

The Anatomy of Worship

by Art Katz

The sermon emphasizes the importance of worship in maintaining a living relationship with God and the consequences of losing worship, including hardness of heart and cruelty towards others.

Duration: 37:57

Scripture: Genesis 4:2-10, Genesis 4:25, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 22:37, Hebrews 13:15

Topics: "Worship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of maintaining a living relationship with God. He warns against the danger of becoming so focused on doing God's will that we outstrip Him and neglect our relationship with Him. The preacher uses the story of Cain and Abel to illustrate this point, highlighting Cain's lack of worshipful and respectful attitude towards God. He emphasizes that worship is not limited to music, but includes actions and attitudes that flow from a worshipful heart in a relationship with God.

Transcript

That God works his marvels out of the living relationship with himself and that we should be careful to watch that relationship and not be stripped of it by even activity for the Lord. The relationship is the key. So in the second paragraph he writes, beware of outstripping God by your very longing to do his will.

We run ahead of him in a thousand and one activities. Consequently we get so burdened with persons and difficulties that we do not worship God, we do not intercede. Just to show you the way that I operate, I take my yellow marker and I mark worship and then I take it and I mark intercede and then I put one arrow going from worship to intercede and intercede back to worship to show the remarkable tandem connection between worship and intercession.

There is no intercession, true intercession that does not flow out of worship and worship flows out of relationship and what he's saying is even the activity for God can steal the relationship and rob the worship and therefore leave you without an adequate intercession. If once the burden and the pressure come upon us and we are not in the worshiping attitude, it will produce not only hardness toward God but despair in our own souls. When I read that I thought, wow, that's just so much on with what has come to my attention the day before when my brother in Holland, my key man in Holland to whom I had written to say, are you irritated or something? Your last letter or so to me sounds very cryptic, very short, very terse, very edgy and he said, yeah, he said, I'm weak and I forgot the words that he used, impatient, tired, weak and tired and he felt that he was being oppressed of the enemy and he can't wait for this thing to be over

with which he's involved with me.

What kind of an attitude is that? So he thinks it's the enemy probably in proportion to the importance of what we are about and so I said to him, well, you need to look to your devotional time. Probably you're sagging and being affected because you're not in a worshipful relationship with the Lord and therefore you're experiencing discouragement and weakness. And so this is what Oswald Chambers is saying, that if we lose that worshipful attitude, it will produce hardness toward God and weakness and despair in our own souls.

In a certain historic way, this is exactly what happened to Germany. It experienced hardness to the degree that it lost its worshipful relationship with God and hardness is another name for cruelty. What Jews experienced at German hands was hard.

It was a hardness of heart and a cruelty for which they were capable because they became hard to the degree that they lost the worshipful relationship with God that comes through relationship. They lost their connection with worship and relationship that results in hardness and despair in our own souls and despair is at the root of Nazism. There's a fancy word called nihilism which is the denial of everything.

It's the negation of everything. It's the despair in which there's no hope for anything. And you bring it down in a Gotthardammerung, a final damnation of everything where the German cities are left in burning rubble.

That was the end of World War II where Hitler was down beneath the earth in his bunker while overhead the whole great capital city of Germany was in burning ruins. Have you ever seen those pictures of that city taken by air at the end of World War II? A whole year of mile wide areas. There's not a building with a roof on it.

They're skeletons. They're just gone. That's the walls.

It was a complete devastation. That's the consequence of losing that relationship and bringing hardness and heart toward others and despair in your own soul. That despair is at the root of Nazism and why they were capable of atrocity and annihilation and the devastation of Europe and finally of Germany itself.

Then he says, God continually introduces us to people for whom we have no affinity unless we are worshipping God. Well, the people to whom God introduced Germany for whom they had no affinity were the Jews themselves. There was no natural affinity for the Jew.

The only thing that would enable you to relate to a people for whom you have no natural affinity is the worshipful thing that stems from that relationship with God. If you don't have it, the most natural thing to do is to treat them heartlessly. I wrote in the margin, history demonstrates that the natural thing that takes place that becomes heartless, when it's left too long, it becomes unnatural and ultimately cruel and bestial.

You go from the natural inability to have an affinity with the people who are different to a place where it becomes unnatural. Finally, it becomes cruel and bestial. German history proves what Oswald Chambers wrote about before the advent of Nazism and everything goes back to the loss that comes to man when he loses a worshipful relationship with God.

A hardness in his own heart, an inability to relate to those that are different, and a natural revulsion that becomes unnatural and finally becomes bestial is the experience of modern times. That's the nation of the

Reformation. That's the land of Luther that lost it over a process of time.

