

Rage against God

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that you would feed us with your word. We ask, Father, that as we think about what you have taught through your word written, that you will help us to be aware of the problems in our own hearts, the command centers of who we are.

Father, may this time not be a time where we look and see the faults of others, but may you search our hearts and may your Holy Spirit bring your word to the very command center of who we are so that we will bear much fruit in our day-to-day lives to your glory.

Father, make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, learning to live for your glory. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. So the story of Cain and Abel, I think a lot of people are a bit familiar with that story, even those who don't come to church very often or don't have much of a Christian memory.

And for a lot of people, it's a good story. It's a story, in fact, actually, in some ways, it's probably a perfect Canadian story, at least how we sort of vaguely remember it, because it talks about how you shouldn't hurt people.

[1 : 1 7] You shouldn't hurt people by killing them. And it teaches us that we're really our brother's keeper. So it teaches us that we're our brother's keeper, and we shouldn't hurt people.

And so, at least in the way that many of us remember the story, it sounds like it's a really, really good story, one that we wouldn't be very, very embarrassed to share with a non-Christian friend, a seeking friend or neighbor, even a skeptical friend or neighbor.

We might say, this is like a perfect text, until you actually start to read it. And when you actually start to read it, it would be sort of very funny, I guess.

Not funny in a good way. I don't mean that. It would just be very, maybe uncomfortable, if we thought it would be a good story to share with our neighbor. And then as we get into the story, we realize one moment, this is actually very un-Canadian.

You know, when I talk to people in coffee shops and other places, one of the standard things, in fact, we're organizing an apologetics conference in November all around this theme, in a world of 10,000 religions, how on earth can Christians believe that Jesus is the only way?

[2 : 2 7] How on earth can Christians believe Jesus is the only way in a world where there's 10,000 religions? And this is, it's not just that many, most Canadians would say that you can't believe in Jesus in a world with 10,000 different religions because at the heart of most Canadian thought and belief, whether you're an atheist or not, you'd believe that basically everybody should be able to worship God, however they define him or her or it, in whatever way they choose.

You know, because it's a variation on the catechism of Canadian culture. Like a catechism is something where a basic question is posed all the time and an answer is given.

And if you read, if you watch movies, if you watch sitcoms, if you listen to the news, if you read the newspapers, you know, the basic type of catechism is what's really important.

Well, what's really important is that you have to be true to yourself. Like, you need to be authentic, and to be authentic, you need to be true to yourself. And, you know, if there's some problems going on in your relationship, if your job, what's one of the most important tasks that a Canadian can do?

Not only to be true to yourself, but you have to take steps to be happy on your terms. You know, not that oppressive dad or your oppressive mom or your oppressive, you know, partner or husband or wife or oppressive kids.

[3 : 51] Like, you have to be happy on your terms. And movie and show, time after time, pose that type of dilemma or tension, and it's resolved by people being true to themselves and making, taking the steps to be happy on their terms.

And then usually part of the tension is some type of pushback or conflict around that, and that brings us to the third part of a catechism of Canadian culture. And the third part of the catechism in Canadian culture is that no one can tell you what is right or wrong for you.

No one can tell you that. And then it's just a natural aspect of this Canadian catechism to say, and nobody can tell you that you've got to worship God some way or do a particular thing for God.

That's up to you. You figure that out yourself. You be true to yourself. And that's how Canadians think. And I know it makes it, we cry at this idea.

You know, Canadians would cry at the idea that there's a right or wrong way to do something like approaching to God. And so, you see, here's the problem. We think, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, Cain and Abel, that's a really, really good text because you know what it's all about?

[5 : 02] I am my brother's keeper and don't hurt people. Like that's, you know, like it's sort of soft, you know, being Canadian, caring for others, don't hurt people. But actually, what is at the heart of the story is that two people come to worship God and God says one person does it right and the other one does it wrong.

And all of a sudden, for Canadians, our heart starts to get a little bit beating faster and maybe we get a little bit nervous about this apparently Canadian story. But I want to suggest to you that actually this story that seems to go against what Canadians want is actually really what Canadians want and what we really want and what we really need.

So let's get the Bibles out and let's look at the story. And the story's found in the book of Genesis, very, very first book in the Bible. Chapter 4, it begins at verse 1. It begins at verse 1.

