or in April when you're doing your taxes and you know you've done them right but you have an accountant look them over is to make sure as they go through everything that you've spent, just to make sure that you've done it correctly. It's human nature to not like to be evaluated. It's human

nature to just want to be appreciated for whatever it is that we do. And yet it's important for us sometimes where somebody takes a look from the outside on the inside to see are we really where we're supposed to be?

When it comes to your worship, today is really about taking a quiz about your worship. But this is a quiz that you're not going to turn in. This is a quiz I'm not going to evaluate. This is an opportunity for you and the Lord to work together to see how are you doing in your worship? It's a chance for you to evaluate your worship of the Lord, Jesus Christ. And if your heart is open today, the Lord will help you with the four questions that we're going to take a look at to see if your worship is where it needs to be. To really evaluate where your worship needs to be. Because God knows that you are most satisfied when your worship is aligned with him. And that's what God wants. That's how you were designed. You were designed to worship the Lord. You weren't designed to be worshiped. You were designed to give worship and you were designed to give worship to Jesus Christ and him alone.

So if you're ready to take the quiz today, I'm gonna invite you to open your Bible up to Genesis chapter four. We're going to look in the first 16 verses. You'll find yourself very familiar with this story. It comes right after the fall of mankind, where Adam and Eve sins, God meets out punishment for both of them. And this is where the story picks up in chapter four with this now dysfunctional family that we have, having dysfunctional kids. And here we pick up, I want to read this and then we will unpack these four questions together. It says, "now the man had relations with his wife Eve" and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. "And she said, I have gotten a man child

"with the help of the Lord. "Again, she gave birth to his brother, Abel "and Abel was a keeper of the flocks, "but Cain was a tiller of the ground. "So it came about in the course of time "that Cain brought an offering to the Lord "of the fruit of the ground. "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, "but for Cain and for his offering, he had no regard. "So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. "Then the Lord said to Cain, why are you angry? "And why has your countenance fallen? "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? "And if you do not do well, "sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you, "but you must master it. "Cain told Abel, his brother and it came about "when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel, "his brother and killed him. "Then the Lord said to Cain, where is Abel, your brother? "And he said, I do not know, am I my brother's keeper? "He said, what have you done? "The voice of your brother's blood "is crying to me from the ground. "Now you are cursed from the ground, "which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood "from your hand. "When you cultivate the ground, "it will no longer yield its strength to you. "You will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth. "Cain said to the Lord, "my punishment is too great to bear. "Behold you have driven me this day "from the face of the ground and from your face, "I will be hidden and I will be a vagrant and a wander "on the earth and whoever finds me will kill me. "So the Lord said to him, therefore, whoever kills Cain, "vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold "and the Lord appointed a sign for Cain "so that no one finding him would slay him. "Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord "and settled in the land of Nod,

East of Eden".

Now, most of us are familiar with this story. As a matter of fact, even if you don't have much biblical knowledge, you're familiar with the story of Cain and Abel. As a matter of fact, some people will even use the euphemism of Cain to say, you want to go out and raise some Cain tonight? I mean, people are familiar with this story. And when you read this story at face value, you wonder, well, what's the point of this story? I mean, here's the story of two brothers and you have one brother who doesn't love the Lord and another brother who does. The brother who loves the Lord is killed by the brother who doesn't love the Lord and the brother who doesn't love the Lord goes on to live the rest of his life and it all seems pretty good. So is the moral of the story, if you worship God, you're going to die and if you don't worship God, life's going to be good? I don't think that's why God put it in his word. And so what we're going to take a look at today is when we take a look at the heart of these two men in their worship of God, we're going to be able to discern where our worship is and to evaluate us in our hearts before the Lord and where we're at. Because it's important for us to know just how white hot is our worship for the Lord, Jesus Christ. And really we're asking ourselves how we're growing or progressing or advancing in our worship.

And the first question is this, are you growing in your religious practice or faithful worship that gains God's attention? Are you growing in your religious practice or your faithful worship that gains God's attention? There's two different ways you can go. It says here, "now the man had relations with his wife "and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. "And she said, I've gotten a man child "with the help of the Lord". Every

mother knows when she gives birth to a child and sees the uniqueness of the child, just like a father knows as well, this wasn't just our doing, God was behind this. God's the one that put this child together. Eve recognizes, even though she was impregnated by Adam, when she sees her son Cain, she's like, God did this. God gave me this son, I understand that. "Again, she gave birth to his brother, "Abel and Abel was a keeper of the flocks, "but Cain was a tiller of the ground". So it's just telling you what their occupation was. Cain worked the ground, Abel took care of the flocks. Verse three says, "so it came about in the course of time". It's important for us to understand, especially when people look at the Bible and say, how did all the people get here if there were only Adam and Eve? Well, it came about in the course of time. Over time, there were plenty of children and grandchildren and nieces and nephews that came from Adam and Eve. So what you have is you have Cain and Abel, but you also have other people who are now populating the earth over the course of time. And the reason we know it's been a period of time is because at the end of this story, when Cain is pleading with the Lord, he's worried he's going to be killed. And you would say killed by who? It's just Adam, Eve, Cain and he killed Abel, so there's only three people, who's going to kill him? The reality is in the course of time, more people were born. So there's more people populating the earth and that's what's going on here.

