

Part 8: The Family Name

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At some point in their life, every kid is embarrassed by their parents. It seems unavoidable. It's one thing when your dad says too many "dad jokes" around your friends, or if your mom calls you "honeyboo" at school drop off. What's significant about those moments is the truth that it reveals. We naturally and intuitively know that our family relationships play a defining role on who we are, and how we are viewed.

In the Middle Ages, your family name described and defined you. Many of the last names common in English speaking places represent this. Families who worked as metal workers or blacksmiths were called "Smiths." Barrell builders were "Coopers," clerks and teachers were "Clarks," and those who worked in the mills took the last name "Miller."

These names not only identified you—but in a way they defined you. Some of these jobs had little social prestige. So if a lowly "Tanner" wanted to become a "Carpenter," it was an uphill battle of moving to another town, starting a new vocation, and hopefully carving out a new life for you and your family. Your hope and your future was often wrapped up in your family name. That's the title of our sermon this morning: "The Family Name."

We've been studying the first family of all creation in the book of Genesis. And while they aren't given last names—if their vocations defined them—it's not good. We've met Adam the Sinner, and last time we met Cain the Murderer. The first family had problems, and so might yours.

Maybe you have a great family. Maybe you had a terrible one. But what our passage shows us today is that our problems are a lot bigger than our birth family. Adam and Eve's hope for redemption was that they might have a child who rises above their past mistakes and carves out a new future.

Maybe you've heard the phrase before, "Generational wealth." That's what Adam and Eve hoped for. They hoped that someone would make it big—and they would win enough resources and respect that their family might once again live in peace.

In other words, Genesis 4 and 5 is the first input into Ancestry.com. But it's not someone else's family, all of us are related to this family. In light of that, our big ideal this morning is this: **The Name of the Lord is the only name that gives hope.** We will see this in three parts this morning: First we will see, **Two Names**, then we'll see **Two Problems**, and lastly we'll see **One Hope**.

Let's begin today with our first point: **Two Names**.

Moses is directing our attention to two names in specific here: Cain and Seth. The book of Genesis is going to give us a lot of names. In fact, the whole of the book is built around eleven genealogies—eleven lists of names and families.

This isn't for nostalgia's sake—it's for our sake. Maybe you've heard someone say, "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." But history is not just the passing of time. Time doesn't teach. People who live in time—they teach. They warn—they instruct.

The Bible reminds us that history is not an arbitrary passing of time until everything someday stops—history is the story of God's creation. The Bible doesn't aim to present the arbitrary story of the universe. It's telling us the story of a personal God, who created us all, and who is on a mission to redeem those same men and women who rebelled against him.

Didn't we see that after Adam and Eve sinned? Death entered the world, but God gave hope. He said to the serpent, **Genesis 3:15**, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head and he shall bruise your heel." God has now framed for us the whole scope of human history.

History is personal. It reveals whether or not God is good on his word. And Adam and Eve hoped he would—they witnessed the dawning of hope in Cain. Was this the offspring? Is he the one? The new Adam.

That's where things went wrong. Cain—he's a murderer. Able, he's dead. So the question Adam and Eve now sit with is: Who? Who is the guy, who is the family line wherein God will keep his promise?

We might be hoping for a rags to riches story from Cain. Even though Cain killed his brother—God didn't put Cain to death. God did promise Cain that he would be a nomad. He'd have to move from spot to spot for the rest of his life.

Cain heard this and complained to God. A nomadic life isn't a very safe life for a murderer. What if Adam and Eve have another kids, and he comes looking for Cain? Where would Cain hide? What would happen if they tried to kill him? God gave him a promise though: **Genesis 5:15**, "Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him."

Cain was cursed—but he was also promised protection by the Lord himself.

So, what will Cain do? Well, notice what Moses says next: **Genesis 4:17**, "Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch."

Cain continued to work, he continued to be fruitful and multiply, but like father like son—Cain still failed to trust in God. He built a city. He heard the promise of God—but he trusted more in the protection of man.

The venom of the snake is hard to remove, isn't it? Isn't this what we so often do? We are all the touchy feely type. We are quick to cry out to God when we feel alone, and we are willing to trust him when it seems we have nothing else. But, as soon as another hope—generally one we can touch and feel—comes up, we put aside God's promise and we place our hope in what man's eyes can see and man's hands can touch.

It's not wrong for us to want to build cities. It's not wrong for us to want to build our bank accounts. It's not wrong to want to get married, or have kids, or get your degree. But how many of us, like Cain, choose to do so in order that we might be able to trust in man's visible and tangible hope instead of God's promise of faith?

The strength of Cain's city revealed the weakness of Cain's heart. And the walls of man cannot cure the hearts of men. All of us want the security of a kingdom. Sin drives us to want security. A dangerous world wants us to find security. But God's word reminds us that our problems are too big for any kingdom of man to secure us. We need to find refuge in the city of God, the city that God's own Son is building—the kingdom of God.

How do we get access to that one? Jesus tells us: "The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God has drawn near, repent and believe in the gospel."