Genesis 4, chapter 1, and here's how it goes. Now, and you don't necessarily know that in English, although it's sort of implied in English, what the word Hebrew is telling us is that this is going to be another story as part of a set of stories.

And what's just happened is that Adam and Eve have introduced evil into the world and as a result of Adam and Eve introducing evil into God's good creation, they're now at odds with each other, at odds with creation, at odds with the creator, and the story has just come to the point where God has expelled them, pushed them out of the Garden of Eden, and the cherubim is there to stop Adam and Eve and their descendants, that's you and me, from going to eat of the Tree of Life.

[6 : 52] So that's what's just happened. Now, Adam knew Eve, his wife, and if you're not familiar with how the Bible speaks in the Old Testament and also in the New, but mainly in the Old, when it uses the word no in this matter, it's a polite way of referring to sexual relations.

And just as a bit of an aside, whenever the Bible, the Old Testament, uses the word sexual relations for animals, it doesn't use this word, only uses it when human beings are having sexual relations, but that's a whole other sermon topic.

Now, Adam knew his wife, knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord. The English here has a little bit of a glimpse of this.

It's, I have gotten a man. Yeah, God helped a bit. In some ways, it's not, you see, one of the things that this story is showing is how evil has come into the world and now evil is becoming more prevalent.

Its hold and its touch is becoming more extensive. So, once again, I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord and again she bore his brother Abel.

[8 : 10] Now, Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain, a worker of the ground. He was a gardener. In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions and the Lord had regard excuse me, or accepted or was pleased with Abel and his offering but for Cain and his offering, God had no regard or he didn't accept it or it wasn't viewed as valid.

So, Cain was very angry and his face fell and in the original, very angry is a very good sense. I mean, it really, if you wanted to say, put it actually, capture the original language, very would be bolded.

He was really angry. Like, this is rage and so much rage that his body language betrayed that he was visibly, visually, really, really angry.

So, that's where the story is. So, what's going on? So, here's the first thing. Why on earth, in fact, in some ways, this story now touches on some of our very, very, very deep fears as human beings.

that God just picks favorites. He's just up there flipping a coin. Okay, George is coming to me. Heads, I'm going to like him. Tails, I won't.

[9 : 44] Oh, it's heads. Lucky for George. You know? Then the next person comes along, God's up there flipping a coin. Have you ever seen the movie No Country for Old Men? One of the, in the book, it's a brilliant book, by the way.

Dark book, but very brilliant. And one of the, there's a serial killer in there and every time he comes to people, he flips a coin. It's putting on how the coin lands. Whether or not he'll kill them or not. And is that what God's like?

Okay. Oh, I like Abel. I don't like Cain. Thumbs up for Abel, thumb down for Cain. Just completely willful. It's actually one of our fears. It's one of the great fears of our culture.

It's in fact, one of the reasons why for many Canadians the idea that we worship in our own way is so preferable to the apparent willfulness and immorality or amorality of power.

So, is that what's going on in the story here? Like, is that what's going on? Well, no, it's not what's going on. Let's, in fact, put the first point up.

[10 : 45] This is really, really key. It's going to be, in fact, a surprise because many people think that the Christian faith is just all about externals, learning the Apostles' Creed, learning how to go to church, you know, learning how to give money, learning how to read the Bible, that it's not a religion of the heart, that it's not a religion of something central and deep to us.

In fact, it's one of the reasons why in our Canadian catechism, like, you have to be true to yourself, you have to be authentic. There's a sense that it should be deep and internal and that one of the problems with Christianity is just all external.

Yet, the key to understanding this story is this first point. We see people act. the Lord sees what is really and truly desired when we act.

That's what he sees and that's what matters to him. How we act matters but what we're desiring when we act, that's the key.

And so, just look at the text. You can see some hints about this in the text. Like, first of all, the word offering and the word offering here and it's a really important sense.

[11 : 51] it could also be translated as homage or homage. I don't know if I'm pronouncing it correctly because it's a word that's hardly used in English anymore. And in homage, what is, you come and you give a bit of a token to acknowledge to one, well, you pay homage to a king or to the queen or to God is you're acknowledging that the other person is greater than you and that you owe them your loyalty and you owe them your trust and you owe them your obedience.

