January 7th, 2018

ICA Sunday Pulpit Message

The Resolution that Abel Made (Gen. 4:1-8)

<Intro> It is extremely rightful that a creation worships the Creator.

I am thankful that we can give worship on this first new year’s Sunday. Thank you for those of you who devoted themselves to serve and prepare for the worship. The Cooks and the Lees from San Antonio are traveling the farthest to come to church. I thank Deacon Clay and Seonae for interpreting, David and Deacon Jongtae for making ppts, Deacon Junsung for transcription, and Deacon Samantha and Daeun for playing the piano. I also thank those who prepare the meals for Sundays. I thank the presider, the greeters, and the one who did the representative prayer. Likewise, many people serve and devote themselves to prepare for this worship.

This year’s first message is about worship. God put together the Bible and the first Book of the Bible is Genesis. It briefly records how this world was created. It doesn’t say in detail how many stars in the sky or what all the creations God created. As early as Genesis 3 records how the mankind committed sin against God and left God. The frailty of humankind is recorded in the very beginning. In Genesis 4, the humans gave birth to a first human named Cain. A man murdered another man for the first time and Abel was killed. God created Adam and Eve. Eve gave birth to Cain. The first human being to die was Abel. God placed this horrible incident in the beginning of the Bible. Sometimes we see dead animals on the road. Seeing that, no one thinks that they are lucky to see that. Usually, we feel bad. Then why did God placed this horrible event in the beginning of the Bible? God did so to relay an important message to us. Abel didn’t die by getting in a fight with Cain. There was a notion of worship behind this incident. God was pleasant with Abel’s worship. Cain sincerely prepared his worship, but God didn’t accept his. Abel brought a lamb; Cain brought plenty of crops, vegetables, and fruits. However, God didn’t care for Cain’s worship. When people don’t get acknowledged of what they do, they get upset. Sometimes church members get upset when a pastor doesn’t bless them. Likewise, Cain got upset when God didn’t acknowledge him. Cain didn’t like Abel. Cain was mad because Abel was successful in his worship. The first message that God wants to give you is about worship. God wants to be worshipped by men.

When you buy or make something, what’s the purpose of it? You do so to use it. You use it to fulfill your purpose. As you use that thing, you become satisfied. As an owner, you become satisfied. As a tool, it serves and helps the owner. Creator God made human. There is a definite purpose of making us. Us, creations, are to serve God. God recorded His purpose in Isaiah 43. “The people whom I formed for Myself that they might declare My praise.” Therefore, it is only rightful that we, the creation, give worship and praise to the Creator God. Giving worship knowing that God is alive and that He is sovereign over our lives is rightful. The Master of our church and the Savior of our lives, Jesus Christ, said, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father is spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. The reason why God saved us through Jesus Christ is to receive worship. We were sinners and had to go to hell, but God saved us so it is rightful that we give worship to God. The very reason we exist is to worship God. Church members exist to worship God. That is why God wants to teach us about worship in the Bible. That is why our first new year’s message is about the resolution that Abel made. Abel didn’t make a resolution to go on a diet or to master English. His resolution was to forever stand in front of God as a worshiper.

1. Abel made a resolution to live as a worshiper for his entire life.

1) The thought of the parents (Gen. 4:2a)

2) The life of the brother Cain (Gen. 4:2b)

3) The world full of curses (Gen. 3:17-18)

How did Abel make such resolution to live as a worshiper for his entire life? His parents, Adam and Eve, named him “Abel”. Usually when parents name their children, the name contains the parents’ ideology and hope. Your names probably have meanings too. What is the meaning of your name Marcus? It means a leader. Maybe you wished to relay the inheritance of leader to your first child, Marcus Jr. I hope Marcus Jr. would receive even greater blessing of leader than your father. Likewise, Adam and Eve named their first son “Cain”. It means that “we begot a son.” It means to own and possess. After being kicked out from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Even held tightly onto God’s promise. “The offspring of woman will crush the head of Satan who deceived you. He is the Messiah who will be victorious over Satan.” Eve was looking forward to that offspring. After she bore a child, she probably thought that that child was the offspring of woman. After some time passed, she thought Cain didn’t seem like the offspring of woman because he wasn’t interested in God and rather focused on cultivating the cursed land. Seeing that, Eve probably felt empty or void. So she bore a second son and named him Abel, which means a breath or a sigh. When you puff your breath in the air during winter, it quickly disappears. That’s the meaning of the name Abel.

