

**'THE GREAT VIOLENCE' # 4**

Last week we were considering the 'Great Lie', otherwise known as the 'original sin' or the 'fall of humanity'. We now consider the consequences of accepting the serpent's evil advice. Adam and Eve, having decided they were equal to God, have been exiled from God's presence, from the blessings, serenity and comfort of the Garden, and will, in future, work for their existence and become familiar with pain. We see the impact of decisions made in the Garden as depicted through the first family.

**Read Genesis 4: 1-10**

*I think we can be sure God does not show a preference to shepherds, or dislike vegetarians, so what has made God 'not look with favour' upon Cain's offering?*

*In the first recorded interaction between God and the first family since leaving the Garden, what is the prime principal God is making clear right from the begin?*

One way to describe the whole of human history would be to say it is the record of humanity succeeding or failing to follow this prime principal. Jesus needed to remind the religious authorities that it is one thing to read the Law (principles on which to live to please God, and for our own benefit) and quite another to allow it's understanding to penetrate your heart. (Matt 22: 34-40, Luke 10: 23-37).

*"God is interested in the state of your heart more than what you have to offer to him, no matter how big the sacrifice is."* (Eric Kwabena Nyamekye)

*'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight'* (Proverbs 3: 5-6)

The time for animal (or vegetable!) sacrifice passed with Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, and today we bring and offer our whole life as a sacrifice to God. For most of us, our lives would not be an acceptable sacrifice, if it wasn't for our lives being embedded in Christ gaining the forgiveness available through him alone.

*Knowing that God searches our hearts can be a nagging worry to Christians. How do you feel about this?*

*For some, there are times when we appear to believe that God's promises apply to everyone except ourselves. Is this familiar to you? (check Romans 10:9-10, John 14:6, Acts 4:10-12)*

*If we say we have the Spirit of God within us and are at peace with God, is this in some way boastful or lacking in humility?*

Jesus is the way back to the relationship first enjoyed by Adam and Eve walking with God 'in the cool of the day.' We can be confident of this.

PS. *It will be helpful to keep your discussions and these notes to hand for next week's study!*

**Prayer:** God of grace, thank you that when I confess my sins, you are faithful and just, forgiving and purifying me from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)(Lectio 365)