And that's the word there for offering. Like, in a Christian church, just so you're wondering, I mean, I didn't say it today, but if you're a guest here today or even if you've been coming here for a while and you haven't given your life to Jesus to trust him as your Savior and Lord, we actually would like it if you don't put any money in the plate.

Have as much coffee as you want and we'd love to give to you. We don't really want you to give to us because really the offering is supposed to be an act of homage. It's laid at the foot of the cross.

We're acknowledging that Jesus is greater than us, that he's worthy to be praised, that he is our manager, that he is our Savior, that he deserves our loyalty and our obedience and our trust and our faith and that's what's supposed to be going on in our hearts.

So that's the word offering. Cain and Abel both come and are supposedly bringing an offering. But then, and this is a little bit harder to see in the English, it's very obvious in the original language.

[13 : 25] It's as if, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, we're going to go. Cain and Abel are going and Cain says, oh yeah, yeah, I guess I got to bring something. Oh yeah, here's a stock. You know, I'll take a piece of corn, turnip, a carrot and a yam and then you go to God.

Okay, there you go. Whoa, okay, there you go. But Abel gives of the very, very, very first of his flock. Why is that very important?

Because he's giving it to God first. He's not saying, okay, after, after I make sure that I'm well fed and, and all my needs are met, if I have anything left over, I'll, I'll give you something.

No, no, Abel gives of the very beginning before he knows if there's going to be any more. And, and this is harder for us to realize in our culture, but he gives them something which is fat and plump.

In other words, something that he set aside to make it nice and fat and juicy. taught, there's a few people here in the congregation who go hunting and if you, you, you hunt wild animals, they're leaner.

[14 : 32] Uh, they, you know, because they have to run and stay away from predators and stuff like that. So this is something cared for, which is going to be really tasty. And the most tasty thing he has, the most precious thing he has, that's what he gives to God.

And the other thing in the story is the anger. So you see both the gift, what it's supposed to be, but it's just a few things thrown together as opposed to Abel and then the, the response, which is anger, shows that what's going on in Cain's heart.

In fact, if you could put up the next, next point, that would be very helpful. What we see here, and it's going to be a little bit hard, I could have used the word sin, but this is a, a, a better sort of general point.

The desire to be God can be nurtured and hidden in spirituality and religion. One of the things that we, that Canadians don't understand, the Canadian Christians don't often understand is that the Bible from cover to cover is a constant critique of religion and a constant critique of spirituality and a constant critique of spiritual, not religious.

It is a thorough critique of it. And so here we see that this is apparently an act of worship. One moment, aren't Christians all in favor of worshipping God?

[15 : 54] Well, we see here from this text, it's not just a matter of going through being spiritual or worshipping God in whatever way you just seem, no, no, the Bible says that there's, in fact, what's going on with Cain, what's being revealed in Cain is his low view of God and his high view of himself.

You know, it's just like God's just like, it's just like another day in the office. It's just sort of like when we walk around the street and we don't necessarily, you know, bow to every person we see. We're just one people, I'm a person, I'm around other people and we just sort of go about our business and it's easy for us to view God as just, well, you know, and he's another being and he has his thing to do and I have my thing to do and, oh yeah, you know, well maybe he's a little bit more important so I should offer him a few things or maybe give me a little bit of comfort and a little bit of peace so I can get something for myself or whatever it is but this text shows that God's not that high and important for Cain.

In fact, you see, what's the thing that's going to be developed throughout the entire Bible is that all sin, whether it's lust, whether it's envy, whether it's gluttony, whether it's sloth, whether it's anger, that all sin is ultimately one component of all sin is my desire or your desire or a culture's desire or a state's desire to be God.

And so we see here that the desire to be God can be nurtured and hidden in spirituality and religion because Cain's worship hid his basic desire to be God.

See, now when we get to this we can see that in some ways this is a bit of a, a bit of a, there's going to be a little bit of a tension for the average Canadian because for the average Canadian on the one hand just like every other human being we desire to be God in our different ways but the other time one of the things that we really hate is arrogance and pride.

[17 : 53] I mean, part of the irony is that many religions and spiritualities put the desire to be more God-like at the very center of what they do actually. And, and, and those who follow Jesus and they're supposed to read the Bible we shouldn't do that but we know that that goes on.