Worship is honoring God. I looked up the word worship in a dictionary. I'm not happy with what I read there, but it needs to be explored.

Worship is the issue of honoring God, whether you do it in testimony, in praise, in song, in preaching, in witness. It's acknowledging God as God, as the source of all. Cain and Abel is the example of a worship that was acceptable to God and a worship that was rejected.

Worship is sacrifice. Cain's sacrifice was not acceptable to God and Abel's was. Matthew Henry says, the way that you can know it is that God consumed Abel's sacrifice by fire and left Cain's sacrifice unattended.

Isn't that remarkable? Because one was authentic. Out of a worshipful heart was a worshipful sacrifice, a worshipful offering that recognized God as the source of the blessings that have been received, that was paying homage to the God who provided it. And God found that acceptable.

But the word Cain means performance, production, self-sufficiency. He gave only a scant nominal acknowledgement of God as a religious kind of obligation, like paying his dues, and God did not consume that sacrifice. It was not acceptable.

And the proof that his heart was wrong and that his heart was hard was that he got angry. Cain became angry, so angry that he finally murdered his brother, whom he envied because God favored him and accepted his sacrifice while he spurned his own. The fact that he could be angry both against God and against his brother unto murder shows that he had not a worshipful heart to begin with, and he could not relate to someone who was different.

God continually introduces us to people to whom we have no affinity, and unless we are worshiping God, the most natural thing to do is to treat them heartlessly. That's what Cain did to his own brother. He treated him heartlessly.

It was the first murder, and it's related to a failed worship that is related to a failed relationship that was not worshipful. See how remarkable all this is? God was not honored because he was no longer seen as the source of German prosperity, but industry, commerce, state, and education, the work of their own hands. Cain means acquisition, getting, production, possession, and Abel's name means futility and vanity.

Isn't that interesting? One emphasizes human attainment, and the other name means non-attainment. It's weakness. It's foolishness.

It's saying, without God, I can do nothing. If there's any increase, it's come from God, and I honor him because I recognize he is the source. Germany lost connection with the source because it was prospering by its own hand, its own industry, its own military, its own system of education.

They lost the relationship with God. They lost their worshipful relationship. They became hardened in their heart.

They could not relate to those that were different to Jews in their midst. They became unnatural, and finally, they became cruel, and they became bestial. That's exactly what Cain became to his own brother, Abel.

And at the end of the age, how does God separate the sheep from the goats, the Cain people from the Abel people? How do you relate to your brother? When did we see you naked, thirsty, and hungry? If you have not done this for the least of my brethren, who should be your brethren, you have not done it unto me, and therefore, be sent into the fire prepared for the devil and for his angels. They are the people of Cain. Not to be able to relate to your brother is the whole issue of the relationship to God.

In the last days, they cannot even recognize the Jew as their brothers, let alone be gracious to them, even in a natural way. The issue of the brother, recognizing the brother, and being merciful and gracious rather than hard and unkind, is the issue of the relationship to God. That's why he can tell at the end of the age who's with me, who's against me, who's Cain, who's Abel, who goes into the fire, who goes into the kingdom prepared for sons.

This Gerhard von Raad, the German scholar, says responsibility before God is responsibility for one's brother. Remember what Cain, after he had murdered his brother, the Lord said to him, where's your brother? He said to Adam, where are you? But to Cain, he says, where's your brother? He says, am I my brother's keeper? And the answer really is exactly. You're the older brother.

You're the firstborn. You should have been watching over him. You should have been protecting him, not murdering him.

The issue of your brother, your attitude and relationship to your brother, is the whole issue of God. Responsibility before God is responsibility for one's brother. Isn't that remarkable? Killing a brother.

That's the way the age begins. And Seth replaces Abel. And from the time of Seth and Seth's children, people begin to acknowledge the name of the Lord.

It begins real divine history. And then the Bible gives the genealogy, and Cain is completely omitted. There's no reference to Cain.

The spiritual history begins with Seth, who replaces him. It's interesting that when Cain is born, Eve says, I have produced a man. When Seth is born, she says, God has appointed.

Seth means appointed. Cain, I have produced. Cain means produced.

Getting. Acquisition. Power.

She said, I have produced a son with the help of God, which is just a little crumb for God. It's a religious piety, which I have produced. But when Seth came, she says, God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel because Cain killed him.

So to Seth, also a son was born, and he's named Enosh. And at that time, people began to invoke the name of the Lord. Spiritual history begins with the replacement for Abel.