If you look closely at Cain’s life, he was not interested in the spiritual realm. The parents felt discouraged so Abel made a resolution. “Let me go in front of God. Let me worship Him.” Abel heard about the Garden of Eden from his father Adam, but when he looked around the land, it was filled with thorns and needles. He realized that he needs God’s help to live in the world. “God cursed the land because of Adam and Even, but how can I appease His wrath? To appease God’s wrath is through the blood of the lamb. I shall go in front of God with the blood of lamb.” Now we know that the blood of lamb symbolizes Jesus Christ’s sacrifice. In today’s words, Abel worshiped God with the name of Jesus Christ. He appeased God’s wrath with the blood of lamb. Nowadays we use lambs for fur, milk, and meat. However, before Noah’s flood, people didn’t eat meat or milk. It was before they had 4 seasons, so they didn’t need fur clothes. What does this mean? At that time, lambs were only used to worship God. Abel tended those lambs. He didn’t tend the lambs only on Saturdays to bring them to Sunday, but he tended the lambs everyday. Tending lambs everyday means that he would live as a worshiper for his entire life. “My parents are discouraged and my brother have left God so at least I shall worship God. Everyone lives for himself, at least I shall worship God.” That was Abel’s resolution.

Because of this background, God placed it in Genesis 4. The only way to solve the curse of Genesis 3 was to be successful in worshiping God. When you are successful in worship, you don’t need to blame others or the world because everything is finished. What does God want the most? What should God’s people resolve first? It is worship. In 2018, we should resolve on worship. That was Abel’s resolution. God’s people, people of faith should resolve on this. This is the beginning of spiritual summit that I shared in New Year’s message. Don’t think that the pastor is telling you to worship properly. You must realize worship correctly in front of God. If God loves and is pleased with worship, Satan hates worship. That is why things happen around us that disable us from worshipping God. Open your spiritual eyes. Sometimes we might think, “My pastor made me upset, I’m not going to go to worship. Deacon Kim hasn’t paid my money back and he is praising. I don’t want to see him.” This kind of negative thoughts block us from worshipping God and that is Satan’s strategy. People don’t kill others because it makes them happy. They are filled with Satan and that is why they kill others. Cain was upset and he killed Abel. That was Satan’s intervention to kill Abel who succeeded in worship.

2. The worshipers have always received losses, harms, and persecutions.

1) Cain’s murder (Gen. 4:8)

2) The superpower nations forcing to worship idols (Egypt, Babylon, Rome, etc.)

3) The final temptation of the devil (Gen. 4:9)

The worshipers have always received losses, harms, and persecutions. That was why Satan killed Abel through Cain. Study world history. Every superpower nation in different ages did something in common. They built idols and temples. They worshiped idols. The Pharaoh of Egypt, Sun god of Babylon, and Zeus of Rome are all for idol worship. Hence, it means not to worship God. Jesus Christ who came to save us was tested by Satan. There were 3 tests, but what was the last one? Satan told Jesus to bow down to him and said he will give Jesus the entire nations and the world. Satan told Jesus to worship him instead of God. Satan knows the worth and power of worship the children of God give. Satan knows that if he takes away this blessing of worship, he is taking away everything. That is why Satan hates worship. But why? What did Satan use to do? He was an archangel who praised and worshiped God. He used to have God’s blessing and glory to worship God, but he grew arrogant and was expelled. He lost his special authority to give praise and worship. Then how would Satan feel seeing the children of God worshiping? He wouldn’t think, “I am thankful that they are giving worship that I couldn’t do.” What does an ex-wife hate the most? She hates seeing the new wife living happily with the husband. Similarly, that is why Satan hates to see us being successful in worshiping God. Worshiping God is giving God what He desires the most and doing the thing that Satan hates the most. If you are successful in worship, you will receive God’s blessing.

