

## What's Crouching at Your Door?

### Genesis 4:1-16 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." <sup>2</sup> Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. <sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. <sup>4</sup> And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup> but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. <sup>6</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? <sup>7</sup> If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." <sup>8</sup> Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. <sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" <sup>10</sup> The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. <sup>11</sup> Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. <sup>12</sup> When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." <sup>13</sup> Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. <sup>14</sup> Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." <sup>15</sup> But the LORD said to him, "Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. <sup>16</sup> So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

When I was a kid, I had a reoccurring nightmare. A blank panther with glowing green eyes would either slink into my room through the bedroom door, and other times violently burst through. I would quickly drop to the other side of my bed, covering myself with my sheets, trying to hide, shaking with fear because I knew it was here to rip me apart. Then the panther would pounce, I would scream, and wake up just before it actually got me. Most likely I had this reoccurring dream because of the movie *The NeverEnding Story* and one of its main villains named Gmork, who was a giant black wolf with glowing green eyes. I still love that movie and watch it regularly with enjoyment to this day and without nightmares anymore, but now you know why I won't show it to my kids...yet.

I don't know how common of a dream this is, this ferocious beast crouching at your bedroom door getting ready to pounce on you and rip you apart, of even if any of you have had a similar dream, but if it is a metaphor for something, we can all relate. We all have a glowing green-eyed beast crouching at our bedroom doors: a beast called sin.

This beast was already alive and well in Genesis chapter 4. After God created a perfect world and two perfect human beings, Adam and Eve, Genesis chapter 3 sees them tempted by Satan. Sin was crouching at their bedroom doors, and they let it in. They sinned, deliberating disobeying God's command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus the perfect world was ruined. Immediately after their sin, though, God out of his unconditional love promised to provide an offspring from the women to crush Satan's head, to destroy this beast of sin. A glimmer of that hope is expressed at the beginning of our verses today. Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." (verse 1)

Later, Cain's brother, Abel, is born. Years pass. Adam and Eve have other sons and daughters. Cain and Abel grew up and became productive workers. Cain worked the fields; Abel tended flocks. They worshiped the Lord with the respective fruit of their labors. "The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor." (verses 4b-5a) Why? Because Abel lived his faith in God by offering a sacrifice of the best portions, the fat portions, of the firstborn of his flock – the best of the best! Cain, though, offered only some of his crops – not the firstfruits, not the cream of the crop, just some, maybe even the leftovers that he didn't want, so he gave them to God. The result: "So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast." (verse 5b)

God tells us, "In your anger do not sin." (Ephesians 4:26) There's a reason sports players trash talk. They want to rile you up, make you angry because when you're angry, you lose your focus. You lose your cool, and you do something that will make your playing worse. It's the same in our spiritual lives. Satan wants to rile us up so that we let the glowing green-eyed beast of sin into our bedrooms. How many sins have you committed in anger, things that you said, things that you did, things that when you are calm you never would have done? While not all anger is sinful in and of itself, it can very quickly lead us to opening that bedroom door and let the beast of sin pounce on us and devour us.

In your anger, what sin is crouching at your door, looking to burst through and pounce on you? Are you on the verge of losing it, that you are holding doing something back that you know is wrong, like a dam ready to burst and overflow with sins? Are you like Cain angry as you see what looks like preferential treatment or that your efforts are just not good enough, that it feels like God is personally picking on you, not accepting your works (even though you have to admit that you're not giving your best)? Are you ready to lash out because other people seem to have all the advantages and are favored by God over you? Are you holding back your mounting frustration at a COVID world that is not returning to normal and continues to disrupt your everyday living, and you know that you are on the verge of doing things that you will regret in response? Are you ready to just give up and call it quits because you are giving more effort into life, your work, your family, and yet you seeing less and less return and things deteriorating all that much more? Are you on the verge of opening the door to let the beast of sin overtake you?

Cain's anger over his lackluster offering had him at a breaking point. Amazingly, God reached out to Cain. The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." (verses 6-7) God gave Cain direct guidance, warning him not to open the door to sin and let that glowing green-eyed beast of sin overtake him. Instead, God told Cain to master it, to rule over that beast of sin and keep the door closed to it instead of letting sin rule over him.

But Cain opened the door. He planned and carried out the murder of his brother Abel. The sin crouching at his door pounced and consumed him.

In our anger it doesn't take much for us to open the door for sin and let it pounce on us too. The warning and guidance that God gave Cain applies to us still today. Sin is crouching at the doors of our lives. It may not look like a black panther with glowing green eyes like from my nightmare, but it wants to devour you just the same. Will you open the door and let it? Will you let sin into your life so that it pounces on you and consumes you?

Unlike my nightmares, we are not helpless, scared little boys just waiting for the beast of sin to burst through the doors of our lives and consume us. No. Christ has jumped into our world, our lives, into our rooms. He fought that beast of sin that was crouching at our doors. He sacrificed himself to kill it. He did this on the cross. By doing so, he tore sin to pieces. The offspring of the woman, descendant of Cain's mother, Eve, crushed the great Tempter. The beast of sin cannot simply break into our lives anymore.

Because Jesus lived perfectly for us, never once letting in any sin crouching at the door of his life and because he sacrificed his life to take away our sins, we are freed from the inevitable demise caused by sin. We are no longer slaves to sin, that we have to let it into our lives and let it consume us. No, Christ freed us from this. He freed us from this by our baptisms. By simple water and the Word of God, we died to sin, drowned that glowing green-eyed beast. It can't just burst into our lives. No, "God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13b) By Christ's power, we can rule over the beast of sin. With Christ in our lives guarding and protecting us, that door where sin crouches stays closed.

All sin is an evil glowing green-eyed beast that wants to devour you, but Christ has mastered it for you. He made you new in your baptism, a newness that is refreshed in you every day by God. We are forgiven and clothed with Christ's perfection. By Christ's power we can keep that door where sin is crouching closed. We never have to be consumed by it. Christ rescues us from the nightmare of sin. Amen.