So notice what happened. This is where the story picks up. "Abel on his part", oh, "so it came about in the course of time "that Cain brought an offering to the Lord "of the fruit of the ground. "Abel on his part also brought the firstlings of his flock "and their fat portions. "And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering". Which means he

paid attention to, means he gave approval to, it means he gazed upon Abel's offering. "But for Cain and for his offering, he had no regard. "So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell". Here's the tale of the two brothers. You have one who is performing religious practices. You have another who is worshipping the Lord. And there is a massive difference. They were both going through the same motions. Somehow, somewhere along the lines and we don't see it in scripture, God had a way for them to come worship. It very well could have been as you remember, after Adam and Eve sinned, they were wearing fig leaves, but that wasn't good enough for the Lord. He had an animal slain because blood had to be shed for their sin and gave them animal coverings. It's very likely that God told them that any type of worship that we're going to bring had to involve the shedding of blood. Cain just brings God leftovers. Like Cain is tilling the field, he's like, here's some fruit and veggies, you know, hope you enjoy it, hope you're a vegan, here you go, right? What does Abel do? Abel brings the firstlings of his flock. That means I'm going to bring God my best. And I'm going to bring him the fat portions. What we see in Abel's heart is a desire to bring God his greatest worship and that's the difference. There's a difference between going through the motions of worship and worshipping, and God knows the difference.

Now we don't glean a lot from Genesis chapter four. We don't learn a ton about Cain, but as we have further revelation in God's word, we do. In first, John, we hear the apostle John talk about this. In first John chapter three, starting in verses 11 and 12, it says this, "John tells us we should love one another". John was always telling us we should love one another. That was kind of his theme. And what does he say in

verse 12? "Not as Cain who was of the evil one and slew his brother. "And for what reason did he slay him? "Because his deeds were evil "and his brothers were righteous". What do we learn about Cain? He was of the evil one. He belonged to his father the devil. He did evil. All we see is the offering, what we don't see is how did Cain live his life? Well we learn from scripture, he lived his life as an evil man. He did whatever he wanted. He did evil in the sight of God. He was serving his father, the devil. So when it came to his worship of God, all he was doing was just giving something, just to keep God off of his back.

You know, God can tell the difference between people that gather to worship his name and people that are just trying to keep him off his back? I mean, there's a huge difference. And God gave regard to Abel because of what Abel was saying to the Lord is this is my best, this is what I have and it's yours. Now think about this for both Cain and for Abel, right? When it comes to Cain and Abel, were they giving God anything that he didn't already own? I mean, we looked at Genesis one and two, God created everything. God created all the plants. God created all the vegetation. I mean, when Cain was giving God fruit, he was just giving God what was his. When Abel was giving from his flocks, he was just giving God what is his. There's, there's nothing that we're ever going to give God that we created, that we made out of nothing. I mean, we're just giving back to him as an act of worship to show that our hearts are rightly related to him.

Here comes the question though. How are you growing? Because it's very easy in our culture to grow into your religious practice, rather than in growing in your faithful

worship of the Lord. When I talk about a religious practice, I'm talking about this. Most people when they think of worship, think about it as a place or something that they do, or a routine that they go through or a ritual that they have or the rhetoric that they hear, or the music that they sing. As a matter of fact, sometimes even in churches, when we gather, we're like, that's the worship team, now worship is over, now, we're going to preach. No everything is worship. And as a matter of fact, let me tell you this. When it comes to the worship of God, we're not just talking about the gathering place of the saints, that desire to gather together and give God glory and worship, everything in your life is to be a reflection of the glory of God and how you worship him. If you're single, you should live your life as a single that worships the Lord. So when people see your singleness, they say, that's what it looks like to worship God. If you're married, the way that you treat your spouse is an act of worship to show the glory of God. If you have children, the way you parent your children is an act of worship to the glory of God. If you're a child, the way that you honor your mother and your father is an act of worship to how you glorify God. If you have a job the way in which you work at your trade and what you do is a way of worshipping God. First Corinthians 10:31 says, "whether then you eat or drink "or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God". It means no matter where you are, no matter what you're doing, whatever season of life you're in, God is looking for your life to be a reflection of the worship of his great name.

And we see scriptures like this all throughout the Bible. In Colossians chapter three, verses 17 and 23, we read two different verses that say the same thing,

"whatever you do in word or deed, "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, "giving thanks through him to God, the father. "Whatever you do, do your work heartily as for the Lord, "rather than for men". See God is not looking for us to go through the motions. God is looking for our heart and here's the, here's the condition of the human heart. We'd rather just do religious stuff in hopes that God's happy with us rather than to give allegiance and faithful worship to him. And when I talk about faithful worship, I'm talking about the word faith. I'm talking about a belief that God exists and that he rewards those who seek him. In the book of Hebrews chapter 11, which is oftentimes referred to as the great hall of faith. We hear what faith looks like, it says, "now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, "the conviction of things not seen". That when I'm faithing, when I'm going through the motions of faith, when I'm doing faith, it's the assurance of the things that I'm hoping for and the conviction of what I do not see. It says "for by it, men of old gained approval". Notice verse three, "by faith, we understand that the worlds were prepared "by the word of God. "So that what is seen was made out of things "which are visible, which were not made out of things, "which are visible". How do we believe that God created everything out of nothing? By faith. We believe it by faith. By faith, verse four, "Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain "through which he obtained the testimony "that he was righteous. "God testifying about his gifts and through faith, "though he is dead, he still speaks". I mean, we see that Abel's gift, his offering was a faith believing that God is who he says he is and wanting to be obedient to him. Verse five, we'll talk about Enoch next week. "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death. "And he was not found because

God took him up. "For he obtained the witness that before has been taken up, "he was pleasing to God". And notice verse six. "And without faith, it is impossible to please him. "For he who comes to God must believe that he is. "And that he is a rewarder of those who seek him".