And it's a very powerful thing. In fact, if you could put up the next thing, Andrew, that would be very helpful. The more I desire to be God and that's what's going on here with, with Cain's anger. The more I desire to be God and the more that desire meets the real world the angrier I get.

The more I desire to be God and the more that desire meets the real world the angrier I get. Why do I put meets the real world? Because you're not God.

You had a beginning, you had an end, you will have an end. You know, one of the things with road rage, one of the things that people who get really angry when they drive, I speak of something that I love from personal experience, not just others but myself.

You want to be like God. Get all these slow drivers out of the way. I got somewhere to go. I got somewhere to go. I got somewhere to go. And how dare you get in my way?

[19 : 22] And so, what this text is showing us with very, very powerful imagery is the more that I have a desire to be God, whether I acknowledge it or am aware of it or not, and yet, that desire to be God, I mean, it's one hand if it's just being my family and I can abuse my family or I can abuse my wife or if you're a woman and you abuse your husband, maybe you can get away with it.

Maybe you can get away with it with your co-workers or you can start your own company. You can be one of those people. I know a person and I don't know if it would go on anymore.

This is just a few years ago in the civil service and one of their co-workers hadn't come to work for I think it was three years. Hadn't come to work in three years, kept getting paid, but nobody, everybody was afraid of her, including the bosses of confronting her.

It was just better to let her stay at home and get paid. So, you know, maybe we can get away with it to a certain extent, but at some point in time we meet the real world and when we meet the real world and our desire to be like God, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged, meets the real world, anger often comes with it and that's what this story is showing in a very, very powerful, powerful way.

So, some of you might be wondering, George, should you say here, the more I desire to be God and the more that desire meets the real world, the angrier I get at God or should I say that like, you know, in Cain and Abel, the angrier I get at just things or the angrier I get at other people and what do you think?

[21 : 03] And my answer is yes, like all of the above. Because in fact, and you know, it's understandable in psychology, which is, you know, fundamentally secular and there's lots of good wisdom from psychology.

There really is. A lot of good psychology is people just really being very careful in their observation about how people work and so we shouldn't say that we shouldn't read it.

But one of the hidden things for all people and especially, it's not talking about counseling, but in fact, an anger at God, a rage against God is important to understand cultures and societies and people and even ourselves.

Now, I have to be careful of the time here. So what's going to happen? Okay? So here's how the story's going. I haven't even got time by my brother's keeper yet. And at first glance, it looks like a very, very uncomfortable story for Canadians.

God is looking at Cain's heart and Abel's heart. He's looked at what's happened. God says to Cain, this offering's not accepted.

[22 : 13] Cain gets angry. Cain gets angry. What happens now? Just a little time out here in terms of reading the Bible for yourself. One of the things about reading the Bible for yourself when you're reading narratives is pause at the different action points and ask yourself what are the possible responses?

That's one of the ways you grow in reading narrative parts of the Bible. So you could say to yourself, okay, God is going to be like a Canadian and what do a lot of us Canadians do when we've offended somebody and made them mad?

We back off. Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't really mean it that way. Is God going to be like very Canadian? Is God going to be like what we imagine? Doomed.

You know, lightning bolt, throw it down and fry Cain right there on the spot and move on. Like what's going to go on in the text? How's God going to respond?

And how's Cain going to respond to God's response? Well, let's look. Verse 6. The Lord said to Cain, why are you angry?

[23 : 19] That's such a good question. Why are you angry? And why has your face fallen? And then, so he first, he asks a question and then in the form of a question, he's really giving them a promise.

It's a bit of a rhetorical question to make a point and the point is a promise. The first thing is like, why are you angry? Okay, Cain, like why are you angry? Like what, what is it that you value so much that my response has made you furious?

And then the second thing is a promise. He says, if you do well, will you not be accepted? In other words, Cain, I'm not saying you're damned forever, that you're completely ruined.

Like, I'm still here. I still love you. Like, this can be dealt with. This isn't the end of the world. And then the third thing is that, is a warning.

And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.

[24 : 34] Gives them a warning that sin is now pictured at, you know, just think one of those National Geographic specials, Planet Earth specials, and it's like a lion or a lioness that just outside of the sight of the gazelle and downwind, not upwind, and it stalks the gazelle and it's crouching to pounce to devour.

