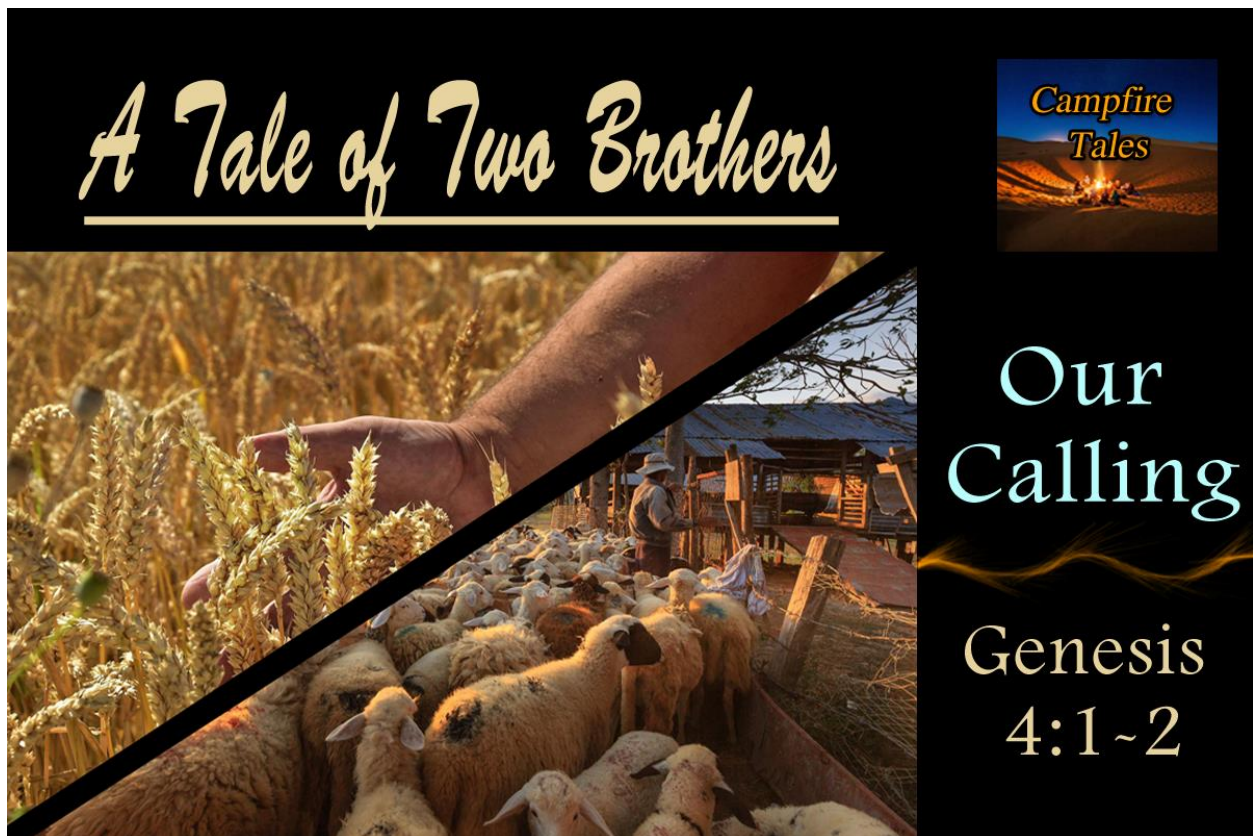


October 2, 2022 - "Our Calling"

This is the first message in our second series in Campfire Tales catalog of sermons. We will be looking at the story of Cain and Abel, "A Tale of Two Brothers," and see if we can discern a more in depth understanding of this story along with the lessons it holds. The message today is about "Our Calling" and our scripture can be found in the fourth chapter of Genesis, verses 1 and 2.

Genesis 4:1-2

- 1 Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man."**
- 2 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.**



Special Music:

"We are an Offering"

Don Moen

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ur2ExE_vMmk

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ME

God called to me in my dreams.

“Do you know who you are?” He asked.

“I am The Man,” I replied

Somewhat overly dignified,

“A prosperous proper businessman,

Shaping the world at my command.

Born a leader and bleeder of souls.

That is my purpose and that is my role.”

And God shook His head and wept.

For that's not the purpose that He had beget

For me.

God called to me in the breeze.

“Do you know who you are?” He asked.

“I am a baker and maker of wonderful breads,

A clothing creator with beautiful threads

A maker of goods,

And wonderful foods.

Creating the best is my passionate goal.

That is my purpose and that is my role.”

