



Bible Study

March 4, 2015

Gen 4:16-26
Isaiah 5:16-25
Proverbs 5:15-6:3

Genesis 4:16-26 (NKJV) -

Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch. To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech. Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah. And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah. Then Lamech said to his wives, “Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, Even a young man for hurting me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.” And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.” And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.

Proverbs 5:15-6:3 (NKJV) - Drink water from your own cistern, And running water from your own well. Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, And not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, And be embraced in the arms of a seductress? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He ponders all his paths. His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, And he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray. My son, if you become surely for your friend, If you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, You are snared by the words of your mouth; You are taken by the words of your mouth. So do this, my son, and deliver yourself; For you have come into the hand of your friend: Go and humble yourself; Plead with your friend.

Isaiah 5:16-25 (NKJV) - But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, And God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness. Then the lambs shall feed in their pasture, And in the waste places of the fat ones strangers shall eat. Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, And sin as if with a cart rope; That say, "Let Him make speed and hasten His work, That we may see it; And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, That we may know it." Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight! Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away justice from the righteous man! Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, And the flame consumes the chaff, So their root will be as rottenness, And their blossom will ascend like dust; Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore the anger of the LORD is aroused against His people; He has stretched out His hand against them And stricken them, And the hills trembled. Their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this His anger is not turned away, But His hand is stretched out still.

Commentary -

Today's reading in Genesis is the genealogy of Cain, that first son of Adam who murdered his brother. When Cain was confronted by the Lord regarding his crime, he rightly saw that from that day, anyone who found him, even his father, would take vengeance upon him and kill him. He knew that his own act of violence was not isolated, but that he had set in motion a cycle of violence that if left unchecked would consume him, and all of humanity. The Lord therefore, as a mercy, placed a mark upon Cain to indicate that he was under the Lord's protection, and that anyone who harmed him would be repaid by the Lord seven times over.

Now protected, Cain goes out and builds the first city. His family having been cast out from the Paradise, the Kingdom of God was then condemned to live as nomads and wanderers on the Earth until God's plan to restore humanity to the Kingdom could come to fruition. Cain however takes it upon himself to establish his own kingdom; a kingdom of man. Cain's city and his kingdom are of this world. He does not dedicate his city to God, but to his own son, who had been born in his image. His descendants then begin to develop art, and culture, and technology, and herding. They make themselves at home in this world.

Cain passed down the rule of his earthly kingdom from father to son, and so his genealogy culminates in Lamech, who shows his devotion to the pleasures of this fallen world by taking multiple wives, and then sings to those wives a song of his own greatness. Just as his forefather Cain sought to replace the Kingdom of God to which he was a stranger with his own kingdom, so Lamech now seeks to replace God with himself as king, boasting in his many murders, over against Cain's one, and his ability to avenge himself exponentially over what the Lord promised Cain.

The truth, however, is that God is Life, and only He can truly create and make alive. Cain and his line can seek to dominate the world God has created, to rule it and to twist it to their desires. Lamech can try to compete with God, who holds the power of Life and Death, but only by killing, never by making alive. We human beings, without God can only bring death, destruction, and violence to ourselves and to the world around us. This is the ultimate condemnation of every human government which seeks to create the Kingdom in this world, through man's effort, whether it be Communist attempts to create a

worker's utopia or Capitalist attempts to create a garden of earthly and physical delights. Whether a ruler be narcissistic in seeking to accrue power and control for himself, or a 'good' ruler who seeks to gratify the passions and demands of the people, Psalm 146:3 warns us to "put not [our] trust in princes, in sons of men in whom there is no salvation."

St. Peter, in his first Epistle, addresses us as pilgrims, and calls on us to live as aliens and strangers in this world. We are sojourning here on our way to the Kingdom which is our home. God has given us countless blessings in this world, as we journey, to aid and comfort us and lead us into the Kingdom, but all of these, if made an end in themselves will bring us only destruction. Take, for example, the word given us in today's reading from Proverbs, encouraging men to find comfort and support in the wife of their youth. At the time of the writing of Proverbs, boys at the age of 13 were married to girls usually between the ages of 11-15 in arranged marriages in which they had little say. Once a man had made his way in the world, there was great temptation to divorce that wife to try to 'do better'. In that world, if a man was particularly successful, he could, like Lamech, take multiple wives in order to indulge his physical passions as he saw fit. That way, however, lies destruction, and we are counseled by the Lord rather to love the companion whom God has given us in this life as a blessing, and to preserve that relationship as holy, and to cherish that person made in the image of God.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, in this Lenten Fast, let us use fasting and prayer and the giving of alms and the making time for the services of the Church to help us begin to disengage from this world which is not our true home. Let us be thankful for the companions, and loved ones, and all the other blessings that God has given us along the way of this life's journey, honoring them, and never treating them as objects for our use, or ends in themselves. Let us embrace Life, and turn aside from violence, destruction, and every form of vengeance.

Questions to Ponder -

- 1) The genealogy of Cain speaks of all of the technological and cultural achievements of his descendants, while Seth's speaks of worship, of 'calling on the name of the Lord'. In what ways does contemporary culture and technology conflict with your ability to pray and worship?
- 2) Proverbs tell us that 'his own iniquities entrap the wicked man'. How have you seen this principle, that one sin leads to another and forms a web that entraps us, play out in your own life?
- 3) The Lord through the prophet Isaiah summarizes the depths of sinfulness as being one of those who 'calls evil good, and good evil'. Think of some ways in which our contemporary culture has, for example, proclaimed the indulging of sinful desires to be 'good', and those who would question it as 'evil'. Have you given in to the pressure of those around you to nod your head at evil and injustice?
- 4) If we truly are aliens, strangers, and sojourners in this world, who have come from somewhere else and who are journeying to the eternal Kingdom, how should this affect the way we view things that happen in this world? How should it affect our planning for the future in this world? How should it be reflected in our behavior?

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