And contrary for, it's a very, very powerful image. It's, on one hand, it's the desire for, but everything that it ultimately desires is something which is going to be against you.

It's contrary to what is your true good, your true need, your true hope, your true help. It's, this is very, very powerful image. And, sorry, I should read the next bit.

So, put up this first, this next point, Andrew. All I can do is, you know, I thought, I thought long and hard about how to word this point and then I realized all I have to, what I really need to do is just make my next point that part of the verse because it's such a powerful image.

Sin is crouching at the door, its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it. And, you know, here's the thing, I don't know how many of you have ever been afflicted with anger, but if you have anger problems, here's one of the things that I know from my own experience with anger.

[26 : 00] Anger is really comforting. Anger can really make me feel good. Anger can fill me with self-righteousness.

Anger can, anger can take away some of the discomfort and lack of satisfaction I feel with myself because it puts me on a high horse and it can just be really comforting.

And, you know, telling a lie can do the same thing and pride can do the same thing and sexual knowing outside of marriage or pornography can do the same thing.

And we can think it's very comforting and maybe even very helpful. I know of a marriage counselor that when counseling couples, I mean, she actually tells them if you're having problems in your sexual relations to imagine being with another person as part of the therapy.

And it can seem like it's very comforting, but the Bible here is far truer to the nature of evil. we think it comforts us, but it actually wants to master us and be contrary to what our true good is.

[27 : 31] Anger-driven people have problems at work, they have problems in their relationship. Sexually driven people have problems with relationships, problems at work, problems with themselves, inability to attach.

You can go on and on and on. It appears to comfort, but I think that is far wiser. The Bible here is far wiser. It is deeply true.

It might seem to comfort, but it's just crouching. It wants to devour you. It wants to master you. It'll rule you. And it will rule you in a way which is not good for you.

And so you need to rule it. And some of you might say, George, are you now saying that you're not saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, that you just have to have this willpower and all of this?

No, because in the context here, this isn't telling me to rule things. I mean, what's the fundamental problem with this whole text? The whole problem with this text is Cain wants to be like God. God's advice now is to say, no, no, no, Cain, you've been trying to be like God, but not very effective.

[28 : 36] Really try to be like God. That's the solution. Really have God-like willpower. Really have God-like knowledge. Really have God-like control and people skills over.

Really have, no, that's not what's going over it. Next point. For every human being, repentance is always an option. See, that's what's going on here in the text, right?

God says to Cain, a little bit of a, like a moment here for a second. It's just like, you know, if I have problems, when I have problems with anger, it's like, George, why are you angry? Time out.

Why are you angry? Like, what is it that you value so much that angers your response? Like, why is it that you're so upset?

Like, what's going on, George? And then the promise. I want to accept you. Like, I'm not turning my back on you. My arms are open.

[29 : 36] I'm looking at you. I want you to come to me. I want to know you. I want you to know me. That's my heart. And then God gives this warning about sin.

You see, the context that the text is inviting us to is for Cain to turn the direction of his affections and his life and his plans and his hopes towards God.

Repentance. And he's saying to Cain, repentance is an option for you. And that's the beginning of a message that's going to go all the way through the Bible.

That repentance is always an option. If you're here today, repentance is an option for you. In fact, it's the option that God wants you to choose. To repent. To turn to him.

He won't turn you away. What is, you know, one of my favorite texts in the New Testament, come to me all who labor and are heavy laden. And I will give you rest.

[30 : 38] Take my yoke upon me, you, for I am gentle and humble of heart. And you will find rest for your soul, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

So how, how does Cain respond to God asking him a question, giving him a promise and making a warning?

Verse 8. Verse 8. And just before I read it, remember those of you who were here last week and over the last couple weeks, one of the things I said which is so unique about the biblical account is that the Bible teaches that God made everything good.

Human beings broke that created order by desiring to be God and by desiring to be God they broke their relationship with God, they brought evil into the world and it was a result of human evil and sin that death comes into the world.

And that's what we just looked at before, that death, God has said death will now be present. And it's very interesting that the first account of death is not of old age but of murder.

[31 : 52] Of murder. Of the murder of the innocent and trusting. Look at verse 8. Cain spoke to Abel, his brother.