3. The worshipers who give devotions have been surely blessed.

1) The covenant that the worshipers hold (Act. 2:42)

2) The offerings that the worshipers give (Eze. 44:28-30, Mal. 3:8-12, Mt. 23:3)

3) The devotion for the place for worship (1Chron. 29:1-30, Act. 1:13)

We think that when we diligently worship God, we will receive blessing. It is right but not entirely right. When we think that we are diligently going to church and worshiping, then that is a religion. Living a religious life only makes everything harder. It brings destruction. The Gospel is initiated by God. Religion is initiated by us striving to earn salvation. Piling up good deeds, becoming a Buddha, and becoming a holy man is all about religion, a way to destruction. God didn’t give us another religion, but He gave us the Gospel. He came to us to give salvation. He gave us the Word. He gives us realizations and answers. God initiates, fulfills, and takes the glory. That is the Gospel. So we must change our thinking. God wants to give us blessing so He gives us the heart to worship Him. When God determines to give us blessing, then we will receive the blessing. He leads us to the place of worship. I hope you open your eyes to realize this. Let’s consider the opposite. There’s nothing good about worship, you have to see the people you don’t like, the sermons sound about the same, the pastor always talk about Jesus Christ… Having these thoughts doesn’t mean that you are simply bored. This is the sign that God’s not giving you any blessing. This is the sign that God is not allowing you to discover the blessings He has prepared. We must open our eyes. You are being deceived when you say you are going to church and you are doing this and that. Because God wants to give us blessing, He leads us to the place of worship and gives the heart for worship. God doesn’t give answers right away. He gives His Word first. Then, He fulfills the promise to the people who grabbed hold of it. You can receive God’s promise during the time of worship. When God wants to raise us and use us, He calls us to the place of worship. He makes us to succeed in worship. Sometimes, you go to church even in the situation where you logistically can’t go to church. That’s God trying to give you blessing. There are also times you decide to go to church but you don’t. Remember that God is hindering something from you. Unfortunately, we are easy to be deceived by our surroundings thinking that the church’s atmosphere is not good or there is no Sunday school system.

David was successful in worship. In 1 Chronicles 29, David gave praises and worship to God with thanksgiving. He worshiped God saying, “Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all. You allowed me to prepare to build the temple.” David understood the value of temple where they give worship. God saw his heart. There is another thing we need to look at. David devoted himself to prepare for the construction of the temple. However, God didn’t give him amazing, everlasting blessing. 1 Chronicles 29:25 says, “The Lord made Solomon very great in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.” Even though David did all the preparation, but Solomon became the greatest king. 1 Chronicles 29 is not Solomon’s but David’s prayer. God received David’s worship and raised his son, Solomon, as a king. To the worshipers, God raises and blesses their next generation. Blessing the next generation is God’s plan.

You know Solomon well. He became very famous for his wisdom that God gave him. How many wives did he have? He probably wasn’t the purest person. He also fell into unbelief when Israel split into North Israel and South Judea. Although Solomon didn’t have the best personality, why did God raise him as the greatest king of all time? Why did God give him the greatest wisdom? Why did God bless him more that his father David? It is because God blesses the next generation of those who devote for church construction. To bless the next generation, God allowed David to understand the value of worship. I hope you don’t misunderstand. I don’t want you to think that the pastor wants offering for church construction. I’m not trying to make you fall into trial. God doesn’t say nonsense. He doesn’t regret. He fulfills His Word. In 1 Chronicles 29:25, God raised Solomon as the world’s greatest king. God wants to raise and use the next generation of those who understand the value of worship and devote themselves for worship.

<Conc.> A saint prioritizing on worship, concentrating on worship, and guided by the worship is very beneficial.

I bless you to enter into the mystery of worship that stores amazing blessings. Prioritize worship and concentrate on it. Be guided by the Word of God during the worship. Then, God’s answer and evidence will continue to pile up.

<Prayer>

Dear God, we give You thanks. You recorded the resolution of Abel in the Bible. Help us to see, experience, and enjoy Your blessings and answers through the worship. Bless the next generation of all those who enjoy the mystery of worship. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray, Amen.