And I don't know if I'm being very fanciful here, but if you see this as a parable or a kind of a design, Abel died at the hand of a murderer in order to make way for a Seth with whom the real spiritual history begins, and at which time the people begin to acknowledge the name of the Lord. So you can almost say that Abel is a picture of present Israel that needs to be brought to death in order that it might be replaced by a Seth who is appointed and who will bless all the nations who will call on the name of the Lord. That though Cain is the instrument of the devil and is heartless toward his own brother and is capable of murder, something

like the apostate church today, something like the apostate God-rejecting world will be the instrument of bringing down present Israel unto death.

And God will replace that with the nation that's appointed by which nations will begin to call upon the name of the Lord. So the Lord's design is fulfilled even through the death of one brings the birth of another. But I just encourage you to look at this first murder.

It's a remarkable statement, and it goes back to the issue of worship. Worship is offering. Worship is sacrifice.

One acceptable and blessed, received by the Lord and the other rejected because the other was nominal, religious, cursory, an obligation, something convenient because Cain gave from the fruit of the field. He was a farmer. He gave what was accessible.

Abel took the best of the firstlings of the flock. He gave the best of the flock, and he gave the fat of the firstling. Fat may be to us repulsive, but to God, fat is the accumulation that comes from rest.

See what I mean? Fat is a statement of a devotional dependency and rest upon God, and that he found that acceptable. His fire consumed it. Cain's was a sacrifice of convenience that was at hand, that he could give, but it cost him nothing.

It was not a real honoring or an acknowledgment that the source of his prosperity had come from God because Cain was a tiller of the ground. He labored. He was a possessor, and Matthew Henry says that probably these two sons, these two first sons had a choice in their vocation.

One chose to be the tiller of the earth and produce because that's what he was, while the other chose to be pastoral and to watch over the flock because that is a devotional occupation. There you sit with the flock, and you have much time to reflect on reality and truth and God and develop a relationship that could become worshipful. Isn't that a remarkable insight? And it was a choice.

Abel chose to be a pastor. Abel chose to be a shepherd, and he recognized that the increase came from God, and he gave him the homage due him as true worship. Isn't that a beautiful story? What these sons represent and the conflict between them, eventuating in murder, and the attitude of Cain when he's confronted by God with the question, where is your brother? Am I supposed to know? What am I, my brother's keeper? The insolence of that, the audacity to talk to God like that shows that it's a man who never had a worshipful or even a respectful attitude toward God that when he's confronted with his sin, he lashes out with a lie.

I don't know. What am I, my brother's keeper? So he's a liar and a murderer like his father, and the Lord had pleaded with him, you know sin is at the door. Yes, your offering has been rejected, but if you'll do right, sin will not consume you.

It's at the door waiting to act out what you have already set in motion. If you don't watch it, what you've done in this nominal relationship with me that hardens your heart will turn to your brother as murder. And the very next thing we read is, Cain took Abel out into the field and murdered him.

After God's warning of what would happen unless you amend and change your ways. He still remained angry. What a picture this is.

And induces his brother to come out into the field that he might murder him. How did he induce him? He probably lied to him or flattered him or gave him a false encouragement in order to do him in. On the heels of God's warning that sin is at the door and it will capture you.

It's wanting God's acknowledgement and acceptance on its own terms, on what it produces and fails to see the grace of God in the field as well as in the flock. Because God calls us to worshipful service. We remembered, was it yesterday morning, Romans 12.1 says, make of your body a living sacrifice, which is your appropriate worship or your appropriate service unto the Lord.

Everything should be worshipful, whatever the sacrifice, whatever the labor, whatever the activity and should come out of a relationship as unto the Lord. And that's something that Cain failed to obtain. And it's the danger.

It's the thing that befell Germany. They produced also out of themselves, the leading economy and military power of Central Europe. And it almost brought down civilization and it hardened their heart.

It made them angry. It made them unnatural. Everything goes back to true worship that God is waiting for.

And true worship waits on relationship. So I'm just appreciating what the Lord is opening in this. Cain was the firstborn and yet God's favorite, that should have been with the firstborn who inherits everything according to the biblical mode, rested on the secondborn.

It's something like Jacob and Esau. Again, Esau was the firstborn, but God's favor did not follow the propriety or the mechanics of men. He chose what he will choose.

So the attitude of the older brother toward the younger, even like the prodigal son and the older brother showed a resentment and an envy and an anger in each case. And the inability to recognize the grace of God on the other brother, because your relationship with your brother is relative to your relationship with the father. If you have not an adequate and right relationship with the father, that's worshipful.