He doesn't speak to God, he speaks to Abel. Abel thinks, well, things are fine. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

could you put up the next point, please? Rage against God tempts one to kill the innocent and the inconvenient.

This describes human history and our world today. ISIL is extremely devout and are filled with rage against God.

And when we cannot kill the God that we are angry at, we very easily imagine killing human beings made in the image of God. And I know Christians have their own sorry, despicable history of using worship to mask a rage against God which takes itself out of you can't shoot God but you can shoot Jews.

[33 : 17] You can shoot gays. You can shoot the unborn. You can shoot blacks. You can shoot people who own property.

You can shoot the educated. You can shoot the Dalits. Or you can strangle them. And this Bible passage here by its description of the rage against God that leads to the killing of the innocent and the inconvenient is unbelievably profoundly true of human experience of the newspapers today and of human history.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. So how does God act?

How does he act? Verse 9. Then the Lord said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother?

Question, where is Abel? See, when I say repentance is always an option, Cain could say, God, I don't know what I've done.

[34 : 37] I killed him. I did it. Have mercy on me. You know, God, it began with just me being mad at you.

And because you liked Abel, and so I was mad at him. And you warned me that sin could consume me and take me over, and I didn't listen to you.

Is there any way you could have mercy on me for what I have done? That's an option for Cain. What does he say? So that verse 9, Then the Lord said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother?

And Abel, Cain says to God, I do not know. Well, actually you do. You can go point to God right where he is in the field. And then, this is not an encouragement for us to care to people.

Am I my brother's keeper? Is the statement of callous disregard of human beings and of God. Am I my brother's keeper?

[35 : 40] I don't know what Abel is. My God, that's your responsibility looking after stuff like that. I got things to do. I got my own plans. I'm not, I'm a brother's keeper.

I got my own plans. So how's God going to respond? Verse 10, And the Lord said, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.

This is one of these wonderful texts in the Bible. You know, those who, for a variety of reasons, have fallen in love with Hinduism or Buddhism or versions of it in Canada.

You know, at the end of the day, one of the big problems, not that Hindus and Buddhists, they're very, many of them are extremely moral. They, they put you and me to shame. They really do. But at the very, very heart of their, of their belief system is this real inconsistency that God is beyond good and evil, that everything is ultimately one.

And here's the thing about the Bible. The Bible, it is very clear from beginning to end that God is, God believes in, in, in right and wrong and justice.

[36 : 48] Jesus. The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground.

And those of you who are here last week, cursed in the Bible means your relationship with the ground is going to become impotent, lacking in power. The ground has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. Then verse 13, Cain said to the Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. And whoever finds me will kill me.

And we'll just pause. Has Cain repented? You know what? To a Canadian, this sounds like repentance. Andrew, next point. Self-pity is not repentance.

[37 : 56] Whining is not repentance. Just before I read the rest of this, it's really interesting if you can find a news account of what went on with UBC when they disinvited that, I think his name was Furlong, and then the Freedom of Information Act, the emails going back and forward between the university and his agent.

That list, in fact, that list, that's sort of, regretting getting caught is not repentance. Managing negative consequences is not repentance.

Facing social exposure is not repentance. Making excuses is not repentance. Cain doesn't repent. He is filled with self-pity and whining at the consequence of his action.

It's an attempt by Cain to make God feel guilty, not for him to acknowledge what he's done and to turn the direction of his life towards God and ask God for mercy.

That's repentance. I have done wrong. Have mercy. I want to be towards you to the ones that we've wronged.

[39 : 17] I want to be towards you and I want to be towards God. Have mercy on me. Is there any help or hope that you may have mercy because what I have done is wrong?

And how does God respond? Verse 15. Then the Lord said to him, oh sorry, verse 14, Cain's continued, Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground and from your face I shall be hidden.

I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth and whoever finds me will kill me. God's response, verse 15. Then the Lord said to him, not so. If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.

And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

What's going on here? Like why is it that God puts the mark on him and is the text contradictory that God said he's going to be a wanderer but he goes and he has a home? No. Next point, please. This is the beginning of the understanding of a biblical thing.

[40 : 30] I don't talk about it as much as I should but it explains a lot of what goes on in, you know, when I said about how, you know, a lot of Hindus and Buddhists are far more moral than you and me, like vastly more moral than you than me.

They have a contradiction in their thought but they're far more moral. The reason is common grace. God offers real grace to Cain.