What is faith? Faith is believing in what I do not see. It's believing that God is the great I am and that he rewards those who seek him. God is alive. God responds to our acts of worship. It doesn't mean God does everything we want when we want. It does mean that God responds to acts of faith. And isn't it interesting that even in a crowd, God can distinguish between those who are faithful and those who are not? I think about Mark chapter five, there's a story about a woman that had a bleeding condition. She had it for 12 years and this woman in her bleeding condition, she went to all the doctors that she could find. She spent all that she had instead of getting better, she actually got worse. She was a social outcast, she was financially broke. She had no relationships, but she thought to herself, if I get to just get to Jesus, I'll be okay. And so Jesus is on the way to heal Gyrus' daughter who happens to be 12 years old and on the way this woman sneaks up behind Jesus and grabs the hem of his garment. Jesus feels power go out from him. And he asks this question who touched me? And his disciples are looking at him like, what are you talking about? Everybody. Like, who's not touching you? There's thousands of people around. He's like, no, no, no. He keeps looking around because he realizes that and can distinguish between a touch of faith and just people bumping into him. And he looks down and he sees this woman. And what does he say? Daughter, what? Your faith has made you well. Her faith made

her well.

What about in Mark chapter two? When there's a group of four men that want to see their friend get before Jesus, because he's paralyzed on a mat and they take them to where Jesus is but they can't get into the house 'cause it's way too crowded. So what do they do? They climb up on the roof. They cut a hole in the roof and they lower the man on the mat and it says this, Jesus seeing their faith said to the man, son, your sins are forgiven. And people were up in arms, like who could forgive sins but God? And Jesus is like oh okay, so you want to know that I'm God? Which is easier if your sins are forgiven or get up and pick up your mat and go home? So just so you know I'm God, pick up your mat and go home. And the man picks up his mat and goes home. Why? Because Jesus saw the faith of the men that brought him, right? I mean, we see this all the time repeated. I mean, remember Bartimaeus the man who was blind that the disciples told to shut up, 'cause he kept yelling all the louder, Jesus son of David have mercy on me? Finally Jesus comes over and says, what do you want? He says, I want to see. And Jesus gives him his sight, said your faith has made you well.

Now let me be clear on this because I don't want to overemphasize something. And that is this. Just because you have faith, doesn't mean God's going to always physically heal you. Can we be clear on that? There are a lot of good Christian people who die of cancer. There's a lot of good Christian people who die of other diseases and all good Christian people ultimately die. Fair? So the point of the story is not if you have faith, God will do whatever you want him to do. The story is God is moved by

faithful people who seek him. I mean, I think about the story in Luke 17 of the 10 lepers that come to Jesus and they want to be cleansed. And Jesus says, go show yourself to the priest and on the way that they turn and go to the priests, all 10 lepers are healed and yet only one comes back to Jesus. All 10 are healed, it says in Luke chapter 17, verse 15, "now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, "turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice. "And he fell on his face at his feet giving thanks to him. "And he was a Samaritan. "Then Jesus answered and said where they're not 10 cleansed, "but the nine where are they? "Was no one found who returned to give glory to God "except this foreigner? "And he said to him, stand up and go. "Your faith has made you well". That's really interesting that Jesus said your faith has made you well. He didn't say that about the other nine. The other nine were cleansed, their physical infirmities were gone. But Jesus says to the one that came back and gave him glory, your faith has made you well. God can move in people's life that aren't Christians. God can have, you can have circumstances happen to your life that's just based on the goodness of God. It doesn't mean that you're born again. This man that came back and worshiped and praised God. He said your faith has made you well, it's healed you. You're healed from the inside out. And really our biggest spiritual condition that we're in poverty of is our sin, not our physical nature. And because of the sin on the inside, we're all physically going to die.

And here's what Jesus is saying, what are you growing in? Are you growing in your faithful worship of me in every area of your life? Or are you just growing in religious practice? 'Cause I'm telling you in our culture, it's easy to grow in religious

practice. It's easy to say, I'll just start attending church more. It's easy to say, you know what? I'll just join a group. It's easy to say, I'll learn my Bible just a little bit better without wanting your heart changed. God wants you to grow in your trust that he is who he says he is. That he's the only true God that there is no other and that you're desperately in need of him. So how's your worship? I mean, that's the question that you and God can spend time on because even if you were to say today, it's great, it's awesome. I would tell you continue to revisit the question because we're humans and we tend to drift. And we need to be back in a place with the Lord where he's drawing us to himself. Because it's human nature to ask questions like this. What's the least I can do and still get saved? Like what's the bare minimum God requires of me? Like I just want to get through this life doing my thing. That's that's human nature. That's why Jesus had a problem with the Pharisees because he said, you honor me with your lips, but your hearts are far from me. Faithful worship, worship is worth ship. It's telling God he is worthy and we're needy. He's worth everything and we're desperate. It's when John the Baptist said he must become greater, I must become less. He must increase, I must decrease.

How's your worship? Are you growing in an understanding that God is greater and that you're not? Are you getting comfortable with the fact that God is greater and you're not? Are you more desperate for the things of God? Because the heart, the human heart says, I just want to do some tasks. David says in Psalm 51, "for you to not delight in sacrifice, "otherwise I would give it. "You're not pleased with burnt offering. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, "a broken and a contrite heart, O

God, you will not despise". What's God looking for? He's not looking for your activity. He's not looking for you to do things better. What does he want? He wants you to give full allegiance in every area of your life to him. How's your worship? How are you trusting God in all the different areas? What's he putting his fingerprints on today saying, hey, I need you to be faithful here. I need you to trust me here. That's what this is all about. Because for Abel, he was telling the Lord, you have it all. I want to give you my best. For Cain, he was evil. He was wanting to live wicked. And he was just saying, God, I worked the ground, here's some stuff from the ground. Just take it. And yet what happened? God said, Abel, I'm pleased with, he loves me. Cain, I'm not pleased with, you're evil. That's the difference. Don't grow in your religious practices, grow in your heart for God and your faithful worship of him.