How shall you recognize the brother? So therefore the brother is the litmus test of your relationship with the father. And that's why, when did we see you naked, thirsty and hungry? When did we see you in the least of these brethren? We didn't see you as the father. And therefore how can we recognize the brother? Though they said, Lord, Lord, I've never known you.

And be cast therefore into the fire prepared for the devil for his angels. The sheep and the goats, the Cain people and the Abel people are the two categories that remain at the end of the age. And it's the issue of Israel that identifies them.

And there'll be no other category. We're moving toward one or the other. So this issue of worship is so enormously important.

And we've been turned off from it because it has become a commercialized thing. It's become a production. Worship teams, worship leaders, music amplifiers, as if music is worship.

It can aid worship, but it is not in itself worship. Worship is an attitude. Worship is a relationship.

Worship is an honoring. Worship is an acknowledgement. And that's what he's talking about.

You lose that, you're going to get tired, defeated, despairing and hard. Germany is the national statement and my brother in Holland is a personal statement, but it's a threat to all of us. So that's why when we had these little pregnant sons, I said, you know, this is an opportunity to give a testimony that's worshipful, to sing a chorus that's worshipful, to share the word of the Lord that's worshipful.

It's not music only, but worshipful things are acceptable to God that flows out of a worshipful heart that's in a worshipful relationship. You shouldn't have to be prompted to give a word of testimony to the Lord. See what I mean? If you're in a worshipful, able place.

See, Abel chose to be a shepherd. He chose a vocation that would give him opportunity for devotion because you're with the flock, but what do you do? You're sitting like David and you're playing your lyre and you're composing your worshipful choruses and your songs. I chose to be a teacher, not for the least of reasons, that it would give me occasion to read.

I wanted to be a teacher because I knew it would require reading and study. So I chose a vocation that would implement my desire and that's what Matthew Henry is suggesting. It's just a conjecture, but he's saying that these two brothers, see this is the beginning and these brothers are prototypes.

One chooses this, one chooses that. One has this kind of disposition toward God, the other has another. I think of that phrase that their souls were made lean.

When you have a lean soul, there's no fat. Fat has taken on such a pejorative meaning in our generation. We want to get rid of it.

We diet, but I'm trying to communicate it in the biblical Old Testament sense. When God smelled the sacrifice of the fat, that was for him the sweet aroma because it was a statement of a spiritual kind. It was a symbolic kind, but if you give a sacrifice without fat, it means you're giving the most rudimentary thing that is more the product of your sweat than the product of your devotion.

Abel gave what was the product of his devotion. He was a meditator. Isaac was a man of the tent.

Jacob was a man of the tent. That's a picture of a pastoral life that finds time not to be so busy that it cannot seek and communicate with God. In our natural bodily life, we don't want to accumulate fat.

It's not healthy and it shows improper diet, lack of exercise, lack of discipline, but spiritually speaking, we want to accumulate it. We want spiritual fat that comes from waiting on the Lord devotionally to see the difference between the natural meaning and the spiritual meaning. But isn't it interesting that the Egyptians despised the Israelite occupation of being sheep herders.

It was the lowest form of employment from the Egyptian perspective. To be a watcher over a flock was in the sight of Egyptians the lowest of all occupation. And maybe later on in Israel that when God chooses a king of all of the sons of Jesse, he takes the one who's the shepherd because the shepherd is the devotional one or has at least the potential and the opportunity for devotion.

You know the story of when we lived in Israel in Carmel in the Galilee Heights. I got up in the morning. I wanted to go up and find a time with God.

And I had to go through brush with thorns and thickets and climbing my way up. My legs were just bloody. But I finally found a rock and the sun was just coming up over the horizon and I'm wanting to wait upon the

Lord and to be before him in this undisturbed.

And as the sun came up and the heat came up with it, the first thing I saw were the droppings of the sheep all around that area. That's where the shepherds had taken their flock. And because of the droppings, there were the flies.

And because of the flies, I was beginning to get nipped and my legs were getting like swollen places. I finally had to leave and my little bubble was burst of the idyllic devotional time that I thought I would have alone up on the mountaintop. So it gave me another perspective.

It said that David followed after the sheep. He had to walk through their droppings and fight off the flies, the thickets. This devotional life is not a snap.

This is not some little sugar candy thing. That's why God respects it. It's a God honoring thing because it requires persistence.

Because it's not ease. It requires a heart that's willing to find the time and to keep persistently at it before God because you recognize him as your source. He's the blessing.