Common grace for all and saving grace for all who ask with repentance and faith. What is one way to understand? In fact, in some ways this is a perfect little illustration of what common grace is.

God's provision and protection without salvation. God's provision and protection without salvation.

Cain is continued to be provided for. He's protected. It's all in the hope that at some point in time that he will turn back to God. Saving grace is what only comes from Jesus.

[41 : 38] If you could put up the next point, please. Oh, sorry. I've sort of got my... I should have... Go to the next one and then we'll come back to this one. There we go. You don't have to be...

Anyway. Actually, I'll sort of go back to the earlier one. Now, everybody's looked at these points now very carefully. There's no contradiction here. This is a very, very powerful image because the land of Nod is...

Nod means wandering. Cain chose wandering away from God to be his home. Where is Cain's home?

Wandering away from God. This is very human. Next point, please. Here's the salvation. I need to wrap it up.

The shed blood of Abel cries out for justice. Isn't that what it does? God says to Cain, I hear the blood of your brother Abel crying out to me. And Abel is innocent and what it's crying out is God, have justice.

[42 : 42] And it's a good call. This is from Hebrews, by the way, this insight. Hebrews 12. It's in your going deeper if you want to check it out. But the shed blood of Jesus cries out that mercy has triumphed over justice.

It's a mixture of a quote from James and a quote from Hebrews. I'm not smart enough to think this up. I got it from the Bible. The shed blood of Jesus cries out that mercy has triumphed over justice.

How has it triumphed over justice? It hasn't triumphed over justice by being unjust, by just saying, well, I'm just going to give these people a pass. And that's injustice.

But that on the cross, the innocent one, God's justice falls on the innocent one because the innocent one willingly says, I will take the place of George.

By his wounds, I am healed. By his stripes, I am delivered. The punishment that brought me peace was laid upon him.

[43 : 53] In my place, condemned, he stood. And the blood of Jesus cries out that mercy has triumphed over justice.

Justice has done everything it should do to be just. And when all is over, there is mercy. Repentance is always an option.

Could you put up the final thing? So those of you who weren't here, I'll stand, please. Please stand. Those of you, you weren't here at the very beginning, at the very beginning of the service of morning prayer, I say a prayer after people have, we've all repented and I say a prayer.

And I'm going to have us all say it together as a closing prayer in response to this text. It's brilliant. It is absolutely brilliant. It is so profound. And what I said at the beginning of the service, which I'm going to have you say in a moment, not right now, but I say, Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and what does this explain here?

But why does God say to Cain, you have a chance? Why does God give Cain common grace? Why? Because God does not desire the death of a sinner. Why does God give common grace?

[45 : 09] Because he does not desire the death of a sinner. What does he desire? But rather that he, that you and me, may turn from his wickedness and live. Next slide. The prayer continues.

And so what has God given to his ministers? And in Anglicanism, we're all ministers. We're all ministers. Ministers just means servants. And what has he said? He's given power to those of us who've trusted in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

He's trusted us to give power, and he's told us to do this, to declare and pronounce to his people in all sort of the city of Ottawa and to the ends of the earth that being penitent, sorry, we, the absolution or remission of our sins is possible.

Why? Because God pardons and absolves all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel. What does unfeignedly mean? The opposite of Cain. It means without any pretense, no play acting, no pretend, really.

Next thing. So how shall we respond? Wherefore means how should we respond? Let us call out to him to grant us what? True repentance. To put an end to whining and self-pity and regretting that being caught.

[46 : 21] Call out to God for true repentance. And what else? We need God's help. Call out to God for true repentance in his Holy Spirit. Why? That our time of worship right now will please him.

That's what we're doing at our present. And that the rest of our life forever may be pure and holy. Why? So at the very end we will come to his eternal joy.

Through who? Through the church? No. Through baptism? No. Through being religious or spiritual? No. Through Jesus Christ?

Yes. This was written over 500 years ago. For some of us we just need to pray this prayer all the time.

And if you have never given your life to Jesus may this prayer be your conversion. Could you go back to the beginning, Andrew? And I invite you to pray it with me. Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live, and has given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people being penitent the absolution and remission of their sins.

[47 : 39] he pardons and absolves all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel. Wherefore, let us beseech him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Amen.