**Genesis 4:1-16 December 2, 2020**

**Advent Midweek Series I: A Child is Born: Cain**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

 We will examine the implications, questions, and expectations for families at the news that they are expecting a child and see the comparison in ourselves as God’s children in light of the birth of Jesus Christ throughout these next 3 weeks in our Advent Midweek Series: A Child is Born. Tonight, we gather together and look at the birth of the very first child, born to the very first parents Adam and Eve. It is a moment that causes Eve herself to say, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.” This man, who could very well be the promised Savior for Adam and Eve since they had been exiled from the garden of Eden. A child is born! And his name is Cain.

 Yes, that Cain. The Cain that goes with Abel, his brother. It is hard for us to look at Cain fairly today. We hear his name and we immediately think of the brutal murdering of his brother Abel. If there were to be a trial, we would all qualify as biased jurors; unable to give Cain a fair trial.

 Even the Old Testament is biased toward Cain; the descendants of Cain are the ones who make a mess of things prior to the flood; the descendants of Cain are the one who make a mess of things after the flood. The descendants of Cain are the godless inhabitants of Canaan when the faithful Israelites come to claim it as the Promised Land.

 But Cain was not always viewed as synonymous with sin and godlessness and death. There was a time when Cain was actually looked upon quite favorably; even to the point where he was considered to quite possibly be the promised Messiah. That time was when he was born.

 Cain is the first child born after the fall into sin in Genesis 3; and he is born to parents who have two lasting images in their minds of that day when they disobeyed God: images of death and images of hope. The death has already been made known: Adam and Eve have been cast out of the Garden of Eden; Adam has already experienced some of the struggle that he will encounter with the ground, planting amidst thorns, working with a cursed and changed world; and Eve has now experienced the pain of childbirth. Their own relationship has been changed, with the headship that we see in a family structure going to the husband. They both realize that life is much different than it was in the Garden.

 But there is also the image of hope. God promised a Savior. God promised someone who would crush the head of the serpent. God promised a child who would be born of a woman who would undo the curse. Cain is the first opportunity for God to fulfill that promise.

 Despite everything that we know will follow; on the day of his birth, there is hope and promise and celebration at the birth of Cain; just as there is at the birth of any child. But there is also the possibility, that this is the one who will make everything right once more, who will bring back the glory days of the Garden of Eden.

 And that is true of every person who follows; no one welcomes their child into the world hoping that the child will become a an ax murder, or a thief, or an addict. No one welcomes their child into the world hoping that the child will be mean, violent, jealous, and problematic. The birth of a child is cause for hope that this child who is born today will be the one who is a lifesaving doctor; or a fearless general; or an amazing athlete; or a multi-millionaire, the President of the United States of America. Expectant parents all say the same thing about their child, “This child will be different, this child won’t be like those other children.” This will be the nice, sweet, obedient, quiet, and good child. This child, in Cain’s sense, could even be the Savior of the world.

 Indeed when your parents looked upon you for the first time, they did not see the effects of Genesis 3, marking you as an enemy of God; they saw you as a human being who could accomplish great things, who would be a shining light in the midst of darkness. They looked at you and assumed you to be perfect.

 You are not perfect of course; any more than Cain was perfect. We do not have much about his childhood or early adulthood, outside of this one account in Genesis 4; but we do know that Cain was sinful from the time that he was conceived in the womb. It is not clear how long it took Adam and Eve to discover this, but just as surely as your parents discovered that you were not perfect, Adam and Eve found that Cain wasn’t perfect, he wasn’t the Savior. Abel, as wonderful as he was in his giving, wasn’t perfect either. Seth, and all the other children that came after, none of any of their children were perfect.

 Cain illustrates his sinfulness in a way that many of us cannot even begin to imagine; and it is for the sins of Cain that his descendants will be cursed throughout the entire Old Testament; and it is for the sins of Cain that even today we recoil at the mere mention of his name.

 But do not forget your own sins. You sins may not be recorded in Holy Scripture, but they should cause no less recoil among the people of God today, for your sins are what separate you from God. You were designed to be perfect; you were called to be holy; and yet, you are no better than Cain.

 For nearly 4000 years, other mothers will look at their newborn sons in the same manner that Eve looked at Cain, wondering if this might be the Messiah; only to discover sooner rather than later, that they were not.

 It would not be until the birth of Christ in Bethlehem that a mother, this time Mary, could look at her newborn son and say with absolute certainty that this is the one who has come to crush the head of the serpent; this is the one who has come to redeem His people from the curse of Genesis 3 this is the one who has come to restore life and light to His creation.

 Jesus is that perfect son born to a daughter of Eve; Jesus is that long promised Messiah. Jesus is the one who has come to live a perfect life; redeeming you and me and all those who have been conceived in sin and have not lived perfect lives from the consequences for those sins. Jesus is the one who brings you into the Paradise of His eternal kingdom.

 For in the waters of Holy Baptism you are reborn as a child of God; and the sign of the cross is made upon your forehead announcing to Satan and to the world that you are one for whom Christ came into the world to die and rise for.

 You are one whom Christ desires to spend eternity with. You are one who is seen as perfect and holy through the eyes of your Father who is in heaven. You are the one for whom the whole Church in heaven and on earth rejoices over, for you are a child of God.

 If you write a newsletter every year around Christmas time, you probably put a summary of what each member of the family is up to. You usually talk about big accomplishments and move quickly past any kind of indiscretion of bad thing that came up during the year. You can imagine that if Adam and Eve were writing a Christmas newsletter, there would be no mention of Cain their son. Maybe one sentence saying that Cain was doing “alright”. That’s how we view sin during these days of joy and gladness, in these days of preparation, but instead let’s remember Cain, the child of potential and hope, who became a walking embodiment of his sin and a curse to others. Let’s remember Cain as the example he was, of how the world had changed since the fall into sin, and the ramifications of unrepented sins of any kind. Let’s look to what Cain was hoped to be, and see Christ, as the fulfillment of the wishes of Cain’s parents so long ago. As Jesus, the one who will mend what is so wrong about this broken creation that we still live in today, and make it right when he returns to take us to be with him, coming a second time in Judgment, but also in love and care. For we are his very own, beloved children.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.