



Dear heavenly Father, we worship You this morning with our tithe and offerings. We pray for the courage to put You first in our lives. In the name of Jesus, amen.

APRIL 17, 2021

When Cain Refused to put God First

Putting God first can be difficult. What can we learn from Cain, who refused to put God first?

Adam and Eve had been cast out of the Garden of Eden when Cain was born. They experienced hardship together. Adam worked hard to grow sustenance from the earth and his children certainly helped when they were old enough to start working.

Cain focused on agriculture. Abel kept flocks. Both observed carefully how their parents talked about God and told stories of the garden. Both heard how God sacrificed the first animal for the forgiveness of their sins and to cover their shame. Both Cain and Abel wanted to worship God.

When they came of age, the Bible says they both brought an offering from the best of what they had. Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock, while Cain brought some of the first fruits from the soil. God looked with favor on the offering Abel brought, but rejected Cain's offering. Cain became furious. Not at God and not even at himself. He was furious with Abel, his brother.

Rejection isn't something human beings know how to deal with well. We hate being rejected and much of our lives is spent doing everything we can to avoid rejection. We sacrifice many years studying, so we are not rejected when applying for a job. We sacrifice time and money dressing up and taking care of ourselves, so we are not rejected romantically. We

sacrifice our talents raising resources, so our credit card isn't rejected at the store.

Despite our best efforts, however, rejection still comes. In this case, Cain clearly rejected God's example of what an acceptable offering should have been. In humility, Cain should have arranged with his brother to have an animal sacrifice. He didn't. Perhaps he thought he would do his best and that should have been enough.

Sometimes we decide to make our own rules when it comes to our offering. This is a mistake. God is God and we are not. The instructions on what we should do with our tithes and offerings are clear and we must follow them.

Once rejected, Cain could not bring himself to be vulnerable and talk to God, his parents or even his brother. Without any resistance, resentment took over Cain. God tried to help but Cain rejected God too. Sin took over his heart and he surrendered all control to his anger and violence. Cain would go down in history as the first murderer.

Cain refused to put God first. The consequences were terrible for him and the people around him. God's love compels us to put His Kingdom first, while Cain's example is a warning for us today. But we don't have to be like Cain. As the deacons collect the tithe and offerings, let's put God first.