And God shook His head and tearfully wept.

For that's not the purpose that He had beget

For me.

God called to me in a whisper.

“Do you know who you are?” He asked.

**“I am a thinker of infinite thoughts,
I offer an answer wherever it’s sought
A master of numbers,
While everyone slumbers.
I have answers to make everything whole.
That is my purpose and that is my role.”
And God shook His head and tearfully wept.
For that’s not the purpose that He had beget
For me.**

**God called to me in the shadow.
“Do you know who you are?” He asked.
“I am an artist, creator of worlds
I paint and I sing.
I dance in the spring,
Bringing life to the chaos that is out of control.
That is my purpose and that is my role.”
And God shook His head and tearfully wept.
For that’s not the purpose that He had beget
For me.**

**God called to me from beyond the night sky,
“Do you want to know who you really are?”
In my confusion, I bowed with my head
Knelt to the ground, heard the words that he said.
“You are my child,
Wild and beguiled.
You may do what you do**

**With the gifts I've blessed you,
Use them to lift each suffering soul.
That is your purpose, that is your role."
And God winked His eye and tearfully smiled.
Helping me realize that I am His child,
And that is His purpose for me.**

How do we know what God has called us to do? Why did Cain choose to become a farmer, and why Abel chose to become a shepherd? It appears to me that Abel may even have been the very first shepherd. And we should also note that the Bible does not tell us that Cain didn't also have a few sheep and Abel didn't do any farming. Our scripture today does tell us this:

“Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.”

By nature, we are limited in our vision and more often than not, we don't ask the questions that we should in order to fill in the gaps. For instance, our experience tells us that if someone is given to farming full-time or shepherding full-time there must be a demand for what they are doing or producing. Yet the only information that we have from these verses is telling us that we are dealing with four people (Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel). So why do we need a full-time farmer and a full-time shepherd? We know from the Bible that Adam lived 930 years and had other sons and daughters after Cain and Abel, including his son Seth who was born to fill the void caused by the passing of Abel. We can see that there was a growing demand for what Cain and Abel were providing, even after the death of Abel

We can speculate all we want about what drew Cain to farming and Abel to shepherding. It is possible that Adam told them what they were to do. In the end, the understanding that we should take away from their work-life is that both flourished in their trades. Herds increased and crops were bountiful so that there was enough for everyone to be content. Both brothers were serving the greater

community. We don't see any grumbling going on about their work. They seem to be fulfilled in the performance of their occupations.

The trouble that is going to come is not based on their work ethic or hardships. Because we are looking back and from a different perspective, we forget that the brothers are defining their roles in a growing society. I truly don't want to draw comparisons with an open market today, but as the demand grows, the supply has to grow to meet the demand. Cain and Abel are creating ways of meeting the growing needs of their community. Sometimes, we actually learn more about people in the Bible from the missing information in a story than the story itself. This whole story of Cain and Abel is not a long one. It is a mere sixteen verses in the 4th chapter of Genesis. But the story lets us glimpse into not only the beginnings of humanity, but also the model of the first family unit and the structure of the first community. It allows us to put the roots of community under a microscope and begin to understand God's purpose for creating us in the first place.

We are surrounded by trillions of people doing billions of jobs for millions of industries for thousands of needs, each position filled by some unique individual that has the skills or is willing to gain the expertise to perform a need and fulfill a role within the community. Some are very successful. Some will never be able to perform in the environment that they find themselves and are forced to reconsider their options. Some will define their own careers. Some will let their careers define them. Some will make their own choices about what they would like to do, and others will let someone make that choice for them. Some

will view what they do as a job and not worth the commitment of their heart. Some will over commit and work themselves to death doing something that brings them no joy. There is also a small percentage of people that actually find a position that brings them peace and joy doing something that they are passionate about. Many people will be pleased just to be able to keep a roof over their head and food on the table. Others will chase after an elusive happiness that they think will be found in a bigger house, larger boat, or faster car. Some will look very successful when they aren't. Some won't look successful at all and still be wealthy beyond reason. But I am sad to say, most will never include God in the discussion regarding their best fit to serve the purpose of our all-knowing, all-loving, and all-understanding Creator.

It was Plato who is credited with saying:

“Our need will be the real creator”

We relate to that in a more contemporary rendering of the phrase:

“Necessity is the mother of invention”

Basically, if we choose work that serves no purpose, and does not meet a need or demand, we will probably starve. So, in a way, I guess we can say that in the beginnings of humanity, there were needs to be met, and Cain and Abel met those needs. At that time, there was no need of a carpenter, stonemason, soldier, or just about any other position that we consider an option today. But there was a need for a farmer and a shepherd to meet the needs of a growing population.

