

The only Son from Heaven - but not the only son

I - Cain

We all have hopes for our children, those of us who have some of those. Usually we hope that our children will grow up to be somewhat like ourselves, so as to believe what we believe and hold dear what we hold dear. Those of us who are aware that such a thing could in any way be possible, we hope that our children will grow up to be better than ourselves, and better off.

And on the other side, what some children fear the most is to turn out to be disappointments to their parents; decent children fear that. Of course, sometimes children will become disappointments to their parents because the hopes their parents have for them are unreasonable, or even unfair, or because the parents are blind to what is good about their children. Or children might become disappointments by *doing right*, rather than repeating their parents' wrongdoings.

Cain was received with great hope; although he most certainly was no better off than his father Adam had been when *he* came into the world; for Cain came into the world under the judgement of death, on account of his father's sin. Nevertheless, there was hope that Cain would turn out better than had his father. After all, his father was the one who had failed as a father even before he had any children, and failed as a husband and head of household, in that he had failed to guard and guide his wife and allowed her to bring sin upon herself, and the judgement of death, and upon her submissive husband, also, and their children. Yes, the ultimate failure was Adam's for failing to *be a man* and display that which these days is commonly referred to as *toxic masculinity* to protect his family.

But there was hope that Cain would turn out better; very much so, in fact. Adam and Eve had heard the judgement of God against the serpent that the Offspring of the woman would crush his head and undo the evil he had done. And with Cain being born, the woman had had offspring. And she exclaimed with joy: *I have brought forth a man with the help of the Lord*. She celebrated not only the birth of her child, but also that of the one she thought would be the saviour, the man who would *be a man* and take up his responsibility and conquer and crush the evil one.

What a dreadful disappointment Cain turned out to be. Rather than saving his family from death, he brought about the death of his mother's other son. Cain turned out to be no good. Well, perhaps not quite no good.

Like most people, he probably had good qualities to him, although he also had evil in him, and did evil; nobody is ever only one thing. But most certainly Cain turned out to be no good as a saviour for sinners, being a sinner himself.

What a disappointment Cain turned out to be, what great evil he ended up doing, what grief he brought upon his parents, the death of their child. And this because of the evil that was in him, not only envy of his brother, but also arrogance against God, assuming that he would be entitled to His favour because of the offering he brought.

Of course, Cain turning out to be such a deadly disappointment also had to do with what he had inherited from his parents, not only the guilt and debt of sin which made him guilty before God from the very beginning, but also the evil his parents, and our first parents, had let into their hearts and minds, of doubt and disobedience against God, and enmity and arrogance, and passed on in the hearts and minds of all their offspring; except for One, that is, but we shall be getting back to that.

Sin came into the world through one man, as Holy Scripture teaches, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. Death has come to us all by the fall and failure of our father Adam. We come into being under the judgement of death, because death is the debt we inherit from him. But not that alone; we make death our own ourselves by our own failure and fault, because we have death in us from our very first moment of being. Yes, for the doubt and disobedience and defiance that is in our hearts and minds from our very first moment of being, it is death, and it makes us to be dead to God, and to the eternal life for which He made us, in the fullness of His goodness and glory.

And as such, Cain turned out to be a disappointment, also, because the hope his parents set to him was miserably misplaced to begin with.

Truly no man can ransom another, says the Psalm, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice.,

Now, whether or not we can really blame our first parents for this misplaced hope is entirely immaterial. We are definitely to blame, though, for the idolatry that it is when we trust in human beings or human belief systems to make things well in this fallen world, and when we trust false preachers who teach us to make all things well in our lives by putting our faith in them and sending our money to their *ministries*, as they call their corporate cults.

For all who have eyes to see, the history of Humankind teaches us the very same lesson as that which Holy Scripture teaches us with what we hear tonight, and what we spoke in our Psalmody: *Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.* Any son of man who is merely that: a son of man, is a sinner, and a sinner is no saviour, and never could be. Any offspring of the woman, who is also the offspring of man is conceived and born in sin and no saviour. This is the painful lesson we learn tonight, as we learn about the fate and failure of the first offspring of the woman, the firstborn son of woman and man, the firstfruits of fallen Mankind.

More importantly, though, so much more importantly, we learn the precious lesson of the Firstborn Son of God who had Himself made to be the Son of Man, born as the Offspring of the Woman, and learn of just how great and glorious the goodness of God is, and the salvation He has given to us. In the fullness of time a woman would not only bring forth a man *with the help of the Lord*, rather, she would bring forth a Man who was not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but rather born of God, the Son of God, who is God Himself from eternity, begotten of the Father before all worlds.

He Himself would come for the salvation of sinners, to restore to His love and to His eternal life us who cast His love aside, and His goodness, to pursue evil instead, and seek good for ourselves, on our own, our own way, apart from Him and His goodness.

More than that, so much more than that, He would undo death for us sinners by dying for us, into the fullness of death, the judgement of His own goodness against evil, His righteous wrath against all wrong and wrongdoing.

He who is without sin would have Himself born into our kind, though without sin. He would have Himself conceived by the Holy Spirit, in holiness and purity, and born of a virgin receiving and conceiving Him in faith, with the faith He Himself would instil in her by His own presence, with His own Spirit, all holy and pure.

And He would live the life that we owe it to God to live, without sin, in full and complete love for God, and trust, and obedience, and submission to His will. And He would have Himself baptised with us sinners, and baptised into our sin, to take it upon Himself and bear it for us, and bear His own judgement against it. And He would die for us, crucified and cursed and condemned for our sin, for our evil and ungodliness, which He had taken upon Himself and made His own.

And this He would suffer for us, in our stead and on our behalf, for our salvation; as only *He* could, in whom there was nothing that belonged to death, and to whom the evil one had no claim. With His sufferings and death the price and penalty has been paid in full for all our sins and shortcomings, for all evil and ungodliness and impurity in our hearts and minds and in our lives, for all our defiance and disobedience and doubt toward God.

He has done it for us, who alone could do it. This precious truth God sets before us with what we hear tonight; and the precious truth of just how glorious the goodness of God is, how great His love for us, that for our salvation God would not only choose for Himself a servant from among men, nor merely send a servant selected from among the highest of the heavenly beings, rather He would send to us His most Beloved, the only Son from Heaven, He whom God Himself calls *God* and *Lord*. As we heard it in our Epistle reading, *of the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever, the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Your Kingdom. And: "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of Your hands."* Him whom God Himself calls *God* and *Lord* He would give over for us, for our salvation.

And He who was and is forever with God, and was and is forever one in the glory of God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He would not only leave it all behind and come to us, He would give Himself over to the deepest depths of degradation and death for us, and the most severe shame and suffering.

So serious is God about our salvation. So certain and secure is the salvation He *promises* to us sinners, full and complete as it is, the price and penalty having been paid in full, and in abundance, at the most terrible cost to Himself. So great, so glorious, is the goodness of God, and His love for us, so far beyond our comprehension, and our imagination, also, as is the glory of the eternal life He gives to us sinners, fully and for real, with His promise, in the Word and worship of His salvation.

For now, we can but begin to relate to the glory of His salvation, in faith and worship. And we can do so only by means of the faith which He Himself gives to us, because He Himself lives in us, with His love and His life, in the Word and worship of His salvation. But when He comes in glory, we shall see Him, *really* see Him, in the fullness of His goodness and His glory, and share with Him forever the fullness of His goodness and His glory.

Blessed is He that comes, in the name of the Lord. *Amen.*