Second, second question. Are you growing in your hatred for God or your love for God and those who faithfully worship him? Are you growing in your hatred or your love for God and those who faithfully worship him? If you don't want to write the word hatred down, we'll get to that word in a second. Write disdain. Are you growing in a disdain for God? Like I'm kind of getting tired of God. Or are you growing in a deep love for God where you love him more and more every day? Because notice what happened when they give their offerings, God says, good job, Abel. God says, Cain, I'm not even looking at yours. "And Cain became angry and his countenance fell. "So the Lord said to Cain, why are you angry? "And why has your countenance fallen? "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?" What does he tell him? You're mad because I want to be worshiped. And if I'm truly worshiped by you, you're going

to be the most satisfied ever. But because you don't have a desire to worship me, you're mad at me for being God and setting standards? What's wrong with you? If you'll just do what's right, you'll be filled on the inside.

Now think about this. God created everything out of nothing, God is the creator. God desires to be worshiped. And he's not up in heaven saying, I need you to worship me 'cause I'm so needy. And if you don't, I'm going to have a bad day. That's not our God. God is worthy of all worship. Whether you ever worship him or not, God is content in himself. But God knows that when you truly set your heart on him to worship him and him alone, that's the greatest satisfaction that you'll ever have in your life. God says I can set the standard because I'm God and I created you. And I know more about you than you know about yourself. And I know that if you'll just do what's right, you'll be fine, why are you angry? Why are you upset? You know, the same thing still happens today? See when people have a genuine heart for God and the word of God is preached, there can be contrition or repentance or they hear something and they think to themselves, I see that's God's standard. I don't know that I'm doing that. I need to change some things. Yeah, I know God's patient with me, but that needs to change if I'm really going to honor God. You know what? I know I need to honor God that way. Because when I do, I'm going to have greater peace in my life. I need to make that change.

But when someone's just going through religious motions and they hear the same truth, they get mad. They get mad at the Bible, they get mad at the pastor. They get mad at the church. You say, well, how does that happen? Let me give you some

examples. I teach on money here probably about once a year or whenever it happens to come up in a text. And inevitably, when you start teaching about money, you realize none of the money you own is yours. You realize that? I mean, everything you have is the Lord's. Well, I earned it. Who gave you the ability to earn it? Who gave you the job? And who gave you the mind? And who gave you the word? Well, God did so everything you have is the Lord's. But when I teach on money and I talk about being generous and overflowing to the things of God, specifically his church, where you're getting fed, there are some who hear that and say, he's preaching the truth. It's changed my life because I give. There are others who are hearing it and they say something like this, you know what? It's been a struggle for us financially. But I realize if I do it God's way, I need to make some changes and I need to go that way. And then there are others that hear it and say, stuff like this, why is he always preaching about money? How come churches need money? They shouldn't even need money. It's not about buildings, it's about people. Who does he think he, right? 'Cause it's a hard hearted religious worship where you don't have a heart for God. And so you think your money is yours. We could talk about it when it comes to marriage, we could talk about it when it comes to sexuality, we could talk about purity of heart. We could talk about our tongue. We could talk about any number of things that God spells out for us, for how he wants to live. And when our heart is right before him, there's a desire to change. And when we're just going through religious motions, we get upset. Cain's upset. 'Cause God set a standard for how he wants to be worshiped. And Cain's basic statement is this, who do you think you are telling me how to worship you? That was

Cain's heart, that's a religious heart.

That can be our heart if we're not careful. And when we grow in that kind of heart, here's what God says, "sin is crouching at the door "and its desire is for you, but you must master it". What's the picture? Sin is about ready to pounce on you and overtake you, but you must subdue it. It's the same language that's used last week. When we talked about the fall of mankind between men and women in a marriage, a woman's desire in a sinful state of desire and to dominate her husband and her husband wanting to crush her. That is the same language used here. The language is this. He says, if you're going to live for yourself and you're not going to worship me, there is sin that is going to want to master your life. Now it doesn't have to, but if you don't worship me, sin's going to have a greater opportunity than your worship of me will. So you got to master this. Here's truth. If you're not worshiping the Lord, you're going to worship something else. We were created to worship. We just were created to worship. If you're not worshiping the Lord, Jesus Christ, you will find something else to worship and likely want other people to worship you in some way. That's why God wants all worship to be on him. He's the only one worthy of worship. He's the only one that can handle it. We weren't meant to be worshiped. And if we don't worship God, you know what we'll worship? We'll worship sports, we'll worship sexuality, we'll worship clothes, we'll worship finances. We'll worship a new job, we'll worship possessions, we'll worship any number of things. We'll worship our careers, we'll worship our abilities. We'll worship anything. And God's like, no, you got to realize if you don't worship me, sin is all over the place wanting to master you, but you can

subdue it with my help.

How's your love for God? Is it growing or do you have more of a disdain for God? Because notice what Cain does. God told him sins about ready to take you over. Cain told his brother Abel, and in many versions it says, let's go out to the field, which is exactly what happened. "And it came about when they were in the field, "Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him". Was God telling him the truth? He was telling him, hey this sin that you're thinking about is going to master you. Here's the problem we have as human beings. We don't think sin's that big of a deal. We think we can play with it like Play-doh and it's never going to get the better of us and we can control it. And we got it in our own little environment. It's no big deal. You can't play with sin. It will overtake you, it will dominate your life. Every drug addict I've ever talked to, never told, never thought, well, I'm totally going to be a drug addict, strung out in the streets. Every alcoholic I've ever met never set out to say, I'm going to be an alcoholic. No serial adulterer ever set out and said, man, one day I want to blow up my family and just be a serial. Nobody says that you can't play with sin a little bit and then expect it'll dominate you. God tells Cain this, Cain's like, oh, it's not a big deal. And next thing, what's he do? He kills his brother. He kills his brother. I mean the first family in case you're wondering, my family is so dysfunctional. Look at the first family, right? I mean, we got two kids and now it's a mess. Why? Because sin entered and here's the truth.

