



Week 4: East of Eden

I desire mercy, not sacrifice.
~ Jesus

APPETIZER: What's the Big Idea?

Matthew 9:13; Hosea 6:6

BIG IDEA:
Religious sacrifice is _____ invention that God accommodates and uses for a season, and then eventually enters and ends through Jesus.

Biblical examples of God's accommodation...

Religion as God's harm reduction model...

DINE IN: The Origin of Religion

Genesis 4

Religion is the most radical dividing of men from God.
~ Karl Barth (The Epistle to the Romans)

Religion is the working capital of sin; its fulcrum; the means by which men are removed from direct union with God and thrust into disunion.
~ Karl Barth (The Epistle to the Romans)

If all the religions and forms of worship under heaven that have been thought up by men to obtain righteousness in the sight of God are not condemned, the righteousness of faith cannot stand.
~ Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Why did God reject Cain's offering?

- Theory 1: God wants blood.
- Theory 2: God wants firstfruits and firstborn.
- Theory 3: God wants a pure heart.
- Theory 4: God wants our gratitude for grace, not religious manipulation.

**Psalm 40:6; 51:16-17;
Isaiah 1:1-20; 43:25; Jeremiah 7
Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Amos 5:21-25; Hebrews 11:4; 8:13**

TWO QUESTIONS FOR ALL OF US:

1. Where are you?
2. Where is your brother?

TAKE OUT: The New Covenant as the End of Religion

**Luke 22:20
Acts 16:30-31; John 6:28-29
Matthew 9:13**

HOMEWORK:

Phase 1: Spend a few minutes each day in meditation, prayer, and/or praise. Focus on God's presence with you in the moment and sense how much you are loved. Trust that this is true and express your gratitude for God's grace. Now move into your day and see how long you can maintain, or how often you can return to, this awareness. And when you do, smile.

Phase 2: When this state of mind becomes more common for you, try to apply it to others around you throughout your day. Sense God's presence and how much he loves the people you interact with, then follow his lead in loving them.

FOR FURTHER STUDY...
Track with the Bruxy Blog – www.bruxy.com

Home Church Questions

HANGOUT [Warming Up to the Topic – in one Large Group]

1. If someone asked you, “Where does religion come from?”, how would you respond? How is the good news of Jesus *irreligious*?
2. Have you been trying your homework this week and/or throughout this series? What has been your experience?

Watch the Home Church Hangout video.

HEAR [Listening to God through Scripture – in Discussion Groups]

3. Read **Genesis 4**.
 - a. What stands out to you from this passage or Sunday’s message?
 - b. Some Christians have taught that God initiated the first sacrifice when he made skins for Adam and Eve in **3:21** and that Cain’s offering was rejected simply because it was bloodless. They appeal to **Hebrews 9:22** for support. How might you respond to this line of thinking?
On the topic of anger...
 - c. In **verses 5-9**, we see this pattern from Cain: First, anger. Second, ignoring God’s voice. Third, violence. Forth, minimization, dismissal, and dishonesty. Have you ever noticed a similar pattern in yourself or others?
 - d. How can the Holy Spirit help guard us against the first step of anger? (For further study, see **Galatians 5:13-26** and **Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32**.)
 - e. Is anger a sin? A good emotion if channelled correctly? Somewhere in between? Use Scripture to support your answer. (See **1 Corinthians 13:5; Colossians 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:8; James 1:19-20**.)
 - f. In what ways does religion tend to *enflame* rather than *tame* human anger? Talk about examples.

HUDDLE [Making It Personal and Praying Together – in Huddles]

4. God told Cain that sin was crouching at his door, waiting to pounce, but he can and must rule over it. In your life, where does sin tend to crouch, waiting to get you? At the door when you come home? By your car when you drive? Next to your computer? Your phone? Your fridge? Your work? Your wallet?
5. What else has God been convicting or encouraging you about through this week’s teaching? How will you respond?