

We see that kind of evil in cases great (like the attempted murder of a person who marches to a different political drum than your chosen one) or small (like neglecting your family and loved ones to climb the corporate ladder). The fact is, as Christians, we have one owner—we have one proper hope and one proper Lord. And it is He who must come first in our hearts and in our minds—above all else. *“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (MT 6:25-34)*

CONCLUSION – (PV 6.16-19; GN 4.9)

PV 6.16-19 ~ *There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*

GN 4.9 ~ *Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?”*

“What does it matter to me that Abel’s missing? He’s not me. He’s my enemy. Why should I care what happens to him?” That same mentality is repeated day by day, hour by hour today. If a person isn’t on the right side: they’re not in the right building on Sunday, they’re not voting the right letter on November 5th, we don’t care. **“Am I my brother’s keeper?”** Yes! Yes, we are. It matters how we treat one another. It matters how we love one another. The evil we all bore witness to on the news yesterday is but a symptom of a society that has happily given into **hate-filled and hollow hearts**. It’s our job to first repair our own hearts, and then help to fill the hearts of the world with the God of love who made them!

LK 10.29-37 ~ *But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”*

INVITATION

#584 [Topical-Hatred]

Hate-Filled and Hollow

TPCL

07/14/2024

PC X Pchd **BL** – 07/14/2024

QUESTION: Why would someone commit such acts of evil?

TRN TO GN 4

INTRODUCTION

ILL—Cultural Touchstones (1/28/1986—coming out of Kindergarten to my mom weeping; she’d just witnessed the explosion of the challenger rocket, death of 7 crew members; 9/11/2001—coming out of breakfast to the quad; heard a plane had struck the World Trade Center) 7/13/2024, I was resting in my bed following a long and overheating walk with Erin and Daisy; she was outside watering the plants, and Seth and Kara were engaged in playing with toys and electronics when I saw the news—the former president of the United States had survived an attempted assassination attempt. All I could think of was my kids—**what should I do? Should I tell them? Should I wait? What was the right thing to do?**

I imagine every single one of you have a similar story to tell. I did what I could to step back and away, but I kept finding my attention returning to the news—desperate to know the answers to a million questions. **Who would do such a thing? Did anyone else get hurt? Did the former president get severely hurt? How could this happen?**

Bit by bit, some of these questions were answered. Others weren’t. Some will be corrected and clarified in the days and weeks ahead, while some may never be. But my heart and head kept coming back to one question phrased a hundred different ways: **why would anyone do this? What could ever motivate someone to do such a heinous thing?** So many lives will never be the same again: the lives of the wounded, the life of the innocent killed, the lives of those connected to all of them. All the result of a heinous murderous and evil intent.

BACKGROUND (GN 4.1-7)

Brethren, I’d like to say that acts like these are limited and rare. In truth, they are rare to this level. But monthly, weekly, daily, hourly—they are repeated in smaller scale.

GN 4.1-5 ~ *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.” ² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.*

GN 4.8 ~ *Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.* This shocks us; this horrifies us! To think of a brother turning against his own brother—to hurt and to kill! We can’t imagine the evil that was allowed to take root in him that would result in such an evil act. And yet, however it was done, it was done: a brother struck down a brother. And this act is repeated continually today—we just don’t realize it because of the artificial lines on a family tree—but truly, each murder committed is a murder of family—brother killing brother or sister. For we are all from the same seed and race!

GN 4.6-7 ~ *The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”*

EX: God looked down at Cain and knew his heart, and He knew the result that would come. He called for him to conquer it: to defeat it, and to not let it defeat him.

We will learn more of what happened yesterday. We will have our preconceived notions and expectations challenged in some cases and confirmed in others. But I feel I can say with confidence, though I do not know the name or background of the shooter, that he gave in. Like Cain, sin was crouching at the door—its desire contrary to him. But sadly, he opened the door. And behind that door was the root of so much suffering, pain, and death today: a hate-filled and hollow heart.

BD1: A Hate-Filled Heart (LV 19.17-18; MT 5.21-26)

ILL—Radiator Cap (Driving in a car that's overheating; lifting up the hood; see the heat radiating from the engine; one thing you never do: open the radiator cap) I saw a video of someone who'd done that over the weekend. The explosion of water and steam was incredible—pressure that had been building behind the scenes finally bursting out violently, burning and scaring anyone who comes into contact with it.

But that's what hatred does. In **LV 19.17-18**: *"You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. ¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord."*

EX: But, oh, how easy it is for us to find ways around this. The Jewish people concluded that they couldn't hate their brother Jew, **but the Gentiles? The Babylonians? The Assyrians, Corinthians, and Romans?** They were fair game! **"God doesn't want me to hate the good people, but the despicable? The evil? Well, clearly, they didn't count!"**

MT 5.21-26 ~ *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny."*

AP: Today, we are so busy grouping people. We're so busy tossing people into the strawman groups that allow us to dismiss them. Their political movement has the wrong animal mascot, so they're evil. The most despicable of language is used to write off a large percentage of the population as not worth the air they breathe. And it doesn't stop with politics. We can do the same in the church when we see people who are caught up in a sin that we can't see their way out of—a sexual sin, a career or lifestyle that isn't compatible with God. And we just write them off! In doing so, we're committing a variation of the same sin: allowing our hatred of their sin to translate to dismissal and, yes, hatred of them as well. Brethren, the Bible is filled with stories of redemption. It's kind of the theme of the thing!

1CR 6.9-11 ~ *"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."*

Brothers and Sisters, we must be different. As His church, we cannot allow a hate-filled heart to take root. We cannot allow that sin to crouch at the door. We must

squash it. We must replace it with love—true, God-like and pure. *Beloved, let us love one another; for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (1JN 4.7-12)*

BD2: A Hollow Heart (EX 20.2-6; LK 11.24-28)

ILL—Nature Abhors a Vacuum (*horror vacui*; something I first heard in middle school; it summarizes a truth: that *something* will always strive to fill *nothing*) We see that when we open a vacuum-sealed container and hear the sound of air rushing in to fill the vacuum. And we see that when we see people striving to remove God from the human heart. Something always rushes in to fill that gap.

Sometimes it's politics. Sometimes it's science. Sometimes it's career. Sometimes it's family. There is not a heart in the world that doesn't have something in its place of priority. That's the reason that God said at the beginning that He must be first. He claims the space of priority in every human heart: *"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³ 'You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴ 'You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (EX 20.2-6)*

EX: But throughout the years to come, the Jewish people would place many an idol in their hearts. They'd place Baal and the Asherah. They'd place wealth. They'd place their national heritage. Time and time again, human hearts have placed something else in their hearts—or even, in some cases, have simply sought to empty that place, entirely.

LK 11.24-28 ~ *"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' ²⁵ And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."*

Something must always be in that spot in our hearts. Be it our family, be it our career, be it fame or fortune. Something must always be placed in that space. But in each case, no matter how hard you attempt to fill that space in your heart with something other than God, it will always result in a **hollow heart**. And that hollow heart will always result in evil.

PH 3.20-21 ~ *"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."*