It's the Lord who gave out of the Proverbs a statement for the black community in America and gave the occasion to speak it. And the fire of God came down that day on that sacrifice. He consumed it.

The people were beside themselves with applause. Because I knew and he knew that I knew that he was the giver of every good and perfect thing that comes down from above. My attitude was an Abel attitude, not a Cain attitude.

It wasn't something I produced. It was something given out of a devotional relationship and the fire of God fell on it. The same thing happened in Nuremberg, Germany with that message on true and false repentance toward the Jew.

May there be more fire falling on what God honors because he knows it's born out of sacrifice and out of relationship with himself. Let's just pray along those lines and thoughts of the Lord for us. Righteousness is the impartation of what God himself is.

And impartation takes place in union and union in relationship. Abel evidently found time for it and his prime time. If he gave his chief sacrifice, the firstling of his flock and the best of it, it was a statement of what had been characteristic of him all the time.

His first thought is always God. His first giving is always God. That's worship.

Worship is the acknowledgement of God as God. And then you give the first. You give the best, not just what is convenient for you.

Brother is the litmus test of what the truth is of our relationship. And we're going to say to Germany that the Jew in your midst for 2,000 years was your brother. What? These people, they're so different.

They're strange. They have side curls. They wear black.

They're not like us. We're Germans. We're civilized.

They failed to recognize their brother because they were different. They were the least of his brethren. They could not recognize them as brothers.

They could not extend themselves to the brother that the Jew was to the German and killed him. They could not save him, so they killed him. They could not beat to the Jew in their midst, the older brother, and show the younger the way of the Lord.

And what you cannot save, you ultimately destroy. What you cannot relate to naturally becomes unnatural. I may be speaking this in Germany.

Lord, give me grace. Because one of the things that we're already learning is some reaction already from the German edition of the Holocaust book. We're a wounded people.

How did this woman say it about Germany? We're wounded and we lack a national self-esteem. It's interesting that when God gives Cain his judgment, he doesn't kill him. He makes him a wanderer over the face of the earth.

And he says, this punishment is too severe for me. He didn't think of a moment's mercy of his brother, but when he has to pay the price and punishment for it, he's full of self-pity. I'm wounded.

I need my self-esteem. You're going to make me a wanderer and I'll be a candidate for others to murder me. What a picture.

It sounds so much like Germany. Because they have not acknowledged that they have murdered their brother. They have not acknowledged the Jew as their brother.

Am I my brother's keeper? Germany would say. So Lord, we just thank you for what you're fingering, what you're touching, what you're sounding. What was at the beginning is such a foreshadowing of what is coming at the end.

When did we see you thirsty and hungry? When did we recognize these as your brethren, let alone our brethren? And so Lord, I'm asking that you would impart deeply an understanding of your heart in all of this. There's a reason why you were so sparing in Genesis, why you're so terse in your statements and so compact that it has to be opened. And I pray Lord that an opening will come in the sharing of this word in Germany especially and places where it pleases you to bring us.

That worship is the name of the game. Worship is not a little icing on the cake. It's not a little aspect for Christian services to make them warm or enjoyable.

It's the heart of the whole matter. And we pray Lord that our own worship would deepen, become every day more authentic and real, more acceptable in your sight, that you might take it to yourself and consume it by fire. It would be a sweet smelling savor.

It would not be the expression of what is convenient for us and what is at hand for us that we can do, that we have produced, but the acknowledgement by God that everything comes from you. So help us in this Lord. We thank you for this precious, rich theme.

And if in any way there's a pattern here that Abel had to go, even through death, violently imposed by an apostate brother in order to make way for the Seth who is given and appointed, which is the picture of Israel in its millennial glory, that will move all nations to acknowledge the name of the Lord, then establish

this Lord in our understanding and in our speaking, this great mystery. Thank you Lord for your thoughts this morning. May they find lodging in our hearts and affect our own attitude, our own walk, our own relationship.

Whatever our occupation is, may we find pastoral time. May we find and seek devotional time that gives you the primary first place and not an afterthought. Thank you Lord, or else our hearts will be hardened, or else we'll become tired, or else we'll become weak, or else we will not be able to relate to those who are different from us and for whom we have no affinity in a natural way.

We will become unnatural. And we thank you for what Oswald Chambers has seen and shared and the precious record in scripture, Lord, that corroborates. Thank you Lord.

Let not this word pass from us until it performs its work. Thank you my God. Sound it where you will, in the earth, in Jesus' name.

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