

The Sermon - In 10 Sentences Or Less

Perfectly Imperfect Faith (Week 2) - Abel's Faith:



1. Our stroll through Hebrews 11 will focus on all the overlooked minor characters mentioned, the first of which is Abel (11.4).
2. Abel's name tells us a lot (Genesis 4.2): it is the same Hebrew root as "vanity/emptiness" in the well-known refrain in Ecclesiastes, and contrasts with his older brother Cain, the gift from God (4.1).
3. The story of Cain/Abel in Gen. 4 presumes the later Mosaic law as a backdrop; the story hinges on one brother obeying the "law of firsts or first fruits" and one not (Exodus 22.29-30; Proverbs 3.9-10).
4. Cain kills Abel because his shoddy offering isn't recognized by God and Abel's is, reversing the favoritism shown to Cain by his family (4.8).
5. The unjust act screams out to God (4.10), the text using a verb reversed in the Old Testament only for those who are oppressed.
6. One thing that sets Abel apart from so many others in Hebrews 11 is that he isn't particularly heroic or successful; rather, he was just obeying what God had already made plain and clear, that is, it was an everyday or ordinary kind of obedience.
7. In order to live by "the law of firsts" in our own lives, we must ask ourselves the following - a) Will I safeguard having my best available to God and others, and not just scraps (Malachi 1.10); b) Will I give my first and best, even when I'm overlooked or discounted by others, like Abel was?; c) Who am I at my best, and is that what I'm giving others?; d) Do I trust God enough to give Him and others my best and first, knowing that "what I give is what I get back" (Luke 6.38)?
8. Abel's unremarkable obedience was met with remarkable, surprising, disproportional resistance (in fact, it cost him his life).
9. Jesus warns us to expect the same thing: our ordinary, everyday commitment to "righteousness" (that which is good, just, and right) will garner pushback and, sometimes, violent reprisal (Matthew 5.9-10).

Scripture Reading This Week

The most extensive passage in the Old Testament about "the law of firsts" is in Malachi 1.6-14, and it focuses on God's response to that guideline being ignored - check it out: [Malachi 1.6-14 NRSV](#)

D. Prayer for Faith this Week

From "The Complete Book of Christian Prayer":

"Eternal God, help us to entrust the past to Your mercy, the present to Your love, and the future to Your wisdom. We believe; help our unbelief, this we pray through Christ, amen."