

Sermon for Sunday, April 8, 1973 by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor
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"SOME MARKS TO LIVE BY"

Genesis 4:8-16, St. John 20:24-25, Galatians 6:14-18

Text: "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus."
Galatians 6:17

This morning I want to talk with you about some marks mentioned in our scripture this morning. The first mark is the mark of Cain. Cain was the son of Adam and Eve and as such was a part of fallen humanity. His mother and father had rebelled against God in disobedience and as a consequence humanity became contaminated. When Cain--in a fit of jealousy and anger--slew his brother, he was doing what was now natural to man. The natural man is sinful. It was not the way God intended him to be, but God gave man freedom. Man used that freedom to rebel against God and in doing so man corrupted himself. So, it was a corrupt Cain who rose up against his brother and slew him.

But sin always has its consequence. People may think they can sin and it won't hurt anyone as long as none finds it out. People think they can do evil and wicked things and if they remain concealed, no harm is done. But the fact is, sin always has its consequence. It may be a character that continues to deteriorate. It may be in the degeneration of morals. It may be in a growing insensitivity to what is good and right and true. Yet, sin always leaves its mark. I remember reading once of a man who had two boys. When they got into their teen years, they began to go wild. The father took a fence post and set it in the middle of the back yard. Whenever they did something wrong, he would put a nail in the post. When they did something good, he took a nail out. It got to be a game with the boys and they began to work to see if they could get all of the nails out. Finally, they succeeded. They were very proud. "Look, father," they said, "We have now rid ourselves of all the nails." "Yes," replied the father, "But look at the ruined post--it is full of holes." That is sin's way. It leaves its mark. The scars remain.

The first mark I want to talk about then is the mark of the sinner. The Bible says that the Lord put a mark on Cain. It was a consequence of his sin. Now, I don't know what that mark was and the Bible doesn't tell us. But I do know the consequence of that mark in Cain's life. The Bible tells us that he went to the land of Nod which means "wandering". That's what life is like when it is marked by sin. It isn't going anywhere. It isn't going in any worthwhile direction. Jesus said that the road to heaven is straight and narrow. The man who is wandering in sin isn't on that road. The Bible also says that Cain built a city and he called the name of the city "Enoch". And that word means "beginning again." Man who is building his life without God is always having to start over, to begin again.

Yes, the mark of the sinner. You and I are the children of Adam. We, too, are a part of sinful, fallen humanity. We, too, bear the mark of Cain. We, too, bear the mark of the sinner. Many of us are not going anywhere worth going this morning. We are always trying to start over, to begin again. But life isn't working very well. Life isn't working because we are not on God's straight and narrow way. Life isn't working because we are trying to start over without God. And life just doesn't work very well that way.

The second mark I want to talk about is the mark of the Saviour. After the crucifixion God raised Jesus from the dead. But when Jesus first appeared to his disciples, one of them named Thomas wasn't there. When the others told him about Jesus, he couldn't believe it. He said, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe." Eight days later the disciples were together again and Jesus came and stood among them. He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your

hand, and place it in my side." Yes, the mark of the Saviour. When Thomas saw those marks--the print of the nail, the wound in the side, the Bible says he fell and cried, "My Lord and my God!"

Do you know what put the marks on Jesus? It was the mark of the sinners. Jesus came to die for our marks of sin. Did you and I have a share in the crucifixion of Jesus? Of course we did! It was our sins--yours and mine that help put him there on the cross. Like Cain, we have been jealous and envious. Like Cain, we do our brother evil. Like Cain, we rebel against God. And like Cain, we bear the mark of sin. And Jesus died for our sins. That's what the cross is all about. You see, sin always demands its pound of flesh. Sin must be punished. And the wages of sin is death. That's what we deserve for being who and what we are--people who bear the mark of the sinner.

But God sent his son Jesus to bear our sin for us. There on the cross he dies our death, he takes our place, he bears the burden of punishment that belongs to us. Whoever you are this morning, you helped put Jesus on that Cross. Whoever you are today, you helped drive the nails and you helped swing the spear that pierced his side. Yes, the mark of the Saviour. The mark of what he did for you and me when he took our place and died our death.

The third mark I want to talk about is the mark of the saint. St. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of Jesus." St. Paul meant that in his service to Jesus, he had paid the price. To the Philippians he wrote, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ..." To the Corinthians he wrote, "Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure...." Yes, Paul loved Jesus. He surrendered his heart to Him. His life was turned over to the Lord. As a consequence, he bore in his body the marks of the saint--the marks of one who was willing to endure all for the sake of his Lord.

I am wondering what our discipleship is costing us this morning. I am wondering what sort of price we are paying for our love of Jesus. Back in the Old Testament the Bible tells us that David sinned against God and God punished David. David went to make an offering to God to atone for his sin. He was out in the country and he wanted to offer a burnt offering to God and he had no wood. A farmer there saw the king and because it was the king he offered to give him wood for his fire. But David would not accept the wood as a gift. He insisted on paying for it. He said to the farmer, "Neither will I offer unto the Lord my God that which costs me nothing."

Yes, what is our offering to God costing us? Take, for example, your time. There are 168 hours in a week. A tithe of that time for God would be approximately 17 hours. Now, even if you give yourself credit for six or seven hours for Sunday, that still leaves ten hours for God. How many of us are spending ten hours each week Monday through Saturday for God? Do you bear the mark of the saint on your watch? Or how about your material goods. How many of us this morning can say in all honesty that a tenth--a tithe--of all we have goes to the Lord? Can you say that? Do you bear the mark of the saint on your pocketbook?

The man of God--the man who has committed his all to this Jesus--will bear the mark

of the saint. His life will reflect his commitment. Over in the Book of Revelation, the writer shares with us his vision of what heaven will be like. He writes, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the Holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.'" And then the writer goes on to talk about heaven and he says, "...the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads." Yes, the name of Jesus will be on them. They will bear the marks of Jesus. That's how God will know his own-- they will bear the marks of Jesus.

We know we bear the mark of Cain, you and I. We know we bear the mark of the sinner. We also know that Jesus came to die for those sins. He took our place and collected the wages due us--for the wages of sin is death. If we love him and accept him, then we will bear in our lives, in our character, in every facet of life, the marks of the saint--the marks of the man who is committed to Jesus. And when we die and stand at last before God--when the time comes when in God's great judgment he separates the sheep from the goats--he will know his own because of the marks they bear--the marks of Jesus.

Do our lives bear the mark of the saint? When the tale of your life is told, when the sands in the hour glass of your life have run dry, when the sunset comes for you, and you stand at last in the presence of God, will he know you are his by the marks you bear?