Cain's hope in his own name is contrasted by the hope which accompanies Adam and Eve's third son, Seth. Notice the shift here as we skip down to **Genesis 4:25-26**, "And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him." To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD."

Here, is child number three: Seth. So now, there are two potential names by which the promise of an offspring hangs. The line of Cain, and the line of Seth.

But those names have two very different grounds for hope. Cain's hope is in the power of man. Seth's hope is in the promise of God. Do you remember what Eve said when she had Cain (Gen. 3)? She said, "At last, I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord." She did it. God helped.

But now, having seen the pains and emptiness of man's name—she says of Seth, "God has appointed."

Eve no longer hoped in what man could get with God's help--she hoped in the promise and the person that God would appoint. Only God could overcome humanity's evil. We see this contrast as Cain's line sings of man's strength, and as Seth's birth coincides with people who call on the name of the Lord.

So there's two names of hope—two lines one might find themselves in: Cain or Seth, Man or God. But we aren't out of the woods yet. Both lines still have issues. That's what we see next: **Two Problems**.

What are the two problems? Mortality, and morality.

Let me briefly illustrate these for you. When you go to the doctor's office, they will always ask you: "Does your family have a history of disease or heart problems?" If you are summoned for jury duty every questionnaire will ask: "Has anyone in your family been accused or convicted of a crime."

And here, our culture affirms the Bible's assessment of the human problem. Our human families reveal the problem of mortality and of morality.

The problem of wicked morals and sin is drawn out as a family trait in Cain's line. **Genesis 4:17-24**, Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael

fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah. Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold."

If I were to write a heading for this section, I would call it "The Limbo" because it's a testimony of how low you can go. Cain's city seemed to be safe. It seemed to have lots of resources. It had tools, instruments, agricultural systems. And yet inside of those systems—arrogance, wickedness, and murder flourished.

This culminates in the seventh man in Cain's line—a man named Lamech. And if Cain was wicked—it seemed wickedness grew stronger as it aged. Lamech shows how far we've gone from the garden. God designed marriage between one man and one woman—but Lamech took two wives as property just as easy as he took two pieces of fruit. Cain killed his brother, and was silent about it. Lamech forces his two wives to hear him sing a boastful song about his own murderous rage and how it surpasses even the justice of God. God promised vengeance sevenfold—but Lamech's is seventy-seven fold.

Kid's do you know the feeling after the dentist and your mouth is numb, and you stop feeling things? This is what sin does to us. It numbs us to pain that would otherwise protect us. Paul warns Timothy of those whose sin has produced in them a seared, or calloused, conscience.

This is the danger of a small God theology—it leads to sin. If God is small—then men are big. And therefore the biggest, and baddest, and most influential men rule. And our only hope is to be bigger, badder and better in the eyes of man. It's a dog eat dog world, and we all lose.

And it's a family problem. It runs in the blood. While I've never seen it, I've heard that the plot of the Godfather is one son who wants more than anything to distance himself from his mobster father's way of life. But by the end, the son is more wicked and violent than his dad.

While you might never have heard of Svetlana Peters, you've probably heard of her dad. Ashamed of her dad, she fled her homeland and lived as a global refugee for her adult life. But despite moving away, denouncing him, and changing her own name—she said she lived life as a prisoner to his name. Sure enough, when she died—newspaper headlines simply read: "Svetlana Stalin, daughter of Joseph Stalin, dead at age 85."

Your dad wasn't Stalin. But all of us have Adam as a father. We don't become sinful when we sin—we are sinful therefore we sin. It is the human problem. Paul tells us in **Romans 5:12**, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned." So, what can we do about it?

This moral failure leads to our second problem: death. We all die, we are all mortal.

This too, is universal. The line of Seth is a godlier line, and a more hopeful line, but they are still a human line. They too suffer from the death that sin brought into our world.

I'm not going to read whole list again. But look at it. There's a lot of different names, most are hard to say, and hard to keep track of. But there's two words that are easy to keep track of: "fathered" and "died." Time and time over we read of the hope of someone who was "fathered" the hope of an offspring of faith who might crush the head of the serpent. But as soon as they were born we read, "and he died." Eight times. Death reigned—even for those who had hope.

Seth's family gatherings might have had less murderers than Cain's. But they've got the same number of gravestones. You might try to exercise more than your dad, watch your genetically high blood pressure, and even live longer than your grandpa. But you'll still die. Ash to ash, dust to dust, fade to black.

So, if Cain's line stinks. And if Seth's line still dies—we've really got to wonder: "Where in the world is our hope?" That's the very question Seth's own Lamech is asking when we get to the very end of this passage: **Genesis 5:28-29**, "When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son and called his name Noah, saying, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands."

Still dying but still hoping. Maybe this Noah guy will do it. Will he? We'll find out. But I want us here to do the hard work of setting aside our theologian glasses and put on our own reality. It's easy to look at this and say: Well, I certainly don't want to live in the consequence of Cain's kingdom of man. And we know that these guys here, these men of Seth who hoped in God—they'll be alright. It's their line that will bring for the line of promise God is faithful, the serpent crusher will come. Yet, we commend and call these men to hope even while we, ourselves, are unwilling and dissatisfied to wait on God in our own lives.