Why do I talk about your love for God and your love for others? In Matthew 22:37, it says, "here's the first commandment you should love the Lord, "your God with

all your heart, soul, mind, and strength". And the second commandments like, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself", right? They both go hand and glove. If you love God, you love God's people. John tells us the same thing in first, John chapter four, he says, we love first John 4:19. "We love because he first loved us. "If someone says, I love God and hates his brother, "he is a liar for the one who does not love his brother, "whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. "And this is the commandment we should have from him. "The one who loves God should love his brother also". Here's what I would tell you. Your belief, what you believe about God is demonstrated by the way you treat God's people. What you say you believe about God is demonstrated by the way that you treat God's people. And I say God's people. How do you treat Christians? See, there are people that hate God because, and it's demonstrated in their hatred for Christians. They hate Christians. They don't mind people that have faith. They don't mind people that go to church. They don't necessarily mind people that say they're spiritual. But if you start talking that there's only one true God, it's the Lord, Jesus Christ. The second person to the trinity who created everything out of nothing, who came to this earth incarnate, who died on the cross for your sins, 'cause you're dead without him. He rose from the dead, he's the only one that offers life. I've repented of my sins, I've given my life to him. It's him and him only. And oh, by the way, he's coming to judge all of those who don't know him. People that hate God, hate that message. They despise that message. I grew up in a religious environment. I went to a Lutheran grade school. I went to a Methodist church and when I grew up, I thought I was a Christian, but and I didn't mind going to church.

But those Christian, you know, the weird ones that were always like, oh Jesus, you're so good, I couldn't stand people like that. Right? Until I became one. Then everything in my heart changed. Now I realize in the Christian family, we have some weird people in our Christian family. That's okay, I maybe one of them, that's okay. But we have a love for them. Even the people that are different than us, because we have the same father, right?

People that don't love God, don't love Christians because they don't love the God that we serve. And it gets played out in everything that you see in the papers. It gets played out in everything that you see on social media. It gets played out in everything that you see in politics and education. When people have a disdain for the God of the universe that we say that we love, they always come after those who say that that's the God that we believe in, right?

How's your worship growing in the Lord? Do you have a love for God and those who faithfully worship him? Are you growing in that? Or is it becoming more of a disdain and a growing hatred? See, it comes from our obedience to him. Jesus said in John 14:23, "if you love me, you will keep my word. "If you do not love me, you will not keep my word". Part of love is obedience to God. And obedience is not you better, you have to, you must. God's mad if you don't. That's not obedience. Obedience is because I love God so much, I want to do what God wants. I want to honor God. I want to do faith without works is dead, right? So I want to live my life so that my life doesn't look dead, I want to live my life so I have the living Christ on the inside, working all this out. I want to have the obedience that comes from faith. Like Romans 1:5 tells

me. Not because I have to. Not because I must or I should or God's. But because I want it, I want God. I want what he wants. I have my Bible open when I study by myself and I have my Bible open when I'm hearing the word taught. 'Cause I want God to show me areas that he wants me to change and grow into because I want to be more like him, because I love him.

That was the heart of Abel. Abel wanted to give God his best, Abel knew he was dependent upon the Lord. Abel knew he was covered by the blood. Abel knew that he needed the Lord. Cain lived evil. Cain did what he wanted. Cain went through religious practices just to do his thing, to keep God off his back, which tells you this parents, you can have two different kids in the same home, raising them the same way and they can turn out entirely different and it had nothing to do with you, it had to do with their own hearts. God wants all to come to know him. And here's the truth. In second Corinthians chapter, chapter two, verses 15 and following, it talks about we who love Christ. What that looks like for those who don't know him. It says, "for we are a fragrance of Christ to God "among those who are being saved. "And among those who are perishing. "To one an aroma from death to death and another "aroma from life to life "and who is adequate for these things?" We're an aroma of Christ. When you're living for Christ, you're an aroma of Christ and everywhere you go, that aroma follows you. And when you see someone, when you're a believer and you see someone that's living for Christ, there's an aroma of life that comes out of them. That says, oh, I love that. That was so refreshing for my soul, I needed to hear that, that was so good. When a non believer's around a person that has the aroma of Christ, you're a stench of

death in their nostrils. You're a stench of death. It reminds them of the death that they're going to die. They don't like it. And there's who's, who's, who's, who's suited for such things? I mean, that's just the Lord in our life doing what we want.

So here's the question, how is your love for God? Is it growing? Is it developing? How's your love for other believers? Is it growing? Is it developing? Because that's what God wants for you. The third question is this, goes along with the second question. Are you growing in your hardness or your tenderness of heart toward God and repentance? Are you growing in your hardness or tenderness of heart towards God and repentance? And how are you growing? I mean, so God tells Cain, hey listen, because you're evil, because you don't worship me, because I don't accept your offering, you're upset. You're mad, your countenance has fallen. You're sad, you don't need to be. If you just worship me and honor me and do what I'm asking you to do, you'd be fine. You'd be satisfied. But if you don't, sin's crouching at your door, it's going to dominate you and Cain's like, I don't care. So he kills his brother. So God comes and visits Cain, verse nine. "Then God said to Cain, where is Abel, your brother? "And he said, I do not know, am I my brother's keeper?" I mean, at least, at least Adam and Eve admitted to doing wrong, even though they blamed other people. Cain, when God said, what did you do? He's like, where's where's Abel? He goes, I don't know. I don't know, I don't care. Am I my brother's keeper? Hey God, isn't that your job? Shouldn't you be looking out for him? I don't care about him. I mean, do you hear his evil heart? And what does God say? He said, "what have you done? "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me "from the ground". Now what does that

mean?

