

Title: "A Living Faith: Abel and Enoch"

Text: Hebrews 11:1-6; Genesis 4:2-5, 5:21-24

If you weren't with us last week, I explained that we are continuing in our sermon series entitled, "Living Faith in 3D," -but we are entering a new phase of the series.

We are shifting our focus from the 3D part of the title, over to the "living faith" part of the title.

- In the Fall we sort of took all the dimensions of a living faith apart in order to examine all the various aspects.
- But now we want to put it all back together and see what a living faith in all its dimensions looks like as a whole.
- We want to see what it looks like lived out in the lives of real people.

So we have turned to the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament.

- There we find what is sometimes called the "Hall of Faith."
- You've heard of the "Hall of Fame" for the various sports.
- Well, Hebrews 11 is the Hall of Faith.
- Here we find listed a whole host of the Old Testament saints of God who exhibited a "living faith" in their lives and in their generation.

We are going to spend the next few weeks looking at these "hall of faith-ers", to see what a multi-dimensional 'living faith' looked like as they lived it out.

- Today we begin with Abel and Enoch, from all the way back at the beginning of the Book of Genesis.
- Abel was the second son of Adam and Eve.
- Enoch was Adam and Eve's great-great-great grandson 5 or 6 generations later.
- Listen first to what the Book of Genesis says about these two men, and then to what the writer of the Hebrews says about their lives and their faith.

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"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists, and that He is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him."

A “living faith,” the writer to the Hebrews tells us,  
-is not only having faith that God exists,  
-but that He is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him.

“A reward-er.”

You see, a living faith involves being deeply persuaded that  
earnestly seeking God is worth it.  
-That there is something to be gained by doing it.

Like Jesus said in the parables that we read earlier in the  
service.

“The Kingdom of God is like a treasure buried in a field.  
When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy  
went and sold all he had and bought that field.”

You see, he was convinced that what was buried in that field  
was worth more than everything else he had.  
-So he earnestly sought the purchase of that field.  
-He sold everything else that he owned to get it.

That is living faith.

-And the writer to the Hebrews tells us that Abel and Enoch  
displayed that kind of faith in their lives, in their generations.

And how does he know that?

-As you heard from what I just read you from the Book of  
Genesis,  
-there is hardly anything said about Abel and Enoch.  
-They each get just a sentence or two to sum up their lives.

But the writer to the Hebrews wants us to consider what is  
said in those few sentences about their lives,  
-in terms of whether they not only believed God existed,  
but that He is a rewarder of those who earnestly  
seek him.

Well, my friends, in our day we would say that what people  
highly value in their lives, they spend time and energy and  
money on.

-I highly value reading, and so I have no problem spending  
money on buying books,

-and I like nothing better than spending time sitting down and reading them.

And I do it because I am rewarded by spending that time and money.

-It is a joy. It is a blessing in and of itself.

-I love the peace and quiet. I love entering into the life and story of the people I am reading about.

That's the way it is when we pursue the things we highly value.

-We spend time and money and energy on them because we are somehow rewarded by it.

So look first at Abel.

-Abel was Adam and Eve's second son.

-And it turns out he grows up to be a shepherd taking care of flocks and herds.

And we aren't told much about him, but what we are told is that he brings to God a thank offering consisting of one of the firstborn lambs of his flock.

Aha! You see, Abel is spending "money" on something he highly values.

-The "money" I am talking about is the lamb from his flock.

-That was his currency.

-That was what he had gotten from the work of his hands.

-His wealth would have been determined by the size of his flocks and herds.

And when he brought the firstborn of his flocks and herds to offer it to God,

-it was a sign that he valued and loved God even more than the work of his hands.

It was a sign that he not only believed God existed,

-but that earnestly seeking God was worth it.

-Because God was worth it. Because a relationship with God was a reward in and of itself.

-He delighted in God, so he was delighted to spend money on showing God a sign of how much he loved him.

He brought God a thank offering of the firstborn of his flock.

Now how about Enoch?

-We said that what we highly value we also spend time and energy on.

Isn't it amazing that all we are told about Enoch is that "he walked with God, and then he was no more because God took him away."

That isn't the way that section of Genesis speaks of any of the other people of Enoch's day and age.

-But Enoch "walked with God."

-That was the hallmark of his life.

-And those words describe companionship with God.

-They imply a life of spending time and energy on cultivating a friendship with God.

They describe a man who not only believed that God existed, -but a man who was persuaded that God was a rewarder of those who earnestly sought him.

-So Enoch earnestly sought him.

-And it seems from what Genesis says, that God rewarded him not only with a lifetime of companionship, -but with an eternal life of companionship.