History is personal! And see how long these people waited in hope! Some of these guys lived for hundreds of years. They were waiting for a long time. Noah and his wife weren't able to have kids until they were 500 years old. It's easy to hope in the promise of God for others—but it's hard when it seems like all our life is wrapped up in those words, "and he died."

Sin is in the genes. Death is in our bones. Cain's kingdom is full of blood. But even those who hope in God still suffer.

But one name really is the name of hope. One line really is the line of promise. Paul does say that sin spread through one man and so death to all men. But, he goes on to say this: **Romans 5:14**, "Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come."

At some point, death stopped reigning. At some point, there was another Adam who would save those who stood in Adam's name.

And that one name, that one source of hope, is seen in the midst of the darkness of Genesis 5. And here's our final point: **One Hope**.

In football, there's a type of guy who is called, "the first guy off the bus." This guy might not be the best player on the bus—but he looks the part. He's the biggest, the strongest, the most intimidating looking guy on the team. And when you roll into a hostile stadium—you want a guy who quiets down the crowd. You want a guy who says this team, this team has a different feel to it.

And that guy is here in Genesis 5. Moses drew our attention to the seventh Adam in Cain's line—murderous Lamech. But now he draws our attention to the seventh Adam in Seth's line: Enoch. Do you notice what's different: **Genesis 5:22-24**, "Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."

Did you see the difference, did you see the guy we have on our team? Everyone else was wrapped up in the "and he died" party. But Enoch didn't. He was there, and then he was not, for God took him.

Brothers and sisters, here's a guy who didn't die. Cain might have worldly instruments and power over those who live—but I want to be on the team who has a guy who has power over death. If I'm going to take a shot, that's the shot I want to take.

Enoch reminds us that for those who hope in God, the difficulties we experience in life are real—but more real is the life we have after life. This world, is life, but it's the opening act. There's life to come—and even though Enoch lived the shortest—Enoch lived the most.

And what led to him having such a unique experience? He walked with God. He boasted not in his might. He ran not to Cain's city. But in the midst of his years, in the pain of waiting, even when he asked the question of *when*, never doubted the question of *if*. Why is that? Because he walked with the God who was good on his word. When the promise seemed far off—he drew near to the Promise Giver.

But here's the real problem. Enoch got out. And it doesn't mean boo to you.

There are lots of people who walked with God and still died. In fact, just about everyone who walked with God from here on out still died.

Enoch made it out—but what about us.

But Enoch points us to another one—another offspring of Seth. Long past Noah. Long past Abraham. Jesus Christ. The one who walked not only with God but walked as God. And he died. He didn't get taken up like Enoch, he laid down his life on the cross instead. He suffered human mortality because he bore the punishment of human morality.

And he did it so that we might have Enoch's hope. And what was Enoch's hope? What's the hope for a new future and a better name? **Hebrews 11:5-7**, "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

Enoch pleased God—and he was taken. But for the rest of us—how do we please God? How do we claim access to the line of Seth and the promise of God? Through faith in God and in his Son Jesus Christ. But, notice how it's not just faith that God exists.

Adam knew God existed. He walked in the garden with him. Cain knew God existed; he met him on the field of his brother's blood. But faith, saving faith, name cleaning faith, name giving faith, life giving faith is faith that God not only exists but that he rewards those who seek him.

He is the name of hope. And it's not death that keeps you from it. It's doubt.

And these faithful men, whose faith was stronger than their present doubt, stand as a testament to us that God's word is good.

He has sent his offspring, and we ought to run to him.

He gives us a new name, his name. And the family name changes everything.

Before I close today—I want to give three quick points of application.

Number One, when God's name is our hope—the gifts of man are used for worship and not for salvation. When man is our hope, man's tools become our weapons. But when God is our hope—the jobs we do, the things we make, the cities we build are meant to be a testimony to his greatness and a refuge for others. Work while you wait—and may the labor of your hand be an instrument of praise to God. The name of the Lord is the end of all our work.

Number Two, when God's name is our hope—it gives us joy in a joyless world. Mary knew her son was going to die on the cross—yet she treasured up every little thing in her heart. Jesus knew he was going to the cross, and yet it was for the joy set before him that he did it. Paul suffered much, and yet in his weakness, he was strong. Just because this world is hard—it doesn't mean it is joyless. We just find our joy—even in hard times—in Jesus himself. The author of Ecclesiastes reminds us that “man will not much remember the days of his life for God will keep him occupied with joy in his heart.” The name of the Lord is the promise of life's greatest joys.

Number Three, when God's name is our hope—walking with God is our deepest assurance. It's hard to forget someone who is right beside you. We know men. Men are all around us. The physical icons of our world abound. But we are called to walk with God with more closeness than we walk with the things of the world. Do you know more about your hobbies than you do God's word? Can you write a love letter to your crush pointing out the individual beauties you see in her—and yet struggle to articulate the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Then seek to find greater hope by communing more with this Jesus, know him in his word, and with his people so that when we find ourselves with him in glory—we know exactly what to do. For we will just walk with him in glory as we tried to here on earth.

The name of the Lord is only name that bring us hope.