You remember how we've talked about every human life is created in the image of God? We are image bearers. Anytime an image bearer is murdered or slaughtered God knows and God cares. You can't, you can't just, you know, your life's not over. I mean, that's why when you see all the martyrs in the book of revelation and they're like, how long oh Lord Lord 'til you avenge our blood? God's going to avenge the blood of the martyrs. I mean, every life matters. It matters in the world, it matters in utero. God hears every single voice that is murdered. Sobering, isn't it? Kane thinks he can just kill his brother, no big deal. He'll move on with life. God's like, hey your brother's blood is screaming to me from the ground. Like I know exactly what you did. I was there, I watched it, I saw it. And here you're lying to me and blaming me for not taking care of your brother when you're the one that killed him all along? Like who do you think you are? So God curses the ground. Notice this. He goes, "now you are cursed from the ground, "which has opened its mouth to receive "your brother's blood from your hand. "When you cultivate the ground, "it will no longer yield it's strength to you. "You will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth". And we talked last week, when God cursed in Genesis three, he did not curse humankind. He cursed the serpent and he cursed the ground. Why is God cursing Cain's ability to till the soil now? Because Cain is evil and wants nothing to do with God. Cain has turned his back on God and doesn't want anything to do with God. And God says, now, not only is the soil going to be hard, but for you Cain, you're not gonna be able to produce anything from it. You thought you were good at your job, you're no longer good at your job. You won't be

able to do anything anymore, right? Because that's going to be the curse. Since you don't need me and you don't want me, I'm going to let you go.

Now, here's, what's really, really scary about this passage, a lot of us think, well, look at this. I mean, Abel died, Cain lived. Did he really live? Because the Bible would say that he was already dead in his transgressions and sins. And here's what he was telling God in his deadness, I want nothing to do with you. Don't you dare punish me, you go your own way. You do whatever, but don't, don't make things hard for me. I just want to live my life. I didn't ask to be born anyway. You're not a good God, that was Cain's heart. Do you hear a heart of repentance? You hear him say, I shouldn't have done this. I knew you told me sin was going to be at my door. I killed him, I was totally wrong. Show me what I need to do. No, no repentance, no repentance, no grace, right? Cain lied. He was punished and notice what Cain's going to do next. Unlike Adam and Eve who, when they're banished from the garden, don't complain about it. He's now going to complain about his punishment. "Cain said to the Lord, "my punishment is too great to bear. "Behold you have driven me this day "from the face of the ground and from your face, "I will be hidden and I will be a vagrant and a wander "on the earth and whoever finds me will kill me". What's he saying? What is his God? Here's his God ready, ready? Self-preservation, that's his God. Hey, you can't do this to me. I mean, somebody someone's going to kill me. I mean, I got to live my life. I mean, you're, you're interfering with my life. I wanted to live for me. I didn't even want you in the first place. Let me do my own life without you. So the Lord said to him, "therefore, whoever kills Cain, "vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold "and the Lord appointed a sign for

Cain "so that no one finding him will slay him". We don't know what the sign was. We don't know what the mark was. I don't think he was like holding a banner, don't kill me. God said, no. I mean, I don't know if it was a mark. If it was a tattoo, we don't know. We'd only be speculating. God in his grace gave Cain something so that no one would kill him. And that seems like a really good deal. But it's not a good deal. Cain could have repented and had Cain repented, he would experience the presence of God in a way he never had before, but he didn't.

So let's talk about repentance versus unrepentance. I've been a pastor now as a lead pastor for 10 years, I've seen unrepentance play out time and time again. And I wish I could say, oh, it's just in people's lives. I've seen unrepentance play out in my life, right? I mean, we all have stories that where we know we're wrong and we don't want to repent. But unrepentance looks like this is when God shows us truth about our life, that's not aligned with who he wants us to be, or God uses another human being like a parent or a pastor or a coach to show us things in our life that aren't like, we want them to be. Here's what we begin to do. They tell us what the punishment is going to be. And we start complaining about the punishment. That's too hard, I mean, you know, I'm too old for this. You shouldn't be talking to me this way. I mean, you don't know the whole story. We start talk our way out of it. Then we go into face saving mode with all of our friends and everybody else letting them know we're actually really cool. And everything's good and don't worry about this. They're saying this about me, but that's not really true. 'Cause I'm really an awesome person. And they just don't like me anymore. And then when the punishment goes through, they start talking like,

well, this isn't best for me. This really isn't best for my family. You know, you can't do this to me. And if we say, no, this is the way it's going to be then here's what ultimately comes out of a heart of somebody that's unrepentant, blame and criticism. 100% of the time. You're blaming me for this, I didn't do anything wrong. You told me to do this, you're just terrible at what you do. It's way too hard, that's what Cain was saying. I mean, think about this. He killed his brother and what's his punishment? It's going to be hard to produce crops. You have to get them somewhere else. Way too hard. I mean God should have just gone , you know, and smoted him, right? But God's gracious and he doesn't do that. And so God gives him a punishment and he's like, well, that's too hard. I mean, he's complaining and whining the whole time. He killed his brother, he lied about it. He's taking no responsibility. And even though God is trying to use punishment to draw him back to himself, Cain's like, I don't want anything to do with you. Now what's genuine repentance look like? Genuine repentance looks like this. When you're aware of a truth in your life, that doesn't align with what God wants you to be, it doesn't matter if you heard it in a sermon, from God's word on your own, from another Christian in the body of Christ, you are broken by it immediately. You're broken. And your first thought is I need God. And I'm willing to take whatever path I need to take to get right with God. It doesn't matter what the punishment is. And by the way, I don't care who knows. 'Cause I'm not trying to hide it from anybody. I just need God. I see this as a pastor in adulterous relationships where unrepentance looks like this. Hey, you need to move out of your house for a while, you need to get right. Oh, you can't tell me to do that. You know, it's not my fault. If you knew her, then you would bubba,