-Somehow Genesis implies that Enoch didn't die in the same way everyone else did,

-but that he was taken by God in a unique way.

-He seems to have ascended into heaven like Elijah did, or like Jesus would ultimately do.

So little said about Abel and Enoch, but what is said tells us that these men not only believed God existed,

-but that God was a rewarder of those who sought him.

-So they spent their time and energy and money to pursue him.

They saw God Himself as a treasure, "a pearl of great price,"

-and so they were happy to sell everything else in order to buy that pearl.

That's living faith.

Now how about Cain in contrast to Abel and Enoch?

Cain was Adam and Eve's firstborn son, Abel's older brother.  
-He exemplifies something else.

Cain has a faith that God exists.  
-In fact, we see God speaking to Cain directly and quite extensively in Genesis.  
-And Cain speaks back to God.  
-So he certainly believes that God exists.  
-He's got that much faith.

But his life is very different from his brother Abel's life.  
-His relationship with God is very different from his brother's relationship.  
-His bringing of an offering to God is very different from his brother's bringing of an offering.

There is something in Cain that is all snarled up.  
-He is angry. He is "downcast."  
-He seems resentful and bitter all the time.

And when he brings God an offering from the harvest of the land which he has worked,  
-his offering is not pleasing to God.

And the writer to the Hebrews tells us it is not because God likes animal offerings better than fruit and grain offerings.  
-He says it is because Cain's offering wasn't accompanied by faith.

"Without faith," the writer says, "it is impossible to please God."  
-And Abel had it, and Cain didn't.  
-And in Genesis, God speaks to Cain about his heart attitude.

He says, "Cain, why are you so angry? Why are you downcast? If you do what is right, won't you be accepted too? But sin is crouching at your door and wants to consume you. But you must master it."

You see, God is actually calling Cain to repentance and faith.  
-He is inviting Cain to come clean with his anger and bitterness.  
-He is inviting Cain to master the sin that is tempting him to evil, and to earnestly seek God,  
-and to believe that God will reward him if he does so!

He needs to believe that God will forgive his sin, and free him from the anger and resentment, and restore his soul.  
-But Cain won't do it.  
-What he displays is that he doesn't believe that God is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek him.

Cain displays that what he really believes is that he is on his own in this life,  
-and is the master of his own destiny,  
-and if there is any reward to be had in this life he has to go out and grab it for himself.

And so he does. He goes out and grabs his brother Abel and murders him.  
-And then he lies to God about not knowing where his brother is, when he knows full well.  
-And then he leaves God to go off further and further away from home and family and from God Himself,  
-to do his own thing and seek his own fortunes.

That's Cain's story in a nutshell.  
-Sound familiar? Sounds a lot like us, doesn't it?  
-We believe God exists, but quite often we don't live like we believe He is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek him.  
-We run off in pursuit of every other kind of reward out there.  
-Money, sex, power, prestige, entertainment, material things.  
-Whatever we think is a treasure to us that will make us happy.

We are not content with God, and we are not convinced that pursuing a relationship with Him is worth all that much.  
-But all these other things don't actually make us happy or content either.  
-And we're angry about it. Nothing measures up.

People let us down. Material things don't satisfy.  
-More money doesn't bring more peace or contentment.  
-Power corrupts.  
-Sex is fleeting.

And this thing called "sin," is always crouching at the door and is ready to gobble us up.

- And sin isn't just a breaking of rules.
- It is portrayed here as a kind of lion getting ready to pounce upon its prey.
- It is crouching there, tense and ready to attack and consume.

Sin is a living thing in Cain's life, actively engaging him and beckoning him towards death.

But my friends, God is a far more living thing in Cain's life, beckoning him towards life.

- And even when Cain rejects God's invitation, and walks away from God,
- Genesis says that God puts a mark on Cain so that he would be protected in the world and no one would murder him.

God is gracious to Cain even as he is walking away.

- Cain won't receive the rewards God has to offer him,
- but you and I still can.

The writer to the Hebrews is beckoning us to believe in the rewards God has to offer those who earnestly seek him.

- He reminds us of Abel and Enoch.
- He invites us to spend some time and energy and money on cultivating a relationship with God like they did.
- He calls us to sell everything else we have in order to buy that field.

There's treasure in a relationship with God.

- He is worth it!
- Finding God is like discovering what your heart's true desire has always been, but you didn't even know it.
- It's like finding the contentment and peace and pleasure you've always sought in so many other things,
- but never actually found in them.

A relationship with God is a pearl of great price.  
-It's worth selling everything else for to go and buy that pearl.

A living faith is not just believing God exists, but that He is a  
rewarder of those who earnestly seek him.

Let us pray.