

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity  
Genesis 4:1-15  
August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018

In Genesis chapter 4, the Old Testament text for today, my favorite Hebrew word appears twice. So, as you probably could guess, I'm going to preach on that this morning. The word is extremely important for understanding the relationship God has with Israel in the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, this word has everything to do with the most intimate of relationships between individuals that carry over into the bond God created between loved ones, between families and friends, and between Him and all of us.

The Hebrew word is *Yadah*. Literally it means, "To know." In Genesis 4:1, it is used in relationship between husband and wife. It says that Adam "knew" Eve his wife and she conceived and bore a son. There is nothing more intimate than this kind of "knowing," and, it is interesting to note that when God speaks of his relationship with His beloved people in Jeremiah chapter 31 or in the book of Hosea among other places, God speaks of "knowing" and loving His people in this type of relationship... so close... so loving... so intimate. And that is why when Israel chases after false gods, when they ignore His law and, subsequently, the One who loves them, who created them, and who entered into a special relationship with them, the Bible says that when Israel does this, the people of God are literally committing adultery against God.

Now the second time this word occurs is in verse 9. God asks Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" His response... "I do not KNOW" (*Yadah*). He says to God, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" In other words... "What do I have to do with the whereabouts of my brother? He should take care of himself. I'm not responsible for him. I'm not him... I have to take care of myself. You can't expect me to take care of myself AND my brother. I have enough to contend with." He gets snippy with God. He gets defensive. He wants to be done with his brother... forever. He mentions that he does not KNOW... and he is right. He broke an important bond, a relationship that God put together out of love and fidelity. This is so much more than a cognitive "knowing" of God, this is a relational knowing. Indeed it is true, Cain DOES NOT KNOW.

Let's be honest, relationships mean more to God than they do to us. God knows that it is through relationship that everything is brought into being. So intimate is the relationship between Adam and Eve at creation that God laid Adam down to sleep, took one of his body parts and created Eve. Eve came out of Adam. This is quite literally how God shows us what He means by "One flesh." And when Adam awoke and laid eyes on Eve in the Garden of Eden, he KNEW exactly where she came from. He said, "*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh...*" He didn't look at her and think, "Where did you come from? Did you come from that rock over there? Did you come out of that tree?" No! He knew where she came from. He knew because she came from Him and this reality of a one flesh relationship was given in the midst of all perfection – in the Garden before the fall into sin. This is what *Yadah* means. This is the relationship that God entered into with His people and what He, in turn, established between flesh and blood. You see how meaningful... you see the "oneness" of it all. We are God's own made in His own image... He knows us and we know Him.

Then the tragedy. Oh yes the tragedy of the fall in the midst of the garden. But also the tragedy of the first murder, now outside of the garden. Cain was angry. He was angry because God did not regard his offerings the same way as he did his brother Abel's offerings. Let's be clear, it had nothing to do with the fact that Cain's offerings were from the fields and Abel's offerings were from the flocks. God regarded grain offerings throughout the entirety of the Old Testament as sufficient time and time again. It was not the content of the offering but rather the way in which the offering was given. Abel gave out of faith. Cain gave out of duty. Abel knew it would be by God's grace that He would present

such a blessed offering to the Lord. Cain thought that righteousness was attained by the content of the gift... and that is how God measured a successful offering... no faith necessary. Because of Abel's faith his offering was more acceptable than Cain's offering.

So, let's talk about our relationships... with God... with each other. God's relationship with us is a *Yadah* relationship. It's covenant language. He promises fidelity to you and He intends to keep this promise forever. The breakdown of so much that we see in our world, within our country, within our families and within the church has to do with a misunderstanding and willingness to treasure the gift of relationship. This is truly at the heart of what the devil does to attack this world in general and you in particular. He knows that together we love. Together we work in service to one another. Together in relationship we share the truth in love and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our neighbor. He knows that together we gather in faith to receive the medicine of immortality and to continually be fed by Him, sustained by Him, and blessed by Him. Together there is much we can do and through which much is given to us. Yet when we are divided, everything unravels. Everything falls apart.

In this fallen world, you know what the word "divided" means. You know the hurt, the struggle, and the loneliness. The devil loves division because he knows this makes chaos out of order. Our God is a God of order. He ordered everything... His creation, families and lives. God put everything in order and unified all that He created according to His divine will. Then sin came along and introduced a wrench in the works, a bug in the system. Sin took God's order and mixed it all up. Sin desires what it wants and cares less about what it is right. Sin infests the human condition now that sin and anger fills our hearts. We breathe out murderous words and we ourselves become murderers like Cain... dividers of God's good creation. And you have seen how this has hurt our world... yet we are the ones taking part. We are the ones who bring about division. We KNOW better. We KNOW our Lord and He knows us in the most precious and intimate ways. But we look to ourselves first. We strive to get ahead at the expense of others. We desire to get even when we feel someone has hurt us. We like to see others suffer when we think it's what they deserve.

Beloved in the Lord, this does nothing good. This does not serve the covenant relationship God wants to have with us and all people. We chase after other gods when our sinful ways are put above God and others – just like Israel did time and time again in the Old Testament when they broke relationship. It's damaging. It destroys and we can't repair it. This relationship is broken. A complete separation and divorce for eternity is the result. You can't repair what has happened.

But God can. And He did... and He continues to do so. The heavenly Father brought us back into relationship with Him when He gave His only begotten son for us. The damage that we caused can only be repaired through Jesus. That is why, there is no other way to have a *Yadah* "one flesh" relationship with God than for our God to come in the flesh for us... to die in the flesh for you... to rise in the flesh for you... to fulfill all things for you. Look how He loves His creation. He comes to establish this relationship with us again and provide every means necessary to do so. He did this out of a love that knows no bounds.

Our God unites us in Him. The deep sorrow in the text from Genesis is how Cain divided his relationship with his brother, a child of God. This is sin at work. But Christ unites us. This is the joy of receiving the sacrament together today. Live as people of God who are united in Christ. May God richly bless you and give you strength to endure the dividing lines of hostility when the enemy attacks. All peace and comfort comes through the intimate relationship God has established with you through His Son. He provides this most needful gift. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.