bubba, bubba. Unrepentance, hardheartedness, blame, criticism. Who are you to judge me? You're a sinner too. But then I've seen the beauty of God breaking somebody that's been in the sin of adultery and you sit down with them and they're like, it was me. It's a hundred percent me. I know my spouse may have had something to do with it, but I don't even care, it's totally me. I'll do whatever I need to do. You tell me to move out, I'll move out. You tell me to get counseling, I'll get counseling. I'll do whatever I do. I may not even get my marriage back. And I don't, I don't even care. I need to get right with God and I need to get right with God now and I don't care who knows, that's repentance. Cain was not repentant. Cain was not trying to get right with God. Cain was face saving. Cain was just trying to get through life. Cain was just trying to persevere in his own life. Cain just wanted to live for himself. He didn't care about anything else. So here's the question in your worship, in your worship, how's your heart? Is there hardness or tenderness of heart towards God and repentance? Second Corinthians chapter seven tells us what true repentance looks like. Second Corinthians chapter seven in verse 10 says it like this, "for the sorrow that is according to the will of God "produces a repentance without regret leading to salvation. "But the sorrow of the world produces death". Romans 2:4 says, the kindness of the Lord that leads us to repentance. I mean, I mean, if this is our sin right here, and I have personal examples of this and I have pastoral examples of this, if this is our sin here, we talk about repentance being, I was walking this way and I did a 180 and I turned and that's true. But for most of us, that's not what we think repentance is. We think repentance is, oh, I got caught, man. Yeah, I don't want to do that anymore. 'Cause that's bad, that could

hurt somebody, I guess. So I won't do it again. But then we stand right by our sin. Maybe we build a little fence around it or put windows so we can look at it without touching it. And we just like gazing it, like can't do that, but I love doing that, I love it. It's awesome. I'm a Christian, I don't do that anymore. But that stuff it gets ya. That's not repentance. Repentance is a 180 degree turn and repentance is not just turning 90 degrees and saying, okay, yeah, I'm going this way now. I don't, I don't. I kinda like it, but I don't do it anymore. I'm going this way. That's not repentance either. That's just behavioral modification. Repentance is this, God, I broke your heart by doing this. I don't want, where are you? Where are you? God I'm coming right towards you. And Lord in my heart, you have to fill up those areas that I used to fill up on that because that used to fill me up, or I thought it did, but it was killing me. I need you to fill me in a way you've never filled me before. I need you to give me a new hope and a new joy. Lord I'm coming after you and Lord I'm not going to keep track of how many more times I do that. 'Cause I don't even want to do that. But I want to walk with you long enough that when I look back over my shoulder someday, I'm sickened by the fact that I did that. I don't like the fact that I did that. I'm not glorifying in the fact, I'm glorifying the fact you've saved me out of that and delivered me from that. So when does repentance stop? When you stop sinning. When does that happen? When you meet Jesus. So here's the question. When's the last time you repented? I mean, if you haven't repented in the last three months, six months, nine months. I mean, are you saying you haven't sinned in the last three, six, nine months? Are you saying you're not close enough to the Lord where he's showing you his heart and being tender with you

about some things he wants to grow you from? Man I have some things I'm working in my life right now that hopefully over the course of the next months, I'll be able to share with you how God's bringing me out of but I'm discovering again, fresh, all over new ways that God's healing me of sin in my life. I need more of him. It's not just a one and done thing where he, I repented, you know, 30 years ago I got saved, I repented now I'm in Christ. I realized that I'm steeped in sin. And the more I walk with the Lord, the deeper I realize it penetrates and the more weird it is and the more I need Christ. And he's gracious enough to show me. And when he shows me while I repent, because here's the beauty, when you repent and you turn from your sin and you turn to God, that's where healing begins. Anything else that you do is just simply behavioral modification that may last for a day or five or two months or two years and then you're going to be right back in it again. True repentance brings you into a relationship with God where you're done. You're done. You don't have to continue to sin the same sins anymore. How's your heart towards that? In other words, here would be the question for you today. Is there anything in your life the Lord's been tapping on in your life saying, hey, that's out of a line that you've said, I'll work on it God, I'll commit, I'll get better. You can't work on it, you can't commit. You can't get better, you can't deal with sin. Only Christ can deal with sin. That's why he died on the cross to show you that you couldn't do it. It's his blood that frees you so that you can be set free from the power of sin. You can be totally saved and still be steeped in sin. God wants you to be totally saved and be delivered from the power of sin. And God wants you to grow in him because he loves you. And the more you go with him, the more you see how special