But how did they know which one needed to be what? The Bible doesn't tell us that information and anything we guess is supposition on our parts. I will say this, however, people don't generally stick around for a long time, or work with a smile on their face, when they find themselves employed in positions that bring them no joy or satisfaction. So, I would hazard to say that Cain probably enjoyed being a farmer and Abel probably enjoyed being a shepherd, because they got satisfaction and a certain amount of joy of doing those things. I would think that they had some encouragement and direction from Adam and Eve as well as having regular conversations with God to help them find their identity and thrive.

The two brothers were comfortable in the presence of God. We will talk a little later on in this story about God's conversation with Cain, the same type of conversation that Adam had with God. Cain did not find a conversational relationship with God unusual.

I don't know about you, but I sometimes have trouble with this. We have to be honest with ourselves. Our prayers are often very one sided and not so conversational. We often do all the talking. But the intent of prayer is having a conversation with God, where we listen as well as speak. When we ask God what He would like for us to do, we must be willing to hear what he is saying and implement His intentions for us, even if it is something that we are uncomfortable with. And, if we are truthful, there is a bit of trepidation as we consider what others will say when we have an open conversation with the Creator of the

Universe. We really don't want people to look at us like we are crazy. But we will never know what God wants from us if we fail to have those conversations.

We all have two callings on our lives, and the first one is always higher than the second.

15 Woe to those who go to great depths

to hide their plans from the Lord,

who do their work in darkness and think,

“Who sees us? Who will know?”

16 You turn things upside down,

as if the potter were thought to be like the clay!

Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it,

“You did not make me”?

Can the pot say to the potter,

“You know nothing”?

Isaiah 29:15-16

Come, follow me, “ Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

Matthew 4:19

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

Matthew 16:24

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Matthew 28:19-20

Our primary purpose in the universe is to serve as a vessel, a charger, a servant for our Creator. It does not matter if we are a tent maker, wood carver, stone mason, foundry worker, machinist, computer technician, doctor, lawyer, policeperson, farmer, or rancher. Our first and primary responsibility is to God. If what we do for a living causes us to jeopardize our relationship with God, if it requires us to deny His purpose for our lives, then it is our jobs, not our God, that we should reconsider. People often forget that so I will say it again. Our first and primary responsibility is to God. If what we do for a living causes us to jeopardize our relationship with God, if it requires us to deny His purpose for our lives, then it is our jobs, not our God, that we should reconsider. If we truly believe that God values us so highly that He sent His son to become as sacrifice for our sins, then we will trust that God will catch us when we go against the

nature of the world to stand on the truth of our Lord and Savior. There is no compromise on this.

37 Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’

38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:37-40

It is in these words that we find the foundation for our beliefs as Christians. Those words need to be engraved on our hearts. If we cherish what Jesus is telling us here and ask Him to join in conversation with us, we will know where we belong and what He is expecting of us. We can do whatever we want with our lives without consulting him, but if we want to enjoy the blessings and joy that are the products of that relationship with our Creator, this is the only path. If what we are doing fails to meet the demands of this scripture, then we are not in favor with God in our decisions.

That does not mean that God doesn't love us. Romans 8:38-39 tells us this:

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord

We can stand firm in that promise. But if we want to draw close to the source of our creation, our Potter, our Father, our reason for being, we will

“Love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind.”

And “Love our neighbors as ourselves.”

And we will listen for His voice. Through the very nature of belief in the Lord Our God, our path is determined, and our course is set. It is when we forget who we are that we forget our purpose. It is when we forget that we are children of the Most High that we lose our focus. It is when we forget that God has a plan for our lives and we take it upon ourselves to fill that void with our own ego and false purpose, never realizing that what God has in store for us is so superior to what we choose, so full of fulfillment and joy, so perfect for His children.

This week, I want us to consider where we have been in our lives and where we currently are. Have we invited Jesus into the conversation regarding what he wants from us? Are we missing opportunities that God wants us to experience? Have we asked God if He is satisfied with where we are in life, and are we involving Him with our choices?

In 1926, B. B. McKinney wrote a popular hymn entitled “Satisfied with Jesus.” We don’t sing it very often. Maybe because it hits too close to home. But the chorus goes like this:

“I am satisfied.

I am satisfied.

I am satisfied with Jesus.

But the question comes to me

As I think of calvary,

Is my Master satisfied with me?”

God bless you all,

AMEN

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