you are. We love the story of the prodigal son, what's the father do? He sprints to the son until he gets eyeball to eyeball with his son, kisses his son, loves his son. Doesn't start asking his son, where have you been? What kind of sins you sinning? Do you like them? Do you do? No your home, your mine. You're not a slave, you're a son. You're my boy, come on home. If you're a woman, you're a daughter of the most high God and he loves you no matter what that sin is that you're steeped in. And if you're a son, you're a man, you're a son of the most high God. And he loves you no matter what sin you're steeped in. And at church, we can admit that we're sinners. We all do. But then is our heart tender enough for us to confess our sin and turn to Christ? That's what it says in the Bible in Hebrews 3:15, "today if you hear the Lord's voice, "do not harden your heart". We sometimes think when we hear these things and we feel God pressing on us, it's because he doesn't like us. He's mad at us. No he loves you. The reason you're feeling the weight of your sin, is God was wanting to confess and forsake it, God's wanting you to run to him so that you can be changed. How are you growing? Growing in that tender heart or is your heart becoming more hard-hearted? God wants it to be tender. And then finally, this last question, are you growing in your distance from, or a hunger for God's presence? Are you growing in a distance from, or a hunger for God's presence? Now notice what Cain says at the end of verse 15. He's like, you're not going to let me till the ground. And I'm gonna be out of your presence. And at verse 16, it says, "then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord "and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden". What a damning verse for Cain. Here's what he was saying. I'm not going to be in your presence. And I'm totally cool with that. I'm fine with

that, I'm going to go my own way. Just stay away from me, I don't want you at all any more, get away, God. You know what God let him do? He let him go. He let him go without his presence. Oh, but keep in mind that wasn't just for this life, that's for all eternity. We read some very sobering things in Romans chapter one about how God gave them over to their evil desires. Why? Because they worshiped the creation rather than the creator. There is some point and I don't know when that point is where for those who continually harden their heart towards the Lord and say, God, get away. I don't want your presence, I just want to live my life. I want to do my own thing, I want nothing to do with you. I don't care about you. Just let me do my own thing where God in his grace says, okay, go ahead. You go. But you're not just going now, you're going for all eternity. Because you see this thing about this quiz we're taking, I'm never going to grade it. I'm not worthy to grade a quiz about worship. I have to concern myself with my own. You're not going to grade it either. But when you die, you're going to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and he's going to rule on your worship of him. That's what he gets to do. And for those who said in this world, I want nothing to do with your presence. God will say this, depart from me you worker of iniquity for I never knew you. Now understand the heart of God, that will give God no pleasure. God takes no pleasure and delight in the death of even the wicked people according to his ego. God doesn't get pleasure of sending people to hell. But God in his grace will do it when those whose hearts are hardened, want nothing to do with him. So here's the question. Sobering message this morning, I know. But at church, how's your heart before the Lord? Is it tender? Are you receptive? Are you open? Are you distancing yourself from

the Lord or do you hunger? Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:6, "blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness "for they will be satisfied". Will be filled. You want what the Lord has, he'll give you everything he has, but the Lord is not going to work on your false worship and your religious routines and just trying to make it work. So that other people look at you and think that you're cool. God wants your whole heart to be rightly related to him. God wants every area of your life. God is calling you to himself and God knows this, when every area of your life is settled with him, that's where joy comes. Cain settled. Cain said, I'm mad at you. If you don't accept who I am, just the way I am. If you want worship your own way, then I want nothing to do with you. I'm going to live my life in sin. I'm going to do whatever I want and just get out of my way and let me live my life. I want out of your presence. Just protect me so nobody kills me, so I can live in this world just for me. And you know what God said? I love you enough, I'll let you do that. But what a tragedy. For those of us who are believers, you'll never see Cain because when he was banished from the presence of the Lord, he was banished from the presence of the Lord forever. God's desire is that all people would come to a saving knowledge of him. God's desire is that every single person he creates would come to know him. God has an incredible love and if you're listening to this, here's what God's calling you to do. He's not calling you to commit. He's not calling you to fix all your sin. He's calling you to do this. Repent, change your heart. Let Jesus Christ come in and be the Lord over every single area of your life. And the beauty of that, the Puritans called it, the gift of tears. It's when you know you've done wrong. And yet at the same time, you feel the

grace of God. And it's like, I know I'm wrong and yet I know I'm totally forgiven. And I know I'm totally loved. And there is great joy and great rejoicing in that. That's why Jesus said there's more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repents than over 99 that don't need to. Why? Because it's God stirring a work in your heart. So here's the quiz. How you doing? How does God think you're doing? 'Cause we all have areas to grow. We all have room to seek him more. What's he sharing with you this morning? Because in an environment like this, or whether you're online at times, it's like, I'm gonna turn off the TV or I'm getting out of here as quick as I can. If God's doing something in your heart, would you spend some time with him as we sing this last song? And let him do a work and release your heart and your life to him for your name, for his name's sake and for his glory. Would you stand with me as we pray? Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory honor and praise and Lord this is a sobering message because we're reminded of the fact that we want to worship you in our way. We want to, we want to do things that we think are right and yet Lord, we're telling you, we need you. Lord for some of us gathered here today, there's a sin in our life, we may even know we're Christian, but we can't get out of it. For others of us we know we've never trusted you and need to place our faith in you. And how do we do that? Well here's what we know, it's not our efforts, you're the way maker. You're the miracle worker, you're the promise keeper. You're the light in the darkness. You're the one that wants to do all the work. You just want us to come to you. And as you come to the Lord this morning, here's all you're saying, Lord, I've had a hard heart. I haven't worshiped you the way that you've wanted me to. Today, Lord, I want to repent. Lord I

want to turn from my sin and I want to turn, come running to you. Whether that's running to the Lord for salvation or you know you're saved and you're running to the Lord for him to release you from a power of sin that you've been entrenched in for a long time. Lord, we give you all the praise, do a work here. As we sing this song about who you are and your glory and how worthy of worship you are. God we praise you and thank you in the name of Jesus. Amen, amen.